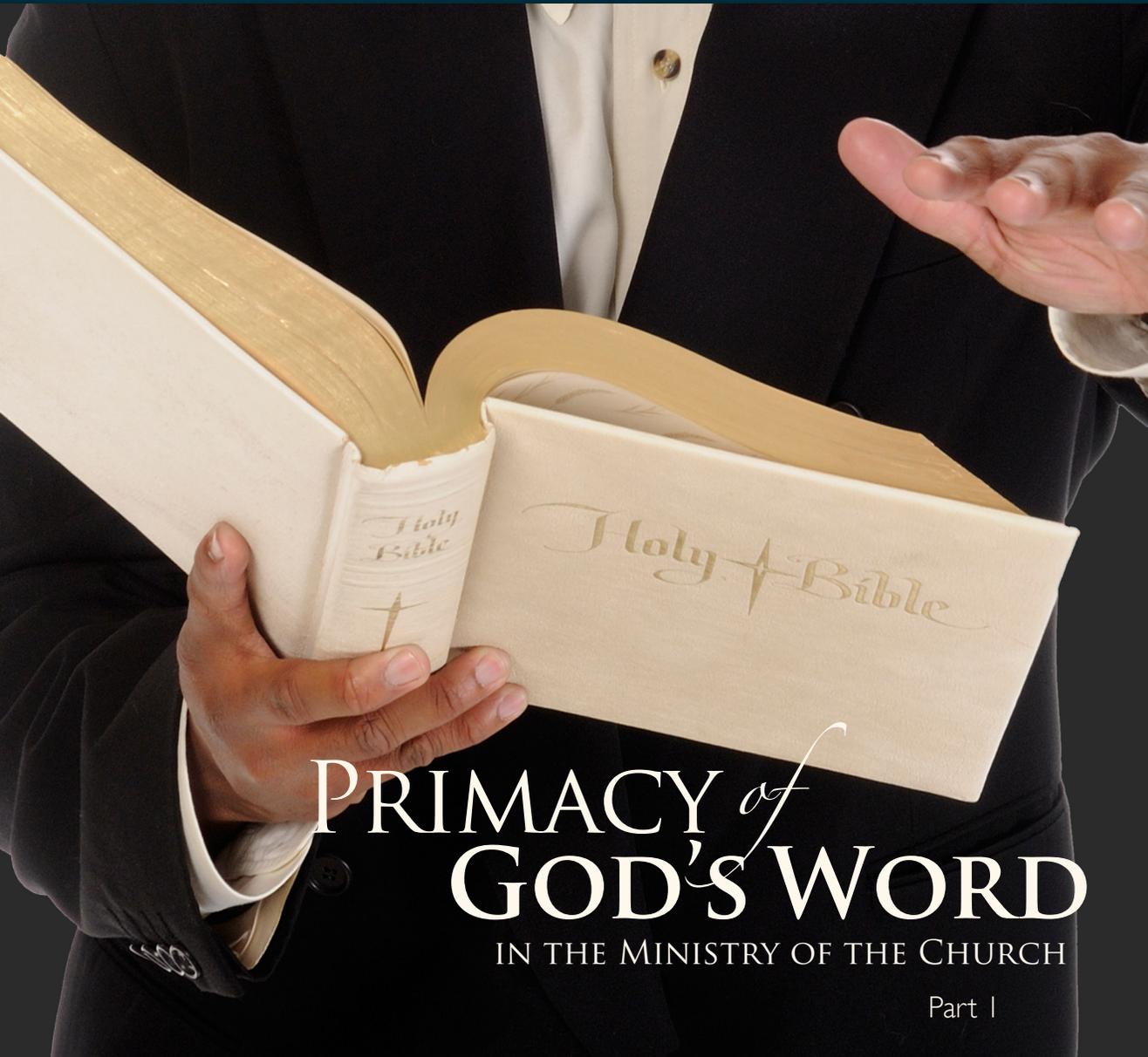


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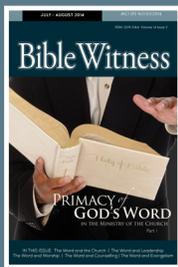


PRIMACY *of* GOD'S WORD

IN THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

Part I

IN THIS ISSUE: The Word and the Church | The Word and Leadership
The Word and Worship | The Word and Counselling | The Word and Evangelism



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EDITORIAL

PRABHUDAS KOSHY

Dear readers,

Every issue of this magazine is produced with much thanksgiving to our gracious God for His unfailing help. His grace has helped us once again to publish this new issue on "Primacy of God's Word in the Ministry of the Church". Though we greatly doubted our ability to produce this issue on time because of some distressing, disruptive trials, the LORD showed His plenteous mercy in answering our prayers to see to its timely publication. Our present experience of divine strengthening has been much like Paul's testimony recorded in 2 Corinthians 7:5-6, "For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that

comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus."

As Paul was comforted by God "by the coming of Titus", we are also cheered by His leading of Bro Ho Kee How to co-labour with us in Bible Witness. He will be serving as the Assistant Editor of Bible Witness. Please read his testimony below to know his calling and aspirations in the LORD. We further praise the Lord for the provision of Sis Lynn Koh, who has also joyfully extended her services for the publication of the Bible Witness magazine. Sis Lynn and her husband, Bro Andrew Koh, having completed their theological training in the Far Eastern Bible College, now serve in the youth ministry of Gethsemane B-P Church.

In this issue and in the next, we will be publishing the sermons that were preached in the 4th Missionary Conference of Gethsemane B-P Church (June 23-27, 2014). We are persuaded that all the ten sermons delivered in the conference by God's faithful servants, which hold rich lessons for the church in her ministry (all the more so in these days of doctrinal compromise in Christendom), must be read by all our readers. We would also like to record our heartfelt thanks to all the preachers, who have kindly and freely given us the text of their respective sermons to be published. May their publication result in the spiritual admonition and edification of our readers.



BRO HO KEE HOW'S TESTIMONY OF CALLING

As a young Christian in the 1980's, I used to look forward to attending mission rallies and conventions organised by missionary groups (many of which had since gone

ecumenical). My heart was stirred whenever I heard reports of the Gospel work in the mission fields, and the oft-repeated refrain that "the harvest truly is great, but the labourers are

few" (Luke 10:2). But I did not hear God's call then.

In the course of time, I became preoccupied with pursuing a career as a schoolteacher. With that, I did not expect God to call me into full-time ministry, as I have always believed that God, in the normal course of affairs, would call His servants while they are young and still at their prime. Over the years, however, there was a growing sense of emptiness as I did not find much fulfilment in my work. I felt as if I was engrossed in things that do not matter to God's kingdom. This heaviness and unease came to a head when I was confronted by God's Word in Isaiah 55:2: "Wherefore do ye spend... your labour for that which satisfieth not?" There came a point when I told my wife that I found no more joy in preparing classroom lessons; I'd rather prepare Bible lessons! With Pastor Koshy's encouragement, I enrolled in FEBC in 2010 for theological studies.

I thank God for the undreamt-of privilege to have studied theology in a sound Bible College, learning at the feet of eminent students of its late founding principal, Rev Tow. The strong conviction of these "faithful men, who shall be able to teach others

also" (2 Timothy 2:2) that the Bible is none other than God's Word to mankind, has not only strengthened my belief that the Bible is inerrant in whatever subject matter it touches on – it has also instilled in me a confidence that if one searches Scripture deep enough, one could refute almost any unsound man-made notion, however scientific or academically acclaimed it may be.

And now there is this growing awareness that many long-held biblical truths are being systematically distorted and misrepresented by a proliferation of modern English versions, as well as liberal and ecumenical material flooding the Christian market through the media out there. God's tender and vulnerable flock, in order to be protected and nurtured, must have constant access to sound biblical reading (and even study) material. Praise God that the Bible Witness magazine (now into its 14th year) has been one such means to this end. Nevertheless, in this age of information explosion, as Pastor Koshy has rightly perceived, there is an increasing need to compile and publish more biblical literature. With a ready pool of rich material – in the form of Pastor Koshy's "collections" of sermons,

book studies, FEBC night lectures and even retreat messages over the years – waiting to be tapped, the need for an enhanced literature ministry has never been greater.

Now, "the gospel must first be published among all nations" (Mark 13:10) before the end comes. One ubiquitous and effective way is unquestionably through the printed page, for "the pen is mightier than the sword". Truly, while I never expected God to call me at such a "late" age, I realise that God, in His mysterious outworkings, has somehow set me aside to "labour" in the "written" word, which entails essentially the ministry of writing and publications. My prayer is that the Lord may "establish... the work of our hands upon us" (Psalm 90:17), for His glory and for the edification of His saints.

The Word & the Church



Prabhudas Koshy

On July 6th, 1415, John Huss, one of the earliest reformers, was martyred for the testimony of Jesus Christ and His Word. He being a Roman Catholic priest, the Roman church could not tolerate his high esteem for the Word of God and his commitment to the headship of Jesus Christ over the church. So he was arrested by the Roman church authorities. When Huss refused to renounce his uncompromising commitment to Christ and stand on God's Word, they dragged him out of the prison, defrocked him publicly by stripping off his priestly vestures, tied him to a stake and torched

him to death. While being led to be burned, he prayed, "Lord Jesus Christ, I am willing to bear most patiently and humbly this dreadful, ignominious and cruel death for Thy gospel and for the preaching of Thy Word. I pray Thee, to have mercy on my enemies." John Huss gave his life for the headship of Jesus Christ and the authority of God's Word over the church.

Upholding the primacy of God's Word in the church is a cause worth dying for. Our fathers of faith did give their lives to uphold this great truth, John Huss being one among the many of such reformers.



John Huss Memorial in Prague
 Photo by Gokhan Batir

God's Word Resisted by the Roman Church

John Huss' martyrdom arose from the Roman Catholic Church's vehement opposition to 3 basic tenets of his teachings:

- The church is made up of all of God's elect;
- The authority of the Bible is higher than the authority of the church;
- Jesus Christ Himself is the Head of the church.

The first teaching challenged the Roman church's stance that the true church was made up of the priesthood, with the lay believers communing with the church only through the right of communion. It exposed Rome's position as contradictory to the biblical assertion that the church is made up of all born-again Christians (who are God's elect) and is the entire fellowship of believers, not merely the hierarchy. The second teaching practically objected to the traditions and papal decrees which were given greater prominence in the church than the Bible. The third teaching unequivocally denied absolute papal authority over the church. These were diametrically opposed to the Roman

church's hitherto unquestioned doctrines and practices. No wonder the Roman church hated and sought to kill John Huss!

In a word, the Roman authority's contention against Huss was one of authority in the church. Whose words wield authority in the church, Christ's or the Pope's? Who tells us who should constitute the church? Who decides what the church ought to be? John Huss would not leave these matters to be decided on by the church's traditions and philosophies. He pointed to the Bible to prove that the church is the communion of the saints (i.e. those who are saved by the blood of Christ) under the headship of Jesus Christ, and that it should be governed by the truth of God's Word.

100 years later, while reflecting on John Huss' sermons that he read, Martin Luther, the great reformer, said, "I was overwhelmed with astonishment. I could not understand for what cause they had burnt so great a man who explained the Scriptures with so much gravity and skill." The life and teachings of Huss became a compelling, motivating factor for Luther and other later reformers. Like Huss, they also fought for the headship of Christ, the authority of God's Word, and the communion of the saints who form the church. Significantly, one of the key issues of Reformation was: "Who wields the ultimate authority in the church?"

Ultimate Authority in the Church

If the authority of the church is vested in a man, then what he says becomes the doctrine. But if Christ and His Word are acknowledged as the ultimate authority in the church, then God's infallible Word will become the church's sole, supreme authority in all matters of faith and practice. Whenever a church refuses to yield to the divine authority of the Scriptures, it will gravely err in its doctrine and practice. Only a church

that is subject to Christ and His Word will be concerned with His truth and glory.

In these days, departure from God's authoritative Word is rampant in many protestant, evangelical, reformed and fundamental churches. Their leaders are increasingly dependent on humanistic psychology, worldly philosophy, surveys and analysis, so-called extra-biblical messages received through dreams and visions, etc. They are increasingly fascinated with worldly wisdom and, ironically, distance themselves from the truth and wisdom of God's Word! When man's voice becomes the authority in a church, she ceases to function as a true church of Jesus Christ. Without God's Word, the church cannot be deemed the church of Jesus Christ. It is through His Word that Christ nurtures His church. Through the Word, Christ communes with His church to guide, strengthen and keep her in His will and purposes.

In our churches, God's Word must have supremacy over everything because it is the voice of our Saviour and Lord. No pastor, preacher, elder, deacon or member should exercise his own authority in the church above it. No one in the church is above God's Word. Everyone must tremble at its glory and greatness. Every preacher who handles the Word must do so with great fear and reverence. After all, a preacher is God's mouthpiece; he must expound God's Word. Preachers are God's instruments to proclaim His Word. It is through His church and her preachers that God declares His Word to the world. So both the church and her preachers must have a preoccupation for the faithful preaching of God's Word. When pastors preach the Word of God, they declare God's authority over the minds and souls of all in the church.

We shall now consider why God's Word must have primacy in the church.

Only by the Word Can the Church be Called Out

Firstly, God's Word is an absolute necessity for the regeneration of the people who form the church of Jesus Christ. It is by the Word that people are born again and brought into His church. Simply put, the church is formed by the preaching of God's Word!

Without the regenerating work of God's Word, we cannot have the redeemed to make up the church. The church is not a communal gathering, nor a club for the socialising of rich men in society, nor a fraternity between sportsmen and their fans. The church is a gathering of people who are born into the kingdom of God; and they are brought into God's kingdom by the voice of God. The Shepherd calls His sheep out from the world and gathers them as His flock. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23). Let every preacher in the church be committed to a thorough exposition of God's Word, because that is what casts the incorruptible seed that brings about spiritual life in the souls. Make no mistake, preaching the whole counsel of God is the means by which people are born again. Alluring words, modern music and other entertaining activities in the church do not add people to the kingdom of God. God's plan through all ages for the formation of the church is the preaching of His infallible, inerrant and forever-settled Word. 1 Peter 1:25 declares, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." The power of God's Word will not wane and is still very powerful to save sinners!

We know that people in modern churches are distracted by all sorts of prevalent ideas and philosophies. Unbiblical carnal worldly ideas, atheistic evolutionary views and other

godless theories are dragging away many young boys and girls who have grown up in the church. Our sadness over the departure of those who are apostatised notwithstanding, let not our confidence in the power of God's Word to save sinners be shaken. The true elect of God will come into God's kingdom when they hear God's voice. The preaching of the Gospel of Christ according to God's Word will continue to call His people out of the world to form the church. Thus, as long as there is opportunity for us to preach, we must preach. The preaching of God's Word will never be irrelevant in this world. It is always relevant for the salvation of people until our Lord Jesus returns and the door of salvation is completely closed.

God's Word alone is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). Nothing is more crucial for the growth of the church than God's Word. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18). God's will concerning His people's regeneration is by the instrumentality of His Word of truth. God has no other design and means of salvation but the preaching of His Word. Jesus said in John 6:63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." It is the words of Christ that give eternal life. Oh, how important it is that the church and her preachers are committed to declare Christ's words faithfully and fervently. Good, effective preaching is not dependent on the preacher's wisdom of words or eloquence, but on his commitment to faithfully bring out the truths of God's Word and show them to the people. Unless the preachers clearly and thoroughly elucidate the truths of God's Word, their preaching will have no power to effectively convict, guide and transform people for God's glory. Hence, calling people's attention to relevant Scriptural passages and getting them to focus on the truth of those

passages are most vital in the exposition of God's Word. It is only when the words of the Scriptures are faithfully proclaimed and exalted, that the divine life in them will be imparted to the hearers. There is no other way for the church to bring people into God's kingdom and to gather genuinely born-again people into its fold.

The book of Acts is replete with such testimonies of the preaching of God's Word in converting the heathen and gathering them to worship Christ: "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11:19-23). Like the early church members, if our people will be committed to the spreading of God's Word, we can be assured that the Lord will save souls and add them to the church. Don't you remember Paul's words in Romans 1:16? "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Did he not also say, "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16)? Undoubtedly, from the apostle's abundantly clear testimony, what matters most is preaching.

It must also be stressed that any form of church growth attempted or achieved in ways contrary to God's Word is unacceptable and

most displeasing to God. When people are brought together without the regenerating work of God's Word and His Spirit, it cannot be truly called a community of genuine believers. It is utterly reckless and heinous to bring people into the church by providing for them secular songs and entertainment that sanction and further entrench them in worldliness. Those who follow such unbiblical methods of church growth will, like the unscriptural proselytising Jewish preachers, be slapped with Christ's censuring words: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Matthew 23:15)!

Only by the Word Can the Church be Nurtured

Secondly, after being called out, God's saints' continual spiritual nourishment and nurture are wholly dependent on God's Word. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). Paul's words to the young pastor Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:6 abundantly prove this truth: "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained."

Unmistakably, Paul asserted that the nurturing of a church that is committed to a pastor, can never be carried out fully until the pastor himself finds his nourishment in the things that are revealed in the Bible. In other words, every pastor or preacher must be a man of God's Word. He must keep it in his mind; he cannot have a life apart from God's Word. Only then can he remind others of those things that are written therein. If a preacher's life is detached from God's Word,

his hearers will be saying, "This is funny, this guy says that this is the truth, and yet he lives the opposite way. His preaching doesn't match his life. How then can we trust what he says to work?"

A severe problem that affects today's churches (whether they be evangelical or fundamental or reformed) is that the lives of their pastors are not well-nurtured in God's Word. Though those men are capable of delivering impressive expository sermons from the Word, their lives are detached from the truths they proclaim. Their practice seems to suggest that they have adopted a different standard than what the Bible has



set forward as principles of Christian life. In the church, they speak highly of God's Word, but their lives away from the church seem to suggest that there are better principles in the world than those of the Bible. They talk about obeying and propagating God's Word, but in reality, they would not let God's Word control all aspects of their lives. They seem to imbibe the popular idea that the preacher's duty is only to expound or explain the meaning of the biblical passage and not necessarily to make specific application of its truth in their or the hearers' lives. They argue that applying the truth of God's Word is not the preacher's duty, but the Holy Spirit's. Yet

another similarly warped view contends that a preacher should not make any reference to himself during preaching, even if his testimony affirms and illustrates the Scriptural principle he has drawn out of the biblical passage of his sermon. These misguided pastors maintained that if you tell the hearers how you have lived out or benefited from the truth that you are expounding, then you are exalting yourself, and not the Word of God. So if one were to say, "the Lord has changed me", or "the Lord has done these things in my life", or "this is how the Lord has helped me to guide my family", then one is too occupied with oneself, and not with God's Word.

Undeniably, applying the truth of God's Word into the life of the preacher and hearer has always been unacceptable during times of rebellion and worldliness among God's people. Nevertheless, the faithful prophets of God, like Ezekiel, were not covered by ridicule and resistance. In Ezekiel 34:2-6, the prophet censured the pastors ("shepherds") of Israel for doing nothing to rebuke the worldliness and idolatry of the people of Israel - "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them." Ezekiel sharply denounced the refusal of Israel's shepherds to address the spiritual and moral

declension of the people, which resulted in the idolatrous conduct of the nation. They did not deal with the spiritual maladies, wounds, infections and sicknesses of their flock. They were, shamefully, more concerned about their own material comfort and progress than the spiritual well-being of the people!



Rev Prabhudas Koshy

Certainly, pastors' preaching should not just be for mental and emotional stimulation. It must focus on the hearers' spiritual restoration and renewal. Hence, the truth of God's Word must be applied in the lives of the hearers. Prevalent sins among the people must be rebuked. They must be warned against accepting falsehood and worldliness. Preaching of God's Word must not be just a thing of the head, but of the heart and of the hands! We must call the people to repentance and to return to the Lord with faith and obedience. Through preaching, pastors must call the people of the church to follow them in the ways of the LORD. Unfortunately, many pastors of our time are keen followers of their people into worldliness instead of being strong leaders who guide the people into God's truth and righteousness. Their messages and activities are tailored to fit the people's sinful and worldly wishes and whims. Preaching in the church ought to be intolerant of sin and falsehood!

Feeding the flock requires not only declaring the Word faithfully but also having

“oversight” of their spiritual nurture and growth. The Apostle Peter said, “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind” (1 Peter 5:2). The word “oversight” denotes being observant of the flock’s state of affairs to provide the appropriate care for the sheep’s nurture and protection. The whole purpose of preaching God’s Word is to feed, supervise and guide the flock into spiritual renewal and well-being. The Apostle Paul manifested such a commitment in his pastoral ministry and advised all who are in the church leadership to do the same – “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:27–28). The credibility of a pastor or preacher is that he is committed to declare the whole counsel of God’s Word. It requires him to be dedicated to study and preach the Word, and to live according to it. He needs to be nourished in the Word before he can effectively nurture the people in the Word. This is why Paul exhorted Timothy: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Not only preaching, but even singing in the church ought to be thoroughly biblical. Paul admonished the Colossian church, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16). In other words, it is God’s Word that determines what and how we should sing. Hence, besides preaching, Christians’ singing in the church is also to be an effective means of communicating God’s Word among the worshippers. Our singing must aid the church to the end that

“the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom”.

Let us desire that God’s Word will be richly found in us! Scarcity of God’s Word is perilous to the church’s spiritual growth. For our church to be nurtured by the richness of God’s wisdom, let the preachers then preach and teach God’s Word not as an academic discourse, but as having authority to direct the lives of the hearers in God’s truth and righteousness. Paul charged Titus that he should preach in the church with authority: “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (Titus 2:15). Likewise, he said to Timothy, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2).

Only by the Word Can the Church be Sanctified

Thirdly, it is by the Word of God that His people are sanctified. “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:25-26). Without sound preaching of God’s Word, the church can never be sanctified. The Holy Spirit uses the preaching of the Word to help believers discover and discard their misconceptions, ignorance, sins, etc. Thus, Paul said, “We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13). No wonder Jesus specifically prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

Many of us have come clean before the Lord through repentance when God’s Spirit convicted us through the preaching of the Word. Though we might have felt humbled being exposed by God’s truth, we remained

with the church because “it is good for me that I am corrected”. It is not easy for our rebellious hearts to sit under a pastor or a preacher who faithfully expounds and pointedly applies the Word. A faithful preacher stands at the pulpit with the intention and prayer to get every wicked thing out of the people’s hearts. Grievous though such chastening might be, the preacher must not shirk from this difficult task, for afterward it will yield “the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:11). The manifestation of such mixed sentiments is acutely displayed in the Apostle Paul’s sharp rebuke to the Corinthian church: “For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent (or regret it), though I did repent (or regret it): for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry (or grieved you), though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you” (2 Corinthians 7:8–12).

Growing up as a young boy in the villages of India made me aware of the widespread problem of head lice in children’s hair. I had seen mothers painstakingly trying to remove them. Sometimes, their well-meant efforts caused

pain, and children would cry and struggle. Some agitated children would not want to sit patiently but rather go out with their friends to play. Their mothers would then restrain and rebuke them: “Oh, how embarrassing that you have so much lice on your head! Bear for a while; let’s get rid of them.” A similar tension or struggle is often felt in the church when an observant and responsible pastor responds biblically to the presence of sin among the people. When he earnestly preaches God’s Word to get rid of the encroaching sin, some would feel rather uncomfortable and distressed. Make no mistake about this: the Word of God is the most powerful cleansing agent for the sanctification of God’s people. How can we get rid of sin from among God’s people? What shall we do to help them walk in the holiness of God? Preach the word – it sanctifies! It is God’s sanctifying grace that provides the church with good, sound preaching of the Word. If you attend churches where God’s Word is clearly preached and applied, that is God’s special, sanctifying grace for you.

Only by the Word Can the Church be Protected

Fourthly, faithful preaching of God’s Word is paramount in protecting the church from false teachers and their false doctrines. In Acts 20:29-32, the Apostle Paul cautioned the Ephesian church’s elders: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

The sober reality is that wolves have somehow made their way into the church and also found their place among the elders. If we think that all the wolves are somewhere out in the world, we are utterly wrong, in the light of Scripture. The wolves – men who speak perverse things – can be found in any church. We will not recognise them unless we know the truth. We will not recognise the error if we know not the truth. We need to have the whole truth to detect half-truths. The pretenders, liars and seducers use half-truths to mislead people. They will not always lie flat-out, because that would help us to identify their real nature; they are very adept in telling us half-truths in order to deceive us. Knowledge of the whole counsel of God's Word is, therefore, paramount to guard ourselves against false Christians and false teachers. Only the faithful preaching of God's Word will help us perceive the error of what is presented as "truth".

Dear brethren, knowing the truth is the church's only protection from infiltration of sin, falsehood and men who are obsessed with their own glory. Paul warns, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Timothy 3:13-14). Indeed, the knowledge of God's Word will shield you against the attempt of anyone who tries to beguile you, the way the devil beguiled Eve in the Garden of Eden with his twisted doctrines and claims.

Only by the Word Can the Church be Prepared for Christ's Return

Finally, God's Word is needed to prepare the church for the coming of Christ. God's Word is the divine means to prepare the church for His glorious appearance. "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might

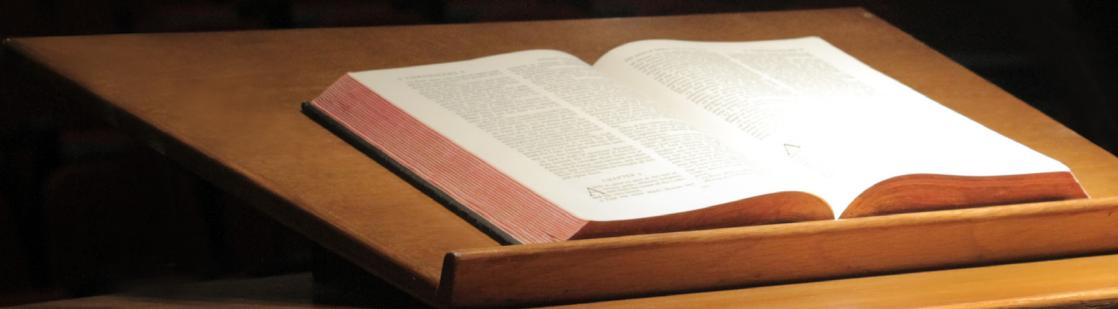
present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:26-27). How wonderful is this work which God's Word accomplishes in the church.

The church is gathered, nourished, sanctified and secured, that it may be prepared for the eternal glory of Christ. The church is constantly washed by God's Word that it may be presented before Christ as a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle. To reiterate, the primacy of God's Word is an absolute necessity in the ministry of the church, without which we can neither exist nor function as a church being prepared for His return. Without the application of God's Word in our lives and ministry, we would not truly be the church of Jesus Christ, but just another community or society. What makes us decidedly different from all other communal gatherings, is the Word of God. As a church, let us stand "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:9)!

...for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ

Revelation 1:9





THE WORD & LEADERSHIP

Lee Kim Shong

The church, being the body of Christ, is a divine organisation, with Christ as the Head, who has given authority to some qualified believers to take the oversight of His church on earth. "And he gave... some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-13).

BIBLICAL IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH LEADERS

In the New Testament church, the leadership consisted of a group of elders, assisted by deacons (Philippians 1:1). An elder is also referred to as a bishop in the New Testament. The name "elder" emphasises his title whereas the name "bishop" (which means

"overseer") refers to his duty. He oversees the flock. He is concerned primarily with two things: prayer and teaching of God's Word. The character and effectiveness of a church are directly linked to the quality of her leadership. It is important for qualified church leaders to set the standard. The church rises or falls with her leadership.

This is not difficult to understand as elders are primarily involved in teaching and administration. The elders who rule in a local church are ultimately responsible for making decisions after giving themselves continually to prayer and Bible study. This is to ensure that the church follow the will of God. It is a high calling. Theirs is the solemn duty to defend the faith and keep the false teachers out. "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). They are also to

discipline Christians who fall into doctrinal error or serious sins. When a member errs that way, he is put out of fellowship until he is willing to abandon his error. Then God can start to restore him.

Elders are to be chosen from the congregation "in every city" (Titus 1:5). This urgent injunction to appoint elders (who are themselves answerable to the Lord for their ministry) based on biblical principles, reflects the utmost importance of the church leaders' role. This biblical pattern of the ordination of elders is seen in the example of the early church: "And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith... And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed" (Acts 14:21-23).

BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS OF CHURCH LEADERS

The church must determine whom God wants to serve as leaders based on a set of spiritual qualifications listed in Scripture. Luke 6:40 tells us, "The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master." The church rises or falls through leadership.

Elders should not be chosen because they are famous, rich or acclaimed by the world.



Rev Lee Kim Shong

They are chosen because God has called and prepared them for such leadership. We are to focus on character rather than function: what he is and not his social status. We need to carefully guard the sacred office.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 gives us this list of non-negotiable qualifications:

A blameless man of irreproachable character

Loyal to his wife and able to command his children in God's ways

Not impaired in judgment – sober

Self-disciplined

Has an orderly lifestyle

Hospitable to strangers

Skilled in teaching

Not a drinker

Not a fighter

Gracious

Not quarrelsome

Free from love of money – not putting a price on the service

Spiritually mature

Well-respected by non-Christians

Obviously, by "blameless", the Apostle Paul is not implying sinlessness here. Otherwise, none is qualified. But there must not be sins in the leader's life whereby they will be used by the unsaved as a handy weapon to attack the church or an excuse to continue in sin. Equally obvious and high on the "qualifications" list is that there must be evidence of strong influence of faith in an elder's own family. His children are to emulate the father's faith with a measure of godly conduct. By ruling well "his own house", he shall then be able to "take care of the church

of God”, which is but a much “magnified” version of the family.

Thus, for an elder to rule the church well, not only his own life must be evaluated, “being ensamples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3b), he must also have the spiritual qualities and gifts to tend to the spiritual needs of his flock. Elders need to take note of the flock so that they know their conditions and pray for their needs. Moreover, they are to feed the flock with biblical teachings, as well as encourage them to come for Bible study, prayer meeting and to adopt proper spiritual values. “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof...” (1 Peter 5:1-2).

As such, church leaders must be subjected to the scrutiny of this “must-have” list of biblical qualifications. We are to be careful when we choose the leaders of the church. We need to take time to look for godly virtues and pray for God’s guidance. We are not to choose in a hurry. It is better to wait rather than to rush in appointing elders and deacons; otherwise, we have to taste the bitter consequences. A pointed analogy would be this: it is better to go hungry than suffer from food poisoning!

BIBLICAL CHARGE TO CHURCH LEADERS

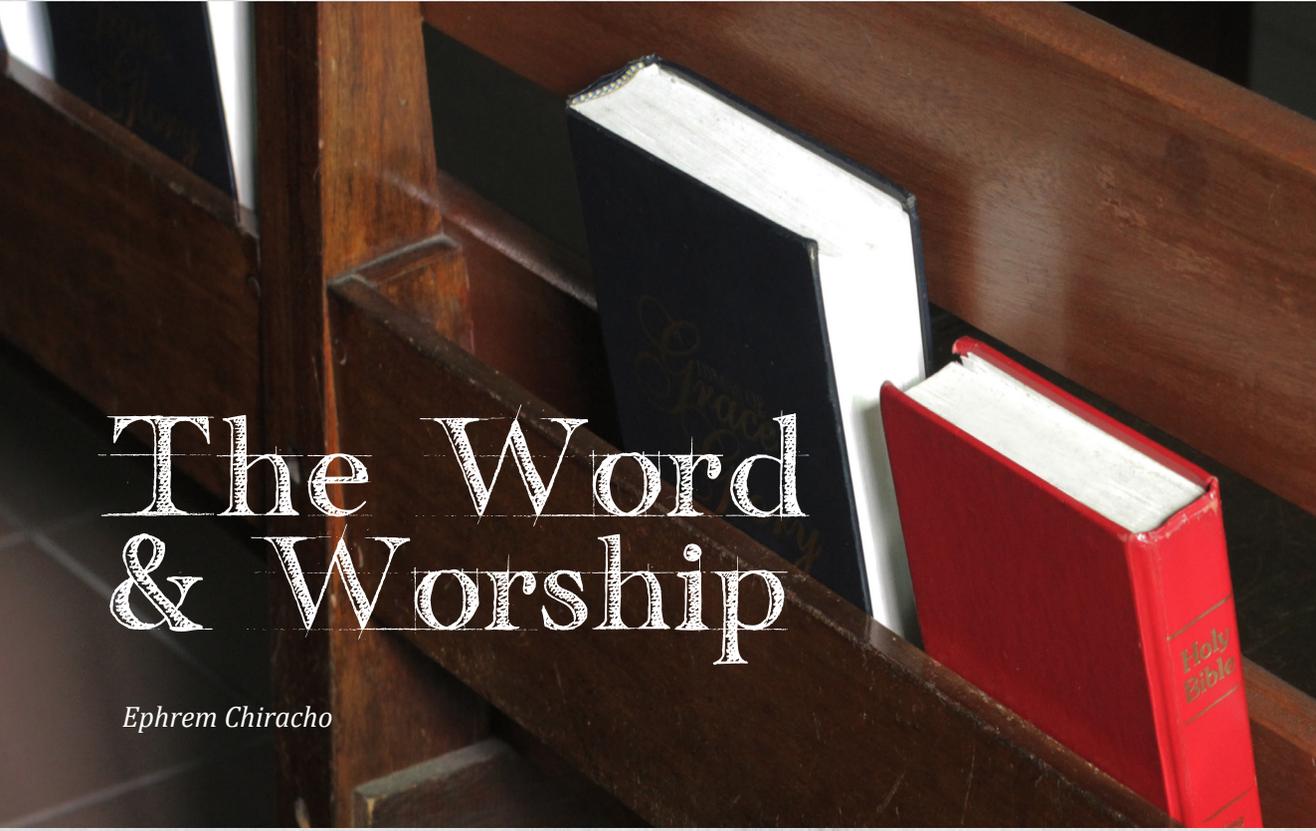
Leaders are servants of the Lord. They are nothing in and by themselves. They are what they are, by the grace of God. They are God’s stewards; only God is their Master. They lead by godly example and do not boss the church members around. “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3). As the flock belongs to God, they are ministers only. And not only ministers, but “watchmen” putting their

lives on the line in guarding the flock. They are to watch out for false leaders: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, ... [and] which he hath purchased with his own blood. ... after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember...” (Acts 20:28-31).

Such watchful vigilance is the lot of church leaders, especially God’s under-shepherds who are called to feed His flock. But it is not without reward. The Apostle Peter has this promise for them: “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:4). This is a great encouragement to those who walk in the steps of the Great Shepherd.

The apostle gives further instructions to those who are serving: “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:5-6).

Last but not least, we are to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord daily (2 Peter 3:18), and give all diligence to abound in godly virtues (2 Peter 1:8). If we do not grow in godliness, then we will grow in vices. That is the inexorable law of spiritual nature; there is no standing still. It is a tragic thing to see leaders fall. Before we see the growth of maggots, there must be decomposition of a creature. Similarly, before the fall, there must be inward corruption. May the Lord preserve our church leadership from falling and keep them continually strong in faith and devotion to the Lord. Amen.



The Word & Worship

Ephrem Chiracho

The “Word” and “Worship” are two most important matters of the Christian life.

God has revealed Himself and His will to us through His Word. His goal is that we may worship Him acceptably. We can know God because He has made himself known to us through His Word. And we can worship God acceptably because He has given us divine guidelines of worship in His Word. Therefore, worship and God’s Word are inextricably connected.

The vital difference between idol worship and worship of the living and true God is that the former is governed by the wishes and whims of the idol-maker. Not so for the latter. Inasmuch as God has made us for His glory, He has decided the form, manner, content and time of His worship for us. Thus, while idol worship is based on man’s imagination, worship of God is founded on divine revelation.

God’s Word as the Supreme Rule of Worship

The Bible is meant to guide man on what to believe concerning God and to teach him his duty towards his Creator. Even before the Fall, Adam’s relationship with God was regulated by God’s Word (Genesis 2:15-17). After the Fall, by illustration (Genesis 3:21), God taught sons of man how to worship Him acceptably. That is why Abel’s worship, which was based on faith and expressed through blood-sacrifice, was accepted while the LORD rejected Cain’s humanistic worship (Genesis 4:1-7). Through Moses, God guided the national and covenantal life of Israel by the Word which He gave them (cf. Exodus 19-24). In fact, the book of Leviticus is a detailed manual of the worship of God. In the New Testament, Jesus declared that acceptable worship is offered to God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24). He also added that the path to bearing abiding fruits is by allowing

His Word to guide our steps in all things (John 15:1-8). Therefore, a fruitful Christian life and acceptable worship that brings glory to God have to be guided by the Word.

God has foreordained what is fit for His glory. For our worship to bring glory to God, it must be regulated by His revealed will. There is no place for innovation in the worship of God. Worship requires a hearty obedience to God's prescribed form, content, and manner of worship at all times. "Innovation" brings God's wrath upon the "worshipper". Remember the case of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-5). They added to the worship of God a "strange fire" which the LORD did not command in His Word. "And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD." Therefore, let us be careful not to violate God's Word in this issue of His worship (cf. 1 Kings 12:25-33). Innovation in worship is a "will-worship", i.e. a "self-made religion" that is abominable to the living and true God (cf. Colossians 2:23).

Not only must all matters of Christian worship be done in the name of Christ, anything that goes contrary to God's attributes and His Word must be excluded from our public worship. We shall now consider the vital place worship has in a Christian's life and the biblical guidelines for acceptable worship.

Worship Vital in a Christian's Life

It is Our Proper Response to God
In Exodus 20:2-3, God declares His right to Israel's single-hearted devotion. "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Simply stated, He is saying that "since I am thy Lord, thy King, and thy

Redeemer, I have the right to thy exclusive loyalty". God is our gracious Redeemer, who loved and saved us while we were yet His enemies. He raised us up from the dunghill and set us in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus (cf. Ephesians 2:6). How should we respond to His saving grace? We should respond with unreserved love manifested in acceptable worship.

God has changed our destiny from eternal suffering and shame to eternal joy and glory. The only worthy response to Him is undivided devotion and dedicated worship. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:9-10; cf. Deuteronomy 10:14-11:1). Truly, we have every reason to wholeheartedly commit our life, our all to the worship of God our Saviour.

As citizens of our nations, we are duty bound to render diligently and promptly to the government all that is due. If we neglect any of these duties, we will be charged with breach of loyalty. Likewise, as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, we are duty bound to render to God, our King and Redeemer, acceptable worship at all times, in all places, and at all costs!

It is the Divine Purpose for Our Existence
From Exodus 4:22-23, we know Israel was redeemed to serve God as a son does to his father. Worthy worship of God underlined all that she undertook in God's name. When Israel's worship was corrupted, all her spiritual activities were deemed corrupted and unacceptable to God. We, as Christ's redeemed, are no different, "for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained

that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). We were “re-created” in Christ to accomplish the divinely ordained “good works”. Yet, any good work that is void of true worship is hypocrisy, and unacceptable to God. Therefore, a life that is not marked with proper worship of God is a life void of true meaning and purpose.

Daniel of old is a good example of this truth. He knew the reason for his existence, i.e. why he was divinely preserved alive when most of his countrymen were massacred by the Babylonians. He was an enslaved captive living in a foreign land, and (worse still) compelled under man’s law not to worship the living and true God (Daniel 6:1-9). Daniel had every reason to neglect worshipping God. Against all odds, he committed his life to worship God, even at the cost of his very life (Daniel 6:10-24). He did not count his life dearer than the worship of God; despite the death sentence, he continued to worship the LORD. Let us stop making excuses for not devoting our lives to the worship of God. We must lay all that are dear to us at our Lord’s feet in order to fulfil our divine calling, i.e. to worship the Lord at all times.

God Deserves Worship

“Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (Psalm 29:1-2). Neglecting worship is robbing God of His glory; it is denying His divine prerogative to receive proper worship from His moral creatures, especially from His redeemed people. God is our Creator and Redeemer. He created us to manifest His glory and redeemed us to show forth His praise.

One of Israel’s gravest sins was forsaking and corrupting the worship of God. They failed to glorify God as their Father and Lord. 2 Kings 17 gives the summary statement of why God’s judgment fell upon the

northern kingdom of Israel: they refused to give glory to God in proper worship. God gave Israel many years to repent, sending His prophets to rebuke and correct them. Yet, they remained in their idolatry and corrupt worship practices. Therefore, God destroyed their land and made them captives to Assyria. Israel’s tragic history reminds us that neglecting the worship of God is a very serious sin!

God Nourishes and Matures Us through Worship

As soon as the New Testament Church was born, she expressed herself as a worshipping community. Those who received the preached Word with joy and were baptized “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). Central to their worship activity was the “apostles’ doctrine”, referring to the preaching and teaching aspect of Christian worship. This is a fundamental means to build up and nurture the saints so that they “may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:15).

Christian worship is a vital factor in the feeding of God’s people with spiritual food that transforms their lives into Christ-likeness (cf. 1 Peter 2:1-2; Romans 8:29). Through faithful instruction from the Bible, the Christian becomes fully matured, equipped and prepared for all good works (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Since God nurtures us through worship, those who neglect worship neglect their soul, and hence, they cannot grow spiritually. Years may pass, but they remain in spiritual infancy in the things of God.

Biblical Guidelines for Acceptable Worship

Christian worship involves the mind, will, thought, feeling, speech and acts of the worshipper. How must we offer our worship to God so that it may be acceptable?

Inspired by the Spirit and Guided by the Truth

The classic passage on Christian worship is found in John 4:23-24: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Worship is not a mere physical exercise. It is the offering up of our hearts to the living God in true love and devotion. It is neither a mechanical activity nor lifeless formalism, but a dynamic and loving response of our spirit to the Spirit of God indwelling us whereby we call God "Abba, Father".



Rev Ephrem Chiracho

Worship is a sacred moment when we enter into the Holy of holies with offering of thanks, praises, adoration and prayer unto our Creator and Redeemer. The genuine expression of our hearts' devotion is the essence of worship. Yet, this solemn spiritual activity must be based on God's commandments to be acceptable to Him. Worship that is not guided by the truth is vain service (cf. Matthew 15:9).

Offered with Holiness and Purity
 "Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2). Our God is infinitely holy, so much so that holy angels in heaven worship Him covering their faces and feet (cf. Isaiah 6:1-4). To give

unto the LORD the glory due unto his name, we must worship Him in holiness. Approaching God with a sin-marred life dishonours Him.

In the Old Testament times, as the high priest led in the worship of God, he wore a cloth engraved with "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" on his forehead (cf. Exodus 28:36-38; Leviticus 8:9). This is to remind the priest as well as the people of the need to render their worship to God in holiness. An impure life, unholy thoughts and actions corrupt true worship. Likewise, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" must be "written" on our lives. We must maintain purity in our daily walk and talk, so as to offer acceptable worship to God (cf. Psalm 15:1-5; Romans 12:1-2).

Offered with a Joyful Heart

We come to worship God with a joyful heart remembering His saving grace, goodness, and faithfulness towards us. The psalmist confessed, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD" (Psalm 122:1). Are you excited when you are invited to attend a prayer meeting, a fellowship group or the Lord's Day service to render your worship to God?

We are solemnly invited to "[m]ake a joyful noise unto the LORD, ... come before his presence with singing" (Psalm 100:1-2). Jubilation and gladness should mark our worship (cf. Acts 2:46-47). Our songs must be thoroughly scriptural, an overflow from the fullness of God's Word in us (Colossians 3:16-17); service and giving ought to be rendered with promptness and joy of heart (cf. Psalm 98:1-4). We rejoice in the Lord for His mighty salvation and worship Him gladly (cf. 1 Samuel 2:1-10).

Offered with Humility and Reverence

Being mindful of our lowly state in comparison with God's infinite majesty, glory and holiness must cause us to render our

worship to Him with great humility and deep reverence. "But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple" (Psalm 5:7). Yes, we come to God boldly trusting in the imputed righteousness of Christ, yet with fear of Him "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen" (1 Timothy 6:16). Therefore, decency and humility are appropriate in the public worship of God because our "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him" (Psalm 89:7).

God's people of Malachi's days made light of God's holy name and worship. This was revealed by what they brought before God as offering: they brought the sick, lame and blind (Malachi 1:6-14)! What was God's response to their blasphemy? He exclaimed, "Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand" (v. 10). God not only rejected their worship, but also cursed their sacrifices (v. 14). Irreverent approach to God brings His displeasure and wrath upon us. Beloved, let us worship our God with a humble heart and a lowly spirit (cf. Psalm 51:17).

Offered with a Prepared Heart
Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 gives us pertinent practical counsel on how to approach God in our worship. "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools" (v. 1). Readiness is central. We must carefully prepare ourselves for all that we are going to do in God's presence. When our hearts are duly prepared to praise God, to exalt Him in adoration, to hear His voice, to render our

service, and to pray before him, our worship will be acceptable unto the LORD.

We should be prepared to hear God's Word declared to us rather than uttering a thousand words before our heavenly King. Preparedness to hear God's Word is demonstrated not only in our attentiveness but also in our commitment to obey whatsoever the Lord commands. Hearing that is void of obedience and submission is "the sacrifice of fools", which is disgusting to God. That is why God labelled Israel's worship as mere lip-service: "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men" (Isaiah 29:13). Readiness not only to hear, sing and pray but also to live it out, will render our worship acceptable to the living and true God.

Conclusion

Worship is a sacred spiritual exercise whereby we come into the very presence of God to glorify Him with our lives, thoughts, words and actions. We are created and redeemed to worship Him acceptably. God deserves our wholehearted devotion and exclusive worship. God's Word is the supreme guide in our worship. Any act of worship that is contrary to God's Word is abominable to Him and brings God's wrath upon the "worshipper". The Bible plainly teaches us that we must worship God in spirit and in truth. As we approach God in worship, we must come with a pure heart, holy life, deep humility and reverence for His majesty, joyfully rendering our service to Him with a ready heart and mind. May the LORD help us all to worship Him acceptably at all times and in all places! Amen.

HOLY BIBLE

The Word & Counselling

Tan Kian Sing

“ And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. ”

- Romans 15:14

Romans 15:14 tells us, “And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.” The Greek word for “admonish” is “noutheteo”, which may also be translated as “to warn, exhort, advise, correct, caution, reprove gently, instruct, teach, put in mind, put sense into, or counsel one another”. From this, we have the term “nouthetic” counselling which best describes biblical counselling.

God's Word Profitable for Nouthetic Counselling

Biblical or “nouthetic” counselling is governed by the profitable use of Scripture as spelled out in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Paul indicates that Scripture is useful to perfect the man of God by “nouthetic” means, i.e. doctrine (teaching), reproving, correcting and instructing (training or educating).

Profitable for Teaching Doctrine

Many problems faced by people in life can be solved if they truly learn the doctrines of God's Word. By being well taught in the teachings of God's Word, they will readily differentiate right from wrong, good from evil. Those who lack a good grounding in the fundamental truths of the Word easily fall prey to psychology (including so-called Christian psychology) to help them sort out their life's problems. The Lord Jesus Christ warns in Matthew 22:29 that many people “do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God”.

Take, for instance, the many who fall into the sins of immorality, pornography,

lust, unfaithfulness and divorce. They need good counsel from a proper understanding of God's Word that His power is available to deliver them from yielding to such temptations. Instead of taking “heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:16a), they rather unwisely give heed to Christian psychologists who make them believe that they cannot help themselves because they are “addicted” to such things. There is simply no disincentive to their continual engagement in their wicked ways; conversely, ill-advised “doctrine” of the psychologists further gives them licence to do as they like. Right doctrine from Scripture, as the only profitable safeguard, enlightens us with the truth of God's Word: “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5).

Besides, Scripture has many wonderful promises of God to assure the believer that he does have the power to overcome sin. In biblical counselling, we therefore attempt to direct the counselees to God's truth and to teach them the correct doctrines so that they may “all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Ephesians 4:13, 14).

Profitable for Reproving

In biblical counselling, reproof is not a pleasant procedure for the counsellor and the counselee. Nevertheless, there is still a need to rebuke, reprove, admonish, or show disapproval of wrong beliefs, attitudes or actions. We need to lovingly

and graciously confront the counselee regarding his sin if we truly want to help him. As James says, "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).

Some pastors seem reluctant to rebuke certain sinful behaviour in some people, especially so if the sinning person is a prominent member of the church or even a session member. For example, a pastor may think it too risky to confront a strong-willed church choir director about his divisive attitudes, for fear of offending him and thereby losing him together with other of his choir members. Nonetheless, faithful pastors should obey God's injunction to use the Word of God profitably in the ministry of rebuking. The same applies in the case of church leaders if the unfortunate situation arises: "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (1 Timothy 5:19-20).

Consider the prophet Nathan. When he had to confront King David for his sin with Bathsheba, he was not afraid to do so with the authority of God in boldly reproving David, "Thou art the man! ... Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon" (2 Samuel 12:7, 9).

Pastors and counsellors must do the same if we truly want to help people. If we fail to do so, we actually show that we do not truly love them. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him" (Leviticus 19:17). Gently remind them (with care and concern) that when we

rebuke it is from the Lord, and that reproof is proof of God's love and our relationship to Him. "My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth" (Proverbs 3:11-12). "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee" (Deuteronomy 8:5). Although it is unpleasant to confront someone who has sinned, it is a necessary and indispensable part of helping him change.



Rev Tan Kian Sing

Profitable for Correction

The Greek term for the word "correction" literally means "to make upright again".

Thus, correction is about restoration to an upright or right state. Correction is for the improvement of life or character. It is about making a change for the better.

After confronting the counselee who has done something wrong, God says there must be a change. His life has to be put right again. He might have failed to meet certain biblical requirements in his Christian life. There is a need, therefore, to correct him through the use of God's Word, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in order to change or correct his desires, thinking and behaviour that are contrary to the Scriptures.

As pastors and counsellors, we want people to be conformed to the image of Christ. But the supernatural power of God working in the counselee is needed for the change to be made possible. Therefore, a real and permanent correction, in the truest sense, can only be achieved in a born-again child of God who has, in the first place, already experienced the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in his life. Pastors and counsellors must thus, first and foremost, share the Gospel with a counselee if he is not a believer. Biblical counselling is only for believers as unbelievers cannot understand the things of God because they are “spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Profitable for Instruction in Righteousness

Fathers are urged to “bring [children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Literally, this is about providing spiritual instruction to form godly habits and conduct. It is also about training and disciplining, that is, to train children in accordance to biblical principles of faith and holiness. It also involves the chastening of children, so that they may repent and correct the errors of their ways. In fact, it is about the whole training and education of children in a manner that pleases the Lord by the use of commands,

admonitions and even punishment according to God’s Word.

Similarly, in adults, this concerns the cultivating of the soul, firstly by curbing unrestrained passions. It is also instruction which aims at increasing virtue. God has given us His Word which is advantageous and beneficial for such a purpose – that a counselee, after having been confronted and corrected, might repent of his wrongdoing and sin, and turn decidedly unto righteousness and holiness.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the inspired Word of God is profitable and sufficient in biblical counselling. There should be no reason for Christians to run after all kinds of secular theories and psychological models that are in the world to help in the “nouthetic” confrontation, change and care of troubled souls.

God Himself says concerning His Word in Isaiah 55:11: “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” God stands behind His Word, which is not only unfailing, but also quick and powerful to accomplish all that is according to His will and good pleasure.

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The Word & Evangelism

Reggor Galarpe

Biblical Basis of Evangelism

Why should the church be concerned with evangelism? Should everyone be involved in evangelism? The answer is found in the Lord's Great Commission: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20). The Great Commission is mentioned in all 4 gospels (cf. Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21).

From these passages, together with the blueprint for evangelism given in Acts 1:8 –

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" – we have the biblical basis for evangelism. Evangelism constitutes one of the church's main purposes, which was what the Lord Jesus Himself clearly defined as the purpose of His coming: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Seeking the lost was the utmost desire and the very reason why our Lord came into the world!

Both the Living and the Written Word have given us the basis for evangelism. There is no reason why we should not be concerned about it. If we are truly Christ's

followers, then we must be up and about obeying His command and following His example. Otherwise, we are actually guilty of the sin of disobedience to Christ who has commanded us to go and preach the Gospel. If we do not have compassion, love or zeal towards the lost, and if we do not pray for the salvation of our loved ones nor reach out to them with the Gospel, then we are indifferent to the condition of the lost! If the love of Christ does not constrain us (2 Corinthians 5:14) and motivate us to reach out to people, then we are insensitive to the love of Christ!

Biblical Guidelines for Evangelism

Since evangelism is commissioned by God, it follows that guidelines must be based on His inerrant and infallible Word. Looking at the Great Commission, we shall focus our consideration on the mandate for evangelism, the message of evangelism, and the manner of evangelism.

The Mandate for Evangelism

Unquestionably, the mandate comes with the command from the Lord who has “all power... in heaven and in earth”. Accomplishing this command would involve “going”, “proclaiming”, “baptizing” and “teaching” (Matthew 28:19). Indeed, biblical evangelism is more than just giving out Gospel tracts or inviting someone to church to hear the Gospel.

“Go ye therefore” behoves us to take the initiative to reach out to the lost. We cannot expect the lost to come to us; we must go to them. Biblical evangelism is reaching out, going out to the lost souls of this world. Many churches have fallen into the error of thinking that if sinners want to be saved, they need to come to church. They expect unbelievers to come, when in reality it is the church that

should GO out to them. Yet others have given in to a pragmatic methodology of attracting and charming people to church by way of entertainment. This is one reason why we now have so-called “seeker-friendly” churches (like “user-friendly” gadgets). Realize that we are to GO!

“Teach all nations” tells us that evangelism is about preaching and proclaiming the Gospel with all its implications of the atonement of Christ, grace, repentance and faith. Evangelism is preaching the message of the cross of Christ, that He died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day.

“Baptizing them” entails the calling of sinners from confession and repentance of their sin to profession of their faith in Christ. Jesus has commanded that those who believe and receive the Gospel must be baptized. This does not teach baptismal regeneration. The ones to be baptized are those who are already saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Teaching them to observe all things” emphasizes the importance of grounding believers in the fundamental truths of God's Word. As new believers get baptized, they are incorporated into the assembly of believers – the church – from where they receive continuous further teachings, to be established in the doctrines, principles and practices of Christian living. This is one specific task in the Great Commission aimed at “perfecting” the believers.

The Message of Evangelism

Obviously, the message of evangelism is the Gospel – the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ. “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). It is sad to note that many today are preaching another gospel, including “social” or “prosperity” gospel,

liberation theology, economic equality, and many other humanistic philosophies and ideologies. In the Philippines, there is the prevalent gospel of good works, of penance, of indulgence and of idol worship!

Equally unacceptable is a “diluted” or “shallow” form of evangelism, which has been oversimplified. This approach goes like this: “God loves you and He has a wonderful plan for you. Just believe and you will be saved!” While this might sound reasonable, it does not in any way deal with sin and repentance, and therefore is woefully inadequate and insufficient. This “watered down” gospel is one that often leads to “easy-believism”. There is another trend that is called “quick-prayerism”, whereby the one presenting the Gospel would quickly ask the other person to repeat the sinner’s prayer and then declare that the person is saved! Yes, God in His sovereignty may have a person saved in this way, but this approach, more often than not, can be misleading. People must know why and what they believe, hence the need for a clear presentation of the Gospel.



Increasingly, in much of modern evangelism, there is one vital element that is missing – the message of repentance. Biblical evangelism requires repentance. Repentance is not just something preached by John the Baptist. Repentance is preached by Jesus Christ. “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17; Luke

5:32). It is also preached by the apostles. “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Similarly, Paul addressed the men at Mar’s Hill thus: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). As far as the Lord and the apostles are concerned, the message is always “repent and believe” the Gospel. In biblical evangelism, it is not only God’s mercy and love, but also God’s holiness, righteousness and judgment of sin that should be made clear, without fear or favour and without apology. Repentance from sin is a must before anyone may receive the offer of salvation so rich, full and free!

Admittedly, there is this subtle prevailing but wrong notion that evangelism is a mere human effort, something that we do for God. It is thus solely dependent on the natural talent and charisma of the presenter, and on his ability to argue and persuade. Nothing is further from the truth. Evangelism, being of the Lord, is the ministry of the Holy Spirit and is something which God does through us. This is clearly demonstrated by how the Lord worked through His people in the ministry of the Gospel during the Pentecost (Acts 2:37-41, 47), and in the early stage of the church (Acts 11:19-21; 16:14).

Without a doubt, it is not by human prowess that man gets saved. This is further attested to by the Apostle Paul in his epistles. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. ... And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom,

but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:1, 4). "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance..." (1 Thessalonians 1:5; cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”
Acts 1:8

The Manner of Evangelism

Generally, there are 2 ways in which the early Christians fulfilled the Great Commission. The first is personal or individual evangelism, sometimes called witnessing (telling others about Christ), or testifying (speaking of what you have personally experienced in your own life regarding salvation), or personal outreach (person-to-person dealing with other persons), known also as personal “soul-winning”. Personal evangelism implies that every believer should know what he believes in, and must learn to share it with others and personally draw them out and lead them to Christ. This is by far the most effective means of evangelism whereby a person shares the Gospel with a friend or loved one.

The second is collective or group evangelism. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:19-20: “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ...” As Christ’s ambassadors, the church should be obedient to the Word of God proclaiming the “word of reconciliation”, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Undeniably, the work of evangelism must be the church’s priority, whereby every member should be motivated, equipped and mobilized to reach out effectively to the community at large. As we read through the history of the early church in the New Testament, we realize that it was not only the apostles that did the work of evangelism, we see the ordinary believers sharing the Gospel as well, in line with the evangelistic pattern delineated in Acts 1:8. Following the stoning of Stephen, “there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles” (Acts 8:1). And what did those ordinary believers do? “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4).

Following the example of those early Christians, we are also to pursue the work of evangelism. In addition to the regular evangelism sessions of the church, we may consider the following various ways:

- ◆ Evangelistic Bible study or Inquirer’s Bible class.
- ◆ Evangelistic meeting or Gospel rally
- ◆ Media evangelism – print media (such as Gospel tracts, evangelistic literature like Bible Witness magazine); broadcast media (like

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Media Ministry

"...ye shall be witnesses unto me..." Acts 1:8

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- ◆ Special ministry and outreach – ministries that reach out to specific groups of people like students, businessmen, and even ex-convicts (Prison Ministry) and ex-drug addicts and substance abusers (Care Ministry).
- ◆ Missions – evangelism extended overseas to cover even greater areas to preach the Gospel and eventually establish a church.

Truly, evangelism can be incorporated in every ministry of the church, be it our Children's Ministry, Teens and Youth Fellowship, or any other fellowship group. May the Lord impress upon us all the importance of evangelism and stir us to reach out to our friends and loved ones with the Gospel.

Conclusion

As the Lord carries, the work of evangelism must continue. As the Lord leads, we are to be engaged in avenues whereby we can share the Gospel with the lost, seeking to win souls for Christ. "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified" (2 Thessalonians 3:1). As Paul had prayed, we also must pray for an open door for the Gospel. Inasmuch as evangelism is the work of God, we are to pursue that work based upon the principles and guidelines of the supreme Word of God. God's work must be done in God's way, as revealed to us in God's Word. Amen.

BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 20 (PART 1)

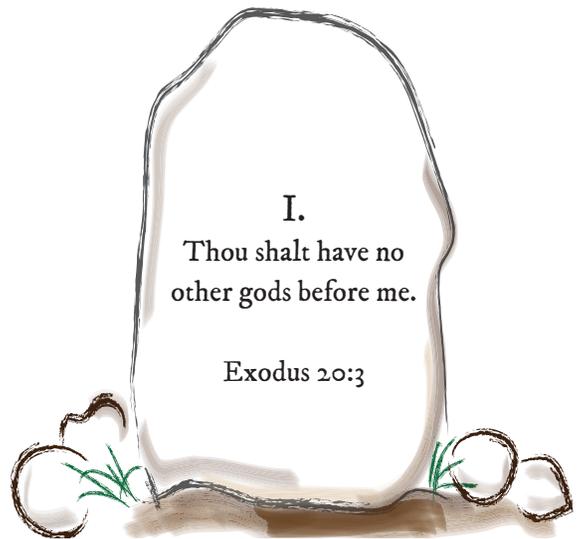
Sarah Yong

The LORD had led the children of Israel into the wilderness of Sinai. He descended upon the mount in smoke and fire and spoke to His chosen people with a great voice. Moses would later receive this testimony on two tables of stone, written by the finger of God (Deuteronomy 5:22), which are the 10 Commandments. Below are exercises relating to the first 4 Commandments:

Read the given Bible references, and then fill in the missing words to complete each verse under each respective Commandment.

We are commanded to
worship God alone

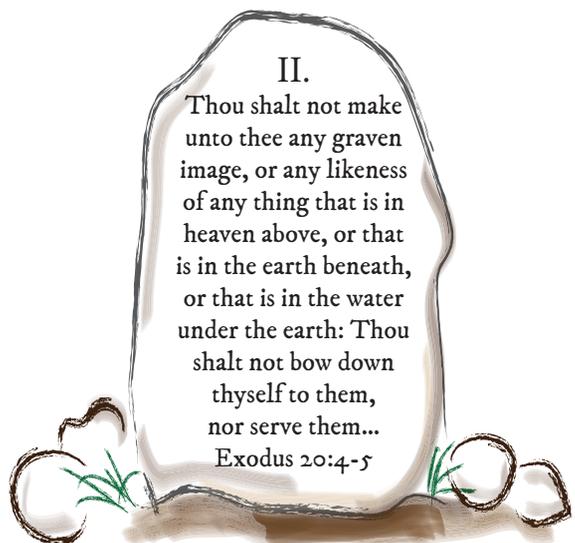
- a. "Yet _____
thy God from the land of
Egypt, and thou shalt know
no god but me: for there is
_____"
____" (Hosea 13:4).
- b. "Know therefore this day,
and consider it in thine
heart, that _____
_____ in heaven
above, and upon the earth
beneath: _____"
____"
(Deuteronomy 4:39).



We must avoid idolatry and obey
God's Word totally

- c. "_____
_____, nor make to
yourselves molten gods: I
am the LORD your God"
(Leviticus 19:4).
- d. "God is a Spirit: and they
that worship him must

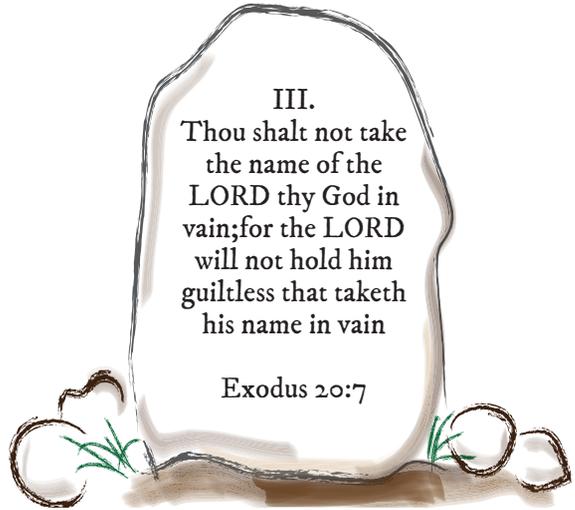
_____ and in truth"
(John 4:24).



EXODUS 20 (PART 1... CONTINUED)

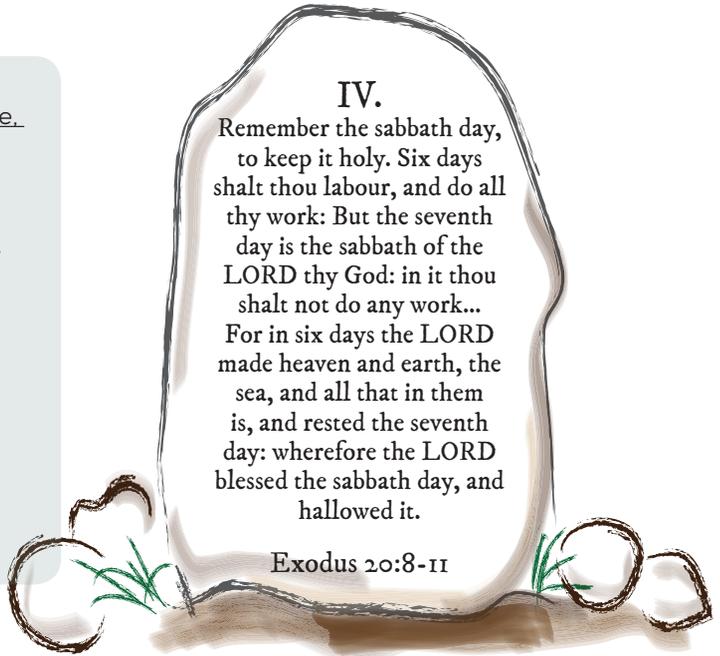
We should reverence God's name, Word and works

- e. "And _____ swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou _____: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:12).
- f. "Give unto the LORD the _____; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2).



We must be in God's presence, serving Him and studying His Word

- g. "Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and _____: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 26:2).
- h. "Keep the sabbath day to _____, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee" (Deuteronomy 5:12).

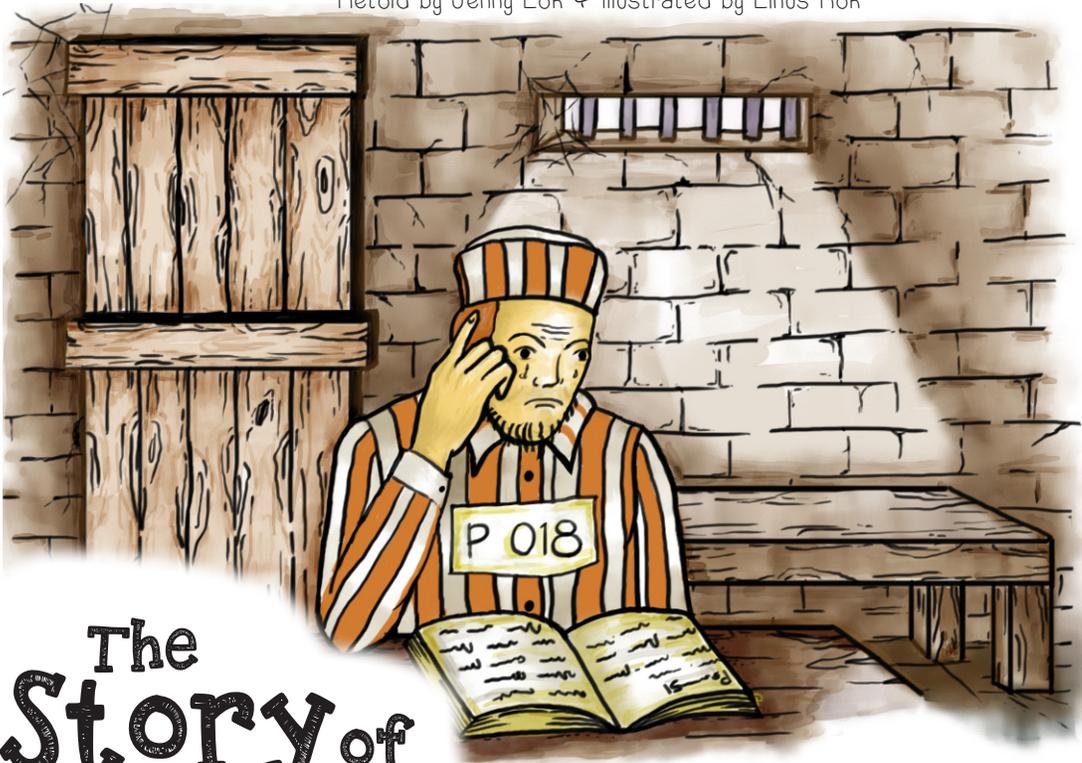


ANSWERS TO BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 19 (VOL 14 ISSUE 2, P.24)

2. Sinai 3. mountain 4. voice 5. treasure 6. an holy 7. clothes 8. Sinai
9. bounds 10. killed 11. fire 12. trumpet 13. top

What must a child of God always be ready to do? LISTEN AND OBEY

Retold by Jenny Lok & Illustrated by Linus Kok



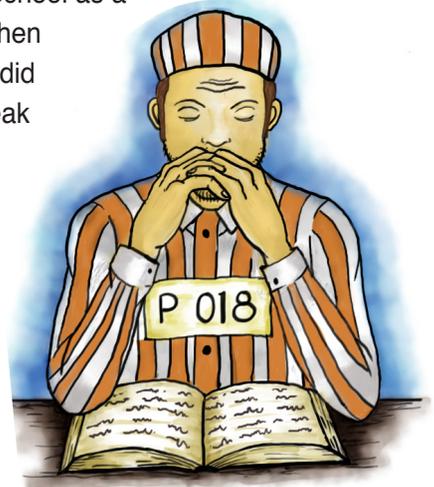
The Story of Fiddler Joss

(a continuation)

Source: "Men of Destiny" by Peter Masters

It appeared that nothing, not even imprisonment, could change Joshua Poole's wicked ways. Thoughts of revenge against his family continued to fill his mind until one day, by God's love and mercy, he met a prison officer named Seth Tait. Officer Tait's first question was: "Have you ever been to a Sunday School as a child?" Greatly surprised, Poole answered, "Yes." Seth Tait then spoke to him about his sinful life and his soul. At first, Poole did not pay any attention to him but Officer Tait continued to speak with him whenever he had an opportunity. The more Mr Tait spoke to him, the more he thought about his past sins.

One evening, before bedtime, he saw a Bible on a table. When he turned the pages, Psalm 51:1 caught his attention, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." While reading, Poole's whole body shook and his legs almost



gave way beneath him. He tried to pray but could not. This thought came to him: "It's no use; nobody wants me... it's no use praying." Satan was indeed working hard to discourage him.

For the next three days, Poole's soul was deeply troubled as he realised how sinful and unclean he was before God. In the meantime, Mr Tait spoke to him about Jesus and invited him to receive Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour. Finally, on the fourth day, Poole trusted in Christ and gave his life to Him. Peace filled his heart and he could not stop singing and shouting for joy.

Soon after, Poole started sharing about Jesus with his fellow prisoners. Some made fun of him but that did not stop him from reaching out to those who came to listen to him. Poole also decided to write to his wife Mary to tell her about his faith in Christ. The reply was disappointing; his family did not believe him.



The day finally came when Poole was released from prison. He wanted to make a fresh start. So he started working for his father. By God's grace and strength, he was able to overcome his addiction to drinking. Poole joined a church where he could learn God's Word and fellowship with His people. His life was so changed that Mary and the children decided to be with him again.

From that day onwards, Poole began a work to help 17-year-old youngsters who fell into sinful habits. He also worked actively to reach out to the down-and-outs of society, such as the alcoholics, the beggars and those who were involved in evil activities. His wife Mary worked alongside him in this Gospel outreach.



Poole soon became popular, not so much for his violin-playing, as in the past, but for his strong preaching in God's power to save sinners like himself. As a result, many turned to Christ.

For the rest of his life, Joshua Poole never drank again. He served God by helping to deliver others from the evils of unbelief and alcohol.

Dear children, indeed, it is God alone who had enabled "Fiddler Joss" to break free from his sinful habit of drinking. Likewise, He can help you to give up your evil ways by His love and power. Come to Jesus who died on the cross for your sins, and confess your wrongdoings against Him. He will forgive you, cleanse you and give unto you everlasting life.

Hebrew 2:14-15 tells us,
 "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (JESUS) also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."





Primacy of God's Word in the Ministry of the Church

"So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." - Acts 19:20



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