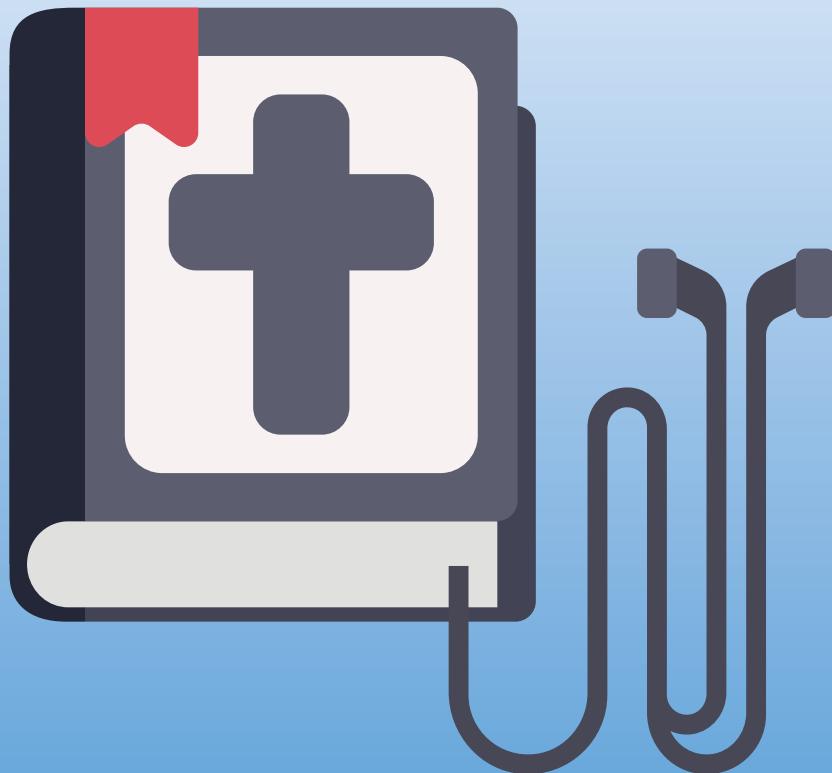


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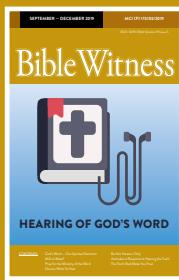


HEARING OF GOD'S WORD

CONTENTS:

God's Word – Our Spiritual Nutrition
Milk or Meat?
Pray for the Ministry of the Word
Discern What Ye Hear

Be Not Hearers Only!
Attitudes in Response to Hearing the Truth
The Truth Shall Make You Free!



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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

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Bible Witness Media Ministry welcomes love-gifts from readers to meet the cost of publishing and distribution. The Ministry also sends the magazine freely to churches in poorer countries. Hence your generous support is much needed and greatly appreciated.

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The articles may be freely used for non-commercial purposes, so long as they are quoted verbatim, and the writer as well as the source identified.

EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

Our hearts are full of thanksgiving to God as we release this final issue of Bible Witness for the year 2019 (i.e. the last two issues of the year combined), in conjunction with the Thanksgiving and Dedication Service (on 16th November 2019) of Gethsemane Media Centre, our new home at 33 Ubi Crescent, Singapore 408584. Among the many thanksgiving items, we recount just a few (which stand out the most in our hearts) as we publish this issue for the praise of the glory of His grace.

The LORD's provision of the four-storey building (of about 11,200 sq ft) comes as a gracious answer to our prayerful waiting on Him for the past five years, even with seasons of fasting. All the funds needed for the purchase, renovations and equipment were all met through the generous and sacrificial giving of His people, and without any loan. The total expenses have exceeded \$S5.5 million, but the LORD has been meeting our every need; hence, we "lacked nothing" (cf. Deuteronomy 2:7; Nehemiah 9:21; Luke 22:35)! The sentiments of our heart are reflected by those of the psalmist who said, "I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside".



to lies. Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered" (Psalm 40:1-5).

The building is well-furnished and fitted with media equipment to set forward the publication and media ministries of the Bible Witness Media Ministry (BWMM). It also houses The Gethsemane Care Ministry's printing and other projects on the ground level. On the second level, a meeting room (with a seating capacity of 130, and attached with a small "cry-room") is built to cater for seminars and meetings of fellowship groups. The third level of the building houses audio and video studios for the production of media resources for the various internet ministries, such as Bible Witness Web Radio and Gethsemane Bible Institute (Online). The fourth level of the building accommodates the office for the staff, a library, as well as a workspace. For all these wonderful provisions, we rejoice and praise the LORD, as Deuteronomy 26:11 says, "...thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee".

An additional thanksgiving that we wish to mention is that by this year end, Bible Witness will have been in publication and distribution for 19 years. With grateful hearts, we remember before the Lord the labour and support of many brothers and sisters who have joined us in our efforts to spread the sound doctrines of the Word through the printed pages of this magazine.

We look forward to the year 2020—which will be the 20th year of Bible Witness publication—in humble anticipation and with quiet trust in God to enable us to continue our work with renewed faith and consecration, in order that we may "declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Please continue to pray for us.

Wishing you a Blessed New Year – 2020!

Heartily in His service,
Prabhudas Koshy

Continue to support Bible Witness Media Ministry. You may send in your love gifts and cheques to "GETHSEMANE BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH", 33 Ubi Crescent, Singapore 408584.



GOD'S WORD

OUR SPIRITUAL NUTRITION

Reggor Galarpe | 1 Peter 2:2

Reading God's Word is profitable for our spiritual life. This writer is sure everyone would say "Amen" to that statement. Meditating on God's Word is vital to our spiritual growth and beneficial for our spiritual maturity. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). Yet, why is it that many Christians today spend little time (or none at all!) in reading God's Word? It is sad, but there has been a serious neglect among Christians in reading the Scriptures. How about you?

Food for Spiritual Growth

If we realise that reading God's Word is essential to our Christian living, then

we need to devote our time and commit ourselves to it. The Lord Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). As bread is necessary food to our physical bodies, so is God's Word to our souls. This analogy between reading God's Word and spiritual feeding is attested to in various portions of Scripture.

Consider the testimony of the righteous Job: "I have esteemed the words of his (God's) mouth more than my **necessary food**" (Job 23:12b). And that of the prophet Jeremiah: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts" (Jeremiah 15:16). Even the psalmist exclaimed:

"How sweet are thy words unto my **taste!** yea, sweeter than honey to my **mouth!**" (Psalm 119:103). Undoubtedly, God's Word is essential to our Christian life. But how much do we "eat" of it?

Just as there are specific food items appropriate for certain age groups (like milk for infants and babies, meat and solid foods for adults), the Bible also has spiritual food fitting for all levels of spiritual maturity. We read of "the sincere milk of the word" for "newborn babes" in Christ (1 Peter 2:2); we also read of "strong meat" for "them that are of full age", who are able "to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14). Be that as it may, we basically take three full meals every day with snacks and refreshments in between. This writer wonders if we could say the same with our spiritual meals. Many of God's children today are spiritually malnourished – not that there is a shortage or scarcity of supply, but all because of their own neglect to feed upon God's Word.

Safeguard against Spiritual Malnourishment

Without a doubt, the sight of malnourished children in our streets does not fail to catch our attention and evoke a feeling of pity in us. It makes us sad to see them in such an emaciated state – thin, weak, sickly and oftentimes dirty. But do you not realise that in a spiritual sense, that is what you are if

you don't nourish yourself with God's Word – thin, weak, sickly and oftentimes "dirty" because of sin?

Sin will weaken and degrade every man. Sin will ruin his nature and destroy his happiness. We are all in danger of falling into it, especially if left to ourselves and to our own ideas, inclinations and desires. We need to be ever on our guard. We must always be vigilant and pray for the Lord's help to safeguard ourselves against sin's assault. Scripture has a ready remedy to rectify that malnourished state of our spiritual condition. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Psalm 119:9). How well we fare in our spiritual battles against sin depends on how much we allow ourselves to be sanctified and cleansed "with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26).

Clearly, God's Word is the cleansing instrument to purge us from our entanglement with sin. No wonder the psalmist firmly declares: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11). Indeed, the psalmist has found for himself an excellent precaution against sin in the Word of God. By its very nature, the Word of God is a remedy against sin. Because it is God's revelation of His truth and wisdom, it promotes holiness and prevents sin. It is the source of everything good and holy, which equips us to stand against sin. Like the psalmist, we must hide God's Word in our hearts. We must lay it upon our hearts, and allow it to cast its light upon our desires, passions, motives and ambitions. If we

give it the most prominent place in our hearts, it will teach us what is holy and acceptable to God, and thus fortify our resolve against every sin.

Brethren, let us delight ourselves in the Word of God, that we may continually grow in the knowledge of God's truth, bearing much fruit in our lives to the praise and glory of our God. Of a truth, the Holy Scriptures are "able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). But that's not all. We are also assured that

"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, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Therefore, read God's Word not only to be saved, but also to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). That way, we will be spiritually safe, and strong, and well-nourished in our Christian life. 



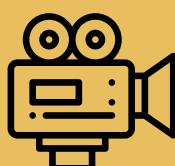
READ

Bible Witness Magazines are available both online and in hard copy format. Other literature by Bible Witness Media Ministry are also available. Please pray as we work on some children's materials and an expanded volume of "My Soul's Delight".



LISTEN

Bible Witness Web Radio (BWWR), a 24/7 web radio, has been on the air since 2006. Recently, we have been facing certain technical issues with the web radio. We covet your prayers as we are refreshing our broadcast programme for next year.



WATCH

Bible Witness Media Ministry produces video recordings; recordings of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church's Sunday sermons are available online on Youtube. God willing, we will be expanding our video offerings in 2020.



In the Scriptures, we often see the analogy between God's Word and our daily food, just like in Hebrews 5:13-14, where God's Word is compared to milk and meat. "For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." While milk is the necessary food for babies for a time (cf. 1 Peter 2:2), it will be quite unusual, if not alarming, if babies don't grow to feed on solid food several years later.

OR MEAT?



Unfortunately, this was the case with the Corinthian Christians who were, according to Paul, “babes in Christ”. Paul said that he had “fed (them) with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto (they) were not able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 3:1-2). This was also true of the Hebrew Christians: “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat” (Hebrews 5:12).

Milk for the Young

In v. 13, the writer to the Hebrews states, “For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.” As a “babe” in Christ who is not capable of taking in solid food, any person who continues to feed on milk is “unskilful in the word of righteousness”. He is one who has no experience or skill, or who is ignorant. It does not mean that he is not a true Christian; rather, it means that he has no wealth and depth of biblical knowledge, nor wisdom, prudence and spiritual perceptiveness necessary to enable him to understand the “hid treasures” of the inexhaustible mine of God’s Word, and the spiritual paradoxes of the Christian faith.

Such an immature believer can be a young Christian, or even a long-time Christian who has somewhat failed to grow spiritually. He has not, like the psalmist, allowed the Holy Spirit to “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law”

(Psalm 119:18). As a result, he does not have his spiritual perception honed to delve into “the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God” (Romans 11:33a)!

Meat for the Matured

On the other hand, in v. 14, the Hebrews writer affirms, “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” In contrast to spiritual babes, this verse tells of one who is of “full age”, i.e. one who is grown up. It is such a one who is able to take in strong meat or solid food. He is able to absorb and appreciate the higher doctrines of the Bible, as well as appropriate them in his life. Such spiritual maturity is evidenced by his ability not only to discern good from evil, but also to choose to do that which is good and abstain from that which is evil. He is also able to discern between truth and error, being (in the words of Paul) “no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14a).

Such a matured believer will “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). His spiritual discernment will enable him to embrace “the spirit of truth”, and eschew “the spirit of error” (cf. 1 John 4:6). All these are by-products of his delight in the law of the LORD and continual meditation of His Word. By thinking biblically and

examining all aspects of life in the light of God's Word, he will be made "wiser than (his) enemies" and "have more understanding than all (his) teachers" (Psalm 119:98a, 99a). Truly, such is the blessed spiritual maturity brought about by being nourished with "strong meat" teachings from God's Word.

What is Your Spiritual Diet?

Dear brethren, how has been your spiritual food intake? Sad to say, most Christians today have still to be fed with milk, as indicated by their spiritual immaturity, carnality and worldly lifestyle. These are manifested in their preferences, pursuits and priorities in life. Evidence of these

can also be seen in their attitude towards God's Word – their lack of desire to study the Bible, coupled with their indifference and irreverence in hearing the preaching of God's Word. It goes without saying that they can only absorb and understand the basic, foundational doctrines of the Bible. They are not ready for the deeper truths of God's Word, which are for those who not only have been made "wise unto salvation", but also are equipped unto all good works through profitable feeding of God's Word (cf. 2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Continual, systematic intake / assimilation of God's Word will stand a Christian in good stead: he can be in a position to teach and guide others (cf. Hebrews 5:12a), and "whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:3d). 



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PRAY FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Reggor Galarpe | 2 Thessalonians 3:1

In the closing chapter of his second epistle to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul made an appeal to the brethren that they pray for him and his co-labourers in the ministry of the Gospel. He made a personal request in view of their burden to preach the Gospel, that it may have free course in the hearts of many. “Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you” (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

Looking closely at the verse, we notice that it is actually a threefold request:

Pray for Preachers of the Word

The apostle Paul often requested brethren to pray for him and his fellow labourers in the work of the Gospel. “Brethren, pray for us” (1 Thessalonians 5:25; cf. Hebrews 13:18). Paul acknowledged the great value of prayer and intercession. In fact, in most of his epistles, you would not miss the apostle Paul remembering others, giving thanks to God for them in prayer. Not surprisingly, we also note how Paul appreciated the prayers of others on his behalf.



Though the apostles were called, equipped and endowed with the Holy Spirit and extraordinary miraculous gifts, they humbly beseeched the people of the church, both young and old, to pray for them. If Paul (with all his unique, miraculous apostolic gifts) required the prayers of God's people, how much more pastors and preachers of our time need the prayer support of the church! Those who lead the church should not forget their need for spiritual support from the congregation. One's office of leadership in the church, or spiritual gift, or past successful service, does not make one self-sufficient in the work of the ministry. Mutual support, particularly prayer support, is vital for the success of the preacher's ministry.

Pray for Promotion of the Word

The apostle Paul yearns for the Gospel to have a rapid spread all over the region and beyond, and desires that there will be no obstruction or hindrance – “that the word of the Lord may have free course...” This ought to be a constant item in our prayers, that the Gospel would have free course not only in many places, but also in the hearts of many!

The apostle desired prayer, particularly for the ministry of “the word of the Lord”. Prayer, both requested and offered to God, recognises God as the source of the progress and success of preaching. It is a great danger to attribute the success of preaching to the preacher's

talent, and not to rely on God's help, as that would ascribe to man the glory due unto God alone. Every Christian who hears the preaching of God's Word must remember that he is in the presence of the preacher's God, rather than the preacher himself. The blessing he receives through the preaching of the Word is God-sent. So, when he prays for the preacher and his preaching, he links the pulpit to the throne of God, the true fountain of all spiritual blessings.

The object of praying for the preacher is that the Word of God “may have free course, and be glorified”. Paul is here using Greek language that evokes the imagery of the ancient Greek runners' success and honour. Truly, Christians must desire and pray for great success through the fervent efforts of the preachers. Their faithful expounding of God's Word is instrumental in turning sinners to Christ, and in establishing faithful churches for the edification of saints (cf. Psalm 67:1-3).

Pray for Power from the Word

The third aspect of Paul's prayer for the ministry of the Word is that the Word be able to accomplish its great and mighty work as it did to the Thessalonians – “... and be glorified, even as it is with you.” It is one thing to pray for the preaching of the Gospel, and another to pray for the penetration of the Gospel in the hearts of people. Paul wrote to the Romans, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ:

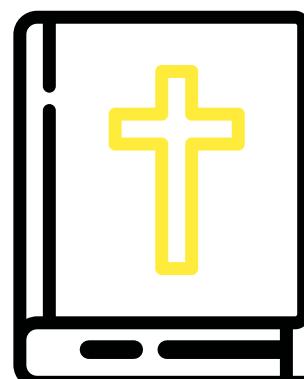
for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

How the Gospel gained a foothold in Philippi (Acts 16:12-15) presents a telling example of the power of God's Word at work. It all began with Paul preaching to the women who had customarily gathered to pray by a riverside, among whom was Lydia. Paul's words immediately arrested Lydia's attention, for Scripture says that she "heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto (i.e. her mind was held and attracted by) the things which were spoken of Paul" (Acts 16:14b). Lydia must have felt her heart "burn within" her, as Paul expounded the Scriptures and presented the Gospel message of the crucified and resurrected Christ. As soon as she was baptized, together with her household, she unhesitatingly invited Paul's missionary team to lodge in her house (cf. Acts 16:15). Allowing Paul to stay and hold meetings at her home would surely enable her to learn more of the Word. At great risk to herself and her household, Lydia opened her house for the Gospel work. Because her heart had been "opened" by the power of God's Word, the Gospel gained a foothold in Philippi, where a strong church was flourishing right in her house. For when Paul and Silas were miraculously delivered from the Philippi jail, "they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed" (Acts 16:40). Evidently, these "brethren" were saved while Paul was ministering the Word there!

Indeed, the Gospel has the power to convict and convert sinners into "brethren"; it has the power to transform lives, and power to save sinners from their sins to the glory of God. Isaiah attested to this power when he wrote: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 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" (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Conclusion

Come to think of it, we ought to be praying the same prayer today! We should never cease in asking the Lord to bless the preaching of His Holy Word, no matter where it is preached and wherever the Gospel is presented. As preachers of the Word, how comforting it is to know that the church upholds us in prayer! While we intercede for others in our prayers, it's just wonderful to know that others are interceding for us! ✌





DISCERN

WHAT YE HEAR

Reggor Galarpe | Matthew 16:6

In the Scriptures, we often read of the phrase, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (cf. Matthew 11:15; Mark 4:9; Luke 8:8; 14:3), and other suchlike statements that stress the importance of hearing the Word of God with a humble, obedient heart, and not simply hearing it mechanically with the mere physical ear. It is the kind of hearing that brings about true saving faith – “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

The Lord Jesus Himself, in emphasising the truth in His teachings, would often say in the gospel accounts, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” The purpose is to call upon the hearers to seriously consider the truth they have heard. The same emphasis can also be found in the Lord’s respective final exhortations to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

Be Vigilant against Erroneous Teaching

On the other hand, we also find in the Scriptures this word of caution: “Take heed and beware of the leaven (referring to the doctrine) of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6, 12). While we must be humble and obedient in hearing the Word of God, there is a need for us to be careful and discerning in what we are listening to. We have to be vigilant against “false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies”, and “by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (2 Peter 2:1-2). We cannot be naive; there are those who preach false doctrines and even another gospel. They can be very articulate, impressive and convincing, so all the more we must “be on guard” so that we will not be deceived.

It was for this reason that the apostle Paul warned the church in Galatia: “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:6-8). Now, in the Galatian church, certain Jewish men were insisting that Christians – whether Jew or Greek – should subscribe to Jewish ceremonial customs, such as circumcision and dietary laws, in order to be saved. They are known as Judaizers. Those men were undermining the pure Gospel message that salvation is by God’s grace through faith in Christ alone, who died and rose again for the forgiveness of sins. Many of the Galatian church members were severely affected by the teachings of the Judaizers. Hence Paul’s concern expressed in v. 6: “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel”.

Any gospel other than “salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus who died and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures”, is a distorted gospel. Even today, many add to or subtract from the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. Note Paul’s absolute denunciation and severe censure of every preacher of the false gospel message: “let him be accursed”! There is a great need for us not only to preach the pure Gospel with clarity and zeal, but also to be vigilant against (and in denouncing)

false teachings and their advocates.

Be Not Deceived by Evil Communications

Today, more than ever, there is a great need for us to be very discerning as “preachers so-called” are all over the place! You would find them not only among the conventional print and broadcast media (such as books, radio and TV), but also on modern social media. In these days of hyper-connectivity through social media, there is a pertinent need for biblical circumspection in scrutinising the loads of information, views, opinions and perspectives, which are so readily available “at the click of a mouse” or “by the touch of a screen”.

Discern what you hear (or read)! Truly, “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Galatians 5:9). To those who may not realise that a little acceptance of untruth here and half-truth there can lead to great and disastrous spiritual tragedy, the folly of New Evangelicalism must be highlighted. In advocating the preeminence of ecclesiastical unity over doctrine, the New Evangelicals seek to tailor God’s Word to man’s desires by trimming the message of God in order to gain a hearing for their message. This pathetic principle of accommodation and compromising stance led invariably to a weakening of their position on biblical inerrancy.

Incidentally, the New Evangelical view of the Bible is one of limited inerrancy,

which teaches that the Bible is infallible when it speaks of spiritual and salvific issues, but not when it touches on matters like science, history and geography. But this is tantamount to saying the Bible is just a wonderful book on salvation, not an infallible source-book on matters of knowledge. As has been repeatedly shown in churches throughout history, those who begin questioning the validity of small details of Scripture eventually undermine larger doctrines as well. And this we find largely to be the case with the New Evangelicals, tragically. Their proponents not only refuse to denounce as false teachers those who teach that the Bible is full of myths, they now also question the biblical Creation account in favour of theistic evolution, and hold compromising views on Christ's virgin birth! Oh, how far they have

veered off the strait and narrow doctrinal path of Scriptural truth – which all began with an undiscerning tolerance of liberal teachings.

Dear brethren, discern what you hear. “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33). Let us rather follow the example of the Bereans who “were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts

BE NOT HEARERS ONLY!

Prabhudas Koshy | James 1:22

The apostle James draws attention to a great danger existing among so-called Christian circles: “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22). There are two sorts of hearers in the church, according to James. Though all the worshippers appear to be listening to a sermon, only some of them truly receive and apply it to their lives. The rest, though they appear to have paid attention to what is being preached, do not seem to bring their lives into subjection to the Word preached faithfully.

17:11). There is only one safeguard for doctrinal purity and spiritual blessedness – examine what you hear in the light of the infallible, unchanging Scriptures. 

The first group of hearers, referred to as “doers of the word”, is what James desires every churchgoer to be. So he instructs us, “be ye doers of the word”. But, what is it to be a doer of the Word? A doer of the Word is one who applies his mind to understand what is being preached, and then makes every effort to meticulously practise what he has heard. Such a man takes God’s Word seriously, and yields to its authority and wisdom in humble obedience. Such a man is reverential in his hearing of the Word. He believes that the Word of God is good and most beneficial to him. He receives it with meekness (cf. James 1:21), whether it be a rebuke, or correction, or instruction, or promise.

The second group of hearers are the indifferent hearers. This sort of hearers may listen to what is being expounded from the Scriptures with apparent joy. Nonetheless, soon their joy in the preached Word vanishes, as they give heed to other voices brought to them by temptations and trials of the world. Eventually, it becomes their habit to live in total disregard of what they have heard from the Word. If they hear a sermon on repentance, they would not repent.

When they hear the call to separate from unbelievers and wicked men, they scoff at it and continue to foster their close interaction with the ungodly.

The “hearers only” group is also warned that they are deceiving themselves. Surely they would not pay attention to that warning. Instead, they might speak ill of those who warn them. They make themselves appear as eager hearers, but they are superficial hearers. When the hearers refuse to take hold of the truth of God’s Word, they live without its wisdom. Knowledge without obedience is futile. Now, if you are just a “hearer” and not a “doer” of the Word, James is here saying that there is something wrong with your thinking: you are “deceiving your own selves”! The Greek compound word translated as “deceiving” gives the idea of someone who is beside his logical self and not reasoning rightly. James’ warning is clear: the end-result of one who constantly takes in without ever putting into practice is a deluded person who is setting himself up for making miscalculations in life’s decisions!

Oh, it is a terrible folly not to take hold of divine truth. It would inflict severe damage on one’s spiritual integrity and effectiveness. It is a dreadful mistake to neglect the truth that has been brought to one’s attention. Dear brethren, be not hearers only! 

ATTITUDES IN RESPONSE TO HEARING THE TRUTH

Reggor Galarpe | John 8:31



In a time when people are bent on ignoring, if not denying, absolutes and take everything as relative instead, it is truly comforting to be reminded of the words of our Lord Jesus in John 8:31. “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed”.

These were the words of the Lord to those who believed on Him when He said that He was sent of the Father. “And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. As he spake these words, many believed on him” (John 8:29-30). The Lord then continued with these words in John 8:32, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” This assertive statement of our Lord have become a universal slogan. It has been quoted (and misquoted as well) by many in their

personal Christian struggles. However, just because many would use it as their exhorting slogan, it doesn't follow that they perceive it in the same context in which Jesus said it. As people tend to be selective in their application of Scriptural truths, these words of Christ may mean differently to different people. If truth favors them, they would want it; but if it makes things a little difficult and entails some sacrifice, they would have nothing to do with it and might even label it as impractical or not pragmatic.

Following are some of the attitudes of people in response to hearing truths of the Bible:

Wrong Attitudes towards Truth Truth Rejected

This was the case with many of the Jews. Jesus who is the Way, the Truth and the Life was in their midst; yet how did they treat Him? The Bible says, "He came unto his own, and his own receive him not" (John 1:11). In rejecting Christ, they have rejected the Truth. This attitude is what we often find in the gospel accounts. We read of how the Jews would ignore, despise or mock the Lord Jesus. They often challenged the Lord in His words and teachings. In so doing, they were opposing, suppressing and denying the truth.

Concerning the many miracles and healings done by Jesus, the Jews would

attribute them to the work of the devil. "And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils" (Matthew 9:33-34; cf. John 10:19-21). On one occasion when a man who was blind since birth was healed and able to see, they doubted and questioned if he really was born blind in the first place (cf. John 9:18-20). Even regarding the resurrection of the Lord, they blatantly conspired to make up stories, saying that the disciples stole His dead body from the grave! "Now ... behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day" (Matthew 28:11-15).

Someone once said, "Truth is so precious that it is surrounded by bodyguards of lies." As truth at times can be too painful or too costly, people would strive to cover it with layers of lies. We all can see this in real life and in every aspect of our society—in politics, in business, in academia, in religion, even in the family and in our individual lives! It is sad how people could become so desperate that they would go to any lengths to deny, suppress, or silence the truth!

Truth Redefined

Yet some others are more subtle. They may not outrightly silence the truth, but they nonetheless undermine the truth by twisting or distorting it. As mentioned at the start of this article, we live in a time when everything is viewed by many as relative, including truth. That is to say, what is truth to you may not be truth to other people. It all depends on the situation. This unfortunate situation came about because many have redefined truth according to their own personal preferences, views, concepts, ideas and understanding (or is it misunderstanding?) of things.

This is precisely the problem of many false religions of the world throughout man's history, with their secular and pluralistic worldviews. This redefined perception of the order of things is succinctly highlighted in Romans 1:19-25, where Paul minces no words: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also

gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."

Right Attitude towards Truth

Truth Received

The only rightful attitude towards truth is to receive it. Truth is to be received by faith. It is another way of saying we must believe it! To resist truth is to go against what is logical and what is blessed. "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Corinthians 13:8). This certainly has reference to the Bible which, being the Word of God, is the ultimate Truth. The Bible reveals to us the mind of the infinite, eternal and unchangeable God. In the Bible is contained all that we need to know to gain salvation and entry into God's kingdom; in it is also contained all the godly principles to live a victorious life as sojourners in this sin-darkened world; and in it is all that we need to know to occupy ourselves as we await Christ's return to this earth. All these precious truths—and more—which have been revealed to us, being recorded in the Bible, "belong unto us and to our children for ever" (Deuteronomy 29:29b). We may not be able to comprehend every detail behind every truth, but it would be to our good to receive it, to believe it, to obey it, and to live by it!

Remember what Jesus said: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Most certainly, receiving the truth shall make us free—free from unbelief, from false and wrong beliefs, from sin and the guilt of sin, even from our own sinful self and from everything to which we may have been in bondage. The truth will grant believers freedom from dark and false thinking about God's righteousness,

freedom from their prejudices and superstitions, freedom from slavery and bondage of sin, as well as freedom from fear of death and condemnation.

Thus, may we who follow Christ and His truth rejoice to take heed of the apostle Paul's admonition to "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1). Amen. 

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Prabhudas Koshy | John 8:32, 36

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah had predicted that when the Messiah, the Son of God, comes, He will liberate those who have been under the repression of Satan, sin and death (cf. Isaiah 61:1-3). As the only begotten Son of God, Christ enjoys unchallenged, eternal right to exercise the full authority vested in Him by the Father to liberate slaves of sin. Christ alone has the power and freedom to liberate us from everything that shackles us spiritually. So, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36)!

All in Bondage to Sin

This profound, divine declaration was uttered by Jesus during His earthly ministry to the Jews, who had earlier blatantly claimed that they were never in bondage and had always been free. "They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" (John 8:33). They boastfully said that they were free to do whatever they liked to do. They did not acknowledge that they were actually under the wretched bondage of sin!

But Jesus unequivocally told them that they needed freedom for they were under the shackles of sin. In no uncertain terms, Jesus rebuked them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34). The servitude to sin is the most grievous bondage, far worse than any other kind of political or social servitude. Since the fall of Adam, all men are born slaves to sin, without the power to deliver themselves. Only by the gracious bestowment of freedom by the Son of God could men's souls ever be liberated from the clutches of sin. Hence, freedom from sin's influence and guilt is the greatest freedom.

Means to Breaking Bondage to Sin

The means to experience that freedom is "the truth". Jesus said, "And ye shall

know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). What is "the truth" that we shall know? In the Gospel of John, the word "truth" frequently refers to Christ and His words. The apostle John wrote (concerning Christ) that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), and affirmed that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17b). Hence, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ are referred to as "the truth".

Just before assuring the believing Jews that "ye shall know the truth", He had told them in v. 31, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed". Undeniably, the true evidence of a genuine disciple of Christ is that he continues in the Saviour's Word. This is the true mark of Christian discipleship. Sadly, it is not uncommon to see some hearers (having been moved by the reasoning and earnestness of the preacher) initially manifesting lots of sympathy and even excitement about the truth expounded. However, their enthusiasm soon vanishes, and they are no more to be found among the adherents of Christ. Such fleeting fervour is not the mark of a true disciple.

Enjoying Continued Freedom from Bondage

To be sure, it is to those who persevere in His Word with obedience whom Jesus says: "then are ye my disciples indeed". True Christians will always delight in

the Word of their Lord; only such will have the attestation and assurance from the Lord that they are His true disciples. Continuing in Christ's words brings us into a relationship with Him as His disciples, which enables us to truly know Him who is "the truth". Christ is the Truth personified! He is the source of all truth, the embodiment of the truth, and His words grant His people the knowledge of His truth. As true disciples of Christ, we are to walk in the truth (cf. 3 John 1:3), love and believe the truth (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12), as well as to speak the truth in love (cf. Ephesians 4:15a).

When we abide in the knowledge of Christ and His words, we possess the truth that shall make us free. In possessing and embracing the truth, we shall experience true freedom from the slavery of sinful cravings, inordinate passions, degrading vices and all carnal propensities. We shall also be granted deliverance and freedom from all awful errors that once subjugated us. No doubt about it, our yielding to the truth of Christ will free us from many tyrannical masters. Here is a list of them: the bondage of sin (cf. Romans 6:18, 22), the accusing conscience (cf. Hebrews 10:19, 22), the curse of the law (cf. Galatians 3:13), the law of ceremonies (cf. Ephesians 2:14-16), human traditions and ordinances (cf. 1 Peter 1:18), and the tyranny of Satan (cf. Hebrews 2:14), of course.

Assuredly, the truth of Christ's words shall make you free, and as Jesus declared, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"! 

Jim Elliot (1927-1956)

Part III

(Retold from "Jim Elliot - He is No Fool" by Irene Howat, published by Focus Publications, Scotland, the United Kingdom; "Jim Elliot - Missionary to Ecuador" by Susan Martins Miller; published by Barbour and Company, Inc., Ohio, the United States; "He Changed Them" by David Porter; published by Christian Focus Publications, Scotland, Great Britain.)

Retold by Jenny Lok

Illustrated by Andronicus Koshy

In September 1949, Jim was expecting Elisabeth to arrive at his home for a visit. She was meeting Jim's parents for the first time. It was little wonder that she was nervous about it. At that point in time, Jim had no clear direction as to where God wanted him to serve. This, he felt strongly, was necessary for him to receive a "commendation" from his local church first. Because of this, they decided to put their marriage plans on hold to give more time to determine God's direction for their future. Both Jim and Elisabeth waited patiently, but not without longing for the day that they could be husband and wife, serving the Lord together.

Some time later that year, Jim wrote to Elisabeth of possible opportunities to go to either of two fields: Ecuador or India. The first was to take over Dr Tidmarsh in his mission station in Ecuador, as his wife was in extremely poor health, making it impossible for them to continue their mission work. The other was to work with Roland Hill of Bangalore, who needed a qualified teacher of Greek to start a Bible school for the purpose of conducting Bible lessons for some of the Hindu high school and college students studying English. Jim was more inclined to work among the Quichua Indians in Ecuador. However, he decided to wait upon God so that he might discern His will for him at this critical moment.

In the summer of 1950, Jim started linguistic studies in the University of Oklahoma. For 10 weeks, Jim was immersed in learning how to master unwritten languages. Through a fellow student, Jim came to know about a certain tribe called the "Aucas". The name "Auca" in the Quichua language means "savagery". They were an "unreached" tribe that would not welcome any white man to befriend

them, and were cruel not only to the outside world but also to their own tribal members. It seemed impossible that they would ever accept any missionary reaching out to them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jim's heart began to beat faster at the mention of the Aucas. He knew with certainty that his dream of evangelising an unreached tribe might come true for him. That was the kind of mission work he had always desired. Jim spent the next 10 days praying about this matter. His closer college friends also agreed to pray along with him. After a season of prayer, Jim came across Exodus 23:20-21, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice ..." He was much comforted by God's timely encouragement to him for his work in Ecuador. Though all ready to go, Jim desired to hear from the elders in Portland and receive their blessings for this mission work. Imagine Jim's joy when he was told that the Portland Assembly leaders would be behind him in his work in Ecuador!



Jim finally finished his linguistics course in Oklahoma and began making plans with a college friend, Bill Cathers, to meet up with Dr Tidmarsh in Ecuador. Unexpectedly, in late 1950, Dr Tidmarsh wrote to Jim to inform him about his year-long furlough in England. It looked like Jim had to wait for a while before he could set foot in Ecuador. Without Dr Tidmarsh, there would not be anyone to introduce them to the mission work among the Quichuas. At the same time, Bill got married and changed his mind about going to Ecuador. Though Jim was disappointed about the change of plans, he trusted in God's perfect timing and provision of another co-worker. During that one year of waiting, Jim was involved in ministry work in another small town called Chester in Illinois, with another college friend, Ed McCully. Together, they preached the Gospel and hoped to set up a Plymouth Brethren assembly in Chester. Full of enthusiasm, they wasted no time in picking up skills in "radio, medical and educational work". However, in June 1951, Ed also got married, meaning that Jim's hope of engaging Ed's help in Ecuador was dashed. However, Jim's despair did not last long, for God had provided Pete Fleming, another college friend, to work with him in Ecuador.

On 4 February 1952, Jim and Pete were on board the ship, Santa Juana, waiting to set sail for Quito, "a beautiful, old, and picturesque city (in Ecuador), lying between two mountain ranges". Dad and Mum Elliot, together with others, were there to see them off. Though joyful that Jim finally knew where God wanted him to be, they wondered when they would ever meet again. They had no inkling of the extreme danger that Jim would face in primitive mission work.

Upon arrival at Quito, Jim and Pete lodged with a missionary family. While there, they eagerly tried to pick up Spanish as quickly as they could – soon, Jim was busy preaching in Spanish! One particular happy occasion during his time in Quito was when Elisabeth arrived unexpectedly there. In actual fact, she was there to learn Spanish, as well as to gain knowledge of some tropical diseases and other medical-related subjects. Jim and Elisabeth were thankful to God for some time to catch up with each other, yet both having decided to put God's service first before marriage plans.

From Quito, both Jim and Pete moved on to Shell Mera and then later Shandia, where they would be based. In Shandia, which was high on a cliff, the Quichua people, though simple and contented, took some time to warm up to Jim and Pete. Once the Quichuas realised that they were in Shandia to help them, they became friendly. Jim and Pete's immediate task was to learn the Quichua language. Luis, their interpreter, translated Spanish into Quichua, making it easy for them to begin sharing the Gospel. Still, they knew it was needful to master the Quichua language without delay. Before long, Jim and Pete plunged into

Postcards from Quito, Ecuador, 1950s



busy days of reaching out to the Quichuas, who were basically primitive in their way of living. Often, Jim and Pete had to deal carefully with their superstitions – sometimes, infants died during delivery because they would rather believe in their witches and wizards than in good medical advice.

In July 1953, Shandia was hit with a torrential rain, causing floods which ruined their one whole year of hard work. All that they had built – the school, clinic, kitchen (and even personal belongings) – were swept away by the swelling rivers. At this point, a man named Atanasio, another missionary from Puyupungu,

requested their help to build a school. Jim called upon his old college friend, Ed McCully, and his wife Marilou to serve at Puyupungu. But they were not ready to do so because they could hardly speak the Quichua language. Jim finally realised that the time had come for him to marry Elisabeth so that they could serve in Puyupungu as a couple. The long-awaited happy day came on 8 October 1953 (Jim's 26th birthday)!



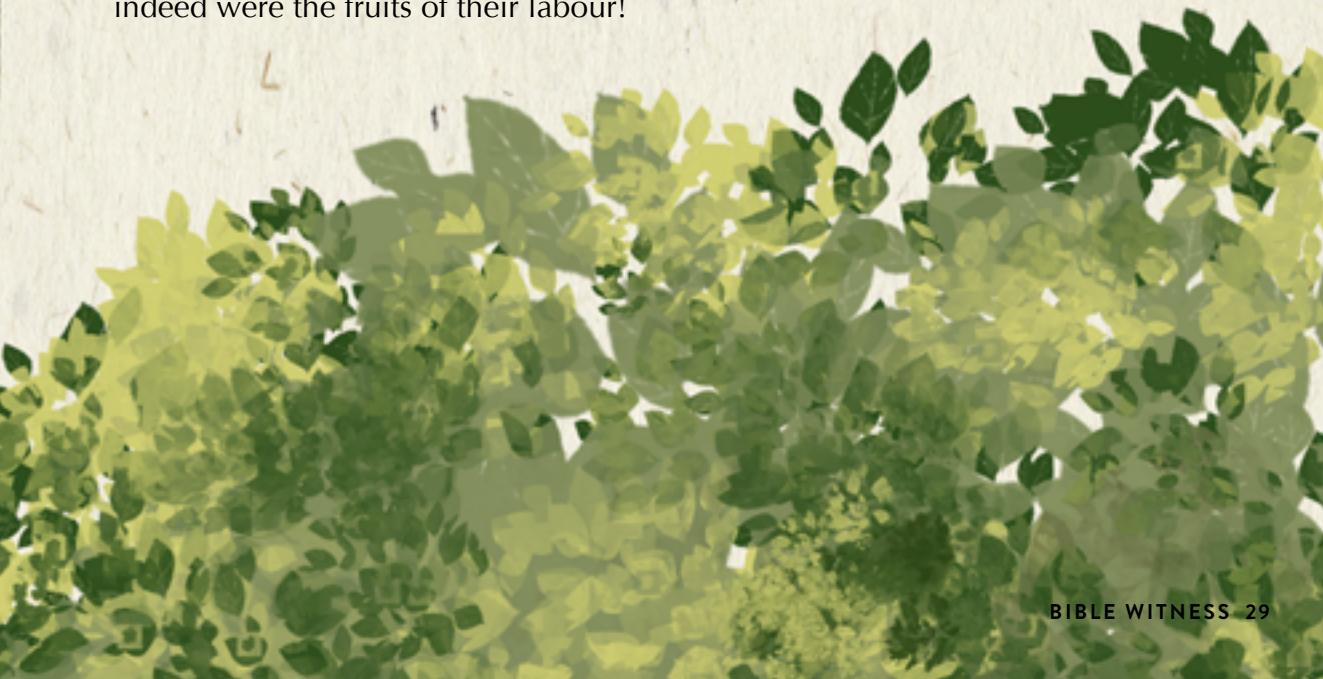
Right after their marriage, Jim and Elisabeth arrived in Puyupungu to a warm welcome by Atanasio and his friends. They were not alone for their first night in Puyupungu, but found themselves in the company of large cockroaches that roamed the house! For 5 months, both husband and wife worked very hard to see to the building of the school and reach out to the local people with the Gospel. Many turned to Christ. They even set up a house for future missionaries

to stay when they came by. An airstrip (for landing of planes) was also about to be completed.

In mid-1954, Jim decided that they should return to Shandia. The people at Puyupungu were doing well. Many of the young Christians were growing in their faith. Moreover, Jim wanted to see his dad, who was also in Shandia to lend a hand in constructing some mission buildings. While back in Shandia, they had a Young Men's Conference, attended by over 700 Indians, some coming from far places. Jim saw the potential in some of these young men and was eager to train them to be future leaders and teachers in the mission work.

In February 1955, Jim and Elisabeth arrived in Shell Mera, where Jim was tasked to build a hospital. While there, a very hospitable couple, Nate Saint (a Missionary Aviation Fellowship pilot) and his wife Marj Saint, invited Jim and Elizabeth to stay with them. By then, Elisabeth was due to deliver her baby any time. To their great delight, the baby was born two days after their arrival at Shell Mera! Dad and Mum Elliot were also there to welcome their granddaughter Valerie. Everyone rejoiced and thanked God for a new addition to the Elliot family.

Soon after Dad and Mum Elliot's return to Portland, they received news from Jim that there was an Auca attack near Arajuno, where Jim's co-workers, Ed and Marilou McCully, planned to set up their home. Apparently, the Aucas had killed a mother and her 2 children. Though Jim and Elisabeth were rather disturbed by the news, they trusted in God's protection over all who served among the Quichuas. Despite the constant danger that lurked around the mission areas, they were beginning to see progress in their labour in Shandia and the surrounding region, for close to a dozen Quichuas had given their lives to God. How sweet indeed were the fruits of their labour!



Bible Trivia — Numbers 11

Sarah Yong

Read the respective Scripture verses in Numbers 11, and then fill in each blank with the right answer.

1. Many of the children of Israel complained and it _____ the LORD.
(v. 1)
2. The people lusted after the fish and vegetables they had eaten in _____.
(v. 5)
3. They despised the _____ that God sent upon the camp at night. (v. 9).
4. The LORD decided to give the people _____ as they had requested. (v. 18)
5. This flesh would be provided for the people to eat for the whole _____.
(v. 20)
6. The LORD sent a wind that brought _____ from the sea. (v. 31)
7. The people stood and _____ the quails for two whole days. (v. 32)
8. As they chewed the flesh, the wrath of the LORD was _____. (v. 33)
9. The LORD smote those that lusted with a _____ great plague. (v. 33)

A Lesson to Note

Use the red, underlined letter from each of the respective answers above (corresponding to the question number) to complete the message.

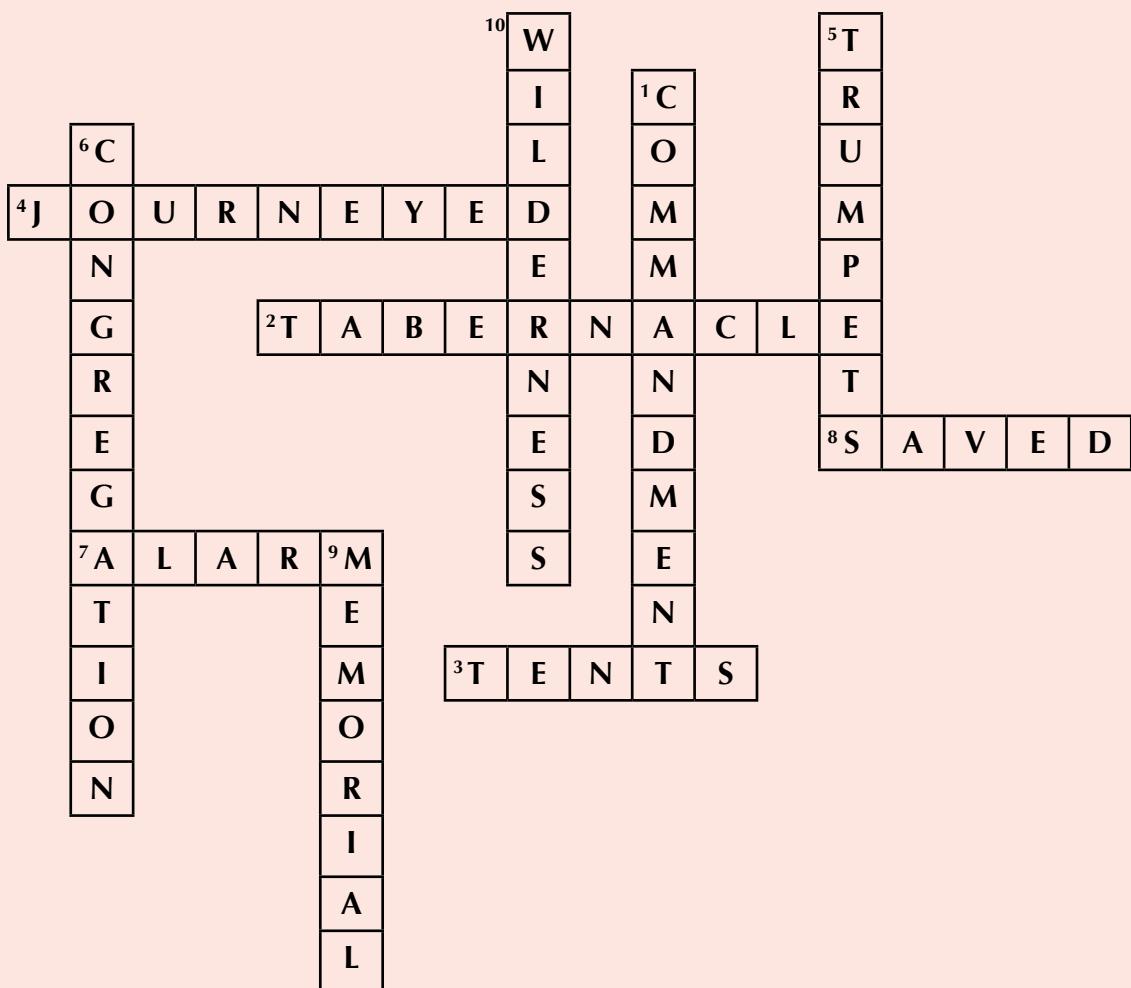
"We should not murmur against the LORD. As God's children, we must take time to remember His goodness in our lives and come before Him with _____."

5 4 7 3 8 1 2 6 9 6 3 2

ANSWERS TO BIBLE TRIVIA - NUMBERS 9 & 10 (VOLUME 19, ISSUE 4, PP.34-35)

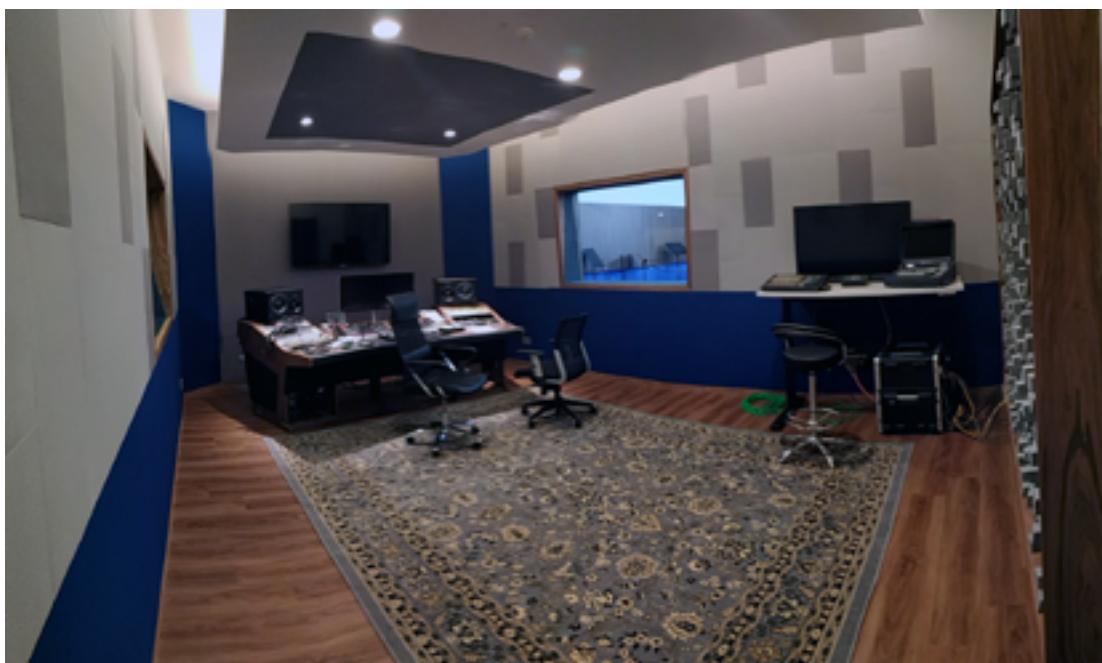
Numbers 9: commandment, tabernacle, tents, journeyed

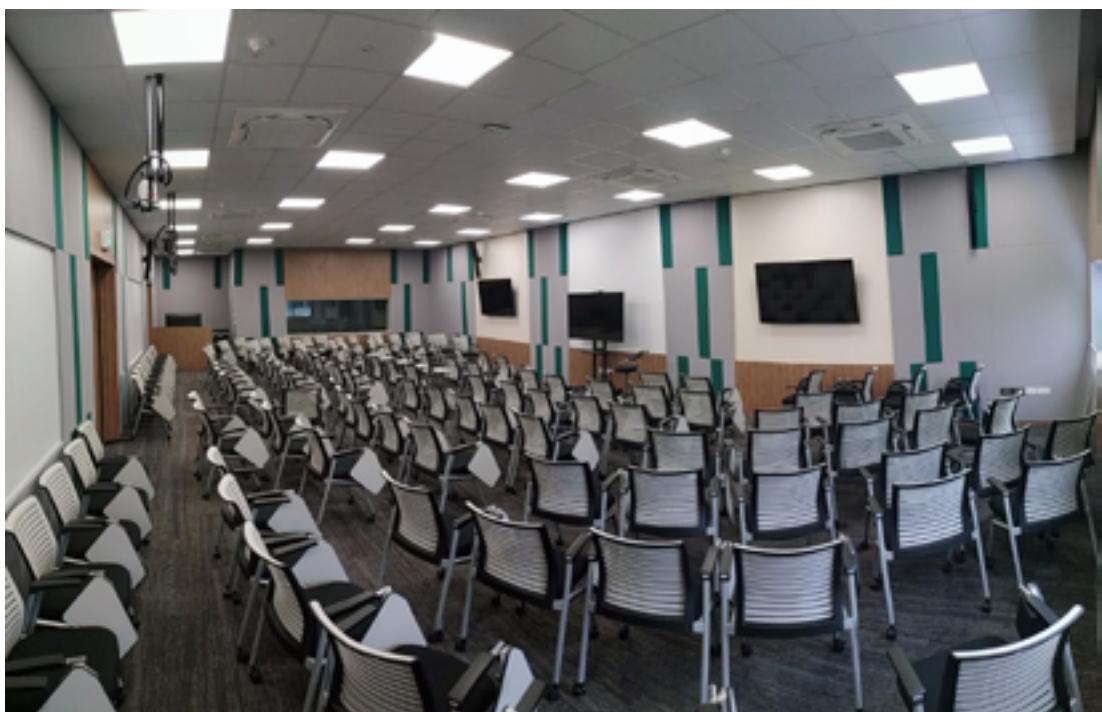
Numbers 10: trumpets, congregation, alarm, saved, memorial, wilderness



IN THANKSGIVING FOR GETHSEMANE MEDIA CENTRE (GMC)

We thank the LORD for all the provisions for the renovation of GMC. While most of the renovation works have been completed, as of the time of publication, there remains some corrective works to be done. Please pray that all the work will be completed in a timely fashion.





◀ Facing page:

- Studio 2 (top)
- Control room (bottom)

▲ Above:

- Studio 1 (top)
- Level 2 seminar room (bottom)

Blessed
IS HE WHOSE
TRANSGRESSION
IS **forgiven.** I
SIN IS **covered**

PSALM 32:1

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BLESSED
IS HE THAT
CONSIDERETH
THE **POOR**

Psalm 41:1

April 2020

Bible Witness
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Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

19 Good Friday

Psalm 41:1
Blessed is he that considereth the poor,
the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.



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