

# Bible Witness

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## Christians' Duty to the Church



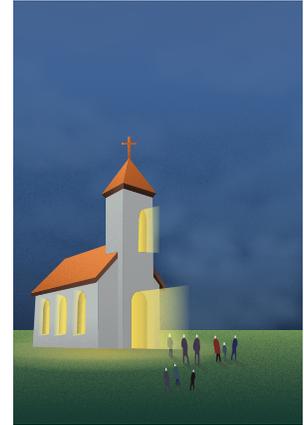


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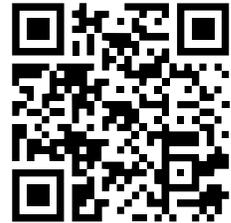
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“I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.”—Psalm 122:1



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# CHRISTIANS' DUTY TO THE CHURCH

Volume 22 Issue 1 | January–February 2022

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*All articles in this issue are written by Prabhudas Koshy,  
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## IN THIS ISSUE

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>4</b>            | <b>18</b>   |
| Attend the Church   | “Add to” the Church<br>(I)—Witnessing for<br>Christ |
| <b>9</b>            | <b>25</b>   |
| Pray for the Church | “Add to” the Church<br>(II)—Winning Souls           |
| <b>13</b>           |   |
| Support the Church  |   |

## CHILDREN'S PAGE

- |  |
|--|
| <b>32</b>  |
| Bible Trivia<br>(Numbers 32:1–29)<br><i>Sarah Yong</i>   |
| <b>34</b>  |
| Hudson Taylor<br>(1832–1905)—Part XI<br><i>Jenny Lok</i> |

# ATTEND

## THE CHURCH



**E**very Christian is instructed in the Scriptures concerning his God-ordained duties to the church, which none should neglect. Neglecting one's duties to the church is dishonouring to God, and is akin to defying God who has commanded them. Dereliction of one's responsibilities to the church is also tantamount to obstructing the cause of His kingdom. No real child of God would abandon his duty in his Father's house, the most obvious of which is to “not forsak[e] the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25).

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It has always been the Christians' practice to meet together—in an appointed place, on the appointed day, at the appointed time—for participation in worship, receiving instruction of the Word, fellowship, prayer, observance of sacraments, etc.

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## Biblical Allusions to Need for Church Gatherings

It has always been the Christians' practice to meet together—in an appointed place, on the appointed day, at the appointed time—for participation in worship, receiving instruction of the Word, fellowship, prayer, observance of sacraments, etc. The following are some of the New Testament passages that draw attention to the believers' commitment to gather as a church:

- “And they, continuing daily **with one accord** in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart” (Acts 2:46).
- “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples **came together** to break bread, Paul preached unto them...” (Acts 20:7).
- “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let **every one of you** lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him...” (1 Corinthians 16:1–2a).

That's not all. Abundant evidence to believers' regular gathering together as a church can further be gleaned from the apostle Paul's stern rebuke of certain misconduct in the local church, as seen in the following verses:

- “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are **gathered together**, and my spirit, with the

power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:4–5).

- “Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not... For first of all, when ye **come together** in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you...” (1 Corinthians 11:17–18).
- “If therefore the whole church be **come together** into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?” (1 Corinthians 14:23).
- “How is it then, brethren? when ye **come together**... [l]et all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue... let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church” (1 Corinthians 14:26–28).

Furthermore, it is instructive to note that even after early Christians were prohibited from entering the temple and synagogues of the Jews, they did not stop gathering as a church. They often met in believers’ homes, which could accommodate many who would gather. As a biblical example, when Aquila and Priscilla were in Rome, they hosted a church gathering in the house where they had lived (cf. Romans 16:5a). This was in the context of the believers in Rome being spread throughout the city (due to persecution) and having to meet together in different locations in the city. One of the congregations must have been that which met in the

house of Aquila and Priscilla. Similar house churches existed in other cities also. Such biblical examples include the churches in Colossae meeting in Nymphas’ house (Colossians 4:15) and in Philemon’s house (Philemon 2; cf. Colossians 4:9; Philemon 12); as well as the church that met in another house of Aquila and Priscilla in Asia (Minor) [after they had moved away from Rome and presumably later settled in Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:19; cf. Acts 18:1–2, 18–19a)]. Christian gatherings were not just confined to believers’ homes. At times, the believers gathered in large buildings, such as schools; one such example was the school of Tyrannus, as recorded in Acts 19:9.

## Mutual Edification through Church Gatherings

Christians are exhorted to be participants of church gatherings for mutual edification: “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24–25). The Greek word (*episunagōgē*) used here for “assembling” suggests some official corporate meeting of the believers. The words, “the assembling of ourselves together”, would thus refer to church gatherings, such as worship services, Bible studies, prayer meetings, etc.

Now, when the writer of Hebrews exhorted thus, it must have been

apparent that some had been neglecting the Christians' public gathering. They wilfully deserted the "communion of the saints", which was regarded as serious spiritual misconduct. Their failure in attending church gatherings could have been due to a lack of interest in the worship, laziness, engagement in worldly affairs, or falling away from the faith. Be that as it may, their absence from the church meetings deprived them of the spiritual blessings that God would provide through these meetings. They failed to appreciate that Christian assemblies are summoned to provide spiritual nourishment for the believers through worship, mutual service and fellowship—i.e. to "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works... exhorting one another".

By coming together, Christians are expected to strengthen and stimulate one another in their spiritual walk. Having close and regular fellowship with other believers is an absolute necessity for spiritual growth and fruit-bearing. Association with other Christians provides every believer with spiritual nourishment and growth. Immeasurable good can come from spiritual association and activities with other Christians. The New Testament lends no support to the idea of lone Christians. On the contrary, it condemns such a notion. Attending church gatherings must be a habit maintained

by every genuine Christian. It ought to be every Christian's practice unless prevented by some exigencies. If a Christian is compelled to be absent from the church, it would be a sorely painful matter to him—and he must return to the church meetings at the earliest possible opportunity.

Absence from regular, prearranged church gatherings is a matter of grave concern. A deserter of church assemblies can be a stumbling block to others' spiritual growth. He discourages and prevents his family members from fulfilling their God-ordained duty of attending church regularly. His disinterest and abandonment of church meetings would make him a terrible example to others around him (especially those closely related to him), who might come under his influence. He is also neglecting his duty to call others to hear the preaching of the Gospel. He thus becomes a great waster

of opportunities for his and others' spiritual progress. In his sin of omission, he forfeits the spiritual blessings and heavenly rewards involved in mutual edification through church gatherings. On the other hand, when members of the church attend the church's pre-announced meetings, they bring cheer and encouragement to the pastor, elders and preachers whom God has ordained to minister His Word in the church for the edification of every church member.

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# Flourishing Family and Spiritual Life Centred around Church

Every Christian must be committed to building up his family life around the church, and not the world. The family that regularly participates in church meetings and activities will be well grounded in the truths of God's Word and the love of Christian fellowship. Active participation in church meetings and activities will protect the family against the worldliness that lures particularly the youths away from godliness and service to the Lord. Consistent involvement in the events of the church will be profitable for the family's spiritual progress. "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalm 84:10).

It is both the duty and privilege of believers to go into the LORD's house. There they will find spiritual pleasure, and rejoice in the abundance of divine peace and comfort. There they will have their spiritual strength renewed, and spiritual enthusiasm revived. So, let us prayerfully desire and prepare to be in the LORD's house with His people—"LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth" (Psalm 26:8).

May each of us bear a similar testimony as that of the psalmist: "I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday" (Psalm 42:4). It is this writer's ardent prayer that every true Christian reader will share in the joy and sincerity of the psalmist, who proclaimed, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD" (Psalm 122:1). ■



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# PRAY FOR THE CHURCH

**B**efore Christ's ascension, He commanded the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit's promised empowerment, that they may be His witnesses all around the world. "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). For "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).

In obedience to the Lord's command, the apostles returned to Jerusalem (Acts 1:12a), and "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" (Acts 1:14). That first prayer gathering after Christ's ascension, which began with just the eleven apostles, eventually grew to a total of about 120 (Acts 1:15). From that group of praying men and women who waited for the power of the Holy Spirit,

sprang up the first New Testament church in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1–47)!

## Be Given to Prayer

The Lord’s instruction to the apostles to tarry in Jerusalem led them to a season of prayer, together with other believers. They prayed with hearts submissive to the Lord’s command, and with the joyous expectation of the Spirit’s might that would empower them as witnesses to the Gospel in a hostile world. Though they hardly knew the details of what would happen, they knew for sure that life and the ministry ahead of them would be full of trials and sorrows. But their persistence in prayer would be instrumental in preparing them for all the challenges which they would face. Through constant collective prayers, the church overcame persecution, apostasy, temptation, and made significant progress in preaching the Gospel and advancing the church’s work.

The early church relied on God through prayer for all their spiritual and physical needs. They relentlessly pursued divine help in prayer. They prayed individually as believers (cf. Acts 9:10–12, 40; 10:9), and corporately as a church (cf. Acts 1:14, 24; 4:24–31; 12:5, 12). What a far cry from the contemporary church! Sadly, prayer is much neglected in the church at large today. In churches of our day and age, we hear of large crowds turning up for concerts, for entertainment, and even for listening to the testimonies of the rich and famous. Prayer meetings, on the other hand, attract only the faithful few. Lack of interest in prayer is the primary reason for the weakness of the contemporary church.

We must take care not to be drawn away from prayer by laziness, pleasure, business, etc. The dire consequences of neglect of prayer cannot be ignored. The present circumstances in which we live and serve are perilous to holy living that is acceptable to God. There are many powerful temptations and demonic doctrines that lurk around us. Only through much prayer can we keep ourselves holy for our Master’s use. Unless we are diligent in prayer, we will be overtaken by the adversary’s ploys to destroy us (cf. Luke 21:36). Truly, only when we are given continually to prayer will the church members’ personal life and the church ministries flourish spiritually.

## Be Earnest in Prayer

That is why we read of Paul’s apostolic exhortation to the church in Colossae, “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2). We too must take heed of this injunction to pray with earnest perseverance and give ourselves unto prayer as God’s Word requires. Now, the Greek word (*proskarteréō*) translated as “continue” has the idea of “to continue to do something with intense effort, even with the possibility of difficulties along the way, until one has brought it to the wished-for end”.

So, firstly, our prayers must be earnest before God. Prayer should never be perfunctory. A casual or superficial attitude in prayer is akin to being irreverent before God. An indifferent heart in prayer is tantamount to mocking God’s holy and solemn presence. Wandering hearts and sleepy prayers are not befitting the majestic

presence of our gracious God. Then, secondly, there must be devoutness and commitment to prayer. Jesus had said that “men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). This is not to say that we are to be always on our knees, but rather that the spirit of prayer should never be laid aside. We must have a prayerful spirit all the time. We must also delight in frequent prayers, whether they be short or protracted prayers. God must be frequently sought, for He alone is our help.

Scripture records many examples of men and women who prayed earnestly and without ceasing. We need not look too far. Even in Paul’s epistle to the Colossians, the apostle mentions his co-labourer, Epaphras, as “always labouring fervently for you in prayers”

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(Colossians 4:12). Such constancy in prayer has been the secret of God’s servants who are God-honouring. Such is also the secret of a God-honouring, vibrant, fruitful church. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, a praying church will be empowered and guided to fulfil God’s glorious purposes concerning its work on earth. Believers will be built up in knowledge and godliness to serve the Lord in love, unity and peace, that the Gospel may spread far and near. The Spirit of God will invigorate a praying church to magnify the Lord, that more members may be added to the church as the blessings of the Gospel of Christ spread throughout the community.

## Be Watchful in Prayer

In Paul’s apostolic counsel on prayer, we are also called unto watchfulness in prayer—“watch in the same” (v. 2b). The word rendered “watch” has the idea of “refrain from sleep”, “stay awake”, “be alert”, “be vigilant”. When physical tiredness and sleepiness prevented Peter, James and John from being awakened unto prayer, Jesus rebuked them: “What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:40–41). Even physical fatigue is not a satisfactory excuse for failing in prayer. Christians must be awake unto the pressing matters of life and ministry, so as to bring them to God in prayer.

Besides, being watchful also entails looking out for what God has already

blessed us with, which should evoke a thankful spirit in us. Whenever we pray, we must be full of thankfulness towards God. Admittedly, we are more prone to ask or complain than to give thanks. When we pray, we must be grateful for the blessings already granted, and for the promises He has given unto us. Beware: ungrateful men are not fit to pray! On the other hand, grateful men who depend upon God for spiritual wisdom and power to lead those under their care will pray without ceasing. Those who desire to be faithful in their God-given roles will be utterly dependent on God through prayer. Gratefulness and watchfulness would hasten them to the presence of God. They will be serious in their commitment to pray for their families and those under their charge, as well as to pray with them. They will also

count it their special joy and duty to be with people who gather together to pray. Indeed, men of faith are not only given to prayer, but also earnest and watchful in prayer.

## Conclusion

Most of us are not called to be preachers of the Word or to be leaders of the church. But all of us are called to be mighty in intercession. Like Epaphras, who was constantly mindful of his home church and toiled in prayer for the brethren (cf. Colossians 4:12), we too must pray. With burden, faith and thanksgiving we must pray. Let there be godly expectation of divine blessings as we pray for ourselves and our church. All of us can pray for one another—and that we must do. ■



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# SUPPORT

## THE CHURCH

**M**any Christians in these days seem to live without any sense of belonging, commitment and loyalty to the church. They appear to create their own spiritual environment without any responsible relationship with the local church. But Scriptural instruction (through biblical precept and example) not only enjoins believers to gather as a church to be partakers of worship, sacraments, prayer, fellowship, and learning of God's Word; it also teaches Christians to know and fulfil faithfully their responsibilities as members of the church. Among such responsibilities is the duty to support (in material terms) the ministries of the church.

### **Every Man a Cheerful Giver According as He Purposeth**

From the inception of the New Testament church, we can see that the activities, workers and the needy members of the church were adequately supported by the generous (often sacrificial) giving of its members. We read concerning the first church, that "all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their

possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need” (Acts 2:44–45). The church’s support by its members has been enjoined as a divine command—“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Giving to the church’s cause should neither be a forced service nor a painful duty. It ought to be a joyful rendering of our hearts’ devotion to God, as encapsulated by the phrase, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart”. Such joyful, responsive support is demonstrated by the Antioch Christians’ giving in support of the Jerusalem church in a time of “great dearth throughout all the world ... in the days of Claudius Caesar” (Acts 11:28b). “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which

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dwelt in Judaea” (Acts 11:29). Indeed, “every man according to his ability” should determine the manner we render our support (in material terms). Of course, at times some may be called upon to give sacrificially, just like the churches of Macedonia in Paul’s time. Concerning the help received from these local churches in Macedonia, the apostle Paul testified that “beyond their power they were willing of themselves; praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints” (2 Corinthians 8:3–4).

## Attending to Material Needs of Church Ministries

Thus, from Scriptural precepts and by biblical examples, the inescapable fact is: the church cannot carry out its ministries without its members’ generous support. Among other things, continual support is needed for the following:

- the furtherance of the Gospel,
- edification of the believers,
- salaries of pastors, preachers, missionaries and the church staff,
- support of the mission stations,
- purchase and maintenance of equipment and software for the media ministry,
- the work of benevolence towards the poor and helpless.

Only when all the church members joyfully shoulder the church ministries' burdens can the church fulfil the Lord's work expeditiously.

Certainly, our church should neither be luxuriously furnished in its interior (with exquisite and expensive fittings), nor ostentatious in its façade, like some posh, private mansion. But neither should it look like a dilapidated, neglected house! Every department of the church must be well taken care of. God wants us to be good stewards of His house. When He put Adam in the garden of Eden, He expected him "to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15). God expects man to be responsible for the realm where he is placed, to keep the place well-organised and functional according to His glorious will. Thus, the members of the congregation should be thoughtful in attending to the needs of the church. Like their own homes, they should care for the various areas of the church.

Needless to say, a church growing in size and ministries will have many matters to be attended to—such as paying heed to the increasing number of staff and providing for their remuneration, keeping tabs on new ministries and their needs, maintenance and repair of the buildings, procurement of furniture, equipment, vehicles, etc., as well as tending to the physical and spiritual care of members, among others. How wonderful it would be if members would attend to all such matters without appeals for support from the pulpit! The pastor and elders can thereby be spared from the uncomfortable job of regular plea for funds (which sometimes may unwittingly make it appear as

though they are pleading for their personal interests). This is especially so in the area of remuneration for full-time Gospel-workers.

## Practical Issue of Remuneration

To put it plainly, materially recompensing a pastor (or a preacher) is the rightful thing for his church to do, so that the Gospel-workers may give themselves to the ministry of the Word and to the care of souls, without being burdened and distracted by their own personal and families' needs. The crux of the issue is: Should the ministers of the Word (and, by extension, others who are called to serve the Lord full-time) support themselves by taking on a secular job, or should the church provide them with a regular salary?

Paul affirms that the biblical thing is for the ministers of the Gospel to receive support from the church—"Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:13–14). To the Galatian church, he emphasises, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Galatians 6:6). Likewise, in his pastoral advice to Timothy, he reiterates, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And,

The labourer is worthy of his reward” (1 Timothy 5:17–18; cf. 2 Timothy 2:6). It is abundantly clear that Scripture stipulates that the beneficiaries of the ministry of God’s servants ought to supply their needs. The remuneration which they extend to the minister must adequately provide for his necessities and personal expenses in equipping himself for the ministry. Providing a salary that would sufficiently support the minister and his family is the duty of the church where he ministers.

Now, if it was Paul’s view that the church ought to remunerate the full-time workers of the church, why did he refuse his legitimate and irrefutable right to remuneration from the Corinthians at a great cost to himself? And why did he choose to be bi-vocational at times (cf. Acts 18:1–3)? Paul’s reason was that while he preached in pioneer areas in a pagan environment, he did not want the matter of his remuneration to be a distraction or hindrance to his hearers. He advocated greater flexibility in winning their hearts to the Gospel—“And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself” (2 Corinthians 11:9).

The same principle applies in our modern context, where modern missionaries also face similar circumstances

as Paul in their pioneering work. In such scenario, the sending churches must support the missionaries. By way of example, Paul himself gratefully accepted the help sent to him by the established churches, such as the church in Philippi—“I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity... Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction ... Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account ... having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God” (Philippians 4:10, 14–18).

## Conclusion

Without question, a generously supported church will be like a well-oiled machine that is smooth-running and productive. Such a congregation will become a channel of blessing in God’s work and bring glory and praise to God. Many servants of God and His people who benefit from our well-run ministries will offer praise to God, as Paul did for the generosity of the Philippian church. In our supporting of the church, God will see to it that we shall suffer no lack, as Paul assures us: “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19; cf. Psalm 34:10). Amen. ■

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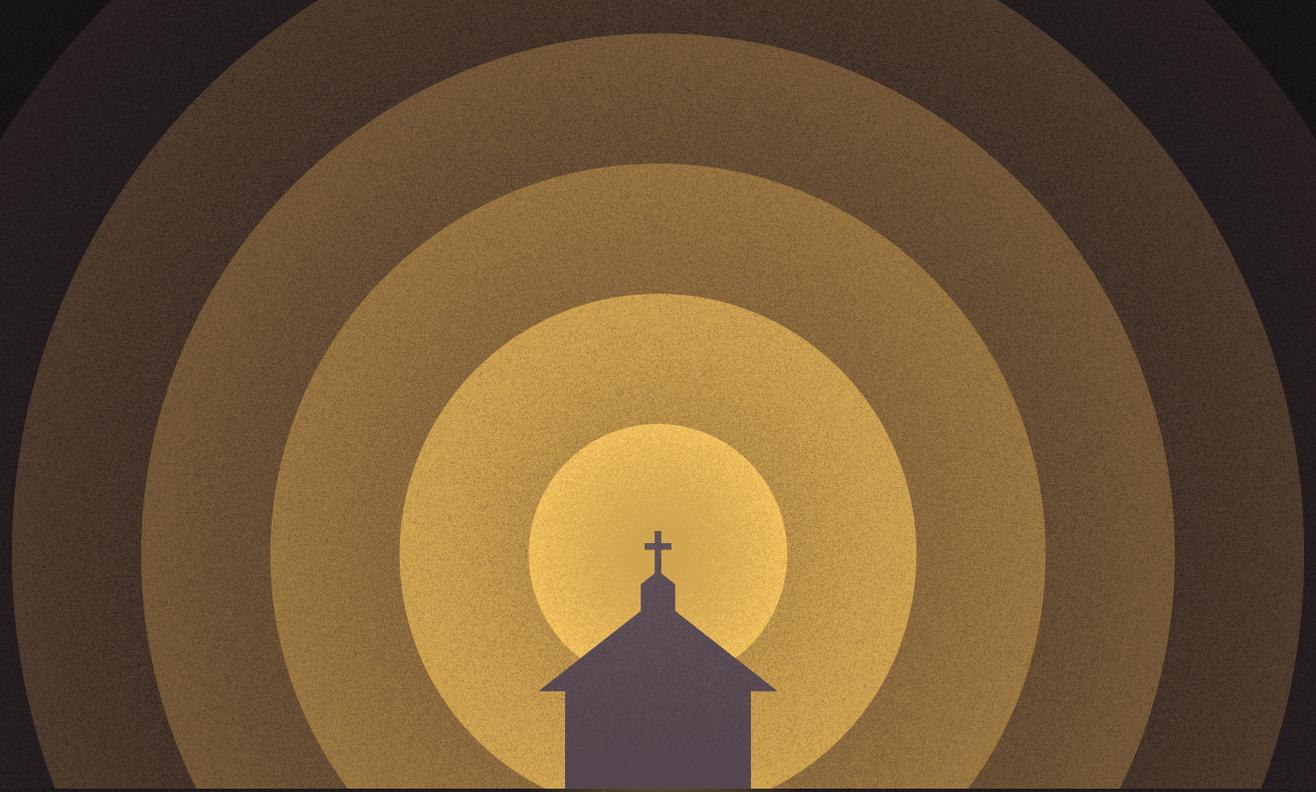
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be good stewards  
of His house.



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## “ADD TO” THE CHURCH (I)

# WITNESSING FOR CHRIST

**A**ll genuine believers should realise that they must give great importance to this duty of witnessing, which is instrumental in bringing about an abundant soul-harvest in the church. It is certainly not because there are no more people to be saved that we do not have a good harvest of souls. Our Lord said, “The harvest truly is plenteous” (Matthew 9:37). Jesus also said, “behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35).

Neither can we say that the small soul-harvest we see in these days is due to the lack of God’s provision for us to be effective in evangelism. The Lord has promised us: “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). Our Chief Aide, the Holy Spirit, has already come to strengthen us.

Some may say, “Well, there is a kind of ‘hardening of the ground’ going on in these days.” However, that observation overlooks a much greater problem, which is the fact that Christians are not witnessing as they ought to in these days. Many Christians are too busy with study, work, family and leisure. Their attitude towards evangelism is altogether appalling. They tell themselves, “When I am free, or when an opportunity comes my way, then I will bear witness for Christ.” Today, people go seeking for all sorts of achievements in life, but not for the conversion of souls. Oh that we believers will see the great importance of this duty from the Lord and go to spread the Gospel to those around us!

## Innate Nature of Every True Christian

Jesus has said to His disciples, “Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). Take note that the Lord did not say that you “will become the light”, but that you “are the light of the world”. Having been called by Christ out of the darkness of sin, we are to “[a]wake... that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give [us] light” (Ephesians 5:14). The apostle Paul explains it in another place as: “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). We are now no more in darkness; neither does darkness have power over our lives. So, we are told: “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye

light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8).

Christ has made us lights so that we may shine in this dark world of sin. That’s why He continued to say, “A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14b–16). The Christians’ (new) innate nature is to shine in a world that is in dire need of spiritual light. They cannot think of not being light, as they are already made light by Christ through His Word and His Spirit. So, shining for Christ and giving light to a people in darkness, is not a strange concept to Christians. We are called and prepared in Christ for that one purpose—to shine for Christ!

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Christ has made us  
lights so that we  
may shine in this  
dark world of sin.

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If we appreciate this truth, then the words of the prophet Isaiah to Israel are also applicable to us—“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isaiah 60:1–3). Oh, what sweet promise! May we Christians take hold of this precious promise and act upon it, that we may receive its sure promises—“Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” In other words, through our sharing of the Gospel message, souls shall be converted for Christ.

## Most Important Duty on Earth

The following are some biblical reasons why we must consider witnessing for Christ as our most important duty. May they convince and convict us of our spiritual obligation as witnesses of Christ.

### *It is a responsibility that comes with our special privilege in Christ.*

Believers are Christ’s special envoys on this earth, His only chosen vessels to carry the Gospel to the world. We are Christ’s ambassadors who, on His behalf, declare unto the world: “Be ye reconciled to God!” In Paul’s words, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he

hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:20–21). Everyone, who is thankful to the Lord for the gift of His special privilege as His ambassador, must be delighted that he is sent to preach the Gospel.

As ambassadors of Christ, we must preach the message of reconciliation to God through Christ with enthusiasm, exuberance and excitement. There should never be a sense of unhappiness or unwillingness in our heart when it comes to witnessing for Christ. Always remember that as Christians, we are His ambassadors wherever we are in this world. Therefore, our chief duty is to witness for Christ everywhere.

### *It is the most urgent duty we have towards the unsaved.*

Witnessing for Christ is undoubtedly our most important daily duty towards the unsaved, because there may not be a tomorrow for some of them. Paul recounted in 2 Corinthians 6:1–2 how he was careful to minister the Gospel as an urgent message to the hearers, that they may receive it “now” and not tomorrow. “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, **now** is the accepted time; behold, **now** is the day of salvation.)” Indeed, “To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts...” (Hebrews 3:7b–8a).

Surely, it is a great crime if we have kept back an urgent message that could have saved a man in peril. If the man

in danger does not regard the warning message, then the messenger is not guilty. Likewise, it is every Christian's duty to seriously think about the suddenness of death that can take the unbelievers around him to eternal hell. Should we not warn them about the judgment and then point them to Christ? Undeniably, witnessing for Christ is an urgent duty that we have towards the unsaved.

Jesus said, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2). Truly, the reason for the lack of increase in soul-winning is that we believers are not availing ourselves to the work. We are busy with too many things, except the work of soul-harvest. Notwithstanding, whom will God send as the labourers for the soul-harvest, but believers like you and me? Our Lord told us, "Follow

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We are busy with  
too many things,  
except the work of  
soul-harvest.

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me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Jesus has called us and given us His salvation. May we in grateful response win souls through the preaching of the Gospel.

***It demonstrates true submission and obedience to our Lord.***

The Lord, after His resurrection and prior to His ascension, repeatedly told His followers that they should go out and be witnesses of His Gospel everywhere. The message of this mandate, commonly known as the Lord's Great Commission, is echoed by all the four Gospel writers, namely Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Matthew wrote, "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 alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18–20). Mark declared, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15–16). John reported, "...as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). Luke highlighted Jesus' promise: "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).

Even more, throughout the Scriptures, we see the urgency of God

in calling sinners unto repentance and salvation. Oh, how the Spirit of God, the author of the Bible, wants us to be repeatedly reminded of our Master's charge! The Spirit of God desires that we, who follow the blessed Lord, neglect not His directive. So, let us submit readily, at all times, to fulfil His Great Commission (cf. Luke 14:23).

**It patterns after Christ's commitment to spread the Gospel.**

The path that Jesus wants us to go is the same path He Himself had walked by fulfilling His Father's will—"as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). So, let us carefully observe how Jesus viewed His Father's will concerning His ministry on earth.

Jesus expressed His heartfelt burden thus: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10; cf. Matthew 18:11). Jesus, being consumed by this purpose for which the Father hath sent Him, took a journey to the land of Samaria, a place avoided by the Jews of His time. There, He met and talked with a Samaritan

woman, which surprised His disciples. Later, when the woman went back to her people to tell them about Christ, the disciples asked Jesus to partake of the food they had bought, considering that He was hungry and tired after his long journey. But Jesus refused to eat their food while He waited for her to return with her people. He replied them, saying, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together" (John 4:34-36).

Jesus' hunger to win souls was far greater than His hunger for food. Such was His passion to win souls, because He knew that was His Father's will. Likewise we, who have committed our lives to be patterned after Christ, must strive to be like Christ in winning souls. Even if it takes the need to skip a meal to share the Gospel with someone, let

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it be done without grudges. We must be like Christ in spreading the Gospel. It is the desire of our loving Saviour that the Gospel of His love be preached everywhere, even “unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Indeed, “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:14). His love seeks to reach mankind even beyond the boundaries set by nation, race and language (cf. Revelation 14:6).

And in the current economic and political context, we, who are in Singapore, do have a wonderful opportunity to reach out to people of many nations who have come to work and reside in this country. We must share with them God’s love that gave His Son. May our good economic situation be used to good spiritual advantage in serving as a platform to promote missions worldwide. Oh, may we, being constrained by the love of God, go and seek those who are without Christ, and witness to them of Christ and His salvation!

## **Delight of All Who Await Christ’s Blessed Return**

Noteworthy, in Matthew 10:32, we read of Jesus as saying, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” In Luke 12:8, we read a very similar saying of our Lord, “Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before

the angels of God”. When our Lord returns, those who have laboured to witness to the world will receive an unprecedented and eternal honour from Him. He will commend them before God and His angels.

In a true Christian’s heart, nothing is sweeter than the words of appreciation and acclamation from his Saviour and Master. This special honour is reserved for all who confess Christ as the only Saviour and Lord before men. Everyone who magnifies Him by preaching His mercies and love shall surely be honoured, for they have given Him glory before men. This is affirmed by Paul when he wrote about this future joy to the believers in Thessalonica, who had believed the Gospel through his fervent witnessing—“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy” (1 Thessalonians 2:19–20). Indeed, there will be much joy at the coming of Christ for those who labour today. The apostle Paul encouraged the Corinthian believers in 1 Corinthians 3:8 (concerning their ongoing labours for the work of the Gospel), “Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour”—further reminding them that their “labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

The coming of the Lord is a great reason why we should see proclaiming Christ as the most important job on earth. When He comes again, He will honour all who have honoured Him by declaring His Gospel to the world. How delightful that will be! That day will also be a great day of honour

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to the Lord. When He presents us with the crowns, He is honoured for having saved us, and for having used us as His instruments. When we work hard to spread the Gospel, we shall bring glory to Him both now and forever, for our crowns shall manifest His mercy and power that make us His useful vessels in the ushering of souls to a glorious eternity. So dear Christian readers, labour now by honouring the Lord in witnessing for Christ as you await His blessed return, when He will delightfully commend and reward us before the Father and the angels.

## Conclusion

May our initial enthusiasm in witnessing for Christ not die off. Let us not allow difficulties or lethargy hinder our commitment and involvement in this God-given duty of evangelism. How wonderful it will be if our respective churches receive from the Lord a similar commendation as that received by the Thessalonian church from the apostle Paul: “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love... (and) that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad” (1 Thessalonians 1:2–3, 7–8). Amen. ■

## “ADD TO” THE CHURCH (II) WINNING SOULS

**T**he Lord has appointed His church to preach the Gospel of Christ for the reconciliation of sinners to God. Nothing gives the pastor or preacher of Christ’s Gospel greater pleasure than to seek the glory of God through soul-winning. May God grant us the same spirit of the apostle Paul, who said to King Agrippa, “I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were ... altogether such as I am, except these bonds” (Acts 26:29). The apostle’s clear aim

in bearing witness for Christ before all sorts of men, whether it be a king or a peasant, was the conversion of all whom he came into contact with.

Do you live as a Christian with the same clear aim? What exactly is your ambition as a witness of Christ? What would you have God do? May all who minister through the various ministries of the church, whether to children or to the elderly folks, sincerely seek the salvation of many. Let us preach



and teach, looking not just for one, or two, or a mere handful to come to Christ the Saviour; instead, may our heart's aspiration be: "Would to God that every single one whom I interact with come to Christ the Saviour through my witnessing!"

May we be truly apostolic in our evangelistic passion. The grand object of the Christian ministry is the glory of God, and it is to be mainly achieved by the winning of souls. If we do not win souls, we should mourn as the husbandman who sees no harvest; we should feel dejected as the fisherman who returns to his cottage with an empty net, or as the hunter who roams over hill and dale in vain, without any catch. Our heartfelt disappointment should equate to Isaiah's anguished utterance (with many a sigh and groan)—"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" (Isaiah 53:1). The ambassadors of peace should not cease to weep bitterly until sinners weep for their sins.

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Preach the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ for sinners, and proclaim pardon as its result.

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Having articulated our great aim in Christ, allow this writer to set before the readers some practical steps that every one of us should take if we are to be the instruments in God's hand for the conversion of men, women, boys and girls.

## **Depend Entirely upon the Spirit of God and Look to Him for Power over the Minds of Men**

This is absolutely necessary because it is the Holy Spirit who brings about spiritual conversion. Salvation of souls is a divine work (cf. John 3:5; Romans 8:2; 1 Corinthians 6:11). Constant reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit was characteristic of the apostles (as well as other great soul-winners of the past). To the Thessalonian Christians, the apostle Paul wrote, "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 1:5a). To the Corinthian church, he reaffirmed this important dependence: "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 2:4).

Dear brethren, the danger is that we feel very little of His power in these days. Do we not fail in many of our efforts, because we practically (though not doctrinally) ignore the Holy Spirit? His place as our God demands that

we should enthrone Him in all our enterprises—be it at the beginning, or in the midst, or at the end. We should always be mindful that we are the instruments of His unseen (leading) hand, and nothing more. Oh that we would be more truly sensitive of our need for the fullness of the Spirit’s enabling power! Then we would take heed of depending more on His help in our Gospel-sharing, that we may “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh [us] a reason of the hope that is in [us]” (1 Peter 3:15). May we pray more importunately to be anointed with His sacred unction, that our preaching and teaching will be real channels of His operation.

## **Give Prominent Place in Your Witnessing to the Gospel Truths which are Most Likely to Lead to Conversion**

**First and foremost, “preach Christ crucified” (1 Corinthians 1:23).**

Preach the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ for sinners, and proclaim pardon as its result. This is the “great net” of Gospel “fishermen”. True, the souls of the elect are also drawn or driven in the right direction by other truths of the Gospel. Related to Christ’s substitutionary atonement are all those doctrines which cluster around the Person and work of Christ, the justice of God, the love of God, repentance,

faith, etc. But the truth of the atoning death of Christ is the “net”. Where Jesus Christ is exalted as the Saviour, souls are attracted. The preaching of the cross is, to them that are saved, “the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24).

**Teach the depravity of human nature.**

This is the doctrine that convinces a sinner of his need of a Saviour. It is an unfashionable truth in these days. Preachers are busy talking about “the dignity of human nature”. Brethren, we must not be in any delusion about the significance of showing the sinfulness of the human heart. To extenuate the evil of our lost estate is not the way to lead men to Jesus.

Be specific about the many sins that plague us. Talk about sin, not superficially glancing at the evil of sin, but mentioning various sins in detail, especially those most current in our days. Use the Ten Commandments, like the Lord Jesus, to show how they are being broken by evil thoughts, intents and imaginations. By this means, many sinners will be pricked in their hearts. Charles Spurgeon, a great soul-winner himself, said, “The law goes first, like the needle, and draws the gospel thread after it: therefore preach concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. Aim at the heart. Probe the wound and touch the very quick of the soul.”

**Set before your hearer(s) God’s justice and the certainty that every transgression will be punished.**

Paul preached of “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come” (Acts 24:25), and made Felix (the

governor) tremble. These themes are equally powerful in our contemporary context. We rob the Gospel of its power if we leave out the threats of punishment from God. Today, false doctrines such as “annihilation” and “no fiery hell” are forcing preachers to speak less or nothing at all about the eternal condemnation in hell. Such an attitude is causing one great means of conversion to be left unused.

**Preach earnestly the love of God in Christ.**

Magnify the abounding mercy of the Lord—“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16–17). Yet, be sure to always preach it in connection with God’s justice. Never exalt one divine attribute at the expense of another. Do not underrate the infiniteness, eternity, and unchangeability of God’s holiness and justice. The true character of God is fitted to awe, impress and humble the sinner, and then to move him to seek His mercy and pardon because of His great love. Be careful not to misrepresent your Lord!

**We must in plainest terms preach justification by faith.**

Justification is being declared righteous and judged “Not Guilty!” by God. The justification of sinners is made possible because Christ has satisfied God’s law and justice. We are justified by faith through the finished work of Christ. “Therefore being justified by

faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1–2). This is the method by which the atonement becomes effectual in the soul’s experience. Justification by faith must never be obscured—preach it passionately, clearly, boldly.

**Tell your hearer(s) about the aid of the Holy Spirit for a sinner to repent and believe.**

To cause anyone to think that by his own abilities he can be saved is a damnable heresy. Salvation is of the Lord. We must therefore speak of the divine operation of the Holy Spirit that convicts a sinner of his sins, and of his need for the Saviour. We must urge the hearers to take heed of the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit to forsake sin and come to Christ.

These foregoing truths (among others), which are essential parts of the Gospel message, are necessary to lead men to faith. Therefore, make them the main emphasis of your evangelistic attempts.

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Justification by faith must never be obscured—preach it passionately, clearly, boldly.

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# Use Appropriate Modes of Handling These Truths for Securing That End

**The best way to draw sinners to Christ is to preach Christ to sinners.**

Exhortations, entreaties and beseeching, if not accompanied by the sound doctrine of Christ, are like firing without bullets. You may shout, and weep, and plead, but you cannot lead men to believe what they have not heard, nor to receive a truth which has never been set before them. Indeed, “how shall they believe in him (Christ) of whom they have not heard?” (Romans 10:14). So, preach Christ, “who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world” (Galatians 1:4a).

**As preachers of Christ, adorn yourself with holy virtues.**

Paul advised Timothy to “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this

thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16). A godly and devout man, who is large-hearted and self-sacrificing, has a power in his very person. His advice and recommendation carry weight because of his character. When he comes to plead and persuade (even unto tears), his influence is wonderful, and God the Holy Spirit yokes it to his service.

**Plead with sinners by way of emotional persuasion.**

Brethren, we must plead. Entreaties and beseechings must blend with our instructions. Any and every appeal which will reach the consciences and move men to flee to Jesus, we must perpetually employ, if perchance by any means we may save some. But always do this in absolute sincerity; any affectation is despicable.

**Appeal to the understanding.**

Spurgeon said, “True religion is as logical as if it were not emotional ... Of carnal reasoning we would have none, but of fair, honest pondering, considering, judging, and arguing the more the better.” The Christian faith

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“True religion is as logical as if it were not emotional ... Of carnal reasoning we would have none, but of fair, honest pondering, considering, judging, and arguing the more the better.”—Charles Spurgeon

is not some mystical superstition. It is a faith that “cometh by hearing, and hearing by the (sound, logical) word of God” (Romans 10:17). Ours is a reasonable, explainable faith (cf. 1 Peter 3:15).

### **Preach believably and solemnly.**

Everyone who preaches Christ must have absolute trust in the efficacy of the Gospel that he preaches. “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). Always expect the Lord, who has sent you, to bless His own word—this will give us a quiet confidence which will eradicate fear, doubt, rashness and weariness. Preach very solemnly, for it is a weighty business, but let your matter be lively and pleasing, for this will prevent solemnity from souring into dreariness.

### **Make time for visitation.**

Make yourself available to and converse with people. Find opportunities to tell the Gospel to others. Seek out the wandering sheep one by one, and when you find them, point them to the Good

Shepherd. Call, every now and then, on a friendly neighbour, or fellow student or co-worker, in order to tell him of our blessed Saviour. Let there also be special informal meetings to follow up on those awakened, anxious souls. Those few moments of dialogue can be instrumental in enabling them to receive further instruction, prayer, as well as sharings of edifying testimonies by recent converts.

It must also be noted that we must avoid persuading hearers to make a profession without conviction and genuine faith. Nonetheless, there should be every opportunity for hearers to have their doubts cleared, errors rectified, and terrors dispelled by a few moments of discerning conversation.

## **Conclusion**

Finally, beloved brethren, by any means, by all means, labour to glorify God through soul-winning, and rest not till your heart’s desire is fulfilled. May we be constrained by the love of Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:14). Truly, “he that winneth souls is wise” (Proverbs 11:30b)! ■

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# BIBLE TRIVIA

## NUMBERS 32:1–29

SARAH YONG

As the children of Israel proceeded towards the Promised Land, they came to the land on the east side of the Jordan River.

**Complete the narrative by choosing (from the clauses given in the box) a suitable ending for each of the statements on the facing page.**

- a. ye shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession.
- b. they saw that the land of Jazer and Gilead was suitable for cattle.
- c. this could discourage the children of Israel from going over into the Promised Land.
- d. requested that the land be given unto them for a possession, without having to cross over Jordan River.
- e. be ready to fight together with the children of Israel to conquer the land of Canaan.
- f. if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD and be sure your sin will find you out.
- g. if they turned away from after the LORD, they would also suffer the same fate.



1. The children of Reuben and the children of Gad had much cattle, and ..... [ ]
2. These two tribes spoke unto Moses, Eleazar and the princes, and ..... [ ]
3. Moses insisted that they should not remain behind while their brethren went to war, for ..... [ ]
4. He reminded them of the forty years of wandering in the wilderness as the LORD's punishment upon those who did not wholly follow the LORD, and ..... [ ]
5. They assured Moses that after building sheepfolds and fenced cities, they would leave behind their families, and ..... [ ]
6. Moses conditionally agreed, provided they would go armed before the LORD to war until the enemies be driven out and the land be subdued, with this added warning: But ..... [ ]
7. So, Moses commanded Eleazar, Joshua and the chief fathers of Israel's tribes: If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass with you over Jordan, every man armed to battle, before the LORD, and the land shall be subdued before you, then ..... [ ]

**Answers to Bible Trivia—Numbers 31**  
**(Vol. 21, Iss. 6, p. 33)**

1) thousand, 2) twelve, 3) Five, 4) captives, 5) fire, 6) wrath, 7) kill, 8) purified, 9) seventh, 10) offering

# HUDSON TAYLOR (1832-1905) PART XI

Retold by Jenny Lok  
Illustrated by Andronicus Koshy

Retold from:

- *"To China With Love"* by Hudson Taylor, published by Dimension Books, Bethany Fellowship, Inc., Minneapolis, Minnesota, the United States
- *"Hudson Taylor—God's Man in China"* by Dr & Mrs Howard Taylor, published by Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois, the United States
- *"Hudson Taylor and Maria, Pioneers in China"* by J. C. Pollock, published by Kingsway Publications Ltd, the United Kingdom
- *"God's Adventurer"* by Phyllis Thompson, published by Overseas Missionary Fellowship (IHQ) Ltd, Singapore

When Captain Bowers received the news that both Rev. Burns and Hudson would be going to Swatow, he was overjoyed as predicted. In March that year (1856), the three men set sail for Swatow in Captain Bowers' ship. He was kind to extend his hospitality to the missionaries and did not charge them a single cent. A 6-day journey brought them to Double Island, a short distance from the port of Swatow.

On Double Island, the missionaries saw a community of foreigners who were notorious for their involvement in selling opium and in other vices too. Their immediate need was to look for suitable accommodation, away from the lodging of those foreigners. Both men found out that it was no easy task, as they tried approaching the natives to rent a room for their stay in Swatow.

"We've been walking non-stop for quite some time, but there isn't a single soul who would rent a room to strangers. I must admit that I'm feeling rather exhausted!" Hudson groaned while stopping to catch his breath.

"Do not be discouraged, my son," Rev. Burns comforted Hudson with fatherly affection. "Remember, Philippians 4:19 promises us that '[our] God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus'." Hudson's weariness and anxiety seemed to have vanished at the timely reminder. Both resumed walking, this time with renewed confidence and hope in the Lord. A few minutes later, they could see a gentleman approaching from a distance.

"He looks like a merchant. Perhaps we can seek help from him," Rev Burns said hopefully. As the man came near, Rev. Burns greeted him in the Cantonese dialect (commonly used in the town of Swatow), saying, "Good day to you, Sir! We are new to this city and are planning to stay here for a season. We have tried, but failed to find a room to rent. Could you please direct us to an available one?"

For a brief moment, the gentleman stared at Rev. Burns, looking surprised but pleased.

"You speak the Cantonese dialect so fluently! That happens to be my dialect too! I'm glad to meet you and yes, I'll surely help you to find a room to rent!"

True to his word, the gentleman, who was actually related to the highest official in Swatow, managed to help them find a room which was directly above an incense shop. Despite the high rental by Shanghai standards, the two missionaries were only too grateful to find temporary lodging in a foreign city. Both did not complain even if they had discovered that there was no proper ceiling except for the tiled roof above them. Imagine that during summer, the roof tiles would be scalding hot! Nevertheless, they partitioned the single room into 3 sections—2 tiny bedrooms and a narrow



path which served as a living room—using only a few sheets to separate their beds and making do with some boards for their pillows. A table was also set up with only a box lid placed across two stacks of books.

Shortly after they had settled in, Rev. Burns and Hudson started making their rounds in the city. As they met with the locals, they realised the situation in Swatow was worse than that in the town of Wuchen (also known as Black Town) where they had previously made much effort to preach the Gospel.

“Well, Hudson, we must prepare ourselves to deal with a hostile and unruly people here,” said Rev. Burns, his expression serious yet unafraid.

“Indeed, especially the Cantonese-speaking natives who call us ‘foreign devil’, ‘foreign dog’ or ‘foreign pig!’” Hudson lamented, shaking his head at the unpleasant memories of being insulted by the locals.

“In Isaiah 53:3, we have read how Jesus was ‘despised and rejected of men’. Being disciples of Christ, we must look to Him as our example and comfort, for we cannot expect anything less than the present unkind treatment,” added Rev. Burns.

“Oh, help me Lord, to do just that!” Hudson prayed aloud.

Swatow was truly infamous for being a dangerous place, not only to foreigners, but also to the inhabitants comprising different clans in the community. It was commonly said that the entire district was unruly, for it was “without emperor, without ruler, and without law”! Hudson knew very well that he and Rev. Burns could be kidnapped (and ransom demanded for their release) at any time and day if they ventured to preach the Gospel in the streets. Despite that, both missionaries trusted in the Lord’s leading and remained faithful in reaching out to the natives. How they thanked God for preserving them and giving them much courage in the face of danger to their lives!

One day, Hudson was summoned to appear at the residence of the chief mandarin of Swatow. His heart skipped a beat, for he wondered if he had unknowingly offended the authorities. However, when he realised that the mandarin had fallen ill and needed medical attention, the fluttering in his chest was gone in an instant!

Arriving at the grand and imposing residence of the mandarin, Hudson followed a servant down a cool and quiet hallway into the private room of the mandarin.

“Sir, I have come at your request. How can I be of service to you?” Hudson greeted the mandarin respectfully in the local dialect.

“Thank you, Mr Taylor, for being so kind to be here. I have heard that you are a very skilful physician, and many have been healed by your medicine. So far, the local doctors have not been able to relieve me of my ailment. I really hope you can help me,” replied the mandarin, who was seated on a chair, looking pale and drawn. Without delay, Hudson set to work. After conducting a short medical examination, he prescribed some medicine for the mandarin and advised him to rest for the next few days.

The mandarin eventually made full recovery, and Hudson was so delighted and relieved that he could only say, “All glory be unto His Name!” Following this, the mandarin personally offered to lend a helping hand to both missionaries to start a hospital and dispensary in Swatow. Hudson was bubbling over with joy and excitement by the good news. He started making plans to return to Shanghai to gather all his surgical instruments and supply of medicine.

About 4 months later in early July, Hudson bade farewell to Rev. Burns and left for Shanghai, hoping to return to Swatow in a few weeks’ time. Before he left, Hudson expressed his heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to Rev. Burns, saying, “Thank you for the many times that we’ve laboured



together in Swatow and Double Island. Though I'm still struggling to learn the local language, your encouragement has helped me a long way. Besides, the intense summer heat often leaves me drenched in perspiration, but I've learnt to bear with it, just as you've done so. Let's look forward to the medical work that is ahead of us on my return to Swatow."

"Young man, I'm equally happy to labour with you. Let's commit our work to the Lord. May His will be done!" Rev. Burns replied, his face crinkling up in a warm and tender smile.

Alas, upon arrival in Shanghai, Hudson received the shocking news—all his medicine and medical tools had been destroyed by a fire that razed the grounds of the premises where they were stored! Without them, how could he and Rev. Burns start any dispensary or hospital? His dream of a quick return to Swatow was totally crushed! It was then that the truth in Proverbs 16:9 struck home—"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps." Hudson bowed before God in humility and submitted to His will, even as disappointment and sadness filled his heart.

The immediate plan was to go to Ningpo to look for Dr William Parker, his fellow missionary from the Chinese Evangelisation Society, which supported their work in China. Taking with him whatever remaining belongings he had in Shanghai, Hudson prepared himself for a long trip to Ningpo, via the city of Haining.

"Well, this journey to Ningpo must be taken as a mission tour as much as possible. I hope that I have brought sufficient Christian tracts and books to distribute to the natives. It would be a golden opportunity to preach God's Word in this manner," Hudson thought to himself, as he and his accompanying servant placed his bamboo box and bed inside the boat for the trip.

For the next 14 days, Hudson busied himself with his Gospel outreach whenever the boat made its stops. Finally, Hudson reached Shihmenwan, a large town, where he would have to continue his journey on foot. Shortly, he managed to engage 2 coolies, and his servant was to follow the men and watch over his possessions all the way to the city of Changwan, where they would take a break and then proceed to Haining.

Seeing the men trudging slowly down the streets, Hudson went ahead, expecting the men to meet him later with his belongings. The afternoon wore on, and Hudson started to feel the scorching heat from the midday sun. Soon, his feet were covered with blisters, and walking became difficult and painful. He had no choice but to stop and wait for the men to turn up. The afternoon sun gradually turned into an orange glow in the night sky, but still the men were nowhere in sight.

By now, Hudson started to feel uneasy. "Could the men have gone ahead or have they made off with my belongings?" he wondered. He made several inquiries along the way, but to no avail. At last, exhausted and disheartened by the turn of events, he began to look for a place to rest his head for the night. All that he was offered by a landlord was a miserable room cramped with close to 10 or 11 lodgers. Poor Hudson, he had to spend a most uncomfortable night sleeping on a few boards supported by 2 stools!

The next day, Hudson continued his search for the missing men and goods. The hunt took him all the way to Haining. Despite his desperate situation, Hudson attempted to speak a word for Christ to the folks in the villages there. Before long, night fell and he had to look for a resting place again. This time, he was unable to seek shelter anywhere and his heart was increasingly anxious. His eyes swept the area where he was standing, and he spotted a temple opposite. The temple was closed and the stone steps near the entrance looked like a possible sleeping area.

Hudson dragged his weary body up the steps and lay down on the cold hard stone, using his small money bag as a pillow. His eyes were heavy, and he almost dozed off when a sudden noise awakened him...

*(To be continued)*



*Original line work taken from 'Hudson Taylor: The Man Who Dared'.*

# BE CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY

## 20<sup>TH</sup> BIBLE WITNESS RETREAT

**Speaker:** Pastor Prabhudas Koshy

**Dates:** 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> March 2022 (Wednesday–Friday)

**Timings:** 10.30am–12.30pm; 2.00pm–4.00pm

**Venue:** Gethsemane Media Centre,  
33 Ubi Crescent, Singapore 408584

The 20<sup>th</sup> Bible Witness Retreat will be held during the March school holidays at Gethsemane Media Centre (GMC). Please register for the retreat at [biblewitness.com/beclothed](https://biblewitness.com/beclothed).

A concurrent programme for children—*Bible Witness Kids*—will only be held via Zoom. All children are encouraged to sign up at [biblewitness.com/bwkids](https://biblewitness.com/bwkids).