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COUNTERACTING
COMMON
LIES
OF THE DEVIL



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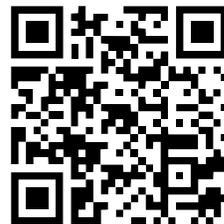
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On the Cover ▲

The devil is called “the old serpent” in Revelation, and also the father of lies in John 8:44.



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COUNTERACTING COMMON LIES OF THE DEVIL

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All articles in this issue were written by the Rev. Dr Prabhudas Koshy, Pastor of Gethsemane B-P Church, Singapore, and Editor of the Bible Witness Magazine.

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COMMON LIES ABOUT GOD

Jesus has said about the devil, “He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44b). The devil constantly lies, that he may deceive men into disbelieving the truth. Indeed, he is “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). The devil unceasingly tries to deceive Christians with his lies to turn them away from God and His truth. Jesus has warned His hearers of this danger, when He said, “Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot

hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do ... And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not ... And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God” (John 8:43–44a, 45–47).

Clearly, the truth of God’s Word is the Christians’ most effective shield against the devil’s lies. “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:5–6). Thanks be to God, whenever the devil utters his lie, we can counteract it by recalling the truth of God’s Word! This article shall highlight some of the devil’s common lies about God that Christians often struggle with, and the Scriptural antidote to them.

“God is not really good!”

In times of loss, failure and troubles, many are compelled to think that God is not good or kind. The devil brings thoughts like: “If God is good, these problems would not have occurred.”

God is good, and everything He does is good. God never makes mistakes. When all seems to go wrong, we must refuse to give up the truth of God’s Word that God is good. If we patiently wait upon the Lord, we shall see the goodness of the Lord emerging from the adverse circumstances. “The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him” (Nahum 1:7). “The LORD is good

unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him” (Lamentations 3:25). “O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing” (Psalm 34:8–10).

Let us confess with our mouth, believing in our heart, “Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!” (Psalm 31:19). God always has our best interests at heart, if we truly trust and obey Him.

“God doesn’t love me!”

Another lie that the devil whispers to the suffering child of God is that God does not love him. He then mocks, “If He loves you, why do you have to suffer?”

God’s love for His people is too marvellous to describe—“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1a)! The apostle John reiterates, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). God’s love for His children is eternal, and it will never cease. If we have sinned, let us repent, for He will forgive us in His lovingkindness. If we are in trouble, let us call upon Him, for He lovingly cares for us. “If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how

shall he not with him also freely give us all things? ...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:31–37)!

Let us assure our hearts, for God loves all His people (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:16). Let us continue to trust in our loving Lord, though the devil whispers, “God does not love you.” Like David, let us say, “How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings” (Psalm 36:7)!

“God is not sufficient!”

The devil causes severe anxiety in some Christians’ minds by making them doubt that God is sufficient for a successful life. He has led many to think: “If I merely pursue that which God teaches in the Bible, then I will not progress in life.” Such a notion leads many to accept compromising principles and questionable practices, thinking these will bring great happiness and success.

On the contrary, the Bible teaches us that God alone is enough for His people. He is all that we need. If we have Him, we have all that we really need. The apostle Paul has said, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God” (2 Corinthians 3:5). He assures the Philippian believers that “my God shall supply all your

need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19; cf. Psalm 34:10). Anything that God does not give us, we should not desire. God gives all that are needful and good for us, and removes everything that is not good for us. To desire that which God does not permit is to flirt with that which is dangerous to our souls. The Lord Jesus tells us, “And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Luke 12:29–31).

Let us not believe the devil’s lie that God is not really enough for us. We have wonderful promises of God’s sufficient provisions in life. “For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee” (Psalm 84:11–12).

“God’s ways are too restrictive!”

Satan not only wants Christians to doubt God’s sufficiency, he also wants Christians to think of God as a “kill-joy”, and that following God’s ways somehow deprives us of our joys and benefits. To discourage us from walking in holiness, the devil often presents the Word of God as too restrictive. He used this device in his temptation of Eve when he cast aspersions on God’s Word, “Yea, hath God said...?” (Genesis 3:1b).

God’s commandments are good, and His ways are the best. “As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him” (Psalm 18:30). Indeed, “I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:96–97). God’s law is all-encompassing enough to keep us satisfied. However, it is restrictive in the sense of restraining us from encroaching into the domain of wickedness. God’s “restrictions” are always for our good, to keep us from misery.

“God will not forgive!”

Yet another subtle way the devil may cast doubt on God’s lovingkindness occurs when a Christian is filled with sorrow and remorse, at the remembrance of his sin he has committed against his Saviour. Here’s where the devil will quickly come with this disturbing thought: “O, this time you will not be forgiven. So many times you have asked for forgiveness, but you haven’t changed. God already knows that you will not change. So He will not forgive!”

Admittedly, the Bible records that some Christians do struggle with certain sin and they must constantly seek to lay it aside. “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1b). In other words, God’s Word encourages us to constantly forsake every sin. There is no sin too great for God to forgive. “Seek ye

the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:6–7). God pardons abundantly! It is our Lord’s message to all the backsliding ones to return to Him, that He may forgive them (cf. Jeremiah 3:12–13a).

When we examine ourselves in the light of God’s law, our sins will be exposed, which may be very many. But He is gracious to forgive our guilt-ridden hearts (cf. Romans 5:20–21). God’s grace is greater than the greatest sin anyone could ever commit. The blood of Jesus is sufficient to cover any and every sin we have committed. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8–9). Amen. ■



COMMON LIES ABOUT SIN

Satan our adversary constantly seeks to corrupt the minds of God's people with his lies about God and spiritual truths (cf. John 8:44). With his lies, he distracts Christians from proper thinking and reasoning. He deceives them not only with outright lies, but also with half-truths, twisted-truths and misleading facts. This wily enemy has been often successful in influencing believers with his lies, even lies about the nature and consequences of sin. He uses them to great effect to deceive us into falling for his temptations of sin.

“Your sin isn't really that bad!”

One common lie which the devil often whispers in the ears of sinning Christians is that their sins are not really that bad. They are led to believe that some sins are less evil, and are inclined

to be tolerated. For instance, one who is angry is tempted to say, “If I use an unwholesome word to scold my spouse, surely I am not committing a grave sin like murder.” But the Bible warns us that such evil communication will lead to further evil acts. “The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; and the end of his talk is mischievous madness” (Ecclesiastes 10:13)!

Like the psalmist, may we realise the abomination and gravity of any sin in the sight of God. “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Psalm 130:3). God's wrath can strike against us for the sins we have committed against Him. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper” (Proverbs 28:13). By quietly entertaining sin, we receive only God's displeasure. A fearful example of the danger of thinking lightly of a sin (such as lying) is found in the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). They were led

by Satan to think that giving a false representation about the amount of money they received when they sold their property, is an insignificant and negligible matter. But God severely punished them for their lie by striking them dead (Acts 5:3–5, 8–10).

Take note that any and every sin is evil and evoke God's displeasure and wrath. The least sin is contrary to the law of God and His glory, and is often punished severely by God. It was Thomas Watson who had cried out, saying, “Oh! Therefore, when Satan says it is but a little sin, do thou say, Oh! But those sins that thou callest little, are such as will cause God to rain hell out of heaven upon sinners as he did upon the sodomites!”

Moreover, a so-called “small sin” can corrupt our minds and lead us into greater evil. So Paul warns us, “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, ... therefore let us keep ... not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:6–8). Always remember that a lesser sin has been the ushering in of a greater. Giving way to a lesser sin makes way for the committing of a greater.

“You can sin and get away with it!”

Another lie of the devil about sin is that punishment from God is not a certain thing. He would even point to others who live in similar sins and have not

been troubled by their sinful actions to emphasise the point that we have no need to fear any consequences. The devil will try to lead you into thinking: “You can sin and get away with it!”

But make no mistake: sin will be punished. Sin is “bittersweet”. It will usher in most tragic losses that can befall our souls. The apostle Peter warns us, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17). In other words, Peter is saying, “Judgment of sin is certain, even to Christians. Nobody is going to get away. In His time, God will judge.” We must always remember that God has severely punished what appeared to be a small sin in man's heart. We read in the Scriptures that God had meted out death as punishment for gathering a few sticks on the Sabbath day (Numbers 15:32–36), for touching the ark (2 Samuel 6:6–8), and for lying to the apostles (Acts 5:1–10).

Sin exacts a devastating toll. There are no exceptions. If we play with fire, we will get burned. We will not escape the consequences of our sins. We will reap what we sow (cf. Galatians 6:7).

“You are not responsible for your action, because you are provoked!”

Really, sin is damning, no matter how one tries to excuse it. Do not allow the devil to cause you to justify your

sinful action by telling you, "Now you are provoked. So you can respond however you may like."

The clear teaching of the Bible is this: "Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil ... If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:16b–21). "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (1 Thessalonians 5:15). The apostle Paul further corroborates this Scriptural truth in his admonition

to the Ephesian Christians: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:31–32).

We are responsible for our own choice of response. If we respond in an ungodly manner, we are then no different from the one who offended us! So, resist the devil's instigation to respond to others' offences in an unloving and ungodly manner. As children of God, we are to avoid evil actions or reactions and every form of revenge at all times, "that [we] may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom [we] shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15). ■



COMMON LIES ABOUT SERVING IN CHURCH

Our Lord Jesus tells us that the devil is a liar through and through (John 8:44). We should never, never "give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27). Rather, we should "resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). If we don't put up a resistance to the devil's advancement, we will soon be overwhelmed by his tactics.

By whispering his lies into the minds of believers, the devil attempts to hinder their walk with God, including their active and joyful service in the church.

SOTERIOLOGY FOR KIDS

SOTERIOLOGY FOR KIDS

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In this article, this writer shall expose the devil's lies intended to discourage believers from serving God, to the end that we may prepare ourselves with the truth of God's Word for a strong defence against his wiles.

“You are not worthy to serve in the church!”

In Zechariah 3, we read of Satan opposing Joshua, the high priest, from serving the LORD. The context of this record clearly implies that Satan took issue with Joshua's filthy priestly garments in order to stop Joshua from serving the LORD. (The filthy garments very well are a representation of the sins of Israel.) Likewise, the devil effectively hinders Christians from serving, by reminding them of their sins and whispering to them that they are not worthy to serve because of those sins. He goads a great many Christians into musing on their sins more than on the forgiveness of their Saviour.

Jesus has not removed the presence of sin. Satan will always molest our souls with sinful temptations and with the memory of our past sins. But let us remember that if we trust the Lord and walk according to His promises and instructions, sin cannot take us again unto bondage. His promises of forgiveness and of His Spirit's aid will help us break free from every discouragement brought by the devil. The LORD then instructively told Joshua, who was hindered by the devil, “Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee

with change of raiment” (Zechariah 3:4). The LORD gave Joshua a new set of clean priestly garment and then encouraged him to serve Him. “If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by” (Zechariah 3:7). This is most comforting, for the Lord likewise will forgive us and encourage us to serve Him. Thus, when you feel you are unworthy for His service, go to the Lord in prayer for cleansing and renewing of strength. Instead of keeping away from serving, trust in His grace and forgiveness, and yield yourself to serve Him.

Hebrews 9:14 records for us a wonderful promise that the blood of Christ purges us, so that we may serve the living God. “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14). Sin may be present, but God's grace and forgiveness are also abundant towards us who trust in Christ. Let not the devil's confusing remarks about our sins overwhelm our desire to serve the Lord in the church.

“You don't have time to serve the Lord!”

Another lie of the devil hindering our duty to serve God in the church is the oft-repeated excuse that we really don't have any time to do God's work amidst our own busy schedule. You can be sure that Satan would not mind Christians engaging relentlessly in the care of

their individual and family lives, or immersing themselves in their material and pleasurable pursuits of life.

As Christians, we should not be living for this world. The Word of God tells us that our greatest desire, like Christ, should be how we can do the will of God in the time He has given to us. We are commanded in 1 Peter 1:17, “And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear”. We may be busy in very many things of this world. But let us remember that on the day of judgment, only that which is done for Christ shall be rewarded. The more heaven there is in our hearts, the less of earth we shall serve. There will not be another life to do the work of the

Sin may be present, but God's grace and forgiveness are also abundant towards us who trust in Christ. Let not the devil's confusing remarks about our sins overwhelm our desire to serve the Lord in the church.

Lord. Now is the time to serve the Lord, before death comes or before the Lord returns. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

God's Word exhorts us to work before the night comes when no man can work (cf. John 9:4). It behoves us, therefore, to “see then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:15–17).

“You don't have enough abilities to serve in the church!”

The devil's relentless attempts to discourage Christians from serving know no bounds. He sometimes does so by suggesting that they are not capable of serving the Lord. He will highlight to them their inability to do certain tasks, with the ill-intention of disheartening them, so much so that they become too demoralised to ever attempt to do anything at all in the church.

But dearly beloved, please remember that every Christian is enabled by the Holy Spirit with a spiritual gift to serve. While describing the functions of the spiritual gifts that the Spirit has given to His people to serve and edify the church, Paul clearly said this manifestation of the Spirit is given to all. “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are

differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal” (1 Corinthians 12:4–7).

We may not be able to do the same work as others. This is because God has not appointed all of us to do the same work. God’s appointment for each Christian is different. Like different members of the body, we may complement one another as we fulfil our own God-given abilities. No matter how small may be the work that you can do, there is always room for you to serve. Every service, however small it may appear, is appointed of God, and is therefore greatly significant for the edification of the church.

“You don’t have to serve, because there are enough people to serve!”

That the devil will try at all costs to keep Christians out of the Lord’s service is unquestionable. Yet another common ploy used by the devil is the suggestion that there is no need for new people to serve in the church, as there are already enough people around to serve in existing roles in the church. But this assertion goes contrary to Jesus’ declaration: “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few” (Matthew 9:37).

In Christian work, there is always room for every Christian to serve.

Scripture is replete with commands and exhortation to serve one another. For example, “love one another” (1 Peter 1:22), “use hospitality one to another” (1 Peter 4:9), “comfort one another” (1 Thessalonians 4:18), “by love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13). These “one another” commands clearly indicate that no Christian is exempted from Christian service. Every believer is called to service.

“Why serve, if nobody notices or appreciates your service!”

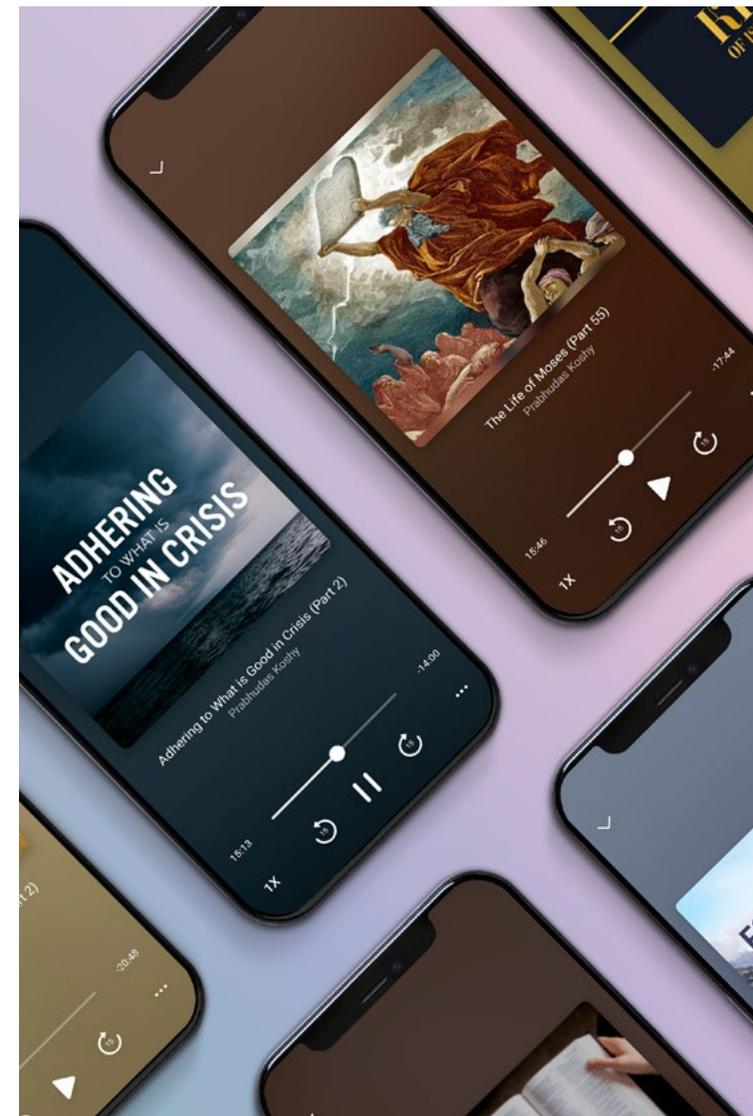
Now, Satan not only tries to prevent Christians from entering into a life of service, but also strives to make Christians abandon their service in the church. He often makes use of misunderstandings, criticisms, lack of support, etc. to make us believe that no one cares about what we do.

God’s Word has already prepared us for such scenario: “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5). Endurance of affliction—whether in the form of hardships, oppositions or lack of appreciation—proves one’s commitment to the Lord and His calling. Hardships help to prove our faithfulness. So, press on, dear Christian. If we quit serving God because of a little bit of hardship, we will not be able to help God’s people to grow in the Lord. When we flee from Christian service, we also fail to do His

will concerning us. Our great calling in the church is to edify one another, even through sufferings.

In this matter, the apostle Paul is a fine example. He wrote, “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Timothy 2:10). Surely, such

an attitude proves our unselfish love for others, thereby manifesting our commitment and sincerity, and ultimately God appreciates it. In the final analysis, that is all that matters: hearing our Lord’s “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21), that we may enter into the joy of our Lord! ■



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COMMON LIES ABOUT MARITAL LIFE



The husband-wife relationship is the most intimate of all human relationships, and is meant to be a reflection of the close spiritual union concerning Christ and the church (cf. Ephesians 5:31–33). Yet, it is the relationship that is most fraught with misguided notions, frustrations and disillusionment. To create a chaotic situation in Christian homes, the devil often instigates the spouses to ignore God’s imperatives concerning their attitudes towards each other. He often takes advantage of one spouse’s failure to provoke the other to neglect God’s clear injunctions concerning each other’s marital obligations.

No thanks to the devil’s lies, it has been commonly observed that in times of obvious misbehaviour of their wives, many Christian husbands are prone to

feel justified in not dealing with them lovingly. The converse is also true. In many a troubled relationship with their husbands, the wives felt they have good reason not to reverence their husbands or fulfil their biblical role at home.

“Your wife does not deserve your love, for she is so defiant!”

Without exception, the Bible always commands the husbands to deal with their wives lovingly at all times. Even when their wives appear to have taken their love for granted and responded disrespectfully, they should neither keep grudges nor deal with them bitterly. Do not succumb to the tempting and easy option of tit-for-tat reaction. “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them” (Colossians 3:19).

Certainly, the biblical command to love the wives does not mean agreeing with or approving of their ideas, when they are unbiblical. Loving the wives does not mean loving their errors. Rather, it is a call to lovingly correct their wrongs, and patiently win them to the biblical ways. A husband’s love for his wife ought to be like that of Christ for the church. Christ’s love saves and purifies the church. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle,

or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself” (Ephesians 5:25–28).

Drawing from this portion of Scripture, the way of treating one’s wife is likened to that of treating one’s own body. As such, it goes without saying that while loving one’s wife is tantamount to loving oneself, dealing bitterly with one’s wife is tantamount to hurting oneself.

“You don’t have to heed your wife; it is she who have to submit!”

Unfortunately, some men are misled into thinking that just because they are leaders, they don’t have to consider their wives’ ideas, concerns or feelings. The devil discourages many Christian husbands from heeding the good counsels of their wives. This ploy of the devil has led many a man to a disastrous end.

The Word of God tells us that God created Eve for Adam, so that she may be “an help meet” for him (Genesis 2:18). It is for better things in life that the Lord brought the woman to be the man’s wife. We are reminded that “whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD” (Proverbs 18:22), and that “house and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD” (Proverbs 19:14). A wife who can give

wise advice is a gift from the Lord. As man's helpmeet, the wife's suggestions and ideas can be invaluable, especially when her thoughts are Bible-based. It is disastrous that a man will not heed his wife's good counsels. Truly, "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life" (Proverbs 31:10-12).

Undeniably, man, being the leader, has to be the decision-maker of the home. He has to analyse his wife's opinions carefully in the light of God's Word. Blind following of her counsels is dangerous. However, if they are scriptural, prudent and helpful, he ought to accept them with thanksgiving. The husband's decision-making can be enhanced with the discreet counsel of a godly wife. So, when a man asks for the opinion of his godly wife before important decision-making, he is accepting God's provision of help in his life. Obviously, this will not always be the case concerning the counsel of an unregenerate wife. Even in such a case, the man does well to still consult his wife, but with scriptural discernment.

"Don't submit to your husband, because his ideas are unwise!"

On the other side of the same coin, Christian women are sometimes misled into thinking that it is okay to be insubmissive to their husbands whose

ideas appear unwise or unprofitable. It is also thought by some that submissiveness to husbands means compromise and acceptance of their wrong and unwise ideas, which can be injurious. Such attitudes are unbiblical and are borne out of the devil's lies. Scripture clearly advises Christian wives to manifest a submissive spirit to their husbands (even if they are unbelievers) at all times. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear" (1 Peter 3:1-2). Only the submissive spirit of a woman can win her husband's heart while rebellion creates chaos in the family.

Submission does not mean unwise agreement with the errors of the husband because Scripture clearly says that submission ought to be "as it is fit in the Lord" (Colossians 3:18). Anything that is "fit in the Lord" can never be unholy or unwise. The fact is that one can be submissive even in disagreements. Disagreements with the husband should not be thought of as a valid reason for rebellion and disrespect. God's call to submission expects every wife to discuss her differing opinions with a submissive spirit, not in a bitter and explosive manner.

Now, it must be noted that submission doesn't mean that a wife cannot have any initiative or creativity of her own. Instead, it simply means that whatever she initiates or achieves must not diminish her relationship with her husband nor her honour for him. She must avoid any selfish or self-glorifying attitude in deference to

the support of her husband, especially when the husband's opinions and actions are biblical. In which case, the wife must quickly put away every form of resentment, and submit to him "as unto the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22). Nonetheless, even when he appears to be unbiblical, Scripture expects that every Christian wife respond to or persuade her husband with a humble and respectful spirit. A wife's greatest means of influencing a husband who is not walking with God is her reverent submission, which Peter likens to "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:4b). Hence, every Christian wife ought to put paid to Satan's lie by exhibiting a submissive spirit to her husband at all times.

"A career outside the home is more fulfilling than being a homemaker!"

One of the most deceptive lies of the devil that has influenced a great number of modern Christian women is this: happiness and fulfilment are not to be found in their chief duty of being a homemaker. Many women have been hoodwinked into choosing careers in the secular world above their homes, thinking that being a homemaker is sheer drudgery and unrewarding. The devil has succeeded in driving many to seek their fulfilment in careers outside their homes. The inevitable result is that in many Christian homes, the children are without the warmth and blessedness of a mother's constant

watch, instruction, care and spiritual nurture. It is this writer's biblical conviction that many an unfortunate situation of teenage delinquency can be avoided, if a watchful, caring and loving mother is at home.

Scripture clearly delineates the duty of a Christian wife and mother in Titus 2:4b-5—"young women ... to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." Here, the phrase "keepers at home" literally means "workers at home" or "homemakers". There is much work to be done at home in support of husband and nurture of children. Home is not to be seen as a place of idleness. God's Word says that it is a place of work for the Christian wives. A woman, who truly loves her Lord, husband and children,

Anything that is "fit in the Lord" can never be unholy or unwise.

will find plenty of work on hand at home. It is her love for her husband and children that makes a Christian woman work hard at home. Let us not fall in line with the mindset of the world that has increased in its hatred rather than love of children. (Think of how many unborn babies are murdered through abortions!) To most worldly couples, when a child arrives despite precautions being taken, they regard it as a hindrance and nuisance. What's more, as soon as the child is born, it is placed under the care of babysitters or childcare centres. This is diametrically opposite to the picture of Christian mothers that the Bible portrays.

See what God intends every married Christian woman with children to do in the following verses:

- “He maketh the barren woman to **keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.** Praise ye the LORD” (Psalm 113:9).
- “Thy wife shall be as a **fruitful vine by the sides of thine house:** thy children like olive plants round about thy table” (Psalm 128:3).
- “I will therefore that the younger women marry, **bear children, guide the house,** give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully” (1 Timothy 5:14).

In the immediate verse above, the phrase “guide the house” means “manage the house”. It is no small task to manage the house. It is a great responsibility that must be performed with much prayer and diligence. Christian wives are accountable to the Lord concerning how they manage the

home. May the wives ask themselves: “Have I managed well my home which the Lord has entrusted to me? Or have I been giving the best of my ability and strength to manage someone else's office? As my husband's helpmeet, have I been lovingly committed to supporting and encouraging my husband to realise all his God-given goals? Or have I been expending my energies for some other man who is the boss of a secular firm? Should I not be utilising the best of my talents and energies for the instruction and nurture of my own children before giving them to others?”

Incidentally, the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 has been wrongly cited by some as a career woman. A careful examination of the text teaches us that her chief area of work is in the home, and only when she has done all at home, she occasionally moves out to do some needful business. Take note of the Scriptural commendation given to her: “She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her” (Proverbs 31:27–28). Indeed, every Christian wife and mother, who loves the husband and children whom God gives her, will first of all make her **work at home** the priority of life.

Make no mistake, Christian women who abandon their chief duty of being workers at home are not following God's will, but the devil's deceptive plan to bring chaos into their homes. Denying this high calling of Christian wives is a sin. May the love for God's truth cause Christian wives to be “keepers at home” and “guide the house”, that “the word of God be not blasphemed”! ■

COMMON LIES ABOUT NURTURING CHILDREN



The Christian family is under attack! Through popular secular and humanistic psychology, the devil has influenced a great number of Christian parents to embrace unbiblical ideologies, methodologies and even expectations in the nurture of their children. Sadly, even so-called Christian counsellors and pastors have been following unbiblical principles. The results of these are rather disastrous—tense and troubled parent-child relationships, quarrelling homes, worried parents, not to mention rebellious, immoral youngsters!

“Others—childcare centres, grandparents, etc.—can manage and nurture your child better!”

The world—which is under the grip of “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2), namely Satan—has largely succeeded in moulding Christian parents to conform to its mindset in rearing children. Christian parents have been influenced by modern

society's philosophy concerning family life and nurture of children. Today, mothers going to work and placing children with caregivers, grandparents or day care centres are accepted practices. Many Christians are also following that pattern, unfortunately. Many excuses have been cited. Some mothers say, "It is terribly boring to stay at home." Some others may say, "I don't think I have the patience to bear my children's nonsense! I will go nuts! I'd rather work outside the home and leave the kids to those who are able to do it."

Be that as it may, God's Word is unequivocal in its teaching that Christian parents are to take the full responsibility in nurturing their children. No one else is accountable for the children's nurture. The primary responsibility of nurturing children is not upon the government, childcare centres, schools, churches, maids, or grandparents, though some of these can contribute and play a supportive role. The parents' role in the upbringing of children is paramount and irreplaceable!

Paul exhorts in Ephesians 6:4, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The word "father" in Greek (*pateres*) can also mean "parents", though the male parent is emphasised (cf. Hebrews 11:23, where the same Greek word is translated as "parents"). So, the message of this verse is also applicable to mothers. Parents are called to nurture their children, and not to upset and frustrate their young hearts to anger. When a child is deprived of proper parental care and nurture, he will grow up with a lot of concealed frustration and anger within his heart.

Parents who cannot show love through patience and constant care cannot be successful in instructing their children in the right ways of life. Christian parents, have you done enough so that your children can sincerely testify, "For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother" (Proverbs 4:3)? May your words and actions never convey to your children that they are a burden that you want to keep away as much as possible!

That's not all. Scripture is also clear in teaching that mothers should "wean off" their children, in every sense of the word. This idea is inherent in Psalm 131:2, where we read, "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child." It is the tender care and nurture of the mother that best prepares the child for new stages in his life. This is certainly not the case with children who are nurtured by people other than their mothers. Dear Christian mothers, are you there when your child needs his mother's comfort as he faces

Christian parents are to take the full responsibility in nurturing their children. No one else is accountable for the children's nurture.

problems? A mother's comfort towards her child is unique and matchless. It is so wonderful that the Lord makes an allusion to it in Isaiah 66:13, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you". To the child, as far as human relationships are concerned, none is as assuring and comforting as the presence of a loving mother!

"Just make sure you spend 'quality time' with your children!"

This commonly heard saying is a subtle mis-notion, no doubt originating from the devil. To many parents, this "quality time" comprises merely a few hours that they spend during the weekend with the children. They may set aside precious time during the weekend and spend much money to engage in fun activities that help them interact with one another. These are often desperate measures taken, but always insufficient, to make up for the parents' lost time at their work places during the week. Such so-called "quality time" spent is misguided.

Parents need to bear in mind that the nurture of a child is a full-time job. Children are to be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). This cannot be done if they are left, day after day, with unbelieving maids, friends, relatives or professional caregivers. When Christian parents leave their children with unbelieving people for long hours, day after day, what the young souls receive is certainly not the nurture of the Lord! Fathers must lead the family in daily

family devotion and teach the children day by day. After a day's work, within a few hours of the night, very few find sufficient time to teach their children Bible stories or verses. In fact, the instruction of the young ones involves more than that. It is the inculcating of spiritual values in the children. It is an all-day affair. It requires opportunities to observe, to show affection and compassion, to correct, to instruct, and to lead through exemplary living.

Here's where mothers have a huge part to play in imparting spiritual values in children. A mother who is around to monitor the spiritual and physical growth of the child will have adequate opportunities to correct and guide the child. Otherwise, as Proverbs 29:15 says, "a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame". How can mothers expect the children to control themselves and behave properly, when they have not shown them how to live a spiritually disciplined life through their own lives? Parents need to show through their lives that selfish feelings are to be given up in order to obey the clear teachings of God's Word. Beware of the devil's lie—"quality time" alone does not ensure that your children will not abandon God's truth to satisfy their own desires.

"One income, not enough; double income, the best!"

Admittedly, the problem of children growing without proper maternal care is not always the fault of the mother alone. Sometimes the problem arises

Katharina von Bora

(1499–1552)
Part II

Retold by Jenny Lok
Illustrated by Andronicus Koshy

Martin Luther understood the plight of the runaway nuns, and started seeking employment for them while looking out for some good men to be their husbands.

Gradually, by 1525, he succeeded in finding work for some and arranging marriages for the rest, except Katharina. She had yet to find anyone acceptable among the suitors.

Katharina did not fret, but continued to pray for God's leading in her life.

Thankfully, for the last two years, upon Luther's recommendation, she had been working as a servant in the home of a clerk named Philipp Reichenback, and then later for the household of Lucas Cranach the Elder.



Meanwhile, Luther tried to matchmake Katharina with other suitable young men that he knew of. After two failed attempts, Luther scratched his head and wondered,

What shall I do with Katharina?

The answer came sooner than he thought. His friend Nikolaus von Amsdorf told him,

Luther, I have good news for us. Katharina, I was told, will only marry either you or me!

What! Are you sure?

Yes, absolutely!

No, I shall not marry. You may marry her instead!

No, my friend. You are in a good position to give her a proper home and status. Besides, a marriage between a former monk and nun will help you testify of marriage as a respectable and holy institution in the Protestant faith. What do you think?

Nikolaus remained hopeful that Luther would change his mind.

You must be jesting!

Luther did not think much about Nikolaus's suggestion till he visited his parents.

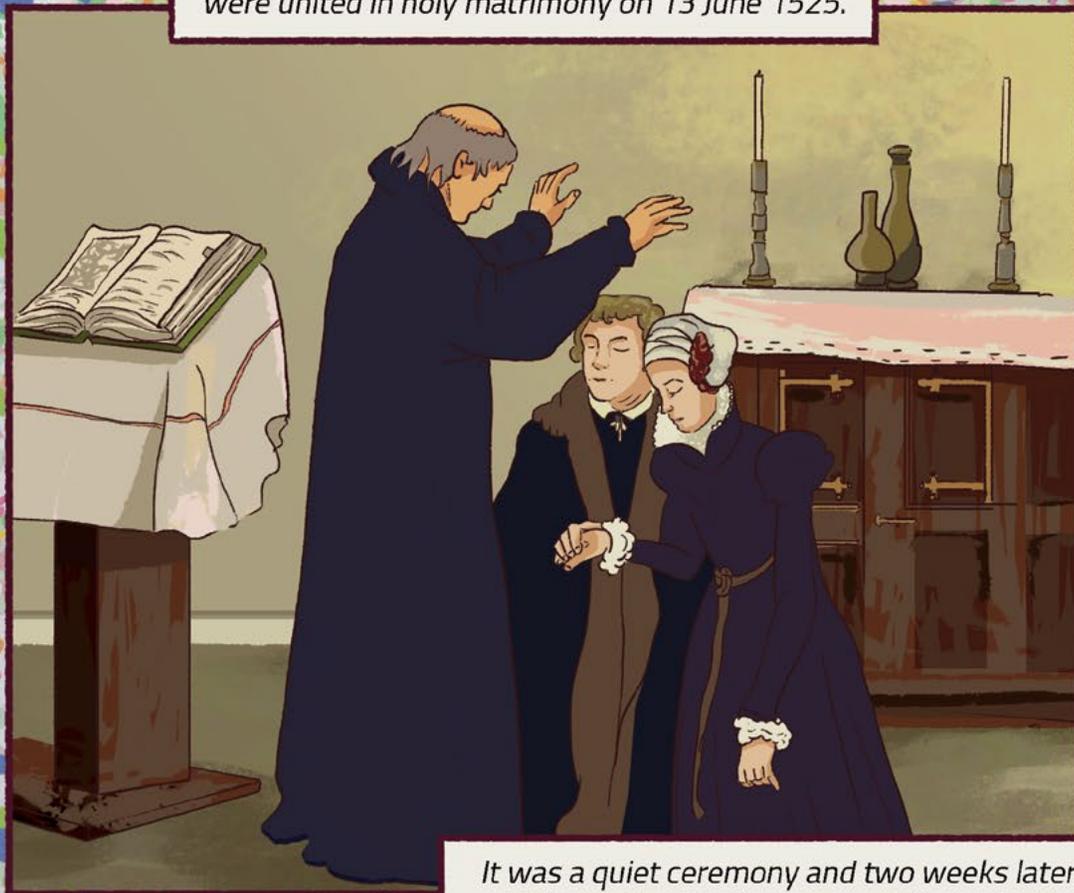
His father was all for it! Having thought through it, Luther decided to marry Katharina because it was a golden opportunity to testify of Christ and raise a godly family, before his enemies would take his life.

In his own words, it was "to please his father, to spite the pope and the devil, and to seal his witness before martyrdom".

To Katharina, however, marriage was "an assignment from God", something that she would work on for God's glory.

It did not bother Luther and Katharina that there was no special love between them at that point in time.

Thus, Martin Luther and Katharina von Bora were united in holy matrimony on 13 June 1525.



It was a quiet ceremony and two weeks later, on 27 June, they had a larger public celebration.

Luther's closest friends were not too excited about his marriage, thinking that it might distract him from his Reformation work. What they did not know was that the marriage would turn out to be an amazing blessing for both Luther and Katharina!

Luther and Katharina set up their home in the former Augustinian dormitory (also known as the Black Cloister), a wedding gift from John, Elector of Saxony, brother of Frederick III.



It was an extremely old but large building and the land surrounding it was vast and fertile.

To Katharina's delight, Luther purchased a plot of land at Zolsdorf (slightly more than 100 kilometres from Wittenberg) some years later.

With a free supply of timber from the Elector, a little farm building was built, which became "a haven of rest" or a holiday home for Luther, Katharina and their young ones. It was in this small estate that they spent many happy moments together as a family.

Katharina was truly a wonderful helpmeet and housekeeper. She rose up very early every morning, be it summer or winter, to begin her work in their huge house and farm. The various skills she had acquired helped her tremendously in all her domestic tasks, such as setting up an orchard, managing their livestock, and even taking care of Luther's poor health through medicinal herbs (grown in their garden) which relieved him of much bodily pain.

Additionally, the couple took in student boarders which helped to finance the expenses of running the entire household. Katharina cooked for them and also entertained guests who visited her husband.

Over time, Luther's affection for Katharina grew deeper. Together, they had six children, two of whom died at a young age. Sorrowful as they were, they went on to adopt several orphans. Under their strict but conscientious and loving care, the family thrived marvellously.



Luther was so impressed by his wife's diligence and capability, as well as her affection for him that he called her the "Morning Star of Wittenberg", "Mrs Doctor", "My true love" and "My sweet Kate", among other endearing names.



He was happy to concentrate fully on his Reformation work – writing, teaching, and travelling to preach the Gospel.

Alas! On 18 February 1546, Luther suffered a stroke and was called home to glory.

Katharina was heartbroken and confided in her sister-in-law (her brother's wife, Christina von Bora) that she could neither eat, drink nor sleep over her grievous loss. Following that, a war occurred between Luther's followers and the Catholic supporters, and thus she and her children fled Wittenberg to Magdeburg.

She returned to Wittenberg in 1547 after a Lutheran defeat, only to witness the devastating state of her beloved home. Everything was in ruins – the Black Cloister, her land and her animals!



Bravely, she picked herself up and continued with her life in the Black Cloister after receiving help from friends to rebuild it. However, in 1552, Wittenberg was hit by the Plague (disease spread by the fleas from rats, leading to fever, swelling and death), so once again, Katharina and her children had to escape, this time to the neighbouring city of Torgau. Sadly, she met with an accident outside the city gate, where she fell from her wagon and broke her hip. Subsequently, Katharina contracted a certain disease which proved to be fatal.

On 20 December 1552, as she drew her last breath, she declared: "I will stick to Christ as a burr (seed of a plant that attaches itself to things) to a topcoat." Such devotion to Christ was praiseworthy!



Katharina's life had truly been a blessing, particularly to Martin Luther, for their marriage had been one of "unanticipated (unexpected) love, respect, honour, passion and partnership", as well as "a good example of marital strength for other Reformers". She had also brought up her children well, and the Lord was pleased to bless them as they grew up. John, the eldest, served as a councillor of state to Elector John Frederick II; the second son, Martin, studied theology while the third, Paul, became a medical doctor; also, her only surviving daughter, Magaretha, married Georg von Kuenheim, a nobleman, who was a great admirer of Martin Luther.

Though Katharina might not be at the forefront of the Reformation movement, her contributions were no less significant, for she had embraced her role as Luther's wife, lovingly supporting him behind the scenes, especially in the pastoral ministry. Truly, Proverbs 31 is a fitting tribute to Katharina von Bora, a pious wife and mother who had "looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her" (vv. 27-28).



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