

The Herald

· OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF SRI LANKA ·

L. O. C. K. D. O. W. N.

is a time to:

L - listen to God's Voice and reflect. Let go & let God.

O - obey His Word and His Teachings.

C - call on Jesus name and be calm.

K - know what is the purpose of all of this.

D - dwell in His presence. Do not panic.

O - offer a prayer for everyone's safety.

W - wait and be patient. This too, shall pass

N - nurture our personal relationship with Him.

"EMPOWERED TO LIVE FRUITFULLY"- SEE INSIDE
ALSO INSIDE - "PRAYING WITH JESUS IN SOLITUDE"

Powered In A Split Second !



The last words Jesus Christ of Nazareth , the risen Son of God, spoke before He ascended into Heaven were a promise of power. That is what is recorded in the opening chapter of the Book of Acts. There is the promise and an almost immediate fulfillment of that promise. As someone remarked, **“When fulfillment follows promise by only ten days, that’s a split second according to God’s reckoning of time!”**

From Acts Chapter 2, we can learn about the power of God that still operates in the Church today - power that can also operate in our lives, if we do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. So in keeping with the theme of this issue of “The Herald,” ‘Powered By The Spirit,’ (Empowered to living fruitfully) I thought we need to begin by asking the question, what is this” power” we are talking about? What is the power that Acts 2 spells out in such detail? So, herewith are some answers that need to be considered.

Firstly, this Power, **is the power of Jesus Christ Himself.** The power poured out on that day, that transformed people through the centuries and that still empowers today, is nothing other than the power of the living Christ. If we take time to read all of Acts 2, we will see how the Apostle Peter carefully pointed out that the spectacular signs – the sound like a mighty wind, the tongues as of fire and the speaking about the wonders of God in other languages – all of these were proof that Jesus Christ was at work. In 2 Corinthians 3: 17, the Apostle Paul said, “The Lord is the Spirit.” So when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the church, it was as if Jesus Himself had come back! The bottom line is that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ; Jesus has poured out His Spirit on the Church and the Holy Spirit binds people to Jesus. So we are powered by that Spirit!

Secondly, this Power, **is the power to witness, the power of communication.** Jesus explained why this power would be given to us. He said His disciples would receive power from the Holy Spirit so that they might be His witnesses, beginning in Jerusalem and spreading to the ends of the earth. The Spirit powers all of God’s people to be Christ’s witnesses

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We are powered to communicate the good news of Salvation in and through Jesus Christ. Often this message is powered verbally. But it also comes through not only in word but also in deed, through examples and life styles. People wonder at times, about the Christian's joy, peace and confidence. And then have discovered that all of this is powered by the Spirit!

Thirdly, **this Power is the Power to change people's lives.** If we had been there in Jerusalem on the day this Power was poured out, we would have certainly been stunned by the sights and the sounds. All of that would have left us shaking our heads in wonder if not fear. But if we had been there, we would also have seen that all of that power was designed to change people through and through. Remember the change that came upon three thousand of the people, who had come running to see what was happening. They did not know when they arrived there, that they would end up believing in Jesus and being baptized. Yet that is what happened ! So this power is people changing power ! Power that renews and enables people to live fruitfully, bearing the fruit that matters most – the fruit of the Spirit!

The world today is filled with so much destructive power that comes in all shapes, sizes and places. We have heard the adage, "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely" I am sure that we know much about that too. On the other hand the power of the Holy Spirit neither corrupts or destroys. It empowers people to live in the newness of life – old things having passed away !

A.W. Tozer said, "When we have the Holy Spirit we have all that is needed to be all that God desires us to be." So we thank God for that "spilt second" that fulfilled the promise to power us on!

MEDITATION

by The Revd: Neville Koch

POWERED BY THE SPIRIT

Every mystery contains two parts - one you know and the other you don't! The Holy Trinity is one we cannot easily grasp, because our finite minds cannot fully comprehend the Infinite. The Bible reveals that there is one God in three persons - the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The power of God resides in all three persons. For instance, Jesus said before His ascension into heaven, 'that the Father has given all power and authority to Him' (Matthew 28 : 18-20).

Jesus said to his Disciples, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you!" (John 20 : 20-22). Jesus while sending his Disciples, tells them to be clothed with power from on high (Luke 24 : 45-49). From these passages we see that the power we are given is passed on from the Father to the Son and from

the Son to the Holy Spirit. So we need a 'power from above' as the source of all power. Without this power our witnessing will have no effect.

Jesus also called the Holy Spirit our Comforter and Counselor so we can depend on the Holy Spirit's empowering. The Spirit is also our Teacher and Guide in all situations.

It is comforting to know that the Holy Spirit helps us in our weaknesses and intercedes on our behalf before the Throne of God (Romans 8 : 26-28). Faithful, winsome witnessing is the result of being powered by the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit empowers us to live a victorious life of peace and joy in Christ. It is my prayer that you will be enriched through the power of the Spirit as you live your daily life. As a self-searching challenge read Galatians 5 : 22-26 and 1 Corinthians 13 : 1-8 and see how you would score yourself. Is it time to kneel down and take it to the Lord in prayer?

Powered by the Spirit we live and walk in the power of Christ's love.

(Revd: Koch is an Emeritus Minister of the CRC Sri Lanka and the CRC North America.)

Empowered To Live Fruitfully

by Pastor Lakmal Wijeratne

Acts 1:8 contains the promise about the birth of the New Testament church. The Lord Jesus had completed his earthly mission of paying the price for human sin on a cross and opened the doors for a new life for the church (a new community of men and women who believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and follow in His footsteps as their Lord) through His resurrection. Throughout our Lord's earthly life we see a very clear understanding and fulfilment of the Father's mandate while it was always the Spirit of God that propelled Him forwards to achieve it. Today we can even think of fruitfulness in our lives due to the faithfulness of our covenant keeping God. It is He who makes us fruitful.

I came across an interesting term '**vampire Christian**' which illustrates the nature of many Christians today. Vampire Christians are those who say 'Jesus, I just want your blood to wash away my sins, but I've no desire to serve you or be more

like you'(IMPACT Magazine, Apr+May 21.pp 24). There is also another section in Christendom that believes that Christian fruitfulness is about material and physical blessings. When we look at the Bible and even church history it is very clear that the material benefits that the people of God received were not meant to be an end in itself but our blessedness was to make us a blessing to others. This was the promise given to Abraham, the father of the faith which was forgotten by his descendants. Many pray and ask for blessings and believe that, if we have enough faith and ask in Jesus' name they will get what they ask for. James 4:3 reminds us of something significant about God's answer to our prayers, if we are selfish and lustful in our supplications they will not be answered. Hence when we look at the Scriptures we see that the salvation Jesus earned for us and the other blessings we receive from God have to result in fruitfulness to God the Father (Ephesians 2:8-10). When we consider the creation of the universe we see God's intention for humans to be fruitful (Genesis 1:22). The original Hebrew word used here (parah) means to bear fruit or be fruitful. Therefore we see that God eternally designed His image bearer to fulfil His mandate. Incidentally this fruitfulness was to lead to increase in number, multiplication and subduing the earth.

John 15 shows us that we are to bear fruit abiding in Christ. After mankind fell into sin, the increase and subduing the earth took place but there is no real fruitfulness, meaning in life. There is a lot of discontentment, futility and meaninglessness according to many OT writings. This was the result of the self-centred (ego centric) life style that people have lived and in turn continue to be in active rebellion against God. Even in the case of the chosen people Israel, we notice that whenever they forsook or forgot the purposes of God they experienced exile, humiliation, suffering etc. Therefore even in a fallen world our divine calling to bear fruit still continues.

Since Jesus' death and resurrection is the only solution to mankind's sin, to those who are in Jesus God has given the ability to battle against self-centeredness and disobedience to God. This is possible because the Holy Spirit of God indwells us as the deposit guaranteeing our eternal inheritance (Ephesians 1:14). Jesus was clear with His disciples that without Him they cannot do any fruit bearing (John 15:5) and it is the Holy Spirit that guides us into all truth and helps us to understand the purposes of God through the Holy Scriptures and empowers us to fulfil them.

In conclusion the Spirit filled, Spirit led, experiences the fruitfulness in the relationship with God and fulfilling His purposes. With the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost we see a new boldness, giftedness and commitment in the disciples to achieve the desires of God which was revealed to them by Jesus. The changed lives, new found boldness, preaching the good news, leading people towards Christ, performance of mighty deeds, earnest prayer were all ways we see the disciples being fruitful. The New Testament church is called to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to bear fruit and be fruitful in service.

(Pas Wijeratne is the Vice-President Ministry CRCSL and is also pastors the English and Sinhala Congregations at Kohuwela.)

Remain IN Him

A couple of months ago, the Redeemer's Youth Ministry was following a series called "Jesus and Identity" and I had the benefit of being part of the 3rd session that was titled "Living as Branches". The lesson focused on the famous bible passage John 15 and the analogy of Jesus as the Vine and we are the branches and how if we remain in Him we can bear much fruit, but without him we can do nothing! The lesson reminded us that as Christ-followers, "remaining in Jesus" is essential to our identity, even if it means pruning-away other aspects of our lives.

When it comes to our daily lives and the world we live in, there is so much that vies for our attention. Social media, technology, friends, hobbies, entertainment, and so on. Each of these aspects of our lives (and many more) consumes a part of us. Our passion, energy, time, and pure affection are divided among so many different things, and if we aren't careful these things can become distractions.

But Jesus says in John 15 that part of our identity as a Christ-follower is that He would command the largest part of our attention and affection. That is what it means to "remain" in Jesus. Christ-followers are to be intertwined with Jesus.

But how do we, as real people serving a real God, "remain" in Christ? In other words, how do we practically stay connected to Jesus? The answer is simple: through meeting Jesus regularly by reading and meditating on His Word; by talking and listening to God in prayer; by praising and worshipping Him both individually and in community with our church. If we do this, we have a promise to hold on to! Jesus said that if we remain in Him we will "bear much fruit".

In order to "bear much fruit", occasionally God may bring us to the place where we recognize distractions in our lives for what they really are. In these moments, God leads us to make choices that are sometimes tough. When God shows us areas of our lives that are getting in the way of our commitment to Christ, it's not always easy or fun. And because of our sin nature, it can be especially hard for us to lose something, even if it is something that's not good for us. But the important thing to remember through all of this is that God is a good and loving gardener. He prunes because He loves! And though it may not be enjoyable, it allows us to stay strongly connected to Jesus, the Vine.

Love,
Wish

The Fruit of the Spirit

- BY GINGER KOLBABA

I was hanging out in my room reading my Bible and praying. I'd recently read about the fruit of the Spirit, and I wanted to work on growing it in my life. I figured I'd start with love.

I'm going to be more loving, I thought. As I prayed for God to help me in that area, my mom called from downstairs, "Ginger! Come down and set the table for dinner."

"I'm doing something!" I yelled back—in not the most pleasant tone.

"Now!" she informed me.

I jumped off my bed, yanked open my door and stormed my way down the stairs, where I then informed my mom that I was busy.

"What were you so busy doing?" she asked.

Before I could even think about my words, I spouted out, "I was praying to be more loving."

My mom chuckled. That's when I realized that during my first opportunity to be loving, I had acted anything but.

At 15, I was learning my earliest lesson about the fruit of the Spirit: It takes time to grow.

Have you ever looked at an apple tree? What kind of fruit do you see there? (OK, it's an obvious question, right?) You see apples. You don't see lemons, coconuts, peaches or kumquats. You can tell what kind of tree it is just by looking at the kind of fruit it bears.

The same applies to us. People can look at the kind of fruit we bear—how we live—and they can learn a little about who we are. How we act and what we say (our fruit) indicate what kind of tree we are.

When we accept Jesus into our lives and follow Him, the Holy Spirit sets to work on shaping us. The Holy Spirit helps us make changes by planting within us Christ-like character traits, which the apostle Paul calls "fruit": "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

God plants them, and His Word feeds them. Our job isn't to simply try to be more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle or self-controlled. Our job is to allow the Holy Spirit to work the character of Christ in us. His Word is the food we need for our spiritual fruit to grow. Then we "water" that fruit by practicing those Christ-like character traits in our daily life. We don't become kind by doing one act of kindness. But the more we practice being kind, the kinder we become. In other words, it becomes part of our character and not just something we do. The key word here is practice. And practice takes time.

Youth Page

Edited By: Wishanka Gregory

As I learned that day when my mom wanted me to set the table and I wasn't loving in my reaction to her request, fruit takes time to grow. We can't pray to become like Jesus and think the Holy Spirit is going to instantaneously make us perfect. Growth will continue for the rest of our lives. Just as apple trees need pruning and nurturing, we do, too.

We do that by staying connected to Jesus: "I am the vine; you are the branches," He tells us. "Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). A branch must stay connected to the vine for the fruit to grow.

As the fruit grows, others can see it because we become those things: more loving, more joyful, more peace-filled. The Holy Spirit gives us power so that we become more self-controlled to say no to the things that are bad for us (sin) and yes to the things that please God. The sweet, ripe fruit of the Spirit displayed by how we act and speak shows that our character is maturing.

Are you becoming more like Jesus? As you stay connected by spending time with Him, the good stuff of His character can grow in you.

Dig Deeper

"Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."

John 15:4



THINK ABOUT IT:

How can you practice Christ-like character traits in your daily life? How can you stay connected to Jesus so he can shape you?

We can do this best through praying and worshiping, reading our Bible, attending church and listening to the Holy Spirit when He speaks to us.

CHILDREN'S PAGE

Edited by
Maxine Jansz

Dear Boys and Girls

Did you know that we are all born in sin and are wicked from birth? What a terrible thought! Is there no way we can get rid of this? Of course there is. God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us.

Who is the Holy Spirit? Our God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the Father has sent the Holy Spirit to be our Helper and to come and live inside of us when we accept Jesus as our Savior.

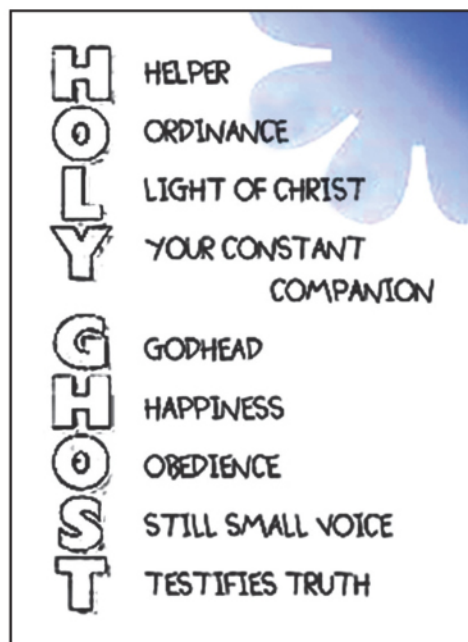
As Christians we don't always feel that the Holy Spirit is in us, But He always is.

Have you ever thought of doing something naughty or bad? And then have you realized in your heart that you should not do it? That is the Holy Spirit leading you to do the right thing.

The Bible says that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. So when we hear that little voice in our hearts telling us to do the right thing, we should listen and obey.

Lots of love

Aunty Maxine



Susan's Choice

SUSAN did not hurry home from school on Friday afternoon as she usually did. She kept thinking about the note Patty had given her. Susan wondered what Mother would say about the note.

"May be I could just not show it to Mother," Susan said to herself. She knew that that would cause other problems, though.

On the note patty had written: "Please come to my house on Sunday afternoon. My dad is going to take us to the mall to buy kites. We will fly them if there is enough wind".

When Susan got home, Mother called to her from the basement. "I am just finishing the laundry," Mother said. "There is a snack for you on the table. I'll be with you in a few minutes."

Susan saw the banana and two oatmeal cookies on the table.

They looked good, but she did not feel very hungry just then. She went to the telephone and dialed Patty's number.

"Can you come over on Sunday?" patty asked eagerly. "Did you ask your mother?"

"I haven't asked her yet," said Susan. "I know what she will say though. She will say that I can't go with you."

"Why will she say that?" Patty demanded. "What's wrong with flying kites?"

"Nothing," said Susan. "The point is that we keep Sunday as the Lord's Day; we don't do any shopping on Sunday."

"Can't choose to shop for a kite if you want to?" Patty asked.

Susan did not answer for a moment or two. She wanted very much to fly a kite.

At last she said, "I'll think about it and call you back."

Mother came up from the basement. "You haven't eaten your snack," she said. "Don't you feel well?"

"I'm not sick," said Susan. She pulled Patty's note out of her pocket and handed it to her mother.

Mother read the note and put it on the table. "What did you tell Patty?" she asked.

"I told her that Sunday is the Lord's Day," said Susan. "I said that we can buy what we need on other days not on Sundays."

Mother nodded. "What did Patty say?" she asked.

"She asked me whether I can choose to go shopping if I want to," said Susan. "Can we make choices, Mother?" "Of course we make choices all the time," her mother said. "The important thing to remember is that we must learn to make the right choices."

"I see," said Susan. "you mean that I can choose to do the right thing or the wrong thing, don't you?"

"yes," said Mother. That is what Father and I are teaching you. That is what you are learning at Sunday school from your teachers."

Susan started to peel her banana. "Now I am hungry," she said. "After I eat my snack, I will call patty. I'll tell her I have made my own choice not to go shopping on Sunday."

"I'm sure that your father will help you fly a kite soon," said Mother.

"Good," Susan said, smiling.



FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

WORD SEARCH

X	T	Z	G	V	S	S	U	W	K	C	X	O	D	D
K	K	F	Z	O	E	A	M	K	I	G	C	V	K	V
C	C	A	B	H	L	D	P	L	N	E	M	R	T	K
G	Q	I	F	O	F	K	E	W	D	N	R	W	Q	Z
B	G	T	T	H	C	E	A	U	N	T	H	U	H	H
A	O	H	D	O	O	E	C	N	E	L	T	O	Q	S
P	O	F	J	A	N	O	E	V	S	E	M	U	P	A
A	D	U	J	N	T	K	U	G	S	N	X	O	A	D
R	N	L	M	Y	R	F	J	F	J	E	W	K	T	T
D	E	N	N	O	O	N	O	V	H	S	B	X	I	B
B	S	E	F	K	L	T	Y	C	W	S	U	U	E	H
N	S	S	J	Q	O	X	C	U	Q	A	X	P	N	K
E	Q	S	U	N	K	G	Z	J	P	H	W	L	C	O
T	W	T	S	D	C	K	L	O	V	E	U	I	E	F
W	A	D	S	B	V	D	U	F	A	P	L	P	O	B



Love
 Joy
 Peace
 Patience
 Kindness
 Goodness
 Faithfulness
 Gentleness
 Self-Control



What Your Children Need from You!

The Seven Ingredients of Effective Parenting

This quarter we are focusing on the filling of the Holy Spirit and the need for His help in being fruitful as Christians. One of the areas we need the help of the Holy Spirit is raising our children to follow Christ. Parenting is not easy these days. It's not always easy to be in control of your anger or to love your kids when they disobey. We forget that **our children are our first fruits, our disciples**. We need to focus on developing them in healthy ways, and helping them grow to be fruitful, Spirit-filled followers of Jesus Christ. The Focus on the Family website has isolated seven areas/attributes they feel make for effective parenting. I thought I would share them with you. I have given the website link at the end of the article if you would like to try out their assessment tool to see how you personally are doing with these attributes

The most obvious one is LOVE. And of course we love our children! But, how often do we tell them that we love them? It is amazing the number of children in this world who feel insecure and doubt their parents love. You need to constantly tell your children that you love them, **no matter what they do**. But words are not enough.

Parental love requires sacrifice, especially of our time. Do we spend adequate time with our children, instructing them and correcting them. Are they the top priority in our schedule? When we talk to them are we really paying attention to what they are saying. Do we let our kids be kids? Are we willing to play and joke with them. That is how they will know that they are loved and will feel secure in that love.

Ephesians 6:4 - *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

RESPECT. Respect is based on knowing the God-given value each person brings to the family. Again, it is shown through attentive listening, willingness to see their side of an issue and being committed to solutions. Encouraging them in the areas they excel is a good way for us to show that they are of value. Discipline should always be done in a respectful way, not shaming the child, especially in public places. Helping them build their own skills and values is an important part of

Phil. 2:3, 4 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

building respect. And when we act this way, they will also learn to respect us.

BOUNDARIES. While we want the world to be open to our children, we also need to protect them from the Evil One and keep them safe. We do this by setting healthy boundaries. When kids are very small we don't let them play in the street because we don't want them to get hit by a car. As they grow we have to be careful about time spent on the phone and internet. We need to limit screen time (outside of school work) and make sure our children are not getting involved in things that will harm their developing brains. There is a reason that children under 21 aren't suppose to drink alcohol. Their brains are not fully developed and can be altered by alcohol, chemicals, and pornography. We need to make sure they stay within the guidelines set up by the Bible to protect our lives. We need to help them understand that healthy boundaries pay off in the long run. There are reasons the Bible prohibits some things, even if it seems like it is okay to everyone else. The Bible says true freedom is in obedience *to the right things*. Some parents make the mistake of wanting to be their child's friend. Your goal is to teach a life of balance and self-control.

"Proverbs tells us, '**Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge**' (14:7). If we don't set our own boundaries in our families, other influences — culture, extended family or trends — will set our children's moral boundaries, and we may become surprised and dismayed by what they have learned." ¹

GRACE & FORGIVENESS is what keeps our mistakes and imperfections from destroying relationships. As parents, sometimes we need to let things go, pick your battles, and love even when there are frustrations and failures. Children learn a lot from failure. How we respond when they fail is so important. Do we criticize, pull them down, or help them see ways to make it work in the future. We don't give up. We keep trying.



We need to say we are sorry when we punish a child unfairly, or lose our temper. Can we say, "I'm sorry, I should not have said that to you. Will you forgive me?" That is how we can help them in future relationships to live in grace. When we think of God's grace towards us, we can see how we need to be a reflection of that for our children.

Matthew 6:14, 15 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

GRATITUDE. A lot of people think this is the secret to a happy life. Do you focus on what you have rather than what you don't have. Do you have a satisfied heart that is free and available for connection and listening. Are you grateful for the family God has given you? Are you grateful for the relationships God has brought your way, the people around you? Do you realize what a gift life is? Do you thank God as a family for all that you have. Even when things are bad, we can find many things to be grateful for, a roof over our heads, food on the table. Help your children also build gratitude into their lives. Saying grace at meals is one way.

Gratitude is expressed through genuine thankfulness, and will help you gain a perspective that parenting is a relationship, not a role, and that life is a gift, not a right. It provides the brain with enough flexibility to bring optimism to adversity. Boy, do we need that today.



1 Thess. 5:16-18 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Timothy 6:6, 7 - But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.

ADAPTABILITY. We have really learned a lot about this quality in the past year. Adaptability requires courageous flexibility and creativity. It also means you know how to let things go sometimes, and that you can give yourself some space and time to recover from stress and problems. Today's world is constantly changing. Look at what we have been through in 2020 and 21. Stress is part of life, we can't avoid it, but we can manage it. Are you able to adjust to different situations? Are you teaching your children to do the same? Are we listening

to our children and helping them to cope with the changing environment? Are we willing to listen to their opinions on what to do and try them out? It is helpful for our children to learn this important skill.

Phil. 4:11-13 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

INTENTIONALITY. We have talked about this in many of our articles. As parents we need to be focused on developing emotional, physical, mental and spiritual growth in our children. We can't just hope they turn out all right. There are too many other influences that can derail good growth in our children. It involves guidance, preparation, teaching, attention, learning, planning and involvement. It requires a PLAN on our part. If our children see that we have a plan, it shows our value of the relationship with our children and our desire for their spiritual and personal growth. Paul's example of prayer in Colossians is appropriate for us as parents.

Colossians 1:9,10 And so, ...we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

There are many other things that we could include here, but perhaps if we start here, we can make a difference in our children's lives. We can't do these things on our own. We need the Holy Spirit's power in our life to do this. Lets pray daily for our children and ask God every day to fill us with the Holy Spirit and show us where we need to improve in these important areas.

Please check out source of this information at the Focus on the Family website.

¹<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/a-biblical-basis-for-the-7-traits-of-effective-parenting/>

If you dare you can take their assessment at:
<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/the-7-traits-of-effective-parenting/#225505>

Scripture references are from the ESV, from Bible Gateway. This article is written by Marsha Navamanie who works with the Christian Reformed Church in Sri Lanka from material from the Focus on the Family website. If you have parenting questions you can reach her at m.navamanie@yahoo.com.



Praying with Jesus in Solitude

By Denise Posie

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. —Mark 1:35

It is not unusual for me to hear someone say, “I’m struggling with finding time to be alone with God in prayer.” I believe many Christians have this same struggle. Perhaps you have said this yourself. Finding time is a significant barrier to spending time in prayer. It is not always easy to sacrifice and give up something else. Most people have busy lives filled with so many meaningful activities involving family, work, ministry, and personal matters. This is a reality of the 21st century. However, many of us desire to see something different for our current prayer practices.

We can be inspired by Jesus’ example of finding quiet time with God. The gospel of Mark describes how Jesus and his disciples are on the move from one place to another. In the synagogue at Capernaum, people identify Jesus as one who teaches with authority and who, more surprisingly, casts out an impure spirit from a man on the Sabbath. Jesus’ reputation grows, and so do the crowds following him.

His disciples James and John accompany him to their next stop, Simon and Andrew’s home. Within moments of their arrival, Jesus is told that Simon’s mother-in-law is sick in bed with a fever.

This next part makes me smile: Jesus goes to her, takes her hand, and helps her up, and the fever leaves her. The atmosphere changes as gratitude and

joy fill the room, and she begins to serve her guests. The news about her healing travels.

Later that evening, Jesus heals all the sick and demon-possessed who come to him. The night was long and draining. The rhythm changes, though.

Jesus probably got some sleep, but there was something far more important on his mind. He enjoyed being with people, but not always. The voices of people questioning his power and authority, of the sick expecting to be healed, and of the disciples faded away. Mark describes Jesus finding an opportune time to leave the house and go to a quiet place to pray. Up to this point, Jesus had been responding to others’ needs. Now he attends to his own needs.

The outer work of ministry and inner work of soul care is propelled by his relationship and oneness with the Father. Jesus prays in solitude, an essential part of his life.

There are two other instances when Mark describes Jesus withdrawing from his disciples and the crowds to talk with God in solitude.

Before feeding the 5,000, Jesus invites his disciples to "come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest" (Mark 6:31). He invites us today to do the same. After teaching and feeding the crowd, Jesus went up on a mountainside to pray (6:46).

Just before his arrest, late at night, Jesus meets alone with God in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-41). Mark describes how challenging it was for the disciples to stay awake and pray nearby.

In Mark 1, he purposefully leaves while the disciples are asleep. We note the importance of alone time with God. Little is known about what happened in these moments of solitude and prayer, but I believe it was critical for Jesus' well-being and mission to regularly set aside his public ministry to get away to pray. He left the regular routine of things behind.

We can learn from Jesus' example. It begins with a desire to get away for some time alone with God in prayer.

My first retreat experience occurred when I was in seminary: a one-day respite from the typical routine of attending classes and studying. We received an optional prayer guide with biblical themes and Scripture passages. I had access to my Bible, a hymnal, a journal, a prayer shawl, and a prayer rug. There was also a prayer tower available on campus. (These types of dedicated places for prayer are becoming more common on seminary campuses.)

Retreatants were told not to interact with each other, but to practice silence. At the beginning of the day, I could not imagine how fruitful and fulfilling

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this experience would be. Since then, it has become a regular part of my life.

When is the right time to pray alone? Some faith traditions practice morning, midday, and evening times of prayer. It takes time to figure out what works best for your lifestyle. There is no set format.

Different seasons of the year or life rhythms require schedule adjustments. Jesus prayed for hours at a time and sometimes all night. Some individuals spend a few days or even longer at a retreat or monastic center, seeking God's face using labyrinths, libraries, bird-watching, and nature trails.

In my travels, sometimes I choose to stay at a monastic center instead of a hotel. If a retreat center is not an option, a long walk at the lake or some other safe, secluded place can be a good space to meet God in prayer.

How to Get Alone Time with God

The thought of being alone might not be easy if we do not like to be alone.

Being alone with God means we must temporarily disconnect from our family, friends, and coworkers, our ordinary situations, and our possessions. Some people put in their calendar an event called "Meeting with God" or "Quiet Time."

For this to happen, our family, work, and school responsibilities must be covered by someone else. Hopefully a relative or close friend will see the value of this time away and graciously meet our needs.

Our laptops and cellphones must be powered off and out of sight—no peeping on social media or reading the news. We do not need to feel guilty about "unproductiveness" or doing what seems to be nothing.

When I was pastor at Immanuel CRC in Kalamazoo, Mich., our council went away for a one-and-a-half-day planning retreat. For some it was a challenge. Several of us worked a full day before arriving at the Hermitage Community retreat center in Three Rivers, Mich., in time for a 5:30 p.m. dinner together.

As the retreat facilitator, I asked everyone to practice silence from dinner-time until our first meeting the next morning. The intent was to give us time to disconnect from our busy schedules and to have time alone with God.

When told about this arrangement, one person was upset. This person worked in a critical care environment and was looking forward to great conversations at the dinner table and late into the night. But we followed the original plan.

The next morning all of us gave testimonies about how we needed this time of solitude. The person who was initially upset was now grateful.

In her book *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*, Ruth Haley Barton talks about getting in touch with what's true about us.

"Most of us are more tired than we know at the soul level," she writes. "We are teetering on the brink of dangerous exhaustion, and we really cannot do anything else until we have gotten some rest."

We do not easily disconnect from patterns and practices that have become so much of our life. But

purposefully connecting with God—speaking, listening, and being silent in God’s presence—can be an adventurous, reverential, and liberating experience.

God does not communicate with everyone in the same way. God connects with us through Scripture, circumstances, and the Holy Spirit. We must intentionally engage God’s Word and place ourselves in a position or posture to receive.

Jesus prayed during in-between times of a typical day of ministering to others and teaching the disciples; he intentionally went off by himself to pray. He was free at the moment! We must trust the Spirit and do the same, showing up before God as we are. We need not worry about anything; it is a safe place.

Purposefully connecting with God might involve going alone to a particular place that has meaning for you, such as a lake, a nature trail, a mountain, or a retreat center. I live about 45 minutes from beautiful Lake Michigan. Sometimes I am drawn to the lake—even in winter!—because it is one of my quiet places to meet our God.

If you decide to stay at home, you might choose a comfortable chair, your crafting corner, a designated prayer closet, or somewhere else for a private time in prayer.

During these times of quietness, we grow in knowing God and ourselves. When we struggle with something, or when illumination or conviction happens based on a recent sermon we heard, the Spirit might prompt us to pray. Dallas Willard describes it this way in his book *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*: “In solitude, we confront our own soul with its obscure forces and conflicts that escape our attention when we are interacting with others.”

These matters might influence the intensity of how we pray and what we pray for.

Being alone in prayer might mean being in a position of vulnerability in which we open ourselves to God. We get real with God about what we think and feel without mincing our words. God knows what is in our hearts and minds. We carry our thoughts, experiences, pain, and emotions with us. Life can be hard at times. There is value in bringing our reality to the Lord in prayer:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God” (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

In Psalm 63:1-8, David describes his times of trouble in the wilderness. He is thirsty and longing for God in a barren place away from his home and place of worship. Yet he seeks and depends on God.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we might have felt depleted, tired, alone, and unable to go to our place of worship. We went to secret closets or quiet places, seeking comfort and assurance of God’s help.

None of God’s people are exempt from hard times. The key is knowing to whom we belong and from where our help comes. There are some things in life no one but God knows about, and God is the only one who can turn the situation around. Thanks be to God!

Jesus faced his most vulnerable and intimate moments in Gethsemane, a familiar, quiet place to be on his knees, alone with Abba, his Father, in hope of another way. He “prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground” (Luke

22:44). Jesus rested in knowing his Father’s will.

It is God’s will for us to make time to be alone with him in prayer. We might struggle, but it will not be a struggle one day when we least expect it. Our struggle will become a longing to be with our God, who loves us and whom we love.

May God help each of us, our families, and our churches to make room for regular quiet times in prayer.



Denise L. Posie is a diversity, equity, and inclusion discipleship coach at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich. She is the author of *Consider a Greater Purpose: Esther, Vashti and the Courageous Women Who Followed*.

(Reprinted with permission, from “The Banner,” publication of the Christian Reformed Church of North America, April 2021).

+++ CHURCH NEWS+++



❖ Lockdowns, Travel Restrictions and Virtual Ministries...

After a brief spell when the Churches were opened for Public Worship and some ministry related activities, health regulations and travel restrictions brought a closure again and virtual ministry resumed in the local congregations. Sunday Worship, Bible Studies, Prayer meetings, Sunday School, Youth Meetings and many other activities went virtual via ZOOM, WhatsApp and other platforms. Although it does have its limitations, given the upsurge of the Pandemic infections and its implications, these avenues of ministry would perhaps continue for a good while more.

❖ Graduates All...



Pastors Dhanaraj Ajendran, Amal Elpitiya, Andrew Cottling and Sumith Fernando were part of the Graduating Class of the Colombo Theological Seminary for 2021.

Whilst Pastor Ajendran graduated with a Master of Arts Degree, Pastor's Elpitiya, Cottling and Fernando, received the Bachelor of Theology. Due to the health restrictions the formal Ceremony, scheduled for the 17th of July, 2021, was postponed for the early part of 2022.

Pastor Ajendran presently serves the congregation at Hatton, whilst Pastors Elpitiya, Cottling and Fernando, serve at Wolvendhal Sinhala, Wolvendhal English and Regent-St Sinhala and Kalpitiya respectively.

❖ Redeemers Youth Ministry.

The Youth at Dehiwela have continued to meet Online during the past few months for the following programs: 12th June "Jesus and Identity" – Lesson 1, led by Shenaya Fernando, 26th June, "Jesus and Identity" – Lesson 2, led by Christian Jeshurun, 10th July, "Jesus and Identity" – Lesson 3, Led by Wishanka Gregory,

24th July, - "Jesus and Identity" – Lesson 4, led by Shenaya Fernando, 7th August, - Virtual Game Night – led by Josh Aldons, 4th September, "You, Me and the Bible" – Lesson 1 – led by Shehan Thomas 18th September, "You, Me And the Bible" Lesson 2 – led by Marsha Navamanie .

❖ Iris Labrooy.

Iris Labrooy, better known as "Aunty Iris" to many who knew and loved her, passed away after a brief illness on the 10th of July, 2021. Aunty Iris and family were part of the Regent-Street congregation for many years until they transferred membership to Dehiwela where she and part of her family worshipped and were involved in the ministry and mission of Dehiwela. When at Regent Street, a weekly Bible Study was held in her home and the fact that she loved the Word and had a good knowledge of that word was demonstrated when she was willing to be part of the Church Bible Quiz Teams with members much younger than herself, even memorising parts of the required portions assigned for the Quiz. During the latter part of her life, when health issues compelled her to take life at a slower pace, she spent much time in prayer and praise. Her family, the Church family and all those who were part of her life, were brought before God's throne of grace regularly and with great passion.

Aunty Iris was a loving wife, caring mother and grand mother who derived great joy when she saw that her children and grand children were walking in the Truth. And it grieved her much when it was not so!

Aunty Iris leaves behind a legacy of faith and faithfulness. A legacy that needs to be emulated by all those who knew and loved her. We pray the Lord's peace upon, Dexter, Tarnia, Christo and the rest of the family.

❖ Swarna and Prema Wanigatunga.

Swarna and Prema Wanigatunga, went to be with the Lord a few weeks apart from each other. After 57 years of a partnership, Swarna was called home on 12th July and Prema on Monday the 2nd of August. Not only were they closely knit and lived in great peace in marriage, their end was also uniquely similar. No suffering. Just "falling asleep in Jesus" !

Swarna and Prema, were amongst the Senior members of the Dehiwela Church. Swarna was the daughter of a pioneer DRC Lay Evangelist, the late Walter de S Wijewickrema. Prema

was converted prior to his marriage. He served the Royal Ceylon Air Force. During those years when they lived in Diyatalawa and Katunayake, their home was opened for a Worship services conducted by the late Revd: Clarence Van Ens, who used to travel to those places regularly.

On moving to Colombo, many years ago, they were associated with the Dehiwela English Congregation, where they worshipped during the latter years in the mornings, until health took its toll.

They were so keen to have their grand daughter who is domiciled in the USA make Public Profession of Faith in the CRC that when on a visit here, Prema accompanied her every Sunday, in spite of his health issues, when she attended the classes and then stayed on for the Worship Service. Her public profession of faith in Jesus, brought both Prema and Swarna great joy. They remained loyal to the Reformed Church through decades and the changing scenes of their own lives and Church life too.

And after a few weeks of separation, after 57 years of living together, they are reunited in their Heavenly Home, never more to part. We do give God thanks for their lives and pray His comfort upon Prabash, Prasantha, Renuka and Piyathie.

❖ **Ananda Jayalal.**

Ananda Jayalal was a driver for the CRC SL for many years. During those years he took the Ministers, Ministry workers our Lay Officers and people to many parts of the Island, for ministry, missions and even administrative matters. He served with a great sense of dedication and we always felt safe when he was at the wheel. He also knew motor mechanism and we did not fear any breakdowns along the way. His service continued until he resigned when he obtained employment in Kuwait. His return to the Country after a few years, mainly to see his son through his O/L exams etc, saw him involved in different forms of employment, until he got himself a Vehicle and did take tourists around. During this time, we were able to have him to drive for us when needed.

Ananda was abundantly skilled. In addition to being a competent driver and motor mechanic, he was a “jack of all trades.” If one changed “jack” to “king” it would not be wrong. From electrical items, mobile phones, refrigerators, washing machines, all kinds of electrical items and even carpentry seemed his forte. Addi-

tionally, his English language skills and his calligraphy were excellent.

Always willing to oblige and serve in whatever way possible was part and parcel of his DNA. Susan and Shehan have lost a faithful husband and father. We have lost a decent and good man and an ever dependable and faithful friend. At 57, he succumbed to Covid and departed without any time for anyone to say farewell but with great memories that would always be treasured.

❖ **Randolph Kellar.**

Randolph Kellar, known to family and friends as Sandy, passed away with a suddenness that shocked all those who knew and loved him. Sandy was the youngest of three boys of the late Eric and Iris Kellar, who were members of the Dehiwela Church. The eldest, Errol, predeceased Sandy, following a motor accident, decades ago.

A Sportsman of repute, especially in Rugby and Boxing, Sandy was also a veteran of the Travel Trade, where he distinguished himself in many responsible capacities both within and without the Country.

Human failings notwithstanding, Sandy found himself worshipping at the CRC Dehiwela on a regular basis. After all, it was the place that instilled in him, the basics of the faith, when he attended the Sunday School together with his brothers. An outstanding quality was that he never forgot his roots and especially the help that the Church rendered him and his family in the early years when life was difficult and he decided to issue a standing order of a monthly contribution to the Diaconal fund, which reaches out to the poor and needy, in gratitude perhaps for what that fund had been to him and his family in his young days.

Always full of humour and some practical pranks as well, he never failed to recognize anyone from the past who were part of his life, even after many years. These qualities sometimes have been lost on many, especially those who have seemingly prospered in their material lives. So where some did lose their heads in more ways than one, Sandy kept his not ever losing the common touch. Now as he rests in peace, we pray, he would also rise in glory.

❖ **Vivian Bulner.**

Vivian Bulner (nee Isaacs) passed away on Sunday the 15th of August, 2021, leaving her family and those who knew and loved in deep distress and shock on hearing the news.

She was the wife of Emmanuel Bulner, an Elder of the Regent-Street congregation and was part of the Isaac family who were born and bred in the then Dutch Reformed Church, with their roots specifically at Maligakande.

After marriage and with the suspending of the English worship services at Maligakande, the family was involved with Regent-Street where Vivian and Emmanuel were involved in different ways and the children were nurtured in the faith of the fathers. With the children leaving the Country for varied reasons, Vivian and Emmanuel, whilst visiting them from time to time, continued to remain in Sri Lanka and serve the Church at Regent-Street. Vivian was involved with the WMU and was known for her delicious chutneys and pickles, especially when it came to the annual sale of the Ceylon Bible Society. The family continued to support the mission and ministry of the CRC, always mindful of the care, compassion and concern that the Church extended to them in their times of need.

Sadly, another victim of the Pandemic, Vivian now rests from her labours and enjoys that eternal peace in her Heavenly Home. We pray the Lord's peace and comfort upon Emmanuel and the rest of this dear family.

❖ **Cheyne Wikramatilaka.**

Cheyne became another victim of the Covid virus and passed away during the early hours of Saturday the 21st of August, 2021. The last conversation with Cheyne was on Thursday followed by prayer and he was confident that other than the cough that remained, he was making good recovery. But that hope and confidence was shattered on Saturday.

With his abundant skills in Leadership and Administration issues, he was initially involved in teaching and training some of our Pastors in these areas, whilst he together with his brother in law conducted such a programme on a more elaborate manner, for our Denominational leadership, especially in dealing with the new normal situation in terms of our ministry and vision. He was from his younger days gifted in music and song and occasionally would release a video of either doing a solo or singing a duet with his daughter.

Faithful to the Church of his youth, he was also very prompt and faithful when it came to giving his tithes and offerings. He would always make sure that there was also a thank offering for some particular blessing that the Lord had bestowed upon him. Having seen the Lord's gracious compassion and mercy to his son, he wrote a detailed testimony of the Lord's healing grace, which was also published in the Herald.

Cheyne leaves behind his wife, Nelu, daughter Cheniliza and son Cheynen.

❖ **Henry Lawson Weinman.**

Henry Weinman, better known as "Joy" passed away in Melbourne on Tuesday the 31st of August, 2021. Joy was very much part of the then Dutch Reformed Church, together with his mum and sisters and served the Church in different ways. My initial contact with him was when he was involved as a Teacher of the Maligakande Sunday School, during the time of the late Mrs. Janet Bird. He also did some insurance work for the church for many years. On moving residence, he and his family got involved with the Kohuwela Congregation, where Joy served as a Deacon for many years. I recall the many times, he together with some of the other leadership of that time, visiting the homes of the poor and needy with a view to spending some time with them and extending to them a helping hand. Personally speaking Maxine and I enjoyed many good times in their homes at Mirihana and Nugegoda. The family occasions were great "party" times. It was also great to touch base in Melbourne and relive those times in some measure. Joy continued to be very interested in the ministry and mission of the CRC and looked forward to news through the Herald and other communications and contacts. Additionally, he also supported the ministry in whatever ways he could and that good legacy has continued with his son Ricky, to the Church at Kohuwela where they spent so many good years. Unlike today where sadly, many a church member has a "consumer" mindset – to be members only because of what they can get – Joy like so many of the faithful was part of the church also for what he could give. So, to God be all the glory! Our deepest sympathies to Anita, Ricky, Sharon, Jackie, Kurt and the rest of the family.

❖ **Rodney Van Hoff.**

Rodney passed away after a long drawn out illness on Tuesday the 1st of September, 2021.

Subject to a stroke a few years ago, he never fully recovered and battled many physical limitations through the last few years.

Part of a family that was closely associated with the D/CRC, Rodney spent most of his youthful years in the congregation of the CRC Dehiwela, where he was an integral part of the Youth Fellowship. When it came to sports Rodney was involved in a passionate way, especially with the game of Cricket that saw hordes of young men and boys almost every evening at the Church grounds playing their hearts out. Rodney led from the front and kept things going with his commitment to the game interlaced with his sense of humour. Rodney specialised in fast bowling and it was a familiar sight during those playing times, to see his gangling figure running from the middle of Station Road to bowl with gusto. And when the umpire turned down an appeal, which he thought should have given him a wicket, he did not hide his feelings !! He was also a very skilled technician when it came to repairs involving Radios, Stereos and even Televisions. That was his forte and he was much in demand by many, especially those who knew him.

Having seen him in his heyday with such energy and full of life, it was sad to see his physical decline during these last few years. Providentially, he was blessed with family here and in other parts of the world who did all they could, together with the help of others, to care for him in meaningful ways with great love. Rodney now rests in peace and we pray that peace upon Christine, Charmaine, Shirani and all members of the family.

❖ **Ramon Aldons.**

Ramon, passed away in the very early hours of Saturday the 11th, following an illness he struggled with for a number of months. The past few months, saw him in and out of hospital, going through many a process of Chemotherapy, followed by many other medical processes. Ramon was initially of the Wellawatte congregation and also served that congregation as a deacon for a few years. He and his family decided to transfer to the Dehiwela Congregation

at some point of time, and the entire family was involved in different ways with the ministries at Dehiwela. Primarily, Ramon was associated with the Choir, whilst Ranmuthu involved herself with the WMU and Joshua with the Youth Organisation – the RYM.

After many months since his illness was diagnosed and much medication, in one sense, his passing was swift and came suddenly. Although much prayer was raised for healing, on his behalf, the Lord thought it best to give him eternal rest and peace and took him to his heavenly home.

We pray for the Lord's grace and peace upon Ranmuthu, Joshua and other members of the family.

❖ **Church Register**

❖ **Deaths.**

I am the Resurrection and the Life..."

Iris Labrooy, on Saturday 10th July, 2021, of the Dehiwela Congregation.

Swarna Wanigatunga, on Monday 12th July, 2021, of the Dehiwela Congregation.

Sandy Kellar, on Sunday 1st August, 2021, of the Dehiwela Congregation.

Prema Wanigatunga, on Monday 2nd August, 2021, of the Dehiwela Congregation.

Vivian Bulner, on Sunday 15th August, 2021, of the Regent-Street Congregation.

Cheyne Wikramatilaka, on Saturday 21st August, 2021, of the Dehiwela Congregation.

Rodney Van Hoff, on Wednesday 1st September, 2021, of the Kohuwela Congregation.

Ramon Aldons, on Saturday 11th September, 2021, of the Dehiwela Congregation.

(The "News" in these pages is usually gathered from the Bulletins published by the respective local churches and available in the Church office. Any other news of events or involving the membership could be sent directly to the Editor of "The Herald," for publication according to the established criteria. – Ed.).

The Shalom-berg

Every act of shalom is a reflection of the Holy Spirit in our lives and the Prince of Shalom we worship.



Kelly Vander Woude is the pastor of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Fort Collins, Colo. He loves to smoke all kinds of food, hang out with his wife and kids, and try to build things.

MOST OF US RECOGNIZE the word “shalom” when we see it and understand that it means “peace.” And yet that’s just the tip of what I’m calling the “shalom-berg.” It’s not just peace, and it’s not just a word. It’s a life-giving, life-enriching, life-breathing peace like none other—a peace that the English language just cannot grasp.

The Hebrew writers of the Old Testament use the word “shalom” more than 200 times. In Exodus 20:24, it’s used to describe the peace offering to consecrate a relationship between God and people; in Genesis 15:15 it refers to one’s well-being or success and even one’s salvation. But then we have a scattering of “shalom” meanings: being complete and unharmed, prosperity, unity, and perfection. The list is long, the texts are beautiful, and the “shalom-berg” gets bigger the further down we go.

Where do all of these shaloms come full circle in Scripture? In Jesus. The Bible declares that Jesus is our “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). Jesus embodies all these beautiful understandings of shalom; he is our Prince of Shalom. Every “shalom” we hear or read points us directly to Jesus Christ.


Jesus speaks to us and gives us peace. His words, love, and guidance are peaceful and good. His is a peace that always was and will always be. And when we begin to see Jesus as our shalom, we begin to understand the depth and hope of that shalom:

- » We read in 1 Timothy 2:5 that Jesus Christ as mediator restores our broken relationship with God and gives us shalom with God. Jesus’ death was the payment for our sins, the restoration of our lives, and the declaration of eternal shalom that awaits us.
- » Jesus also restores our relationships with others. In his death and

resurrection we are given shalom as all the animosity between us is washed away by his blood.

- » With Jesus’ return we’ll have shalom with the earth in the new creation. No more will we be living the words of Genesis 3:17-19, when animosity and sin wreaked havoc on the relationship of humans to creation.

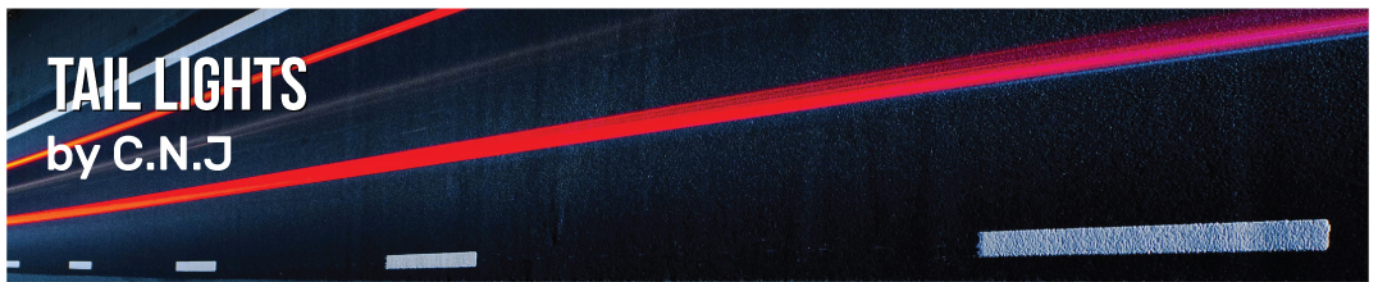
As I look at this world I am thankful for the shalom we’re given and the shalom that awaits us. This world is messed up, and clearly, when it’s left up to us, we don’t make it better. But we cannot just toss up our hands and do nothing, because on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13), shalom came down to us once more and took root in our lives—an indwelling of shalom that convicts and sends. That means that we are to live out shalom within and outside ourselves and around the world. And as we are called to be the hands and feet of Christ here on earth, to be his representatives here and around the world, we must therefore bring shalom. Every act of shalom is a reflection of the Holy Spirit in our lives and the Prince of Shalom we worship.

So how are you sharing shalom today at home, at work, at the grocery store, on the soccer field, on the airplane, talking to your neighbor, or with your family? 

1. What did you understand the word “shalom” to mean?
2. How do we recognize shalom in our world? What are some of the marks or signs of shalom we can see?
3. How do we, either individually or collectively, work alongside Jesus in fostering shalom?

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THE **AUTUMN** SCENE !



There is a wall mural of an autumn scene in the verandah of our home, forming the background where the Online messages are recorded, when the Church is in lockdown. This mural has been around since 1981 and so we have always been in the autumn of life!! The other day, someone who listens to these messages suggested that there be a change of the scenery – so that listening could be more effective! I wrote back and said that seeing is not as important as listening! I am sure from the response that a change was anticipated – whether in banter or not, it was difficult to say – although I would incline more towards banter!!

Not possessing any murals that could have made a change, I settled to think about the Church scene! The Pulpit and its “scenery” has not changed for a hundred years! But then I remembered that there are other diversions and distractions to keep one going during that time. Some in the front of us. Some at the back of us and some even to the side of us!

In this new normal, those diversions are absent. Basically, we stare at the screen and the screen stares back! All part of Online life, whether in the Church or outside of it!.

Through all of this contemplation, my mind went back to what the Prophet Isaiah said about the Word of God in Ch 40 vs 8. If I paraphrase that for tail light purposes, it would read “Wall murals may change, pulpits and platforms may wither but the Word of God stands forever.”! It is true, we sometimes focus much on the container and the periphery and less on the content and the core. It is the content and core that matter. That can give life, renew and sustain. Remember the Bible Story that is a subject of many a joke - when the Lord spoke through an ass?! So, murals, platforms, pulpits and personalities would amount to nothing, apart from the life changing Divine Word!

And may I quickly say, for the present, it would always be “autumn” where we live – at least in terms of that mural on the wall !!

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