

The Herald

· OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF SRI LANKA ·

Remembering Our Priorities!



“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God...”
(St. Matthew 6:33)



“SEEK YE FIRST- REMEMBERING OUR PRIORITIES” - SEE INSIDE
ALSO INSIDE - “THE GREAT COMMISSION AND THE FAMILY”

FIRST Things SECOND - SECOND Things FIRST !!



It is possible you would have noticed the theme of this issue as you glanced at the Cover - "Seek Ye First" (Remembering our Priorities). We thought it is a good theme to give consideration, since our priorities, as the Lord's people, are most of the time haywire just like this editorial caption makes clear!!

Of course, the theme is based on a word from the Sermon on the Mount which Jesus mouthed - **"Seek ye first the Kingdom and His righteousness and all these things shall be added as well"** (St Matthew 6 vs 33).

So, a basic question to start things off would be "What is our ruling passion?" If we do not like the word "passion" it can be replaced with the word "priority" What is our top priority? In other words something that ranks number one with us. We all got one of those, I am sure. Let's say it's our treasure, our highest good. It's the thing, the person, the cause that means more to us than anything else in the world. Is the net spread wide enough? I think so. I think all of us, if we look carefully at the way we are living, can begin to identify what holds that place.

What we are hoping by focusing on this theme, is that each of us will be given insight and honesty about what our top priority is. And it is further hoped, that if is something less than the best, that we will want to change it. As the English Poet Tennyson said, "we must needs love the highest when we see it, not Lancelot or another" That's it.!

The highest and best is in the words of Jesus Christ which has been quoted in St. Matthew 6 vs 33. Jesus calls us to seek His kingdom first. What is the Kingdom He is talking about? It was the chief subject of His teaching. He began his preaching with such a word. Most of His parables were illustrations of the Kingdom.

To put it simply, amongst the many understandings of it, the Kingdom of God is not a territory. It is not chiefly an organization, though it surely includes that. Basically, the Kingdom of God means God actively reigning. His powerful saving rule in the hearts and lives and societies of humankind

The emphasis in this word of Jesus, is not so much on the Kingdom but on **seeking it and seeking it first** - which then speaks priority! When you seek something you desire it, you set a high value on it, you aspire to have it, to make it your own. It is more than a wish and a dream. You go actively looking for it, sparing no pains to find it and moving towards that goal. And when you seek it first, it does become high priority!

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*Front Cover - Design by
Tamara Rebeira*

Actually, we must also not forget the context of this verse and what Jesus said in Vs 25 of this same chapter. Jesus says all of us are seekers after many things He mentions a number of things which we are inclined to pursue as our chief quest. These include the necessities of life. It is not wrong to seek after these things. Jesus says so. God knows that we need these things. The emphasis is not seeking anxiously, (without trusting in God's provision), exclusively (as though these were the only things of value in life) and chiefly. (making them our highest good). He gives the alternative. Seek God's Kingdom first. Make that your chief concern. And the promise when we do that and give God first place, making His rule our chief passion, Jesus says the other things we do need will be ours as well.

The learned Church Father Origen, attributes a saying to Jesus that seems to go right along with His word in St Matthew 6: 33 ... *"Ask for the great things and the little things will be added to you; ask for the heavenly things and the earthly things will be given you as well."*

Suppose we were to venture on this Word, and make a whole hearted Commitment to Jesus Christ. Suppose we were to settle it today, even as we read this piece of writing., that we are not our own, but have been bought with a price and we belong to Him forever. Jesus says, the other things we need, the other goals our heart craves, when we are seeing life steadily and seeing it whole, they will come to us in some ways unsought!

After all is read and done in concluding this piece of writing, it is good to remember the words of Charles R Swindoll that says it all – *"My order of priorities reflects the level of my commitment to Christ. Whoever or whatever is in first place, if it isn't the Lord Jesus, is in the wrong place!"*



...seek ye first the kingdom of God
and His righteousness
and all these things
will be added unto you.
(Matthew 6:33)



by Chamarie Rebeira.

“SEEK YE FIRST” Do I?

Have you ever faced a problem so big that you lost focus? Has something been so huge that it took up all your strength, peace and hope? As Christians, I’m sure we have all felt that way at some point in our lives. What do we do in such situations? The most “Christian” answer to this question is, “we must take it to God” or “we should lay it at His feet.”

But do we?

In my experience, in such a situation, praying is usually my last resort. I tend to try to fix things using my own knowledge and strength first.

We all know that we should seek God first in all circumstances, but the reality is that our human nature tends to try to sort it out first and when we finally realize that we can’t, then we turn to God. So, the question that really should be asked here is why should we seek Him first? How does seeking Him first change our situation?

If you have been a follower of Christ, for a considerable length of time, you would know that most often our situation doesn’t change as quickly as we would like it to. Most often, we still go through difficult times, disappointments, loss, etc. even after seeking Him first. So, what’s the point of seeking Him first?

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matthew 11: 28 – 30

These verses remind us that when we come to God, He will give us rest. Although our circumstances and situations maybe overwhelming and frankly unbearable, God invites us to come to Him and He will give us rest.

This is why we should seek Him first. He has already promised rest to those who come to Him. The fact is He is not going to shove rest at us, He is waiting for us to come to Him, to seek Him, not as a last resort but to seek Him first. As His children, if running to our Heavenly Father in all life’s circumstances is not our first reaction, then we really need to sit and think about our priorities.

(Chamarie is a member of the CRC Dehiwela, teaches Sunday School and is on the staff of Methodist College, Colombo 3).

“Seek Ye First” – (Remembering our Priorities)

By-Dishan Joseph

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”- Matthew 6.33

This is a familiar verse, but what does seeking the Kingdom of God mean? How do we seek it “first”? Today we all live in a digitally dominated world. A modern era where technology influences almost every area of our lives. Seeking God first is a posture of spiritual alignment. Instead of worrying about daily provisions, finances or the future, seeking God first shifts the burden of control onto His shoulders. Today we see some Christians “following” certain church leaders to get “blessings”.

I came across an Old Testament king who gave me new perspective. King Jehoshaphat is introduced to us in 2 Chronicles 17 like this: The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the ways of his father David before him. He sought after the God of his father and followed his commands rather than the practices of Israel. King Jehoshaphat literally chased after God. He would look for God’s presence and ask God to reveal his power and will. On a lighter note I remember in school, a class-mate once wrote the name of this wise king as Jehoshafat!! The teacher burst out laughing and we followed!!

If God is the sovereign ruler of our hearts and minds, then there is no room for another queen or king. When we stand in awe of God as Jehoshaphat did, we can see that we truly are powerless. In that posture, we are given power by looking to God, who holds the universe in the palm of His hands. Psalm 121 says I lift up my eyes to the mountains- where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. This is a spiritual compass directing us to seek God daily, because he is the only way forward and the only genuine source of consistent help. By trusting in His plans and living in alignment with His will, you experience answered prayers, divine provision and a deeply rewarding life.

To get a good definition of “Kingdom of God,” it’s helpful to first understand what “kingdom” meant for the biblical authors. In Jesus’ first-century Jewish context, kingdom meant a tangible, real world on Earth, including real citizens, a real king, and a way of life governed by that king. When kings embraced harmful ways of living and governing, everyone in the empire would suffer. But when kings operated according to God’s wisdom, everyone in the empire would experience increased life, provision, and safety. Jesus, the King of God’s Kingdom, tells us that safety and satisfaction result when we love God and others as we love ourselves. When Jesus says “all these things will be added to you,” he’s talking about drink, food and shelter-all symbols of provision, fullness, and life. Jesus did not embrace anxious ways of protection or accumulation, and he consistently teaches his followers to do the same.

As believers, it would seem that we would automatically keep God first in all things, but this world is full of distractions. It is challenging at times to keep our minds focused on seeking God first. It is tempting to listen to the voices and opinions of others when we are making decisions. Success in life truly comes from making God guided decisions. Decisions are a key aspect of daily life. If our thoughts are guided by the Holy Spirit, then he will direct us to make decisions that finally keep us on the “right” path. Seeking God first is important in all major decision making. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6). We may face fear, loneliness, anger, sadness, rejection, or any other emotion or circumstance that can pull us away from God’s plan and purpose. But when we are seeking God first, we stay focused on His purpose for us. We trust God to take care of us.

God has a good plan for us. When we face hardship, we put our hope in Him as a way of seeking God first and remembering that He will keep His promises, including the promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us. We seek God first by remembering that our approval comes from Him. The

Bible makes it abundantly clear that God is the greatest, most valuable, most precious thing in the universe. In Matthew 13:44-46, Jesus spoke of God's inestimable value. The Bible is God's word, and in it we learn what God is like, what He desires for us, and how we can please Him. By reading the Bible each day and seeking to do what it says, we put God first in our lives. Every new day is a fresh opportunity to prioritize God in our lives. God must become the principal figure in our lives and central to all we do and think. Christian life is characterized by moment-to-moment selfless service to God that flows from love for Him and His people. In all things, the believer trusts, obeys and loves God above all else.



Human seeking behaviors are largely driven by internal neurological and emotional rewards. Some people actively seek attention for external validation, or information to satisfy curiosity and maintain a sense of safety. These deeply rooted tendencies are heavily influenced by individual personality traits and early attachment experiences. People seek material things to cope with underlying insecurities, boost low self-esteem and project a desired identity to others. This pursuit is driven by evolutionary reward systems (the "scarcity brain") and the illusion that acquiring items will provide happiness, status and control. The prevailing view in psychology is that materialism is bad for our well-being. Our possessions become extensions of the self.

A widely agreed consensus among psychologists defines materialism as an emphasis on possessions and money to measure personal happiness. Many individuals' associate material things with elements like happiness, comfort, relief from problems, success, social status and pleasure-consequently holding the conviction that pursuing these possessions will lead to a happier and more satisfying life. True happiness can never be derived from materialistic things as they by their inherent nature, are temporary. The happiness they can give is also temporary. This is why some can't seek God because they are distracted. They run from church to church "seeking blessings".

Putting God first means that we keep the great commandment: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). In other words, we are totally invested in our relationship with God. Everything we have and everything we are is devoted to Him. Putting God first means we keep our lives free from idolatry in all its forms: "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). An idol is anything that replaces the one, true God in our hearts. As Gideon demolished the altar of Baal and chopped down the Asherah pole (Judges 6:25-27), we must tear from our hearts anything that lessens our devotion or reverence of God. As Gideon built an altar to the Lord to replace the idolatrous images, we must dedicate ourselves as "living sacrifices" to God and in that way put Him first (Romans 12:1). Putting God first means that we strive to follow in Jesus' steps with faith and humility. Jesus' life was characterized by total submission to the Father's will, service to others and prayer.

Prayer is a way to connect with Jesus and realign our hearts with His. When we pray we are "seeking" God's guidance and divine will. Prayer is important because it helps us to stay close to God. Prayer also helps us to grow in our relationship with God. Paul writes in Philippians 4:6-7, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus".



The life of Jesus shows us the areas he prioritized. He set the pace for us to follow. When possible we must help others follow him. May we continue to seek God in all things. As promised he will make our life truly rewarding.

(Dishan is a member of CRC Dehiwela. He is a defence writer and security analyst)

Seek Ye First: Remembering Our Priorities

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." — Matthew 6:33

Every day, we make choices about what deserves our time, attention, and energy. As young people, we have school, friends, family, hobbies, social media, entertainment, sports, future plans, and many other responsibilities competing for our attention. None of these things are necessarily wrong, but the important question is: **What comes first?**

Jesus gives us a clear answer in Matthew 6:33: "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness."

To seek God first means making Him our highest priority—not simply giving Him whatever time or attention is left over. It means allowing our relationship with Him to influence our choices, goals, friendships, studies, and daily lives.



What Does It Mean to Seek God First?

Seeking God first does not mean that we stop studying, enjoying time with friends, pursuing our dreams, or taking care of our responsibilities. Instead, it means that ****God becomes the foundation of everything we do****.

When God is first, we begin asking questions such as:

- Does this choice honor God?
- Is this friendship helping me grow closer to Christ?
- Am I using my talents for His glory?
- Am I giving God my best, or only my leftovers?
- Are my goals centered only on myself, or do they include God's purposes?

Seeking God first changes not only what we do, but also why we do it.

Remembering Our Priorities

It is easy to become distracted. We may spend hours scrolling through social media but struggle to spend a few minutes in prayer. We may be excited about our future careers but rarely think about God's purpose for our lives. We may care deeply about what our friends think while forgetting what God says about us.

This is why we must regularly examine our priorities.

Our priorities reveal what is truly important to us. Jesus said in Matthew 6:21, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

If God is truly our first priority, He should have a place in our everyday lives—not only on Sundays, at youth meetings, or during difficult moments.

God First in Our Time

Time is one of the greatest gifts God has given us, and none of us knows exactly how much of it we have.

We should therefore learn to give God our best time. Prayer, Bible reading, worship, fellowship, and serving others should not be treated as burdens or interruptions to our "real" lives. They are part of the life God has called us to live.

A simple way to begin is by setting aside time each day to pray and read God's Word. Even a small, consistent habit can help us develop a stronger relationship with Christ.

God First in Our Choices

Being a Christian youth does not mean that every decision will be easy. There will be moments when following Christ means choosing differently from the crowd.

Friends may encourage us to do something we know is wrong. Social media may pressure us to follow unhealthy trends. We may be tempted to compromise our values to fit in.

In those moments, remembering our priorities matters.

If God is first, pleasing Him must be more important than pleasing people.

This does not mean being judgmental or thinking we are better than others. It means having the courage to stand for what is right while showing Christ's love and kindness.

God First in Our Future

Young people often think about the future: education, careers, relationships, financial success, and personal dreams. It is good to have goals. God gives us abilities, opportunities, and dreams for a reason.

But our future should not be built around the question, "What will make me successful?" We should also ask, "How can I use my life to glorify God and bless others?"

A successful life is not simply one that gains wealth, popularity, or recognition. True success is found in faithfully following God's direction.

When we put God first, we can trust Him with the future—even when we cannot see the whole path ahead.

What Happens When God Is First?

Putting God first does not mean that life will always be easy. Christians still face disappointment, pressure, failure, and uncertainty.

However, when God is our priority, we have the right foundation.

Instead of allowing circumstances to control us, we can trust God.

Instead of seeking our identity from other people's opinions, we can remember that we belong to Christ.

Instead of constantly worrying about tomorrow, we can trust the God who already knows tomorrow.

Jesus' words in Matthew 6:33 come in the middle of His teaching about worry and earthly concerns. He reminds us that our heavenly Father knows what we need. Therefore, we do not have to live as though everything depends entirely on us.

Challenge for Youth

Take a moment and honestly examine your priorities.

- What gets most of your time?
- What occupies most of your thoughts?
- What do you care about most?
- Where does God fit into your daily life?

If God has been pushed into the background, today is a good day to put Him back at the center.

Start small. Pray sincerely. Open your Bible. Attend church and youth fellowship. Serve someone who needs help. Make choices that honor Christ. Ask God to guide your plans.

Remember: God does not want to be merely part of your life. He wants to be at the center of it.

Conclusion

The world will constantly tell us what should come first—success, popularity, appearance, money, entertainment, achievements, or the approval of others. But Jesus gives us a different priority:

"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness."

When God is first, everything else finds its proper place.

So, as young Christians, let us not give God only our spare time, our leftover energy, or our attention when we have problems. Let us seek Him first—in our thoughts, our choices, our relationships, our studies, our dreams, and our everyday lives.

Put God first, and let every other priority fall into its rightful place.

Questions for Reflection

1. What currently receives most of my time and attention?
2. What is one area of my life where I need to put God first?
3. What distractions are preventing me from growing closer to Christ?
4. How can I seek God's kingdom in my school, friendships, and future?
5. What is one practical step I can take this week to make God my first priority?

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, help me to remember what truly matters. Forgive me for the times I have placed other things before You. Teach me to seek Your kingdom and Your righteousness first. Guide my choices, my friendships, my studies, my dreams, and my future. Help me to live each day in a way that honors You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Youth Page

Edited By: Joshua Aldons

Just For Laughs

Catchy songs

"Some people know every word of their favorite song but suddenly become very quiet when it's time to sing a hymn." 😊

Exam priorities

Student before an exam: "Lord, I trust You completely."

Student five minutes later: "Lord, I trust You... but I would appreciate a miracle." 😊🙏

Pastor: "What should be the first priority in a Christian's life?"

Teen: "God."

Pastor: "Excellent! And what comes after God?"

Teen: "Depends... is there food after the service?" 1 😊📱



Phone Battery

"When my phone reaches 5%, I immediately start looking for a charger. Maybe I should be that serious when my prayer life reaches 5%!" 📱

Church punctuality

"Some people are so committed to church that they arrive 30 minutes early."

"Others are also committed—they just arrive 30 minutes late every Sunday." 🕒



Hi boys and girls,

Imagine you had a big cone of your favorite ice cream, (mine would be chocolate chip for sure!) and you take a bite out of the cone! It's crunchy and a bit dry and soon you've finished most of it.

Pretty soon you realize that was probably not the best idea, cos now you have ice cream dripping down your hands and elbows and making a giant ice cream puddle on the floor! Your friend yells, 'what are you doing?! Don't you know your supposed to start eating the ice cream first!'

Oops! Kinda silly huh? Some things have to come first I guess, in this case the ice cream!

Life gets so busy with our school and sports and activities that sometimes we tend to forget what should really come first. GOD! Even when things are so busy we should always remember to give God first place in our lives.

Take some time to read your bible and say a small prayer each morning before you do anything else. That's how we show that He is the most important person in our lives.

Nothing else should take first place because nothing else is more important! When we give him first place, everything else falls into place easy peezy!

Have a great week!

Lots of love,
Aunty Mandy



First things first

Jamie and his sister Emma were bouncing with excitement for the weekend. Their dad had just brought home a brand new, giant wooden puzzle. It was a beautiful picture of Noah's Ark, complete with hundreds of brightly colored pieces!

"Let's build it right now!" Jamie cheered, immediately dumping the pieces onto the living room rug.

"Wait," Emma said, pointing to the clock on the wall. "Mom said we need to read our morning Bible story and pray before we start our big Saturday projects."

Jamie looked down at the colorful puzzle pieces scattered across the floor. They looked so fun, and he really wanted to find the pieces with the elephants. "Can't we just pray later tonight?" he asked. "I want to start playing right now!"

Just then, their dad walked into the living room. He wasn't holding a puzzle piece, though. Instead, he was carrying a big, empty glass jar, a bowl of large, heavy rocks, and a small bucket of playground sand.



"Before you start building the ark, let me show you a little trick," Dad said with a warm smile, setting the items on the coffee table. "Jamie, I want you to try and fit all these big rocks and all this sand into this one glass jar."

Jamie loved a challenge. He grabbed the bucket of sand and poured it all into the jar first. It filled the glass almost all the way to the top. Then, he tried to shove the big rocks inside. Plink, clunk, plop. But after adding only two rocks, the jar was completely overflowing!

"It doesn't work Dad," Jamie sighed, "There isn't enough room."

"Let's try it another way," Dad suggested, gently emptying the jar back into the buckets. "Emma, why don't you try? But this time, put the big rocks in first."

Emma carefully picked up the big rocks and placed them into the bottom of the empty jar. Dad pointed out that one of the rocks had the word God written on it in marker, and another said Family. Once all the heavy rocks

were safely inside, Emma picked up the bucket of sand and poured it over them. The tiny grains of sand cascaded down, slipping smoothly into all the empty spaces between the big rocks. To Jamie's amazement, every single rock and every last grain of sand fit perfectly inside the jar!

"This jar is just like your day," Dad explained softly. "The big rocks are the most important things in our lives—like spending time with God, praying, and loving our family. The sand is all the fun, extra stuff, like playing video games, riding bikes, and even our new puzzle."

Jamie's eyes lit up as he finally understood. "If I fill my day with all the fun stuff first, there won't be any room left for God. But if I make time for God first, there's still room for everything else!"

"Exactly," Dad smiled, giving him a high-five. "When we put God first, He helps everything else fall perfectly into place."

Jamie looked down at the Noah's Ark pieces, then walked over and sat down right next to his sister on the couch. "Okay," he said, folding his hands together. "Let's read our Bible story first. The elephants can wait."

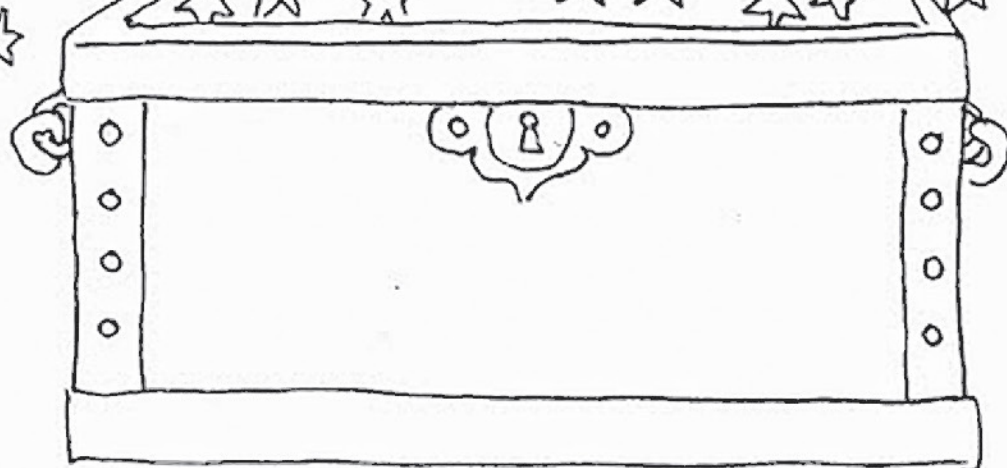
✧ First Things First: My Priorities ✧

This or That?

Sometimes it is hard to choose what to do first. Circle the choice that shows God is the number one priority!

1. It is Sunday morning and it's time to get up! Do you:
 - A) Stay in bed, play games, and skip going to church.
 - B) Wake up, get dressed, and head to church with your family to worship.
2. Emma wants to read a fun storybook before bed, but she hasn't talked to God today. Should she:
 - A) Read her book and just go right to sleep.
 - B) Say her prayers first to thank God for the day, and then read her book.
3. Jamie gets a brand new toy on Saturday. On Sunday, during church time, he should:
 - A) Bring the toy into service and play with it instead of listening.
 - B) Leave the toy in the car or at home so he can focus on God.

Seek first His
kingdom and His
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Matthew 6:33 © Adroniy

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by Marsha Navamanie

Matthew 28: 18-20 - *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

We are all acquainted with the Great Commission, and its importance in the Christian Faith. It is our responsibility as Christians to obey the mandate to "Make Disciples". What is true, but not always recognized is that the Bible is very clear that the family is the place to start in this process. As parents we are responsible for the discipleship and discipline of our children. They are our first disciples.

Jesus instructions about how to do this are very clear. How do we make disciples? We start by baptizing. This is one of our responsibilities as parents to bring our children to God for baptism, to join them to the covenant that God has with us. This associates our children with the church and puts them on the path for a right relationship with God from the beginning. It becomes part of their identity as followers of Christ.

However, this is not enough. We also have to "teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." This is something Scripture requires of parents. There are many passages that make this clear. (Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:18-20; 32:46; Psalms 78; Ephesians 6:1-4; Joshua 4:21; Isaiah 38:19)

We often think that teaching is the responsibility of the church, but the Bible is quite clear that it is the responsibility of the parents. Do we have systematic ways of teaching our children what Jesus commanded us to teach as Moses suggested in Deuteronomy 6? Especially in light of the extra time we have now in the home.

The Great Commission and the Family

Dallas Willard says that "teaching to believe all that I have commanded you" has become "the great omission of the great commission." That deeper spiritual transformation is needed in the church today. Some call this "spiritual formation" and it is a part of what we as parents need to help our children achieve. Dallas Willard explains this process.

*"... 'spiritual formation' could become a term for those processes through which people are inwardly transformed in such a way that the personality and deeds of Jesus Christ naturally flow out from them when and wherever they are. In other words, it can be understood as the process by which true **Christlikeness** is established in the very depths of our being. Thus multitudes of men and women could be brought forth from generation to generation to be, unapologetically, Christ's redemptive community: the true "city set on a hill," of which Jesus spoke, established in the midst of the earth now, as it shall be for eternity in the midst of the cosmos. (Eph. 3:10; Rev. 22:5)*

Spiritual formation could and should be the process by which those who are Jesus' apprentices or disciples come easily to "do all things whatsoever I have commanded you." What I call "the great omission from the great commission" is the fact that Christians generally don't have a plan for teaching people to do everything that he commanded. We don't as a rule even have a plan for learning this ourselves, and perhaps assume it is simply impossible. And that explains the yawning abyss today between being Christian and being a disciple. We have a form of religion that has accepted non-obedience to Christ, and the hunger for spirituality and spiritual formation in our day is a direct consequence of that.¹

We want this spiritual formation for our children. The method is sometimes what are called "spiritual disciplines". Now, no one likes discipline, but as parents that is our role. To teach our children what is good and how to do it. All of this takes discipline in our own lives.

How do we do this practically? We start with having devotional, or quiet times with our

children when they are small and teaching them what it means to have a relationship with God. We tell them Bible stories, which they will enjoy in their younger days, and teach them to pray when they need help. We need to stress the importance of obeying God's commands which are very evident in Bible events. (We have discussed how to do these in other articles.)



As I have stressed many times, they need to understand that "it pays to be good." As children get older we need to help them learn to study the Bible on their own, to learn how to look to the Bible for answers to problems they encounter in life. Are you doing Sunday School with your children during the pandemic?

Most of all we need to be positive examples to them of how we maintain our relationship with God. How are we involved in spiritual disciplines? They should see us having our own quiet times, studying the Bible both alone and with others, praying for others, asking for forgiveness when we fail, showing compassion, reaching out to those in need, fellowshiping with the Christian community and sacrificing for Christ's people. Of first importance is for them to see what it means to be a disciple of Christ, because their own father and mother are following Christ with a whole heart. (Deut. 6:5, Matt. 22:36-40)

Secondly, they should see what it means to disciple others because their parents are building into the lives of other people, either adults or children. And our children should always be our first and most important disciples. Do we think of them that way?

So much of "spiritual formation" talk is about our whole lives reflecting the life of Christ. As parents we need to think about the total person when we are discipling our children. Luke 2:52: explains: *And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.*

Matthew 22:36-39: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your **heart** and with all your **soul** and with all your **mind**.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' How do we teach our children to control their minds, to respond in love when people treat them badly? When

they do something wrong, do we lead them in how to repent of their sins, first to God and then to whoever they wronged? Do they understand the concept of repentance and the need to change? When they have a problem, do they go first to God with it? Mark's gospel includes strength in the list of ways we love God. How does food and exercise fit into our spiritual disciplines? How do we help our children honor God with their bodies?

Some people list the five facets of spiritual formation as: reflective reading, active repentance, total stewardship, penetrating prayer, and community accountability. We could spend a lot of time explaining each of these, but I think I will let you do the research yourself if you are wanting to take this step. (The websites listed at the end are a good place to start.)

Dallas Willard concludes: *"Now if the Vision of this glorious kind of life is there, then the next step is **Intention**. I must decide that I will live that kind of life. And then, finally--and this is the area of what we call "spiritual disciplines," undertaken in the **effort** to actually obey Christ--we have to have a Method."*

And **we** need to be **intentional** about our methods in discipling **our** children. Take some time today to think about how well you are doing this in your family and come up with a plan to increase the time you take to become more like Jesus and then to help your children do the same. If we do that, we, and our children will, as Paul urged the Philippians, *"become blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world."* (Phil. 2:15)

¹<http://www.dwillard.org/articles/individual/spiritual-formation-what-it-is-and-how-it-is-done>

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/articles/spiritualformation/beingformed.html>

Marsha and her husband Ron worked with the CRC SL until 2023. Their ministry is discipleship and helping parents raise their children in the faith. If you would like further information please contact them. m.navamanie@yahoo.com.

+++ CHURCH NEWS+++



❖ Family Fun/Sports Day.

A family Fun/Sports day was organised by the Dehiwela Sunday School on the 29th of June, 2026 in the Church premises. The good weather saw many families and children join in the programs that featured games and activities for the children, young people and elderly. A delicious snack together with an equally delicious take away lunch was enjoyed by all...The morning was brought to a close by a session led by Revd: Roshan Mendis on parenting.



❖ Ceylon Bible Society Annual General Meeting.

The 214th annual General Meeting of the Ceylon Bible Society was held on the 17th of July, 2026 at the Bible House, Colombo 3. A representative gathering representing many denominations were present. The Chief Guest was the former President of the Bible Society, Mr. Eraj Wijesinghe, who addressed the gathering with the challenge to “think out of the box” in facing the challenges and changes of today. The General Secretary Revd: Priyantha Wijegoonawardena presented the annual report.



❖ Ceylon Bible Society – Festival of Choirs

The Annual Festival of Choirs organised by CBS was held for the 34th time at the Cathedral of Christ the Living Saviour on Saturday

the 1st of August, 2026. The Chief Guest this year was Life Governor of CBS, Revd: Charles Jansz. Choirs representing, Ladies College, St Thomas' Preparatory School, Wesley College, St Benedict's College and Carey College, blessed the congregation with their creative singing of the “Wonderful Words of Life.” Revd: Jansz in a brief message focussed on the importance of Engaging with the Word which remains an urgent challenge at a time when the Bible is available in the multiple versions and formats.



❖ NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The Annual General Meeting of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka was held on



Saturday the 15th of August, 2026. The CRCSL was represented by Pastors Lakmal Wijeratne, Rickson

Anthony, Mrs. Gayathrie Duckworth and Mr. Nimroth Thomas. The CRC SL is a Constituent member of the NCC SL.

❖ NEW THEOLOGICAL STUDENT

Mr Locksley Joseph has been accepted as a Student in Training under the CRCSL and would commence full time studies at the Colombo Theological Seminary from September. He is a member of the Hatton Congregation.

❖ CRCSL COMBINED CHOIR.

Practices are in progress for the progress for a special programme for Foundation Day this year. Do watch out for further information.

❖ YOUTH FEDERATION FUN DAY.

A day of fun, games and fellowship took place on the 29th of July, at the CRC Bambalapitiya. A representative gathering of young people from all three language streams enjoyed a meaningful programme planned by the Youth Federation Committee. It was a time of good fellowship and bonding too.,



❖ CHURCH REGISTER

Admission to Full Communicant Membership

"For we are all baptized by the Spirit to Form One Body..."

Win Lee Chang and Shirani Luckshmi Chang - on Sunday 7th June, 2026 at the CRC Kohuwela.

❖ IN MEMORIAM

❖ SUZETTE SMITH

(A Tribute To The Late Suzie Smith. by the Revd: Charles Jansz and read by the Revd: Michael de Kretser, at the funeral service, held at the CRC Dandenong, Melbourne, on 26th June, 2026.)

It was with much sadness that we did receive the news from Adrian Harris, whilst we were at the evening worship on Sunday the 14th of June, that Suzie had entered her eternal rest. Of course, we did know, ever since she was admitted to Palliative care that her life span on earth was going to be limited.

Suzie was one of our Bridesmaid's and one of the sixteen, who comprised our Wedding group in 1977. Having grown up with Maxine, since the Smith family lived a few houses away from Maxine's family on School Avenue, Dehiwela and through involvement in the CRC at Dehiwela, which also included myself, through Sunday School, Youth Fellowship and everything else, Suzie and the rest of the Smith family became part of our lives in more ways than one.

Even though she left the Country, we continued to keep in touch, in different ways and at different times. I do remember visiting Suzie and Jan and enjoying their hospitality when they lived in England. That was in 1980. It was a brief stay with them but great memories of Suzie's cooking – way before there was quality in the spice! And of course the evening visits with Jan to "The Lamb and Flag" – "The Red Lion," etc - names that some would recognize and some would not want to remember !!

Years later we did meet a number of times, on my visits to Melbourne at the many get togethers with those who have been and are part of our lives. They were occasions, when Jan especially had to put to rest many a grandmother (much to Suzie's annoyance), in order to be present on those evenings where there was much reminiscing, good food and water that had turned into wine !

I also recall the many times I visited "Quality Spice" the shop at Noble Park, which was part and parcel of their livelihood and it was here that one saw Suzie demonstrate her skills in public relations especially on a Thursday morning to the ladies who came from some happening at the CWO, which was across the street. So it was, "yes love, no love, three bags full love," and the pan rolls, fish buns, lunch packets and other goodies were eagerly purchased with much relish. Of course, "Quality Spice" was also the place to meet those from the "old country", especially those who lived in the vicinity of Noble Park, which was the base to many Sri Lankans, once upon a time. I can testify to this as I had that privilege, on more than one occasion. It was also the place if you did need some info about some "Harry" and his brother who were from Sri Lanka!

In addition to all of this, Suzie was a caring person especially when it came to those in need. She went out of her way to share her resources in different ways and for diverse humanitarian causes, whenever she was made aware of such circumstances. The bottom line was that she never forgot her roots and those who were part and parcel of her life, no matter how life had changed for her.

I also remember the days, when Suzie and Jan supported and were involved with the ministry of the late Freddie Samuel. The Watchnight Worship Services held on the 31st of Dec each year and attended by many of the Sri Lanka community, saw their participation in a meaningful way, especially in sustaining the time of Fellowship that followed.

Many memories can fill our minds today and many an anecdote can be shared, but it was also sad to hear of some of the physical and mental challenges Suzie faced that ultimately took its toll on her vibrant life. Like all of us she would have had her frailties but her faith in the Lord

ultimately overcame those frailties and held to the very end. Therefore, in His merciful providential timing, the Lord took to her to that prepared place for all who have fought the good fight and kept the faith. So, today, with Suzie, we can be grateful for love given and received and the eternal security we all enjoy, so eloquently stated by the Great Apostle Paul in Romans Chapter eight, that nothing can ever separate us from God's Love in Christ Jesus.

❖ **BRIAN PEREIRA**

(Tribute shared via Video by the Revd: Charles Jansz, at the Funeral Service of the Late Brian and Ashley Pereira, held on Thursday 30th July, 2026 at the Hillsong Church Chapel in Sydney, Australia.)

Dear Daphne, Marilene, Mario and families and dear friends,

It is with much sadness that we did receive the news of the passing away of Brian, even though in one sense we knew that it would be inevitable, since Revd: Miron, kept us informed of his health issues and circumstances, ever since he was hospitalized recently.

I am also honoured to be asked to reflect briefly on his life and the relationship we did share, prior to the emigration of Brian, Daphne and family.

So this is a brief personal tribute, on behalf of Maxine and myself, and more a tribute on behalf of the Church and Denomination that Brian was so very much part of, the Christian Reformed (formerly Dutch Reformed) Church in Sri Lanka.

I first got to know Brian, when he was working with Trans World Radio, an American Christian Broadcasting Corporation that communicated the good news of the Gospel thru Radio, to certain Countries in South Asia, using Sri Lanka, as its base. There were many other church folk who were also employed with TWR at that time, since the Leadership of TWR was very closely associated with the Christian Reformed Church. Perhaps it was there that Brian developed his intense missionary zeal to share the good news of Salvation through both Word and Deed.

Brian's involvement with the CRC SL was what continued to further our relationship. For many years Brian served as an Elder of the lo-

cal Congregation at Wellawatte, serving in different capacities with that Local Consistory. It was a congregation with long arms that reached out in missionary involvement with the people of Ulapane and Gampola in the hill Country. This congregation sustained this ministry in many ways and as I would recall, every month the Leadership would make a visit, I believe it was the last Sunday of a month, to physically minister the Word, enjoy a time of fellowship, whilst at the same time, providing the people with dry rations which also involved a large quantity of milk powder for the malnourished children. I also know that this visit was looked forward to by those who were involved, since it deepened their resolve for this work and since the journey was also sustained by all kinds of goodies to feed their faces and stomachs! Most of them who were part of those visits are now with the Lord and perhaps are now reminiscing with Brian.

At the level of the Denomination, Brian served for 14 years as Honorary Secretary, a task which he fulfilled with great commitment and skill. The records were kept with precision, the correspondence done with speed and wisdom demonstrated in the somewhat weighty decisions that had to be made especially in the interim, from meetings, when such things were left to the seven Officers of that time, of which Brian was one.

My relationship with him had a new dimension, when we appointed him as the Director of "Bible Cor" – a Correspondence Course Ministry that the Dehiwela CRC Congregation did with the West Transvaal Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. When we were looking for someone to head this ministry and take it forward, Brian came to mind and was available. It was another opportunity to continue his missionary mind set, in a different setting and with a different strategy. In an article that he wrote for the 1st Quarter issue of our Denominational Magazine, this year, Brian reflected on this. His memory was jolted when he was looking for a matching button for a shirt, in Daphne's button box. He came across a tie pin, a jade green pin inlaid in gold. It was on an open book and a nib of a pen. It would have been presented to him by someone from the "Bible Cor" Organisation. That memory jolted him to say, "in conclusion to my story, I feel

that God had in mind to someday use me for His glory in spreading the Gospel...”

So, personally and on behalf of the Denomination, we say thank to God for Brian for the memories and faithfulness of someone who loved the Lord, loved His Church and served with a great commitment and passion. We do thank God for His long and productive life. He was “great grand” twice and just missed being “great grand” for a third time ! To Daphne, Marielene, Mario and the rest of the family, we say thank you for sharing Brian’s life and time in these meaningful and fruitful ways that blessed our part of God’s Church and the Kingdom as well. May the Lord sustain you all with the hope we have in and thru Jesus, that this parting is for a while and thru Jesus, we would meet again never more to part.

Thank you! And may your hope in the Resurrection and reunion, sustain all of you, with peace and courage, until we meet in the nearer presence of our Lord !

❖ CRC SL WOMEN’S FEDERATION BIBLE QUIZ 2026.

This annual event in its physical version was revived after 2029 and brought together many teams from all three language streams from all parts of the Country. Based on the Gospel of Matthew with 8 memory verses the Quiz was conducted in all three languages by the a Quiz Master from the National Bible Quiz Committee and Back to the Bible Organisation. Wolvendhal Tamil Congregation ladies emerged winners whilst the Ladies from the Matara congregation were runners up. The ladies from the Regent-Street English Congregation took third place. We can certainly thank God for this event that helped many ladies to study and memorize God’s Word and hide it in their hearts.



Wolvendhaal

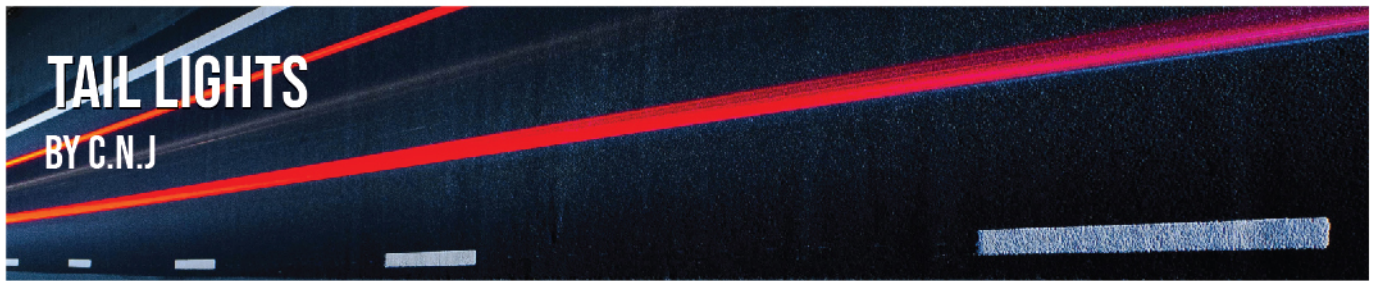
Matara

Regent Street

(Information and pictures by Gayathri Duckworth.)

(The “News” in these pages is 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 worthy of publication, could be sent directly to the Editor of “The Herald,” for publication according to the established criteria. – Ed.).

Seek
Ye First



THE S H O R T PRAYER !



They have Bible names but are not Biblical characters ! One was Timothy and the other David. One asked me to say a "short prayer" prior to the commencement of a Special Meeting. The other wanted to know "what was the shortest prayer I had prayed?" and in the same breath whispered "Amen??" In one sense, "Amen" too has the implications of a prayer. After all, literally it means " Lord let it be – so be it !" It definitely is not a comfort word that brings joyful relief when a boring sermon or meandering prayer ends or even when so called worship goes on forever and a day !!

For a moment I was stumped, since my prayers are mostly lengthy! But then I thought of the one sentence prayers I have prayed in real life situations ! " Lord help me reverse !" – "Lord let me get good parking !" "Lord bless this food" "Lord take me on time !" "Lord please take away the pain!" and many more!

I also thought of the prayers in the Bible – and one I have preached on, the prayer of the Big Fisherman, Simon Peter – when he took his eyes off Jesus, whilst walking on the water and began to sink ! Remember ? Short – even if not sweet ! – "Lord Save Me!" (St Matt 15: vs 30). I always hoped that many would pray that prayer, not only when literally drowning but when drowning in sin!

And then my mind when back to the instructions from Jesus on prayer....St Matthew Ch 6 vs 7 especially, "...when you pray do not keep babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words...do not be like them for your Father knows what you need before you ask!"

So, for the bottom line – it is not the length, verbiage or decibels that matter. The heart is the heart of the matter! It is as someone said, "better in prayer to have heart without words, than words without heart!" And as another rightly commented, " don't pray when it rains, if you don't pray when the sun shines!" Amen !!

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