



THE RIGHTEOUS  
WILL FLOURISH  
**LIKE A PALM TREE,**  
THEY WILL GROW  
LIKE A CEDAR  
OF LEBANON;

**BROKEN BREAD** Page 04



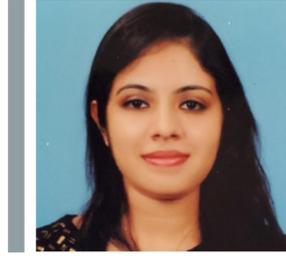
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**MONEY**  
- Makes All Problems!



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# ILLUMINER

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**MARCH 2022**

## UKRAINE AND THE REFUGEES

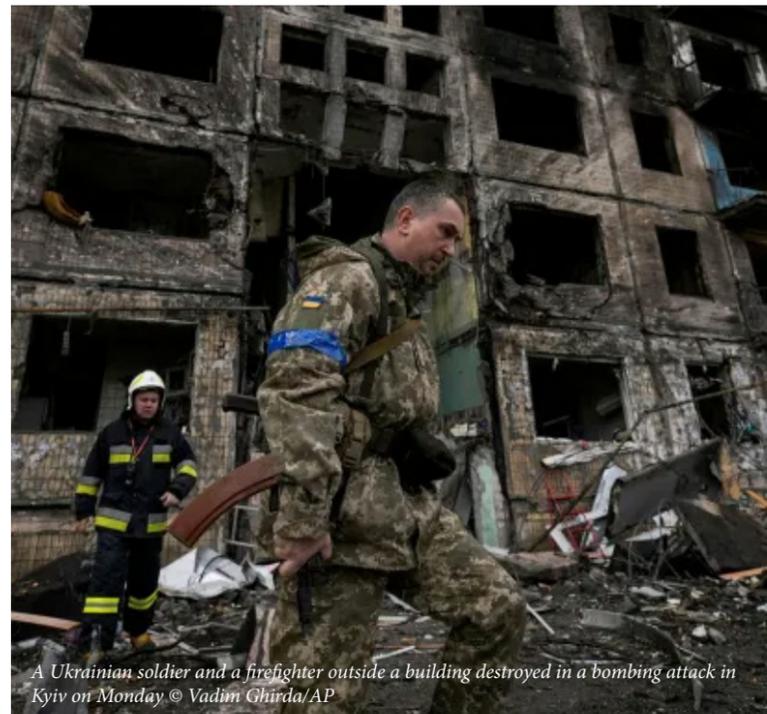


**N**early 3 million people have already fled Ukraine in the wake of the Russian invasion. This migrant population has been the fastest-growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II. Residential buildings in the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv came under fire again this week, with Russian shells leading to a partial collapse of an apartment block. The mounting challenge posed by the basic needs of refugees has also triggered a massive humanitarian response, with churches in various countries stepping up to provide for

the needs of those who are leaving behind the comforts of their homeland.

Although blamed for not helping, the megachurches have been raising financial support through various means. Lakewood Church, Houston, Gateway Church, Dallas, Saddleback church, California, etc., have been leading the efforts to set up crisis relief funds and connect with local pastors in Ukraine and Poland to support those impacted. Some megachurches are also partnering with humanitarian and disaster

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*A Ukrainian soldier and a firefighter outside a building destroyed in a bombing attack in Kyiv on Monday © Vadim Ghirda/AP*

## War is a Short Madness

The famous historian, pastor, and pedagogical writer John Stevens Cabot Abbott once said, "War is the science of destruction." Yes, it is precisely the science of destruction. Humanity has made tremendous progress over the last two centuries, and this enormous progress is enviable and incredible compared to the past. The progressive stage wherein we stand today has no equal in history. First of all, the population has multiplied like never before, with the current world population touching a record of 7.9 billion. All continents and countries boast about the inhabitation of people in large numbers.

Admittedly, war is a short madness. Countries engaged in battle will not often have a reasoning ability but only raging rancor to kill and destroy. When rancor reigns a man, reasoning ability will evade him. So, war is a stage when countries involved will have no constructive thoughts but only destructive ones. Therefore, we must abhor war at any rate and love peace. Our generation is standing on the zenith of technological advancement almost

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## Our Advisors

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**APRIL**  
**Coping with Change and Crisis: Proverbs 3:5-6**

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**'LOVE,**  
*your neighbor as yourself.'*  
There is no commandment  
**greater than these."**



MARK 12:31



FROM THE  
**editor**

## UNRIGHTEOUS MAMMON, BUT RIGHTEOUS GOD

**T**he desire to acquire more money and save more is inherent to all humans. It is a common belief that money is the answer to all human problems, which may be true to a certain extent in certain regards. Money is needed for all the basic needs of any person's life on earth – clothes, food, and shelter don't come free! As much as it is useful and needed, money should not be treated as the end goal in life. When money becomes the goal, acquiring more for oneself becomes the passion, leading to not being content with the gains. Money is not the root of evil, but the love of money is! When the heart is captivated by the "love of" something, barriers to ethical practices are breached to attain that which our heart desires. This incessant desire, also termed "lust," will pass away one day, which means they are not of eternal value.

Money should be considered as a means to an end that is far greater than anything money can buy. According to the Bible, a fool is not the one who has a lot of money, but the one who doesn't know how to use the money for eternal gain! If the sole purpose of acquiring money is for self-gratification, then the tool is used for self-destruction. Instead, if the tool is used to the benefit of the Gospel, then it avails much in eternal rewards. When used to supply material needs to those in lack,

the financial abundance of one person results in spiritual blessings on the cheerful giver. Proclamation of the Gospel to the unreached requires prayers as well as financial support for the "goers."

The unrighteous Mammon directs one to store up for himself by asking the world system to "give, give." Sadly, those who do not seek to become rich in the sight of God will not get to enjoy the fruit of their labors to acquire more wealth. But the righteous God grants all grace to abound towards His children who cheerfully give to those in need. Hence, let us use what can perish from us to gain that which will never die!

**"A fool according to the Bible, is not the one who has a lot of money, but the one who doesn't know how to use the money for eternal gain!"**



## Today's Different Gospel, Bad News to the Poor

**A**t the dawn of the twentieth century, the global rise of Pentecostalism spread through all continents of the world focused on the mission and emphasized a simple lifestyle. But eventually, in the latter part of the century, prosperity gospel pervaded the global stage, attracting thousands into the church with the distorted message of blessing that completely neglected the biblical teaching of God's concern for the poor and exploitation in society. It was a Peruvian theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez, who put the whole gamut of discussion about the poor and poverty in the bible into perspective with his famous statement, "God's preferential option for the poor." His theological reflections emerged from the ground reality of poverty experienced in South America. Gutierrez's three bottom-line principles are: First, material poverty is never good but an evil to be opposed. "It is not simply an occasion for charity but a degrading force that denigrates human dignity and ought to be opposed and rejected." Second, poverty is not a result of fate or laziness but is due to structural injustices that give some privilege while marginalizing others. Third, poverty is a complex reality and is not limited to its economic dimension. To be poor is to be insignificant. Poverty means an early and unjust death.

The bible is a radical text that portrays God as a liberator concerned about the poor, exploited, and marginalized. His statement to Moses establishes that He has not only seen His people's misery (Ex. 2:7) but resolved to act by coming down (Ex 2:8). Furthermore, the Old Testament has numerous verses to indicate that one's attitude towards the poor is crucial to spirituality. The ancient Hebrews were constantly reminded to take care of the poor by lending to them (Ex. 22:5) and supporting them (Lev. 25:35, 36). Similarly, abstaining from helping them (Deu. 15:7-11), oppression, and mistreatment of the poor were sinful (Deu. 24:14, 15). God will ignore those who ignore the poor (Pro. 21:13). The Jubilee year God ordained for the Israelites is another crucial indicator of God's preferential option for the poor. It was an organized social system that would alleviate debts and poverty. In a fifty-year cycle, Israelites would forgive debts, give freedom to slaves, release properties to their owners. In the New Testament, the third gospel contains the most explicit presentation of Jesus' perspective on the use of wealth. At the very outset of ministry, Jesus announces his manifesto in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4:18-20) by quoting Isaiah's prophecy about the ministry of the Lord's servant (Is. 60:1). Luke has incorporated various shades of meaning attached to poverty from the Greco-Roman world in his portrayal of Jesus' ministry. A careful observation of the third gospel evinces that the word *ptocos* (poor) was not merely denoting economically poor. Rather it comprised of a broader group: tax collectors (economically well off), the leper (Simon was rich enough to offer a feast

**“Jesus’ association with the marginalized groups expressed God’s preferential love for the poor. In contrast, the preaching and ministry of the church today rarely reflect it. The institutionalized church has degraded into any worldly institution founded on money and power.”**

- Mark 14:3), and people with other disabilities; peasants (who work with their hands). Jesus' association with these marginalized groups expressed God's preferential love for the poor.

However, the preaching and ministry of the church today rarely reflect God's preferential option for the poor. The institutionalized church has degraded into any worldly institution founded on money and power. The oppressive, class, caste, and racial elements are woven into the church institution, distorting biblical vision building a better world. An occasional act of charity work in the annual agenda of the church does not reflect God's concern for the poor that Jesus expressed in Matthew 25:42-43 playing himself in the shoes of the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned. Genuine proclamation of the gospel accompanies charity.



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## The Best Loan Ever!



*“Kindness to the poor is a loan to the LORD, and He will give a reward to the lender” (Proverbs 19:17).*

Compassion and kindness are interconnected. Compassion is feeling sympathy or empathy toward those in pain or need, while kindness is the generous spirit that responds through good deeds when seeing someone in need. God is compassionate and kind. As His children, showing kindness to one another is not an option; rather, it is our responsibility. The Bible teaches that those who are generous will find favor in the eyes of the Lord (Pro. 11:25; 28:27), and they will be remembered and greatly rewarded.

Jesus taught us to love one another. We display our love for others by helping those in need. Jesus said that whatever help we provide to a person in need, we are doing unto Him (Matt. 25:40). And He assured that whoever gives even a glass of water to one of the least of His followers would never lose their reward (Matt. 10:42). Helping the weak is mandatory to the followers of Christ, for we are taught that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

While inspiring the believers in Corinth to give financial support to the saints in Jerusalem, apostle Paul stated that God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7). He did not want them to give reluctantly or under compulsion or beyond their means but to give whatever they could, with gladness. The support should be provided voluntarily with a cheerful heart. The Scripture reiterates similar concepts throughout the Bible (E.g., Deut. 15:10-11; Pro 22:9). When we give, we are not to expect repayment. Our reward will come from the Lord at the right time. Also, we are not to give for the sake of publicity and desiring honor and applause. Instead, our motive should be led by sincerity and compassion, with the ultimate intention of glorifying our God.

The Scripture advises us to extend our helping hands even to our enemies. By doing so, we follow the will of our heavenly Father, who is kind and merciful even to the ungrateful and wicked (Luke 6:34-35). God loved us when we were

still sinners and offered His Son as a sacrifice to atone for our sin. It was an indescribable gift to us from Him (2 Cor. 9:15). When we have received such love in abundance, we must reflect His character and show compassion to everyone, even our enemies.

We must be faithful custodians of the resources that are entrusted to us. God blesses us abundantly and expects us to practice His character of generosity. In his thanksgiving note to Philippians for being generous to him, Apostle Paul expresses that it is not for him that he rejoices. Instead, he is glad that they will be blessed because of their gift (Phil. 4:17). The Scripture repeatedly guarantees that those who give generously shall be supplied with all their needs according to the riches of God’s glory in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19). So, the best loan ever to God is to show kindness to the poor and needy because God rewards the lender in due time.

**“We must be faithful custodians of the resources that are entrusted to us. God blesses us abundantly and expects us to practice His character of generosity.”**



**JOSSY BINZ**  
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## Speaking Truth, not Facts

All of us, familiar with electronic media worldwide, are quite used to the jargon in the form of binaries such as fact vs fiction, truth vs fabrications etc. Each TV channel, local, national or international, claims to be the first one to report the ground reality (the breaking news as it happens on the ground), be it from military conflict zones, venues of political campaigns or from places of natural calamities and disasters. However, suppose one carefully compares different TV channels on particular news or issues. In that case, he/she will quickly realise that all the channels seem to propagate their own versions of facts, in some ways motivated by political/ideological expediency. In other words, TV channels may be reporting facts as they appear, but they do not tell the truth in its entirety. Perhaps modern-day Christians (both leaders and believers) are susceptible to this trend. How is it possible for someone to present the fact of a matter or event as it is and yet end up speaking untruth (lying)? In order to answer this

question, I shall very briefly draw your attention to Psalm 52 and read it in its historical/narrative context.

Psalm 52, as the superscript suggests, is said to be written by David after Doeg the Edomite, the chief shepherd of king Saul, reports David's whereabouts to the king. If one goes back to the event (1 Sam. 21: 1-10& 22: 9-10) as it happened and recorded against the larger canvass of 1 Sam. 21-22, it appears that Doeg's account given to Saul is factually correct without any embellishment or exaggeration. Truly, Doeg saw David entering the sanctuary and the priest Abimelech feeding David with consecrated bread and even giving him a sword for his journey. But in his psalm, David condemns Doeg's speech/account as being boastful, deceitful, harmful and destructive. Possibly, David may not have mounted such a direct and scathing attack against Saul because he has always regarded Saul as God's anointed and would never pronounce such fiery judgement on him (vv, 5-7); also, he contrasts the divine judgement with his own glorious

**“Accurate facts in themselves do not amount to or translate into truth because facts without truth-telling result in gossip, character assassination, sycophancy, and so on. They destroy relationships, families, and God’s church.”**

future (vv. 8-9). Thus, David primarily fires his salvo at Doeg.

The issue here is: even if all the aforementioned adjectives of David characterize Doeg's act, how does one account for “deceit” and lie? This is because the common semantic field of the Hebrew roots of “deceit” and “lie” and their parallel occurrences in the book of psalms (e.g. Psalm 109:2) makes it clear that David is accusing Doeg of speaking lies. The charge becomes direct and evident in v.3. Ironically, the event



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# MONEY

## - Makes All Problems!



**I**t is fascinating to observe people around us on how pious they are. Sadly, I have seen many people who love money more than anything else in life. They are not satisfied with earning or making money through legal and illegal ways. Also, many who amass wealth are not content in life. Some people presume that “giving money to the poor makes them rich”. There are still other people who preserve their money save it for the generations to come. There may be people who don’t even spend a penny to live fairly. They keep amassing money and wealth and depositing it in the bank for future use. In economic terms, savings are for future consumption. But contrary to that, these people who don’t use or spend their hard-earned money in their lifetime keep such money for their children to boast about their wealth.

There are still people who give money to others for their credit. Such people often claim that they got something to eat because of them. If someone helps somebody wholeheartedly to make a living, it is a great act, and God will indeed account for it in your life or in your generations to come. But many around us give to the poor only when their names are published publicly. There are still many who have a lot of cash in the bank and hand, still, they say, they have nothing. It is equally wrong and sinful to say like that. From all these cases, we are sure that there are many people in this world who are faithful to their money. Moreover, I often heard many people say, ‘I was born in a rich family.’

We should remember that nobody in this world is born ‘rich or poor’. In my childhood, I saw a very rich family who boasted about their wealth, but now they live in utter poverty. In this connection, it may be good to remember that whatever we, especially believers need to boast about is the mercy of our Heavenly Father. We may have better jobs and growing businesses. But these are only temporary and can turn upside down in a matter of time. The naked truth is that rich people in the past are now poor people in this generation and this may be reversed in the future too.

Wealth is a temporary phenomenon. Money does not matter at all to some extent; rather, it is the love of God that matters. Those who love money will keep on loving money until their last breath. But those who use the money to share with others without expecting anything would make their life meaningful. The money one gives to others must be hard-

**“It is essential to keep our faith in God and open our hearts towards the needy. Along with our faith, prayers and praises to God, we need an open heart that will enable us to convey God’s love to others because money cannot love us back.”**

earned and it should be gained through proper means.

Curiously, many “strong believers” will not spare a penny to help the poor and needy in society. They are afraid of losing their money if they give it to the needy. They preach and teach others not to love this world and teach how to live for God. The Bible says in James 2:18- “But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds” we must show our faith by deeds; otherwise, the faith without action is dead.

A rich person becomes rich when he shares his wealth with needy people. We all certainly have to leave this world one day. So, we should invest in eternity than in this world. Put your trust in God, not in money and wealth. It is essential to keep our faith in

God and open our hearts towards the needy. Along with our faith, prayers, and praises to God, we need an open heart that will enable us to convey God’s love to others because money cannot love us back.



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Dr. Binu Daniel is a management consultant, teacher, author, and educationist. He has written numerous articles in well-established English dailies on Economics and Management issues. He lives in Germany with his wife, Reena, and two daughters.



## DEVELOP THE HABIT OF GIVING

**“We serve a giving God. The best evidence is how He sent His only begotten Son into this world to die for us on the cross by giving eternal life for us. So, our giving demonstrates God’s character and response to what He did for us, thereby making it an act of worship and adoration to God.”**

Everyone dreams about being prosperous in this world in one way or another. Who wouldn't want to be rich here on earth? We live in a culture where money drives everything. In theory, money doesn't have any value when it is paper or metal. But it becomes prized when it can be traded for the many desires and dreams we have. Is it God's plan to make everyone rich in this world? Not at all. The scripture is very clear that the love of money is the root of all evil. It warns against the accumulation of wealth and encourages us to seek spiritual riches instead. But at the same time, our responsibility in terms of money here is to be faithful stewards where we recognize that God is the owner of what we possess, and we are just entrusted to take care of it and use it wisely for the glory of God. Christian financial stewardship begins with a deep understanding that God owns everything, is sovereign over everything, and in Jesus, all things hold together (Colossians 1:17).

Many times, we possess a selfish attitude where we think all we own belongs to us. We always desire to own stuff for ourselves. But

Scripture is against that. We should acknowledge God as the source of the money and possessions we have. Our focus should always be on God who is the giver rather than the gifts He has bestowed on us. But unfortunately, our priorities change at times when we are immensely blessed here on earth, and we place ourselves in the spotlight. We need to be consumed by the majesty of God and the remarkable love He showed to us in the gospel. When compared to what Jesus did for us, being captivated by what belongs to God is indeed a serious sin. Every dollar we earn and every asset we count as ours actually belongs to God. So, genuine financial stewards will let go of selfish thinking about their assets as belonging to them.

Proverbs 19:17 says – “Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done.” If we think from an earthly perspective, it may be risky to lend money to the poor. But as recipients of the grace of God, we are to help the needy and poor. That is our responsibility. It may not give us earthly returns but surely it is an investment that yields eternal returns. Giving is an act of mercy as a response to what God

showed us. 1 John 3:17 says – But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? We are commanded to love others not with words but rather with deeds in truth. That is the model that Christ showed by loving us and giving His life for us. So as imitators of Christ, we should also exhibit that model to others.

We serve a giving God. The best evidence is how He sent His only begotten Son into this world to die for us on the cross by giving eternal life for us. So, our giving demonstrates God's character and response to what He did for us, thereby making it an act of worship and adoration to God. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that he has given you.” (Deuteronomy 16:17) One of the main things to consider when we give is to not grumble. That is why Paul says, “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). When we give, it helps us to stay focused and releases us from greed and selfishness. As children

of God who have received God's generosity, humility should be our trait. We should recognize that we are not worthy of His gift and out of gratitude and gratefulness, we should become more gracious with others. Then only would we begin to learn the heart of God and become more like Him?



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# Money & Marriage

**“While money is undeniably a crucial part of our life, it is just as essential that we do not fall in love with money or develop an unhealthy relationship or attitude towards money.”**

**W**hen I got married, one of the first conversations my parents had with my husband and I was regarding money. It was not about how much we each earned, but rather how important it was to change our perspective about all aspects involving money - our earnings, spending, and financial responsibilities to one that reflected and honored our marriage. Following that conversation, my parents made it a point to gently correct us every time either one of us used “I” or “Mine” instead of “we” or “ours”. It took a while for the message to consciously sink in and for us to realize how critical this advice was in shaping our marriage.

In hindsight, here’s what this shift in perspective early in our marriage helped us do:

- It allowed us to establish a level of comfort with each other rooted in the belief that the differences in our earnings did not matter because ultimately, what we earned went into “our account” for “our use”.

- This, in turn, helped us build trust in our relationship because we each knew that the money deposited into our account required us not to splurge based solely on individual desires but rather in agreement with what was best for us as a family.
- It opened the door for honest conversations regarding everyday finance and financial planning without fear of judgment. It removed a lot of the worry and anger, and discontent that comes as you navigate the peaks and valleys involving money.

It taught us to let God be the center of our marriage rather than money. It has blessed us with countless opportunities to be thankful to God for His provisions in our lives, and equally important, it had made us grateful for those moments when things didn’t go according to our well-laid plans.

While money is undeniably a crucial part of our life, it is just as essential that we do not fall in love with money or develop an

unhealthy relationship or attitude towards money. For God himself has advised us to “Keep [our] lives free from the love of money and be content with what [we] have” (Heb. 13:6).



**DIVINE LEONARDO**  
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Divine Leonardo is an educator with the New York City Department of Education. She holds a B.A. in Communicative English, a B.A. in English, an M.S. Ed. in Adolescent Education/English, and an M.S. Ed. in Educational Leadership. She resides in New York with her husband, Eapen Leonardo, and her two children.

POEM

# Do you love me more than ‘these’?

An old, simple yet hard question asked by Jesus to Simon Peter,  
Though for a moment his nerves began to fray like a woven fabric,  
The eyes of his heart slowly rose over a load of fish and the fellow disciples,  
Joyfully he subdued everything that meant ‘these’ in his life,  
And strongly affirmed his love and devotion only to beloved Jesus.

Innumerable good and perfect gifts we have all around us,  
Graciously bestowed upon us by the Heavenly Father,  
Day to day blessings are poured out immeasurably,  
Without a doubt coming from His great heart of love,  
But then, as you get down on your knees to pray gratefully,  
Hear His tender whispers haunting your heart,

“Do you love me more than these?”  
Loving souls and those that we love are all around us,  
Precious are the joyous moments that we share,  
Families and friends are sent for our comfort and ease,  
To be the wonderful tokens of God’s tender loving care,  
While you remain cozy under their rosy love,  
Still the Giver of all blessings would gently like to ask,  
“Do you love me more than these?”

Pause a while to think who are ‘these’ in your little world?  
Are those worth comparing to the eternal life and blessings in Jesus?  
Lift your eyes to the crest of the hill near Jerusalem’s gate,  
To behold the Saviour, the beloved of God bearing the cross,  
Bleeding and dying He showed His infinite love for us,  
And on your knees, feel the gentle tap of His nail-pierced hands,  
Patiently waiting just to hear your loving whispers back to Him,  
Yes, lord, I do love you more than ‘these’!



**ELIZABETH MATHEW**  
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Elizabeth Mathew is a born-again, Spirit-filled Christian. As a former Vice Principal, she had a close association with educators, parents, and children. She has been involved in Sunday School ministry as well as in leading secular schools in UAE for over two decades. Elizabeth currently resides in Muscat, Oman, with her husband, Abraham Mathew, and children.



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## ORAL HEALTH

### GOOD ORAL HYGIENE

It is important to carry out good oral hygiene practices on a regular basis so as to prevent dental diseases and bad breath. Make sure that your teeth are clean and free of stains besides ensuring your gums are healthy and do not bleed while you brush or floss.

### HOW IS GOOD ORAL HYGIENE PRACTICED?

- Eat a balanced diet especially at the right time and limit the intake of snacks between meals
- Brush properly twice a day and floss your teeth daily
- Rinse your mouth with fluoride mouthwash and use fluoridated dental products
- Children who are under 12 years of a drink fluoridated water or take a fluoride supplement if they live in non fluorinated areas
- Replace your toothbrush every 3 to 4 months or sooner if bristles are frayed.
- Avoid the use of tobacco or its products
- Brush your teeth at least twice a day for two minutes each time
- Schedule regular dental checkups and cleanings

### WHAT ARE SOME SYMPTOMS OF DENTAL AND ORAL PROBLEMS

- ulcers, sores, or tender areas in the mouth that won't heal after a week or two.
- bleeding or swollen gums after brushing or flossing.
- chronic bad breath.
- sudden sensitivity to hot and cold temperatures or beverages.
- pain or toothache.
- loose teeth.
- receding gums.
- pain with chewing or biting

### WHAT DISEASE CONDITIONS CAN BE LINKED TO ORAL HEALTH?

Your oral health might contribute to various diseases and conditions, including endocarditis, cardiovascular disease, pregnancy and boirth complications, and pneumonia are a few. Certain conditions also might affect your oral health, including diabetes, HIV, osteoporosis, alzheimers disease are a few.

### TIPS FOR BRUSHING YOUR TEETH AND GUMS PROPERLY

- Place a pea-sized dab of fluoride toothpaste on the head of your toothbrush
- Place the toothbrush against the teeth at 45 degree angle to the gum line
- Move the brush across your teeth using a small circular motion
- Never forget to brush the top of the tongue starting from the back of your tongue to the opening of the mouth
- After brushing your teeth rinse your mouth with mouthwash.

There are daily dental habits that can prevent cavities like brushing and flossing. Despite everyone knows it in their head people get busy, pulled in many directions. Suddenly, usually in the night, there is an indescribable ache that signals a problem. There are also daily habits that can keep sin away: praying and reading God's Word. Everyone knows it in their head. But people get busy, pulled in many directions. Suddenly, there is pain that signals a problem. But there is hope! God is on call 24/7! No appointment necessary!



**DR. ELIZABETH JOHN**  
Dallas, USA

Dr. Elizabeth John pursued her Bachelor of Dental Surgery from Mar Baselios Dental College, Kothamangalam, India. Currently residing in the US with her husband.

*Continued from Page 01*

## UKRAINE AND THE REFUGEES

relief organizations such as Convoy of Hope and World Vision, which have operations in Ukraine.

Amidst the military onslaught and attacks from both countries and with civilian casualties increasing each day, even the smaller churches in Western countries have sprung to action to help the Ukrainians. Ukrainian Catholic churches in the U.S. packed supplies to send back to their motherland. A church in West Virginia has been trying to raise money to help refugees fleeing war by holding a benefit concert. A church in Colorado has collected and wired money to a bank in Germany from where the colleagues from their network have retrieved the funds to use in refugee efforts.

Various church leaders have expressed their condemnation of the conflict and voiced their desire for the war to cease. Various churches around the world are dedicating time to pray for Ukraine as well as Russia. It is a welcome sign from the followers of God by the display of the love of Christ to the suffering souls who are the innocent victims of this conflict.

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## War is a Short Madness

in every sphere of life. If these developments are lost due to war, we need only pity ourselves. What is it called if we destroy what we have laboriously built over the years? It is nothing but madness.

As a matter of fact, Russia is essentially a tremendous authoritarian power in Europe, and Boris Yeltsin laid the foundation for it. However, he pledged to install sovereign democracy, but he didn't. Instead, he forced an authoritarian constitution on the nation against parliament's will in 1993 and never looked back. Vladimir Putin, Yeltsin's former secret police chief, and presidential successor, subsequently intrigued his way to power advancing his former master's hidden authoritarian agenda. Undoubtedly, he is steering and maneuvering his country to a darker world of autocracy, where the monarch is supreme with or without a ruling party.

The President of the Russian Federation is the head of state of the Russian Federation, and he is also the commander-in-chief of the Russian Armed Forces. The President is elected directly through a popular vote to a six-year term. The Constitution of the Russian Federation established term limits for the presidency, restricting the officeholder to serve no more than two terms. However, it may be recalled that some time ago, Putin signed a law that would allow him to run for the presidency twice more in his lifetime, potentially keeping him in office until 2036. If he remains in power until 2036, his tenure will surpass even that of Joseph Stalin, who ruled the Soviet Union for 29 years,

making Putin the longest-serving Moscow leader since the Russian empire. Now Vladimir Putin has been Russia's most powerful politician since he assumed the presidency in 2000, after the resignation of his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin. Putin's current term will expire in 2024, with Presidential terms have been lengthened to six years.

Now consider the allies of Russia—who, are they? China, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, Belarus, etc. China, an all-weather friend, has been Russia's source of strength and support. When China vindicates Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it will not bode well for the future as China has some ulterior motives and tucked up a crooked plan to invade Taiwan. So, in the future, when China invades Taiwan and captures it, Russia will be forced to endorse China. This is the reason why China vociferously throws its weight behind Russia and supports and defends Russia despite others criticizing Russia for its invasion of Ukraine.



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## Speaking Truth, not Facts

is narrated in 1 Sam. 21:1-10 shows that David (not Doeg) is lying. He lies to Abimelech about being uncharacteristically alone and unarmed because he is supposedly sent on a special, secret mission by King Saul, and his men are supposed to meet him at a certain strategic place. So, how fair is it for David to charge Doeg with lies despite the latter presenting undiluted facts? Perhaps the answer lies in Doeg's motive, his ignorance of the reality and the result of his factual presentation. First, Doeg's revelation of facts is guided by his ulterior motive. He divulges David's whereabouts to Saul only when Saul, in his anger and frustration, promises material benefits to his loyalists in the context of his hatred and animosity towards David (1 Sam. 22: 6-10; cf. Ps. 52: 5, 7). Two, Doeg's facts

correspond to the physical eyes, but they betray reality. It is true that Abimelech fed David and inquired for him, but he did it in good faith (2 Sam. 22: 11-15); but Saul's incitement and the prospect of an enticing material bounty make Doeg presume Abimelech's complicity in David's escape. Third, Doeg's accurate facts result in the murder and extermination of a whole innocent priestly clan at Nob (1 Sam. 22: 16-19). The location or sequence of Psalms 51 & 52 in the canonical arrangement is not lost on the reader. That is to say, David's diatribe against Doeg's lies in Psalm 52--facts presented with an ulterior motive that is devoid of reality--is preceded by his explanation of truth as the inner sincerity, honesty and integrity in Psalm 51: 6. In Psalm 51, David faces and speaks facts not necessarily

with graphic details like Doeg, but with a sincere heart.

If we are honest to ourselves, we will remember many occasions where we may have been factually correct but have failed in speaking the truth (sincerity and integrity of the heart). Accurate facts in themselves do not amount to or translate into truth because of facts without truth-telling (sincere heart) result in gossip, character assassination, sycophancy and so on. They destroy relationships, families and God's church. So, as God's children, let us speak the truth, not merely accurate facts alone.

FROM THE HISTORY

## MARTIN NIEMOLLER IMPRISONED FOR RIGHTEOUS RESISTANCE

### NIEMOLLER IMPRISONED FOR RIGHTEOUS RESISTANCE

The results of some trials are foregone conclusions. In the case of Martin Niemöller, the words of Hitler ensured that any court appearance would be perfunctory. Niemöller had delivered a “rebellious” sermon in 1937 and Hitler heard of it and of taped phone conversations in which Niemöller repudiated the Nazi line. Bent on obtaining absolute control over the church, Hitler flew into a rage and bellowed that Niemöller was to be placed in a concentration camp and kept there for life since he had proven himself “incorrigible.”

It is true that Niemöller had helped organize a “resistance” to Hitler’s takeover of the Protestant churches, a group called the Pastor’s Emergency League. “...we have called into being an ‘Emergency Alliance’ of pastors who have given one another their word in a written declaration that they will be bound in their preaching by the Holy Scripture and the Reformation confessions alone...” he wrote in an open letter September 1933. This group developed into the Confessing Church. Nonetheless, he apologized with deep regret in October 1945, after the war, for failing to speak out early and strong enough against Nazism:

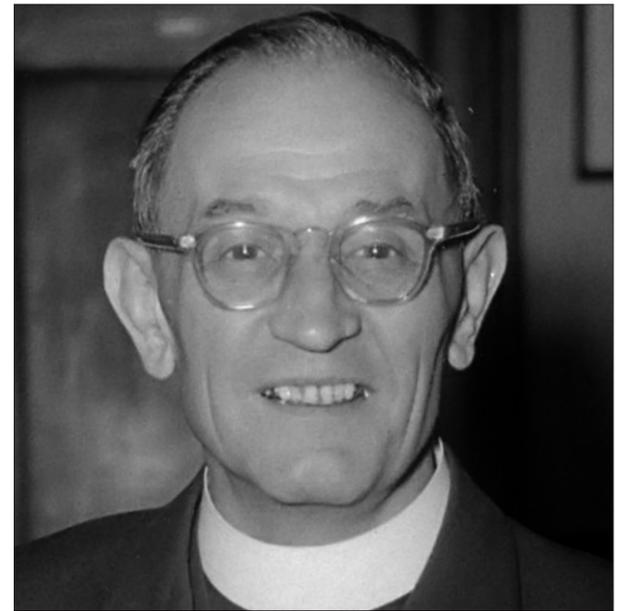
When the Nazis came for the communists,  
I remained silent;  
I was not a communist.  
When they locked up the social democrats,

I remained silent;  
I was not a social democrat.  
When they came for the trade unionists,  
I did not speak out;  
I was not a trade unionist.  
When they came for the Jews,  
I did not speak out;  
I was not a Jew.  
When they came for me,  
there was no one left to speak out.

However, there were plenty of “German Christians” who did not resist at all; who thought that Christ had come through Hitler and their first task was to be German, not Christian. Pastor Leutheuser verbalized their thoughts. Niemöller, an ex-submarine captain, was appalled at this attitude. Christ was to be central in every Christian’s heart. 7,000 Lutheran ministers agreed with him. Niemöller, until his imprisonment, was their strategist. Karl Barth joined this Confessing Church in writing a rejection of the state’s claim to totalitarian power in religious and political matters. This became known as the Barmen Declaration.

Although Niemöller was the symbol of Protestant resistance to Hitler, he has been accused of antisemitism because he preached that the Jews will suffer until they embrace Christ.

In prison, he wrote many letters. On February 8, 1938, the second day of his trial, he wrote to his wife Else, “Give my greetings to the congregation and tell them that I place my entire confidence in God’s mercy and that I am convinced that one day we will recognize in the



light the paths along which he leads us now in the darkness and that we will praise his wisdom! God does not desire to give us earthly hopes, but he will certainly not abandon us. Jesus Christ remains the same, that is certain, and God will grant us that “we remain with him!” The trial ended on this day, March 2, 1938, and afterward, he was sentenced to seven months in prison. Hitler had him arrested again almost as soon as he was released. This time his resistance placed him in concentration camps at Sachsenhausen and Dachau until the end of the war. Altogether he spent eight years in prison.

When Niemöller visited the hotel where Albert Speer, a Hitler associate, was held after the war, Speer expected to see a broken man. Instead, it was a healthy and youthful figure he saw who had emerged from the camps. Perhaps a clear conscience had helped keep him so.



### Pfizer says the fourth dose of the COVID vaccine necessary

Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said the company is submitting data to the FDA on the need for the fourth dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Even though the current Pfizer shots protect from severe disease and hospitalizations, a new booster is needed to prevent infections. The data collected are early and preliminary, pertaining to a study announced in January to target the Omicron variant. Pfizer said

it is committed to collecting all available data and in open dialogue with regulators and health authorities to help formulate the COVID-19 vaccine strategy as the virus evolves. In February, a study published by the CDC found vaccine effectiveness among those who had received the third dose four or five months ago against COVID-19 to have decreased to 66% for emergency room or urgent care visits.

## World News

### Apple allows unlocking with a mask on

The latest Apple updates that came as part of iOS 15.4 and iPadOS 15.4 allow users to unlock the gadget with the face wearing a mask. Another new feature is the Universal Control, which permits interaction with a nearby iPad while working on a Mac. The updates also brought a bevy of new emojis at everyone’s disposal. With the mask mandates being lifted across many parts of the United States, the new feature appears to be a little late. Nevertheless, since the world is still in the midst of the pandemic, those users who are COVID-cautious can put the new feature to proper use. Even though the Face ID was created when the iPhone was initially set up, the latest update asks to enroll the face once again in Face ID to get a better look at the eyes and the space around them.



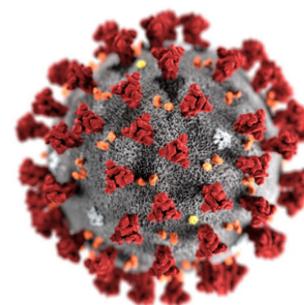
## World News

### A Saharan dust storm covers Spain

A massive dust storm from the Sahara Desert has covered large parts of Spain and is spreading across Europe, making it hard to breathe. The skies appeared eerie due to the tiny particles of sand that traveled thousands of miles across the Mediterranean Sea. The Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Services of the European Union said it was tracking the large mass of dust that has spread across Spain, Portugal, and France. This is said to be an event that typically occurs once or twice a year in February or March when a low-pressure system over Algeria and Tunisia gathers up dust and carries it north to Europe.

### Russia asks China for military help

According to a few U.S. officials, Russia has asked China for military help against Ukraine. Although the request primarily concerns financial assistance, it is said that Russia has also inquired about drones. The Ukrainians are using drones quite effectively against Russian ground movement for reconnaissance as well as strikes. Although three weeks into its invasion into Ukraine, Russia has fallen far short of the progress its leaders anticipated. CIA Director William Burns stated that Russian Vladimir Putin had planned on seizing Kyiv within the first two days of the campaign. Despite the 150,000 troops deployed around Ukraine's borders before the invasion, the Russian advance on Kyiv has made slow progress. The slow advance may have triggered the Russian request for China's help.



### COVID spike in Europe

The COVID-19 cases are again surging in several European countries, which has triggered caution that the U.S. may soon experience another spike. It is noted that there are several factors likely at play, including the relaxed measures of mitigation, the waning vaccine protection, and the spread of new variants. In the U.S., the cases are still plunging, and hospitalizations due to coronavirus are at a low level. But since the previous experiences prove that the virus can be resurgent, all are to exercise caution. The previous infections and vaccinations will likely prevent most cases from becoming severe in there is another wave.



### U.S. Senate approves Daylight saving time permanent

ON TUESDAY, the U.S. Senate passed legislation that would make the Daylight-saving time permanent from November of 2023. This will end the changing of clocks two times each year. This move is supported mainly by those advocating brighter afternoons and more economic activity due to more hours with sunlight in the evening during the winter months. The Senate approved the Bill, called the Sunshine Protection Act, unanimously by voice vote. The House of Representatives must pass the Bill before it goes to the President to sign into law. The White House has not mentioned whether President Biden supports it. The Bill would allow Arizona and Hawaii, which do not observe daylight-saving time to remain on standard time.



### WikiLeaks' Assange denied permission to appeal extradition

Reuters reported that the WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange had been denied permission to appeal at Britain's Supreme Court against a decision to extradite him to the United States. This decision deals a serious blow to Assange's effort to fight his deportation from Britain in the courts. U.S. authorities want Assange to face trial on 18 counts relating to the release of vast troves of confidential U.S. military records, which the U.S. claims to have put many lives in danger. The extradition decision will now have to be ratified by the interior minister of the U.K., Priti Patel, and following which Assange can try to challenge the decision by judicial review. A judicial review involves a judge examining the legitimacy of a public body's decision.