

IF ANYONE DESIRES TO COME AFTER ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS DAILY, AND FOLLOW ME.

Luke 9:25



BROKEN BREAD Page 04



Discipleship

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ILLUMINER

ISSUE 32

VOLUME 03

FEBRUARY 2023

SACRIFICE AND SELF-DENIAL IN DISCIPLESHIP



One of the last instructions of Jesus Christ to his disciples was to go and make disciples of all nations. The ask was to teach these disciples to obey his commands (Matt. 28:19-20). A disciple cannot be passive in life but active in making disciples and teaching them to obey the teachings of Jesus Christ diligently.

Today's challenge is that all resources, zoom or live meetings, and messages are not moving

people to acceptance and obedience. We hear a lot weekly and know the theory very well. We may be able to take a class or preach at a conference, but in our personal lives, we miss application. It may look like the bald man trying to sell hair oil that cures baldness.

True discipleship moves us beyond information to a practical level which involves sacrifice and self-denial and is essential. Unfortunately, we often desire to do everything within our comfort

zone and ensure everything is secure and will not go the extra mile. Jesus taught us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. When we deprive ourselves of our desires and put God's desires before our own, we are living out our discipleship and following in the footsteps of Jesus. We are also living out our faith and showing the world what it means to be a faithful follower of Jesus. When we deny ourselves of things we desire, it teaches us to rely on God instead of ourselves



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ISSUE 32 VOLUME 03

FEBRUARY 2023

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Self must be denied as to time and attention for prayer. All-prayer cannot be wielded without the expenditure of time. "A minute with God" seldom lays hold of Him. Sustained prayer is necessary. Such time may only be found by snatching it from personal pursuits, however legitimate they may be.

- Walter J. Chantry

FROM THE editor



ARE ALL BELIEVERS DISCIPLES?

The first Christian historian, Luke, designated the early Christians as "disciples". Even though Luke informs us that the disciples were first called 'Christians' at Antioch (Acts 11:26), he barely refers to them as 'Christians' in the rest of the book. Regrettably, two thousand years later, along with the change of designation from disciple to numerous other names, it has drifted away from its original intent. Today no one ventures to introduce themselves as a 'disciple', but would proudly say, "I am a Pentecostal", "a Marthomite", "a Jacobite", etc., and fail to agree with each other, defeating Jesus' command in John 13:35. While the present Christians continue to defend their multiple identities with historical and theological reasons, very few are concerned that this has thwarted God's plan through Jesus. As a careful investigator of the tradition (Lk 1:1-4), Luke has an excellent reason to consistently refer to the members of the early church as disciples (thirty out of two hundred and sixty-eight occurrences are in Acts). The earliest followers of Christ fully grasped and practiced what involved discipleship as Jesus taught. It paved a strong foundation for Christianity amid the fiery trials they endured under the Jews and the Romans.

The Greek term for disciple is *mathates*, which means 'a learner'. Humans are designed to learn everything from handling their necessities to communicating using a language. Every human grows to become a mature adult intellectually, socially, and spiritually depending on their learning. Therefore, when God appeared in the flesh to make His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45), the brief period of preparation preceded this significant act involved teaching and preaching in towns and villages of Palestine and preparing a bunch of disciples who learn to become like him to continue the task he commenced. In contrast to all the Old Testament

"Obsession of denominational identity, adopted or inherited as a member of a Christian community that vanquished the passion for becoming a disciple of Christ, is an aberration of redemption history."

expectations of the coming Messiah as a king, priest, or prophet, Jesus appeared as a teacher. The most popular title of Jesus during his earthly ministry was 'Rabbi'. While the crowd who followed Jesus were ambivalent in their commitment and adherence towards him (John 6:26), he called and prepared twelve men from different walks of life: fishermen, ordinary men, tax collectors, and a Zealot (a terrorist group). They were "chosen" (Lk 6:13), "called" (Mk 1:17), and "appointed to be with him and sent for preaching." (Mk 3:14). Moreover, the final command to "make disciples and teach them" (Mt 28:18-20) entails a double emphasis on learning rather than just believing for the future followers.

Discipleship begins with a willingness to learn all that the master taught. Those who become disciples eventually become disciple makers and hand over the master's teachings. Obsession of denominational identity adopted or inherited as a member of a Christian community that vanquished the passion for becoming a disciple of Christ is an aberration of redemption history. Those who truly become a disciple, striving to become like their master alone, can genuinely impact the world that is confused and distraught on many fronts. A true disciple who grows beyond the ecclesial facade into the true nature of Christ will be able to convey the gospel that brings salvation with all its purity and power.

THE DYNAMISM OF DISCIPLESHIP

"Discipleship is a higher calling, an invitation by the Lord of the lords and king of the kings. This calling is not an invitation to obscurity, danger or peril, nor an invitation to an open space, but rather to the most secure place in the world, which is a place behind the master."

Mark 1:16-17 The most admirable invitation Jesus extended to a bunch of fishermen became the foundational statement of Christian discipleship.

1. Discipleship is a calling

Discipleship is an invitation by Jesus. There is no compulsion in it. One can choose to accept or reject this invitation. No one becomes a disciple automatically. Discipleship is a higher calling, an invitation by the Lord of the lords and king of the kings. This calling is not an invitation to obscurity, danger, or peril, nor an invitation to an open space, but rather to the most secure place in the world, which is a place behind the master. No other place is most secure and comforting than the place of a disciple. It is a hiding place as well as a dwelling place. Therefore, a disciple can say, "He is my shield, my defense and my protector". A woman who was troubled for a long time positioned herself behind Him. In that position, she was healed, acknowledged, comforted, and made whole. She came as a woman with bleeding, lost and troubled, but returned as a daughter. She is even alive today in the memory of millions of people as she placed herself behind him.

2. It is the Word of God that makes Discipleship possible

"Jesus said to them." One becomes a disciple by hearing the Word of God. In discipleship, the Word of God has the prime position. It was not the miracles shaping and molding them but the Word of God. He gave them the Word that gave them a new birth, light, and

life. Jn. 15:3 says, "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Jn.16:8 "Simon Peter answered, "Lord, whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life". It is the word that Jesus speaks that makes discipleship possible.

3. The call to Discipleship is driven by divine determination

"I shall make you." The future indicative construction indicates the time of action and the determination of the One who invites. Jesus declares that He is going to do it. In this call to discipleship, Jesus assures Peter and Andrew about their future in the making. Jesus' intent is driven by the divine determination to supersede the potential plans of the enemy to destroy His disciples. The God who calls people to discipleship is determined to make them into the image of Christ. God who calls people to discipleship is God of determination. Our future is in discipleship, and there is no future without discipleship.

4. In this call to Discipleship, there is making

The Greek word used is *poiew*. It is from this word we have English words such as poem, masterpiece, and workmanship. Discipleship involves making. The call to discipleship is a call for beautiful making. Now, as He calls me, there may be rough edges and may not

be beautiful, but discipleship is the process of making one beautiful. In this process of making, there will be crushing, chiseling, changing, shaping, washing, pruning, etc.

5. Discipleship is a process carried out in a community

The word used for you is in the plural (*humas*). This making is going to take place in the company of others. Discipleship is not done in isolation from this world and other fellow human beings but rather in the company of others. This process of discipleship for the first company of disciples was done with 'sons of thunders' Judas Iscariot, who was a traitor and a doubting Thomas. Others are important in this discipleship.

6. Discipline is a process of transformation

Jesus said, "I will make you become". The process of discipleship is a process of becoming. Here is a process of becoming. The one who has chosen the path of discipleship will not remain the same. They will be transformed into something different, new and alive. One who is willing to be transformed only can be a disciple. There is no discipleship without becoming, without transformation.

7. The call to Discipleship is for the sake of others

"I will make you become fishers of

men". Discipleship is not for profit making as catching the fish is. It is to make others what you yourself have become. Some modern translations read, "I will make you become fish for men". The making of discipleship is for the sake of others. Hence, it is to make others disciples, as He made us disciples.

8. The call to Discipleship is urgent and ever-present.

"At once, they left their net and followed Him". There is a lingering urgency to the call of discipleship. There is an immediacy attached to the response to this divine invitation to discipleship. This invitation can neither be postponed for later nor can it be negotiated with. One can either accept it *immediately* or reject it for a future cost. While *today* may be the day to become a disciple, a better time to become a disciple is *now!*



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Discipleship

"Discipleship should not be so much a program in the local church that some sign up for but rather the church's culture, where every member aims at helping others to become more like Christ."

The American theologian, Timothy Keller, rightly mentioned that Discipleship is not an option for a follower of Jesus Christ. The Great Commission, the last words of Jesus, highlights the importance of being a disciple and discipleship, which Jesus affirms by using the imperative "make disciples". The central focus of the Great Commission expressed through the Greek participles translated as "go," "baptizing," and "teaching" (Matt. 28:20) describes three significant aspects of the process. It is a universal call. Many passages in the New Testament talk about discipleship. Still, I would like to develop my small article based on Luke 14:25-35, where Luke, the physician, portrays the beautiful picture of what it means to be a disciple or to be in the school of discipleship. The word disciple was the most common name for the followers of Jesus Christ and is used two hundred and sixty-four times in the Gospels and the Book of Acts. Effective discipleship is built on the foundation of Jesus and the Scripture, a holy lifestyle of Self-denial, and a sacred cause of pleasing God.

1. Effective discipleship is built on the foundation, i.e., Lord Jesus and the Gospel

In the matter of saving lost souls, He wants His house to be filled

(Luke 14:23), but in personal discipleship, He wants only those willing to pay the price. The Gospel does not assure us of any benefits but asks the person who responded to the Gospel to stay true to Lord Jesus Christ and the Gospel. Jesus turned to the multitude and preached a sermon that deliberately thinned out the ranks. He made it clear that, when it comes to personal discipleship, He is more interested in quality than quantity. Quality can be only maintained by staying strong in God's Word. Effective discipleship rests on the foundation of the gospel revealed in God's Word. To build godly disciples, we must build on the foundation of the gospel that comes from God.

2. Effective discipleship is building a holy lifestyle of Self-denial

Jesus, distinguishing between salvation and discipleship. Salvation is open to all who will come by faith, while discipleship is for believers willing to pay the price. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian, rightly said, Salvation is free, but discipleship will cost you your life. Salvation means coming to the cross and trusting Jesus Christ, while discipleship means carrying the cross and following Jesus Christ. To begin with, we must love Christ supremely, even more than we love our flesh and blood (Luke 14:26-27). The word hate does not suggest

positive antagonism but rather "to love less" (see Gen 29:30-31; Mal 1:2-3; and Matt 10:37). Our love for Christ must be so strong that all other love is like hatred in comparison. We must hate our own lives and be willing to bear the cross after Him.

3. Effective discipleship is built to please God from the heart

To be an effective disciple, one should have integrity before God; this can happen only when a follower of Jesus seeks His glory and not one's own. What does it mean to "carry the cross"? It means daily identification with Christ in shame, suffering, and surrendering God's will. It means death to self, our plans and ambitions, and a willingness to serve Him as He directs (John 12:23-28). A "cross" is something we willingly accept from God as part of His will for our lives. If we tell Jesus that we want to take up our cross and follow Him as His disciples, then He wants us to know exactly what we are getting into. He wants no false expectancy, no illusions, and no bargains. He wants to use us as stones for building His church, soldiers who will stand their ground before the enemies and salt for making a difference in His world, and He is looking for quality. Paul lived with a Godward focus. He wanted to please and glorify God on the heart level. We please God by enduring trials with steadfast joy.

Jesus, Himself is a perfect example of enduring trials with complete submission to His Father with great joy.

Discipleship should not be so much a program in the local church that some sign up for but rather the church's culture, where every member aims at helping others to become more like Christ. It begins in our homes, with parents evangelizing and disciplining their children. It should ripple out through the entire church, where all are helping one another to grow and become good disciples God desires.



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COME. LEARN. REST.

THE LORD JESUS
COMMANDED HIS APOSTLES
TO “MAKE DISCIPLES OF
ALL NATIONS.” HE DIDN’T
ASK THEM TO MAKE
“BELIEVERS” OUT OF
“UNBELIEVERS.”

“**W**here are your *students*?” Mary asked Jesus as she opened the door of her Nazareth home to her son. “Where’s that written in the New Testament?” you may wonder. It’s from The Chosen TV series. I like the way Dallas Jenkins portrays Jesus’s disciples as His students.

You may still like to refer to Jesus’s followers as “disciples.” But remember. It was a few Antiochian Disciples of Christ who were at first nicknamed “Christians.” Today, does the word “Christian” remind you of discipleship? Christian jargon, such as discipleship, is not without its problems. Simpler words that effectively convey meaning are always a relief. That’s why I like the word “student.” Disciples are *students*—students who learn to emulate their Master.

Jesus invited people to become His students. “Come to me ... Take my yoke on you and learn from me ...” His Jewish audience knew what it meant to “take up a yoke.” To them, the yoke represented Judaism and its laws. Jews commit themselves, at an early age, to lifelong learning and adherence to the Law. Jesus offered a lighter burden—much lighter than the yoke of Mosaic Law, loaded by rabbinic interpretation (Acts 15:10). He offered them rest for their souls. This ‘rest’ is not a state of inactivity. It indicates the

end of a soul’s wanderings in search of God. Those who come to Jesus find God.

Come. Learn. Rest. We know what it means to come to Jesus. Do we learn from Him? Does that learning lead us to a life of obedience? More often than not, Christians who come to Jesus embrace spiritual complacency because the Church is not implementing the Great Commission. The Lord Jesus commanded his apostles to “make disciples of all nations.” He didn’t ask them to make “believers” out of “unbelievers.” Faith is necessary, as is repentance. But a forgiven sinner must be enrolled as Jesus’s student for life. He must be taught to obey everything that Jesus commanded.

The lack of ‘true discipleship’ is widespread in the global Church. The prayer guide *Operation World* points out that the Church in every country is plagued by immaturity. Rapid growth in numbers, accompanied by a lack of training for new Christians in the Word, made the global Church an ocean that is just ankle-deep! We have not been able to ‘disciple’ every soul that came to Jesus because we were not *taught* well by those who led us to the faith.

Sadly, in most church services, Christians are offered spiritual *fast food* — high in empty calories, low in the ‘meat’ of God’s Word.

Sermons have given way to pep talks and presentations. No one has time for serious Bible study. Pastors are busy shoving comfort foods and pacifiers into the mouths of “baby Christians.” They grow up to become unstable, immature, rebellious “Cretans” who are badly in need of “the sort of exhortation or rebuke that carries full authority.” (See Titus 1:10-12; 2:15) Each local Church should be much more than a “worshipping and witnessing” assembly. Every fellowship of Christians – regardless of what you call it and where they meet – must be the arena where Jesus’s students are trained to obey their Master.



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THE DEPTH OF A SACRIFICE

"Sacrifice requires us to surrender ourselves to His will regardless of how painful, uncomfortable, or inconvenient it might be. There are no take backs or temporary setbacks, with sacrifice. Instead, we are meant to feel the full extent of our sacrifice so that it helps us draw closer to God."

The concept of sacrifice is not new. From ancient mythological stories to the present, we have seen or heard about various sacrifices. Some of these sacrifices were to attain freedom, some to right a wrong, some to protect a relationship, and some that test faith. Each of these sacrifices, whether big or small, required the person to experience a hardship that brought them to their knees and tested their mettle and willpower.

However, as times have evolved, so has our perspective on sacrifice. Today, when we think of sacrifice, we think more about what we need to give up or do to achieve a short or long-term goal. This might be as simple as giving up going on a trip with friends to study for an important exam or living a minimalist life because of your income or what you are trying to save for. Realistically speaking, these are examples of compromise. So then, what is the difference between 'sacrifice' and 'compromise'? In a compromise, we can always change our minds and possibly regain what we invested into a situation. However, as per the scripture, sacrifice requires us to prioritize what God wants of us for others and His kingdom. He expects us to give up our time, talents, comfort, money, possessions, and sometimes our relationships. To be clear, sacrifice is not meant to be confused with giving. Sacrifice requires us to surrender to His will regardless of how painful, uncomfortable, or inconvenient it might be. There are no take backs or temporary setbacks, with sacrifice. Instead, we are meant to feel the full extent of our sacrifice so that it helps us draw closer to God.

For example, Ruth was willing to sacrifice a life

of being comfortable with her family following her husband's death. Despite having her mother-in-law's blessing to return to her own home, Ruth decides that this would not be right and instead promises Naomi to follow her wherever she goes. It was a commitment she made, knowing full well that the path ahead might not be easy, but she was willing to give up what would personally be easy and best for her and trust God to lead the way.

When Tabitha of Joppa died, her people mourned her. She was not a person of influence or great means, but her people recognized that she was different from the rest because she was not just generous with her money and talent and time. She was known as the woman who made coats and garments for widows. She didn't merely express words of sympathy. Instead, she saw to it that to the best of her capabilities, the widows were taken care of and not forgotten.

Just like Tabitha caught the attention of her people, the widow who put her offering into the temple treasury caught Jesus's attention. He noticed that she only "put in two tiny copper coins, worth only a few cents" (Mark 12:42). Still, He makes a note of her contribution to his disciples because He is well aware that she is poor and recognizes that she wholeheartedly "put in everything—all she had to live on" (Mark 12:44).

The story of the distraught mother who came to see King Solomon tells him how her roommate, who had also given birth the same time as her and lost the baby, had switched babies while she was sleeping. Both women claimed the child was hers. But when King Solomon takes the sword

to kill the baby, the true mother intervenes and tells him to give the baby to the other woman. Her love for her child meant she was willing to sacrifice her pain as long as her child was alive and well, even if it was with someone else.

Each of these examples reveals what God's expectation of a sacrifice is. He expects us to be "a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing unto God" (Romans 12:1). He wants us to understand the depth of His love for us and in every season of our life, surrender our ways and thoughts to Him. He promises us that if we are to do this, "everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:29).



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THE PATH OF SELF-DENIAL

"Denying oneself of distractions and worldly pleasures is possible only if we accept that these distractions keep us from our higher purpose. Once this acceptance has come about, we'll be able to look to Jesus and the great love He has showered upon us."

In Matthew 16:24 and Luke 14:27 Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Here denying oneself involves saying no to our desires instead of looking for God's will and following His direction. The ultimate goal of a Christian is to "be conformed to the image of the Son." (Rom 8:29). Getting there involves many steps that every Christian needs to travel to reach that ultimate goal. One main step in this journey is Self-denial.

The journey of a Christian is fraught with many distractions and temptations that will entangle us. "Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8). There is an old parable of how hunters used to trap monkeys. Coconuts were hollowed out, filled with bananas or other treats that monkeys like, and then tied to a tree. A hole big enough for a monkey's hand was cut in each coconut. The monkeys would come and reach into the coconuts for the food; the holes were crafted such that although a flexible hand could fit in, a fist could not be pulled out. By holding on to the food, the monkeys essentially became trapped by their attachment and clinging to the food. All they had to do was let go to free themselves, but their minds trapped them. As Christians, we hold onto many such coconuts that keep us from achieving the fullness of God's plan for us. We need to let go of these fists that are keeping us trapped. This act of self-denial will give us the freedom to turn around and look

at the path that God has prepared for us. These coconuts we hold onto may be our desires, our words, our eating and drinking or the pleasures of this world.

Mary is a prime example of a person whose self-denial has benefited humankind as a whole. Her willingness to yield to the commission that God gave her amid adversity paved the way for the birth of the savior of the world. Denying oneself of distractions and worldly pleasures is possible only if we accept that these distractions keep us from our higher purpose. Once this acceptance has come about, we'll be able to look to Jesus and the great love he has showered upon us. A taste of the Love Jesus showed on the cross is enough to lead us toward discipleship. As soon as we become new in Christ, our old desires and temptations will fade into the distance. We become new people with a new perspective, and the things of old have passed. And we come closer to being conformed to the standards God requires of us. In all this, let us remember that self-denial shouldn't become our obsession. Denying the self should not be the sole purpose of our existence. "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the

race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith." (Heb 12:1 & 2). This perseverance can be achieved "by being transformed by the renewing of our mind" (Rom 12:2) into the image of Christ. Let us seek God's grace and presence daily to lead a self-denial life and a life of Freedom in Christ. "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Heb 4:16).



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CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

"A disciple is a learner who follows a master teacher, imitates his teacher's life, imparts his values, and reproduces his teachings. Christian discipleship involves a close relationship with the Lord Jesus with an intense desire to be like Him."

"If you abide in My word [continually obeying My teachings and living in accordance with them, then] you are truly My disciples" (John 8:31, AMP)

Multitudes followed Jesus throughout His ministry on earth. But only a few stayed very close to Him. They were known as His disciples. Jesus taught, trained, and equipped them to carry on His mission. A disciple is a learner who follows a master teacher, imitates his teacher's life, imparts his values, and reproduces his teachings. Christian discipleship involves a close relationship with the Lord Jesus with an intense desire to be like Him. Accepting Jesus' invitation to follow Him is just the beginning of an all-encompassing endeavour of discipleship. It is a continuous, life-long process of becoming like Him and making Him known to others.

Discipleship involves three essential characteristics - obedience, denial, and abiding. Jesus defined true disciples as those who prove their love for Him by obeying His teachings (John 14:23). A loyal disciple obeys the Lord in everything, remains faithful to the Lord's plan whether the tasks at hand are easy or difficult, observes His commandment of love (John 13:34-35). In all circumstance they would proclaim Him in both blessing and calamity, and follow Him even though they may feel uncertain of the paths that they are being led.

Jesus clarified that whoever decides to follow Him has a price to pay. They must deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23-24). It implies that His disciples must say "No" to desires, ambitions, motives, and longings that draw them away from Christ. In Romans 12:1, Apostle Paul reiterates the same idea and encourages us to present our bodies (dedicating all of ourselves) as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God. He reminds us that a person who belongs to Christ must crucify the flesh with its passions and desires and follow the Spirit's leading in every part of their life (Gal. 5:24-25). Billy Graham commented, "To be a disciple is to be committed to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and committed to following Him every day. To be a disciple is also to be disciplined in our bodies, minds, and souls."

This lifestyle is possible only when a person "chooses to abide in the Lord," which means that a disciple should remain united with Jesus and have a continuous, closer relationship with Him. A disciple should continually trust, rely on, and obey the commands of the Lord. The command is clear! "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples" (John 8:31). Such abiding is mutual. If we abide in Him, He abides

in us (John 15:4), and this union produces fruit (evidence of our faith) and brings glory to the Father in heaven.

Before His ascension to heaven, Jesus commanded His disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Mat. 28:18-20). The mission of a disciple comprises sharing the gospel to make people know about Jesus, believe in Him, and obey His words; to mentor others to become disciples; and live in eager anticipation of the second coming of the Lord. The struggle of daily life is viewed as insignificant from the perspective of the hope and joy of eternal life with the Lord. Let us relish every opportunity to share this joy with others and continue to live a life worthy of being called a true disciple.



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The SELF-SACRIFICE Of A Honeybee

Bees are incredible creatures! They are fascinating and extremely important to humanity. Honeybees have the reputation of being the most studied creatures after humans.

Honeybees are the most social species. A honeybee colony consists of several bees that work together to ensure the colony's survival. A hive's three types of honeybees are workers, drones, and the queen. Each of them plays a specific role in maintaining the colony's health.

Have you ever been stung by a honeybee? If a honeybee stings you, it will bother you and the honey bee that stung you. Honeybees sting us with special hooks on their stingers that keep the stinger in the skin after a person is stung. The stinger is ripped from the bee's body as it attempts to fly away. The honeybee dies in a matter of minutes because of this. This is self-sacrifice in honeybees. When a bee stings us, it releases alarm pheromones from its gland to the bees in the hive. These pheromones excite the other bees, causing them to sting anything that comes too close to the hive. This self-sacrifice of a honeybee is done to protect the entire hive.

As God's children, we must deny ourselves to follow Christ. *"Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." Matthew (16:24-25).* If the tiny creature, like the honeybee, gives its life for the sake of the entire hive, how much more must we, who live for the cause of Christ in this world, sacrifice ourselves to be His followers?

In discipleship, we may have a challenging path ahead of us, but our only focus should be Christ. It means that to be His disciples; we must die to our old selves. There may be challenges after the death of the old being in his discipleship, but keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, helps us get through the path and become more like Jesus until His return.

"If the tiny creature, like the honeybee, gives its life for the sake of the entire hive, how much more must we, who live for the cause of Christ in this world, sacrifice ourselves to be His followers?"



GRACE KATHETTU
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Melatonin: What You Need To Know

WHAT IS MELATONIN?

Melatonin is a hormone that plays a vital role in sleep and is naturally produced by your body. It helps regulate the sleep-wake cycle by signaling the body when the time for sleep is approaching. Your body has an internal clock that tells it when it is time to be asleep and when it is time to be awake. This clock is in the brain just above an area where the nerves travel to the eyes. This area is called the suprachiasmatic nucleus or SCN. Your clock controls the circadian rhythms in your body. These rhythms include body temperature, alertness, and the daily cycle of many hormones. If there is any alteration in this process, it leads to a sleep disorder called circadian rhythm disorder.

WHAT IS CIRCADIAN RHYTHM DISORDER?

This disorder is developed when the body's biological clock is out of sync with social norms, including obligations such as delayed sleep-wake phase (night owl), jet lag, and shift-work disorder (night shift). When it gets dark towards nighttime, your body starts producing Melatonin which starts your body clock preparing you to sleep. Melatonin levels usually rise during the evening, remain high throughout the night, and drop by morning when it is time to wake up.

WHAT ARE THE FORMS OF MELATONIN?

Over-the-counter melatonin supplements are available in doses of 1-10 mg as gummies or tablets. Melatonin is sold as a dietary supplement and is not regulated by the FDA. So, the supplement's content can differ from what is listed on the product label. Before you take melatonin, make sure the brand is reputable and discuss taking this and any supplement

with your doctor or a sleep provider. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine states that melatonin supplements are safe. There is no evidence of serious risks related to their use, but the long-term effects are unknown.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND SIDE EFFECTS OF MELATONIN?

Melatonin is most effective for treating sleep disorders related to the body clock by shifting the timing of your sleep. Many people take it as a sleep aid to treat insomnia (difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep), but there is no proven evidence. If taken in a large dose, Melatonin is proven to cause a rebound effect in the form of next-day drowsiness if taken late at night and in large doses. It may be unsafe to combine with some prescription mental health medications. Consult with your doctor for safe usage.

WHAT IS THE SAFE DOSAGE OF MELATONIN?

No research studies show what dose of melatonin is most effective. A small dose can work better than a large dose. A dose of about 0.3 mg closely resembles the level of your body's natural melatonin production. Larger doses cause the melatonin in your blood to peak much higher. It has been studied at doses ranging from 0.3 mg to 10 mg taken 3-4 hours before sleep time. The most important thing to consider is the timing rather than dosage. Melatonin is most effective in conjunction with bright light therapy, where bright light is used to treat circadian rhythm disorders.

IS MELATONIN SAFE FOR KIDS?

The best and safe practice is to consult with your pediatrician before you give any medications to children, including supplements and handle melatonin as any other medicine and keep

it out of reach of children. One study found the most significant variability in melatonin content was in chewable tablets — the form children are most likely to use, leading to the tendency to overdose. According to the CDC, in 2020, more than 4,000 reported ingestions led to hospitalizations, and 287 pediatric patients required intensive care. Symptoms of a melatonin overdose can include headache, dizziness, and irritability.

On a last note, the Bible says, 'I lie down and sleep; I wake again because the Lord sustains me (Psalms 3:5). Our worries, anxieties, fears, insecurities, and 'what ifs?' may lead to disrupting our sleep, but even then, as a child of God, we have a blessed assurance that "you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety."



JASMINE JACOB
Dallas, USA

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Continued from Page 01

SACRIFICE AND SELF-DENIAL IN DISCIPLESHIP

and helps us stay focused on our ultimate goal of glorifying God. All successful pursuits of accomplishing God's plan and purpose involved sacrifice and self-denial.

Adoniram Judson was 25 years old when he went to serve as a missionary in Burma. At 61, he died on the way back on board a ship in the Bay of Bengal and was buried at sea, having spent 37 years abroad with only one trip back home to America. It took Judson 12 years to make 18 converts. When Judson began his mission in Burma, he set a goal of translating the Bible and founding a church of 100 members before his death. By his death, he had accomplished those goals and more. Judson left the translated Bible, a half-completed Burmese-English dictionary, established about 100 churches, and had over 8,000 believers. One of his famous quotes is –

"There is no success without sacrifice. If you succeed without sacrifice, it is because someone has suffered before you. If you sacrifice without success, it is because someone will succeed after."

True discipleship involves sacrifice, and we cannot make progress without it. If you feel stagnant or stuck in your Christian life, it may be because you know much theory but

"There is no success without sacrifice. If you succeed without sacrifice, it is because someone has suffered before you. If you sacrifice without success, it is because someone will succeed after."

need to improve in practical implementation. Discipleship comes with a cost, and are you willing to take small steps to see God's plans unfold in your life? If we do not have an eternal perspective and temporary outlook toward our life, it will not be easy to give up our comforts. When we realize what our master had told us and how short is our life in this world compared to life after death, it will become easier to deny ourselves and accept sacrifices to accomplish kingdom goals.

We can start with small steps. We can join the group going out to give tracts and do street evangelism. Start meeting someone consistently

and help them in their spiritual journey. Join a team going on a mission trip. When an opportunity to serve requires sacrifice, go ahead with it and do not postpone.

Remember what Judson said, "there is no success without sacrifice."



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THE 2023 ASBURY AWAKENING:

World
News

GOD'S MOVE THROUGH THE ORDINARY

No one here at Asbury is trying to label it as anything; we are all content it to be an “Asbury awakening,” as Asbury Seminary President Timothy Tennant puts it. We are trying to be in the moment, experiencing the move of the Holy Spirit, “His sweet presence,” as one of my friends put it.

Growing up in Kerala Pentecostalism, I recollect being in numerous ‘revival’ meetings and conventions, where charismatic expressions readily manifest in various forms. Nowadays, as a young scholar on Pentecostalism (namely Indian Pentecostalism), I also read numerous Pentecostal narrations globally, longing and desiring for ‘revivals.’ Since last week (February 8th, 2023), the Christian world (through the power of social media) has been flooded with news about a ‘revival’ in Asbury. I have not yet gotten time to do a proper biblical, historical, and theological analysis on if this could be categorised as ‘revival,’ ‘awakening,’ or ‘renewal.’ Because I am right in the middle of this unfolding movement in Wilmore, Kentucky.

It all began with a regular chapel service at Asbury University chapel on February 8th, 2023, when some students decided to stay and continue worshipping after their allotted chapel time. The preacher that day, Zach Meerkreebs, gave a very ordinary altar call or challenge, encouraging students not to leave this place without experiencing the love of God afresh. Few students took that challenge seriously and began to cry out to God. The Gospel choir leading worship stayed back and continued to pray and sing songs. Soon other students joined in, and faculties and chaplains reconvened. As time passed, more students joined in instead of the gathering dwindling. By the evening, some of the Asbury Seminary students also joined in. Since Thursday, I was also able to join in this experience. Students repenting, praying for one another, and worshipping became common sites. That pattern of liturgy did not stop. Soon students began to describe that they were

experiencing a “sense of peace,” “calm-ness,” “did not feel like leaving,” and “lost track of time” after being part of the prayer service at the Hughes Auditorium.

Today as I write, it is one week and is continuing, with overflow chapels at Asbury Seminary (across from the Hughes Auditorium). Those in these services will testify that no one person or a particular leader is running the show. Instead, the institutions ensure that the group of students leads the worshipping and praying. No one here at Asbury is trying to label it as anything; we are all content it to be an “Asbury awakening,” as Asbury Seminary President Timothy Tennant puts it. We are trying to be in the moment, experiencing the move of the Holy Spirit, “His sweet presence,” as one of my friends put it. There are no flashing lights, smoke machines, and emotionally cohesive expressions from the microphone to seduce people into any particular ascetic mannerism. It’s just praying, singing, and worshipping. I shall also mention that around the auditorium, it is a common site to see students read their Bibles and do personal journaling. The desire for the Word is all the more intense in these worshipful environments.

Wilmore is a small town in Kentucky that houses two institutions—Asbury University and Asbury Seminary, which are often considered Wesleyan. These places have theologians, historians & a sizable PhD student community (I am one of them). We are all wrestling with numerous questions: how does this move relate to discipleship? Is it a revival? What are the social ramifications of this move? How will this move impact global missiology and so

on? But for now, we sense God is moving in unexpected ways, and we are content to “let it be what it is.” I am unsure what this ‘move’ will become in the days to come. Nonetheless, one thing is sure, God moves as He wills, which often happens in ordinary and unexpected ways.



ALLAN VARGHESE
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Allan Varghese Meloottu is a Doctoral student (Intercultural Studies) at Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky, USA. His current research is at the intersection of Pentecostalism, social engagements, and public witness. His works on Pentecostalism are published as book chapters and articles in peer-reviewed journals such as *Religions* (2023) and *Nidan: The International Journal of Indian Studies* (2019). He is married to Regina, and they have twin boys, Micah and Nathaniel.



Russia may have lost 50% of its Operational Tank fleet

Russia has potentially lost up to half of all its operational tank fleet since the start of the Ukraine war, according to information collected by a monitoring group, as its military struggles to meet the goals of Vladimir Putin's invasion. Oryx, an open-source intelligence website, has been collecting visual evidence of military equipment losses in Ukraine since Russia's invasion began on February 24, 2022. The group said this week it had verified 1,000 distinct Russian tank losses in the war. It said Ukrainian forces had captured 544

Russian tanks, 79 damaged and 65 abandoned. That toll does not include losses Oryx has not been able to confirm visually, said Jakub Janovsky, a military analyst who contributes to the Oryx blog. He estimated the actual toll could be nearer 2,000 tanks. "Russia started the war with around 3,000 operational tanks ... so there is a good chance that Russia has lost one-half of (its) usable tanks," Janovsky said.

Tanks have been a major focus of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and are seen as key for either Russia or Ukraine to take territory on the battlefield. Experts have also noted that Russian armour was maintained poorly before the war, and some tanks in storage may have been scavenged for parts to keep those sent to the front lines working. Moscow is said to have had about 4,000 tanks in reserve before the war began. "On paper, Russia still has a lot of tanks, but many were not properly stored and might be hard to reactivate quickly," he said.

US to pilot domestic visa revalidation for H-1B visa holders

In a move that could benefit tens of thousands of foreign tech workers on H-1B and L1 visas, the US is planning to resume "domestic visa revalidation" in specific categories on a pilot basis to scale it up in the next few years. The pilot project, to be launched later this year, when fully implemented, would be a big relief to thousands of Indian tech professionals in the United States. Until 2004, specific categories of non-immigrant visas, particularly the H-1B, could be renewed or stamped inside the US. After that, for renewal of these visas, particularly those on H-1B, the foreign tech workers must go out of the country, mostly to their own country, to get the H-1B extension stamped on their passport. When all the H-1B visa holders renew their visas, they must get their passports stamped with renewal dates. This is required if they wish to travel outside of the US and

re-enter the US. As of now, H-1B visa restamping is not allowed within the US. Restamping can only be done at any US consulate. This was a big inconvenience for foreign guest workers and their employees, mainly when the visa wait time was more than 800 days or more than two years. The much-sought-after H-1B visas are issued for three years at a time. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.



World News



Massive earthquakes rock Turkey and Syria

One of the most powerful earthquakes to hit the region in a century rocked residents from their slumber in the early hours of 6th Feb morning around 4 a.m. The 7.8 magnitude quake struck 23 kilometres (14.2 miles) east of Nurdagi, in Turkey's Gaziantep province, at a depth of 24.1 kilometres (14.9 miles), the United States Geological Survey (USGS) said.

Thousands of people have died, and tens of thousands of others were injured by the devastating earthquakes that rocked Turkey and Syria. Rescue teams are still desperately searching for signs of life beneath the rubble of collapsed buildings amid grim conditions. Still, days after the massive tremor, the chances of finding survivors lessen with every passing hour. A series of aftershocks reverberated through the region in the immediate hours after the initial incident. A magnitude 6.7 aftershock followed 11 minutes after the first quake hit, but the largest temblor, which measured 7.5 in magnitude, struck about nine hours later. More than 125 aftershocks have been recorded so far. Rescuers are now racing against time and the elements to pull survivors out from under debris on both sides of the border. More than 5,700 buildings in Turkey have collapsed, according to the country's disaster agency. Earthquakes occur on every continent in the world – from the highest peaks in the Himalayan Mountains to the lowest valleys, like the Dead Sea, to the bitterly cold regions of Antarctica. However, the distribution of these quakes is not random. The USGS describes an earthquake as "the ground shaking caused by a sudden slip on a fault. Stresses in the earth's outer layer push the sides of the fault together. Stress builds up, and the rocks slip suddenly, releasing energy in waves that travel through the earth's crust and cause the shaking we feel during an earthquake." Earthquakes are measured using seismographs, which monitor the seismic waves that travel through the Earth after a quake.

Many may recognise the term "Richter Scale", which scientists previously used for many years. Still, according to the USGS, they generally follow the Modified Mercalli Intensity Scale (MMI), a more accurate measure of a quake's size.



China is preparing for a new battlefield near space

Lying above the flightpaths of most commercial and military jets and below satellites, near space is an in-between area for spaceflight to pass through – but it is also a domain where hypersonic weapons transit and ballistic missiles cross. China has paid close attention to the US and other countries' developments in the region, which Chinese military experts have hailed as “a new front for militarisation” and “an important field of competition among the world's military powers.”

In addition to developing high-tech vessels such as solar-powered drones and hypersonic vehicles, China is also reviving a decades-old technology to utilise this atmosphere area – lighter-than-air vehicles. They include stratospheric airships and high-altitude balloons – like the one identified over the continental United States and shot down recently.

China maintains the balloon is a civilian research airship, despite claims by US officials that the device was part of an extensive Chinese surveillance program. An analysis of recovered parts from the downed device gets underway; a senior State Department official said Thursday that the balloon “was capable of conducting signals intelligence collection operations” and was part of a fleet that had flown over “more than 40 countries across five continents” – a claim China has flatly rejected.



Pakistan is struggling to get IMF loans

A deepening economic crisis has emptied Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves, leaving it barely enough dollars to cover a month of imports, and it is struggling to service sky-high levels of foreign debt. In January, annual inflation soared to over 27%, the highest it's been in Pakistan since 1975, and there are mounting fears for the economy in a pivotal election year. This week the rupee sank to a historic low of 275 to the dollar, down from 175 a year ago, making it more expensive for Pakistan to buy and pay for things. The lack of foreign currency is one of the most pressing of Pakistan's problems. Businesses and industries across Pakistan said they have had to slow or stop work while waiting for imported goods currently stacking up in ports.

World News

While questions remain about that incident, an examination of Chinese state media reports and scientific papers reveals the country's growing interest in these lighter-than-air vehicles, which Chinese military experts have touted for use toward a wide range of purposes, from communication relay, reconnaissance and surveillance to electronic countermeasures.

Unlike rotating satellites or travelling aircraft, stratospheric airships and high-altitude balloons “can hover over a fixed location for an extended period and are not easily detected by radar, wrote Shi Hong, the executive editor of Shipborne Weapons, a prominent military magazine published by PLA-linked institute, in an article published in state media in 2022.

China also appears acutely aware of the potential for other countries to use balloons to spy. In 2019, a documentary series on China's border defence forces produced by a state-owned television channel featured an incident where the PLA Air Force spotted and shot down a suspected high-altitude surveillance balloon that “threatened (China's) air defence safety.” The documentary did not provide further detail about the time and location of the incident. Still, a paper published by researchers in a PLA institute last April noted that air-drift balloons were spotted over China in 1997 and 2017.

Orca mothers give up having more babies to look after their sons.

It's no surprise that parenthood can be demanding, and sacrifices are often made for the sake of offspring. But for female killer whales, the role can be particularly challenging. New research suggests that female orcas might be forgoing having any more offspring because of their sons – even when they're fully grown. The research, published Wednesday in the journal *Current Biology*, focused on a group of orcas known as the “southern resident” population off the coast of Washington state and British Columbia. The Centre for Whale Research, involved in the study, has been monitoring the group since 1976. The species is unusual because males and females stay with their mothers for life. However, the “cost” of a mother's care is bigger in the case of sons.

Researchers do not know why female orcas are less likely to reproduce in such cases, but they suspect that sharing their food with their fully-grown sons may mean mothers have to go with less. Sam Ellis, an animal behaviour researcher at Exeter University who co-authored the paper, said that the nature of the mother's care primarily revolves around their diet of Chinook salmon. “Key to this form of care is food sharing,” he explained. “We think a lot of the care is physically providing food to their adult sons,” he said, though they also lead them to the source of nutrition. “Having a daughter doesn't affect your chance of reproducing again but having a son of any age is hurting the mother's chance of reproducing,” said Ellis.

In late January, a government minister said that more than 8,000 containers were piled up in Karachi's two ports, containing goods from medicine to food. According to local media reports, some of that has started to clear, but much is still stuck. Imran Khan, ousted as Pakistan's prime minister last April, came to power in 2018, promising to fix the economy. At the time, he had vowed not to seek help from the IMF, but inflation soared, and the rupee dropped. He ended up negotiating a \$6bn rescue bailout with the IMF to address the balance of payments crisis. The current negotiations over the next \$1.1bn tranche have repeatedly stalled. It was initially due to be made in November. The government and Mr Khan's party, the PTI, have had their own disagreements with the IMF in the past, but with the country's foreign reserves now so low, both agree Pakistan needs to agree to secure the funds.