

"Faith does not eliminate questions. But faith knows where to take them."

- Elisabeth Elliot

BROKEN BREAD Page 03



DEVOTIONAL Page 05



Josiah:
The Boy
Who
Became
King



Corner Page 07



**Genetic Aneurysm
and Predisposition**

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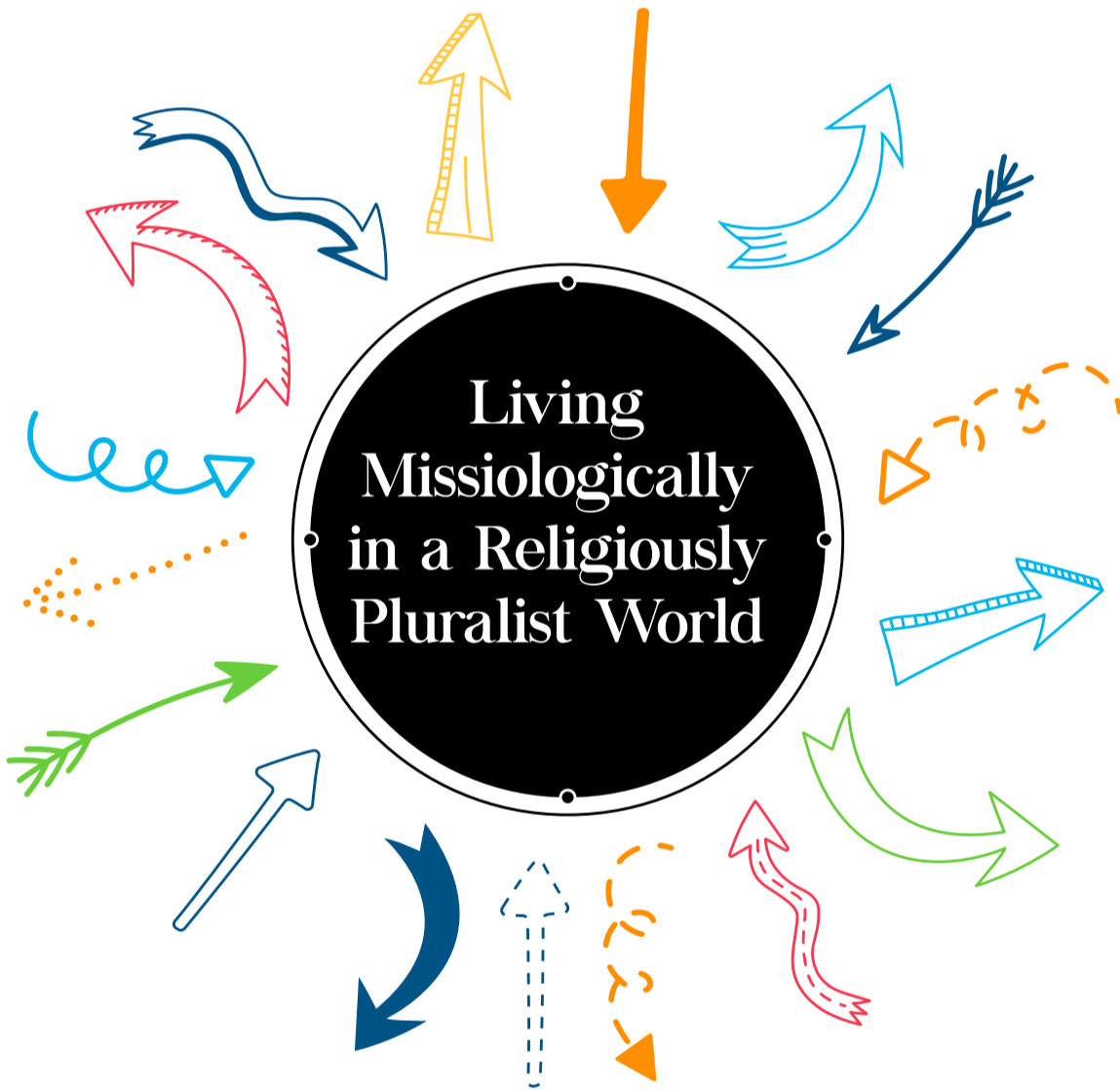
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"In a religiously pluralistic world, Christian witness should not end with preaching and dialogue (orthodoxic engagement). We should also learn how to build friendships and sustain healthy relationships with others, religious and non-religious people so that we can engage with them at orthopraxis and orthopathic levels."



Dr Jose Abraham
California, USA

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All our societies – both in the East and the West - are becoming religiously and culturally pluralistic. Religious or cultural pluralism is not new. What is new is that people following different religious traditions and cultural practices live side-by-side in a community as citizens and colleagues with equal rights and privileges. India, for example, has been the land of adherents of all major world religions. Followers of various religious traditions have lived in India for thousands of years. However, they constituted homogenous communities, often separating themselves from others based on caste, religion, linguistic,

and cultural identities. Various communities did not recognize that they all are citizens of one nation with equal rights and privileges. It is also true with European and other Western societies. Even though Western societies were predominantly Christian, they followed various denominational beliefs and practices. In the West, denominational affiliations became markers of identity, especially national identity. However, today, in the West, Christians of various denominations, non-Christians of various traditions and non-religious people who enjoy equal rights and privileges, live side-by-side as citizens and colleagues. It is not only that people are living together in

a community but also witnessing their faith with each other. This new reality makes the question of practicing Christian faith in a religiously pluralist world relevant.

'Knowing the other' is extremely important to practice our Christian faith in a religiously pluralistic world. However, we should realize that we already have preconceived notions of other religions and their adherents. We often construct our image of religious others based on information from books and popular media. Unfortunately, such image construction does not help us to build bridges of understanding and establish healthy communication with religious

others. When I studied at the Henry Martin Institute of Islamic Studies in Hyderabad, one of my Muslim teachers asked us about the similarities and differences between Kashmiri and Kerala Muslims. He helped us realize that even though both these Muslim communities follow Islam, they do not eat the same food, speak the same language, or wear the same kind of clothes.

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Blessy Diney, Divine Leonardo, Dr Jose Abraham, Dr Rajesh Sebastian and Dr Roji T George

Theme for December
Discovering and living one's specific calling:
God's will and vocation.

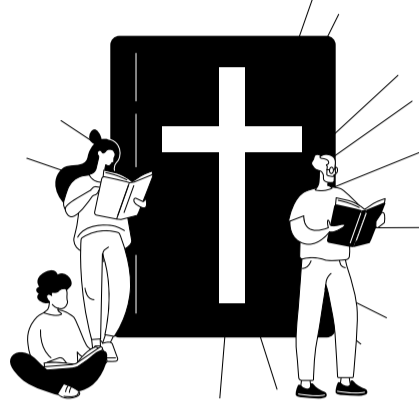
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"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths."



- Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV

FROM THE editor



THE VOICE AMONG THE VOICES

Those who live in a religiously diverse society will undoubtedly encounter the question of orthodoxy (the right belief) and orthopraxy (the right practice) compared to others who share similar worldviews. However, these questions can cause distress and discord in a religious landscape where one tradition claims their understanding of the divine and ways to relate to the divine, exclusive and superior to the other. The co-existence of diverse religious traditions and ideologies is not a new phenomenon. Even during the ancient era when there was no demarcation between religion and state, different nations and ethnicities imposed their belief system on the nations they conquered, disregarding the faith tradition practiced in their land.

In the present times, exposure to other beliefs and practices has soared to a higher level, and many societies are increasingly becoming multi-cultural and multi-faith due to the unprecedented increase in global movement and sophisticated communication facilities. Simultaneously, a growing population, especially in the West, are turning away from religious beliefs and identifying themselves as 'nones', 'no-faith' or 'humanists' besides the traditional categories of atheists and agnostics. The rapidly changing philosophical and religious landscape worldwide demands a pluralistic approach that keeps all religious faiths on equal ground rather than one tradition claiming superiority over another. For many, pluralism is a fascinating option for two reasons: a) A social reason. It alleviates strife, competition and hostility in society. b) A Philosophical reason. No one system of belief can claim that it conveys the whole truth.

It is important to note that some of the early proponents of religious pluralism were from a Christian background. They were undoubtedly driven by Christian principles and values such as 'peacemaking' and 'loving the neighbor', which motivated them to articulate ways to promote harmony. Some tried building bridges through

"Practicing Christian faith in a pluralistic context is neither becoming militant, patronizing, and arrogant about the faith nor compromising, diluting, or modifying it to make it more appealing and unthreatening for others"

dialogues. The title of M. M. Thomas' book, "Risk Christ for Christ's Sake," reflected the extent of the leap many of the pluralists were willing to make. Another instance is the revolutionary views proposed by John Hick, a British theologian who was influenced by Eastern religious traditions he encountered in Birmingham, UK. He proposed a Copernican revolution to the Christian understanding of other religions by placing God at the center and all other religions, including Christianity, revolving around God. In the process of making this shift, he denigrated all the fundamental beliefs and practices of the Christian faith, primarily salvation, divinity of Christ and eternal life.

Practicing Christian faith in a pluralistic context is neither becoming militant, patronizing, and arrogant about the faith nor compromising, diluting, or modifying it to make it more appealing and unthreatening for others. Paul puts it succinctly in Ephesians 4:14ff., "Then we will no longer be infants tossed by every wind of teaching...instead by 'truthing' (aletheountes to speak, to do or to maintain, truth) in love, become mature. Every serious Christian has a responsibility to be truthful about their faith and practice it with utmost genuineness in a rapidly changing world. It cannot get any better than being a faithful witness of Christ reflecting his character and teachings among diverse voices.



Responding to Religious Pluralism

“

Jesus and his Apostles paid with their lives for the claims they made. They never claimed that “Jesus is one of the ways,” or that “Jesus is one of the saviors. While claiming that all religions are true, pluralists accuse historical Christianity of making false claims. Pluralists grant that “Jesus is one of the ways,” and that “Jesus is one of the saviors.” Why would they want to give a title to Jesus that he never claimed?”

WHAT IS RELIGIOUS PLURALISM?

Religious Pluralism is the view that people “appropriate God’s salvation through a multiplicity of ways and means in various religions” (Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 617). To put it in simple language, it is the belief that all religions are valid ways to God and there is nothing unique about Christ other than that he was a great teacher like Mohammad, Krishna, Buddha, etc. According to pluralism, various religions are seemingly different but essentially the same, promoting love and goodness.

CONTRADICTION OF PLURALISM

A pluralistic approach to all religions is usually based on something other than a serious consideration of various belief systems. Yet, pluralists will look down on anyone claiming an exclusive true religious claim. In doing so, the pluralists contradict themselves because they claim that all religions teach truth but at the same time accuse the exclusive religions of making false claims! At the core, various religions

contradict each other. For example, Atheism claims there is no God. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam teach about the existence of one personal God. Hinduism offers various options, including belief in one impersonal God (Nirguna Brahman) or many personal gods.

DO ALL RELIGIONS LEAD TO THE SAME GOD?

Religious pluralism begins with the faulty assumption that all religions lead to the same God. They unintentionally push the concept of one God (Monotheism) on the followers of other religions. According to their standards, it is not fair to push one’s ideas of God and salvation on followers of other religions. For example, a Hindu might dream about living in heaven with many gods, while another one will dream about merging with God (Brahman). Likewise, a Satanist wishes not to go to God and does everything in one’s capacity to avoid God. Why would pluralists deny the Satanist his/her right to go to Satan? Not fair to Satanism!

CLAIMS OF JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES

Unlike Hinduism (a religion) and pluralism (a worldview), Jesus (in John 16:14) and his Apostles made some exclusive claims:

1. “I am the way.”
2. “I am the Truth.”
3. “No one comes to the Father except through me.”
4. “Salvation is found in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

5. “Whoever has the Son has life, whoever does not have the Son does not have life” (1 John 5:11-12).

Jesus and his Apostles paid with their lives for the claims they made. They never claimed that “Jesus is one of the ways,” or that “Jesus is one of the saviors. While claiming that all religions are true, pluralists accuse historical Christianity of making false claims. Pluralists grant that “Jesus is one of the ways,” and that “Jesus is one of the saviors.” Why would they want to give a title to Jesus that he never claimed?

LIMITED OPTIONS

Anyone is free to believe or reject the claims of Jesus. However, the British author C.S. Lewis showed that the options are limited:

1. You may call Christ a liar for making exclusive claims.
2. You may call him a lunatic for making tall claims.
3. If he was a liar or a lunatic, don’t call him “a good teacher” or “a savior.”
4. He was either what he claimed to be (the only Way and the Truth) or a liar or a lunatic. (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 55-56).

The attempt of pluralists to write him off as a good teacher or as one of the saviors is not a reasonable option. Jesus never made such a claim, and he does not need such a concession from pluralists!



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THE SPIRIT IN OUR FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY

"True Christian spirituality and right faith are founded upon the truth of the gospel of Christ and the continued ministry of the Spirit in teaching and guiding us into doing the will of God. There is no other replacement for them to continue our Christian journey."

“Spirituality” is not limited to any religion or its practices. In a postmodern secular context, it refers to discovering the meaning of the fullness of life with the world outside by an inward-looking act of contemplation. It is devoid of God at the centre, and the goal is to discover one’s inner tranquillity in harmony with nature, art, and the world. Such spirituality contradicts “Christian spirituality,” which enthrones God at the centre of human existence.

Paul addresses the Corinthian believers, correcting their misconception about Christian spirituality and living. The problem in the Corinthian church was that some of them believed in higher secret philosophical knowledge necessary for growing spiritually and compared their level of spirituality with one another based on the Spiritual gifts they possessed. Such a misconception was contrary to Paul’s teaching to the believers in Corinth. Paul says that they were not mature enough to understand the mind of God. Instead, they were worldly wise, men of flesh, and immature (1 Cor 3:1-3). In 2:14, he addresses them as “soulish.” They were practising groupism among themselves, seeking the world’s wisdom, and living life without recognising the mind of God. These were indicative of their unchristian spirituality (3:1-4).

Thus, Paul, in 1 Corinthians 2, speaks about his mission among the Corinthians. He differentiates his ministry among them from other teachers/preachers of philosophy in Corinth. He says, “I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom” (1 Cor 2:1). Instead, his goal was to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Cor 2:2). Hence, Paul does two vital things among them to teach them the foundation of Christian spirituality and faith.

First, Paul intentionally replaced the wisdom and rhetoric of the world with God’s power on which the faith of the Corinthians ought to rest (2:4-5). He says, “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power” (2:4-5). In Romans 1:16, Paul boldly declares that the gospel “is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.” The Spirit’s role in effecting human salvation through the gospel of Christ is the Spirit’s power. For Paul, no philosophy preached among them could redeem their soul from the corruption of sin but only the gospel of Christ Jesus. God will regenerate their soul from death and grants them a spiritual life in Christ only through their faith founded upon the gospel.

The gospel is a “message of wisdom,” the eternal mystery of our glory revealed now. He teaches this among the mature, unlike “the wisdom of this age” (2:6-7). None of the rulers of this age could understand the mystery of the gospel, now known as the power of God saving sinful humanity through faith by the death of the crucified Christ. Thus, if the spiritual regeneration is in the mystery of the gospel, then Christian spirituality and faith are founded upon it. Nothing else! The Corinthians ought to build their spirituality solely based upon the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ by faith to experience true life in connection with God.

Second, Paul claims to possess and preach the mind of Christ revealed by the Spirit to all. Thus, their spiritual growth and faith foundation are built upon the special revelations given by the Spirit who knows “the thoughts of God” (2:11). For Corinthians, no other option remains for them to continue in true faith and spirituality

but to continue listening to the voice of the Spirit dwelling in them imparting the correct understanding about what God has given them freely (2:12). The role of the Spirit to grow spiritually knowing and fulfilling the will of God is inevitable for the Corinthian believers. Jesus, too, taught that the Spirit would guide us into all the truth because he will speak not of his own but what he receives from the Father/Son (John 16:13, 15). For our spiritual living, revelation by the Spirit to us is essential because it makes us judge “all things” – visible invisible and public private – knowing the mind of Christ (2:15). Now, this is foundational to our spiritual formation, including moral and ethical, as the apostle would teach in Philippians 2:1-5.

In short, true Christian spirituality and right faith are founded upon the truth of the gospel of Christ and the continued ministry of the Spirit in teaching and guiding us into doing the will of God. There is no other replacement for them to continue our Christian journey. May the Lord always help us recognise God’s mind in all things we see, do, and desire under the guidance of the Spirit that dwells within us. Amen!



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Josiah: The Boy Who Became King

“Josiah’s righteousness and zealousness, his love for God and his willingness to obey God’s laws, unlike his forefathers, is the reason that the Bible bestows him the honor of saying that “Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, following all the Law of Moses” ”



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Born into Judean royalty, Josiah’s life was predestined. It was expected that he would one day follow in the footsteps of his grandfather, Manasseh, and his father, Amon and become king of Judah. What was unexpected was the time frame in which he became king. Two years after his father ascended to the throne, Josiah found himself becoming king. At the tender age of eight, not only did he not have time to grieve the assassination of his father, he also did not have a choice in shouldering a responsibility that was far beyond his years. Regardless of his lack of wisdom or experience as a king, the young Josiah knew that it was vital for him to do things differently right from the very beginning of his rule and, in doing so, became a great example of practical Christianity.

- One of the very first things Josiah does is to **acknowledge** David as his father. “He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and followed the ways of his father David completely, not turning aside to the right or the left” (2 Kings 22:2). As a direct descendant of David, the young boy set his heart and mind on following the ways of David, rather than that of his father who had earned a reputation as being an evil king who did not honor God. This decision allows Josiah to align his life, intentions, and actions with what God expected of him.
- He **seeks** the Lord. Even at such a young age, Josiah had the wisdom and discernment to know that God needed to take front and center stage in his life. He didn’t have the best examples in his life, so he relied on God to direct his path as king.
- He **recognizes** that what his father and grandfather did was not pleasing in the eyes of the Lord and makes a bold move to effect a change based on the needs of the land. He consciously decides to break away from the culture, tradition, and ritualistic thinking that was the way of life in Judah and sets the

wheels in motion to reform the land.

- He saw what was wrong with his people and his land, and he decided to do something about it. Josiah does not dwell on the fact that he was a young, inexperienced king or that he might have taken on more than he could handle. Instead, he **trusts** that God, who began a good work in him, would see it through. So, he makes it his life mission to restore the house of the Lord. This was no small task, and it took years for Josiah to renovate the temple, remove the practices of idolatry, renew the covenant, and restore the celebration of Passover.
- He **obeys** God. Not only does Josiah obey God, but he also influences the people in his immediate circle to obey God and serve God with all their hearts and minds. He is earnest to walk in the spirit and knows that to wipe out the evil and wickedness that has permeated Judah, God must take precedence in his life.
- He is **aware** that God has placed certain people in his life to help him, encourage him, and equip him. From Hilkiah, the priest, Shaphan, the scribe, to Huldah, the prophetess, each person played a pivotal role in helping the young king accomplish God’s decree.

Josiah’s righteousness and zealousness, his love for God and his willingness to obey God’s laws, unlike his forefathers, is the reason that the Bible bestows him the honor of saying that “Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did — with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, following all the Law of Moses” (2 Kings 23:25). For the little boy who became king, there could have been no bigger accomplishment or legacy than this.



“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2 BSB)

A CHRISTOCENTRIC LIVING

“A shift in focus makes all the difference! Likewise, we must stay focused on Jesus throughout our life journey. A Christocentric life is what Christian life is all about.”



Jossy Binz
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Jossy Binz is currently pursuing M.Div. from IPCTSK. She is a teacher and holds a Master's in English Literature.

We live in a pluralistic society where people of different races, religious beliefs, and cultures coexist. With competing ideas & world views and an increasingly globalised and interconnected world, everyone is more conscious of and influenced by different views than ever. The challenge with competing worldviews is that some ideas may get infused into Christian teachings and be practised without realising that these are outside biblical teachings. Therefore, it is a requisite for Christians to have a vivid knowledge of Biblical teachings and to cultivate the habit of discerning what is being taught to them. At the same time, as Christians, we must be mindful of our calling to “love”- God and our fellow beings – because our heavenly Father is Love (1 John. 4:16). There are strict instructions in the Scripture to live at peace with everyone and to conduct with graciousness and integrity in the society.

The Christian life springs from the three theological virtues – Faith, Hope, and Love. These are the excellent qualities that a Christian must possess because these virtues come from God and lead us to God. Through “Faith”, we acknowledge an omnipotent, wise, holy, and loving God. Faith helps us recognise our limitations and our need for redemption and forgiveness. Through “Faith”, we accept Jesus as our Redeemer and Lord and believe He died for our sins, justified us through His righteousness, and reconciled us to God. Christian “Hope” is founded on faith in salvation through Christ. It is the hope of our transformation in the likeness of Christ and a glorious eternal life. The assurance of this blessed future is guaranteed through the indwelling Spirit in us. Thus, “Hope” results in joy and peace in all circumstances. The greatest of the theological virtues is

“Love.” The ultimate picture of God’s love is seen in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our faith in Him gives us the hope to live, which results in our love for Him, which enables us to love others.

The author of Hebrews alludes the Christian life to a race (Heb. 1-3). In our Christian race, we run for Christ. We did not initiate this course; it is God who established it. As we run, we must fix our eyes upon Jesus because He is the author and perfecter of our faith. Also, we must eliminate the things that slow us down, i.e., our thoughts, attitudes, and habits that impede our progress and threaten our relationship with God. It is a life-long marathon, and we must endure it until the end despite the trials and temptations because the reward of eternal life with Christ awaits us at the finishing point. The essential aspect of the race is our focus on Jesus Christ. When Peter focused on Jesus while walking on water, he could move forward and do what a human can do. But the moment his focus shifted from Jesus to his surrounding storm, he started to drown. A shift in focus makes all the difference! Likewise, we must stay focused on Jesus throughout our life journey. A Christocentric life is what Christian life is all about.

We must acknowledge that our Christian life is a constant struggle. But it is not with physical people but with principalities and authorities of the spiritual realm. Our enemies are Satan, his distracting world, and our human nature. So, we must be cautious and alert and constantly focus on Jesus. He is our role model because, disregarding the struggles, He endured the cross and accomplished His goal. He promised to be with us to strengthen us so we can be victorious in attaining our target.



Genetic Aneurysm and Predisposition

During clinical rotation, I came across a patient who had a ruptured brain aneurysm, putting her in a state of anoxic brain with a poor prognosis. While looking into her medical history, I discovered that her brother had sadly passed away a few months ago due to the same diagnosis. This finding prompted me to study her case thoroughly. Further history collection from the family helped me understand that the family had not received proper information about the genetic tendency for aneurysms. This experience in turn heightened the awareness of educating others about this topic.

Basic Facts

An aneurysm is like a bulge or swelling in a blood vessel, and it can happen in different parts of the body, like the significant artery from the heart or brain. It usually comes from weak vessel walls, high blood pressure, or genes that might be inherited. The risky part is that they might burst; causing severe internal bleeding that can be life-threatening. You might not even notice any symptoms until it bursts. The risk of getting an aneurysm can increase with age, family history, high blood pressure, smoking, and specific genes.

Genetic Predisposition

Genetic predisposition means you have a higher chance of getting a specific condition because of inherited genes. So, when we talk about genetic predisposition to aneurysms, it means you could have genes that make you more likely to get an aneurysm than the average person. In a study, they looked at the close relatives (like parents or siblings) of people who had at least two family members with aneurysms. Turns out, these relatives had a 2–3 times higher chance of having a bulging blood vessel in the brain than the general population. It seems like family

history not only increases the chances of having multiple aneurysms but also raises the risk of them bursting and having worse outcomes. About 20% of patients with aneurysms had a close family member with the same issue, and if a sibling had an aneurysm, the risk was eight times higher than usual. So, genes might be playing a role in making aneurysms more likely in the family.

Diagnosis

Physicians use CT scans or MRIs to check for aneurysms. If they find one, treatments can range from surgery to less invasive methods to prevent it from bursting. Regular check-ups are crucial, especially if they are at risk; they can identify and manage it early. If aneurysms run in the family, it is wise to discuss it with a doctor. They can assess risk and recommend ways to prevent it or keep it from getting worse. The key is staying vigilant and acting when necessary.

Prevention

Taking care of the heart involves eating a balanced diet with lots of fruits and veggies and avoiding fatty foods. Staying active helps keep the weight in check and ensures the blood flows well. It is essential to quit smoking because it is a significant risk of getting an aneurysm. Also, do not go overboard with alcohol, as too much can raise the blood pressure.

Checking blood pressure is critical in managing high blood pressure, a considerable risk for aneurysms. If the family has a history of aneurysms, talking to a Genetic Counselor can help figure out how to prevent them. Sometimes, the physician suggests genetic screening to see if any specific genes make aneurysms more likely. Taking care of the mind is essential, too. Practices like mindfulness and meditation can help manage stress. Regular

check-ups are like a safety net—they catch early signs of aneurysms. Keeping the cholesterol in check through medication or lifestyle changes is crucial for the blood vessels. Always keep the communication lines open with the healthcare team to make sure we are on the right track. Preventing aneurysms is like a team effort, considering lifestyle and, in some cases, genes. Maintaining health with regular check-ups, timely actions, and a proactive approach is the key to a comprehensive strategy for preventing aneurysms.

Treatment Options:

Treating an aneurysm depends on how big it is, where it is, and the person's overall health. If it's small, doctors should keep an eye on it regularly. But if it's big, they might need surgery or a procedure such as clipping the aneurysm or placing a stent to divert blood flow away from it. It's important to talk to a doctor for advice that fits the specific situation.



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Continued from Page 01

Living the Kingdom: Embracing God's Reign in the Present and Future

Their interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith (traditions of Muhammad and early Muslim communities) are different, as are their values and religious practices. We often fail to understand that "no two Muslims are the same" (Wilfred Cantwell Smith). So, to know the religions of others, it is not enough to study their religious scriptures, religious beliefs, and practices. We need to know others individually and interpret the Gospel in a language that is palatable to them. It demands making healthy friendships with our non-Christian neighbors and colleagues.

In a religiously pluralistic society, witnessing our faith to non-Christians is essential. To do it, we should know what we believe and the faith and practice of others. It is when we encounter religious others that we get a better grasp of their as well as our own beliefs and practices. However, we should not limit our engagement with religious others only to dialogue and preaching. We also have a responsibility to build healthy and thriving communities and neighborhoods. We, as Christians, cannot do it alone. We need to work closely with religious others, especially to fight climate change, defeat terrorism, challenge racism, and uphold the rights of

women and minorities. Working with non-profit organizations is also important in this regard. Orthopraxy, therefore, is an essential aspect of witnessing our faith in a religiously pluralistic world. Beyond that, it is also important to realize that human beings are driven more effectively than intellectually. Pathic dimensions of our being – our fears, anxieties, hopes, etc. – are real.

So, engaging religious others at an affective level is much more powerful than engaging them at intellectual and practical levels. Can we feel the fears, anxieties, and hopes of religious others living in our communities and neighborhoods? Can we make ourselves available to them when they need someone to share their joys, sorrows, hopes and fears? Can we pray to God to fill us with compassion so that the pain and suffering of others can move us? In short, in a religiously pluralistic world, Christian witness should not end with preaching and dialogue (orthodoxic engagement). We should also learn how to build friendships and sustain healthy relationships with others, religious and non-religious people so that we can engage with them at orthopraxis and orthopathic levels.



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YWAM founder Loren Cunningham passes away



Loren Cunningham, the founder of Youth With a Mission, known as YWAM, has passed away from cancer. He was 88. He died at his home in Hawaii in the early hours of Friday morning, the ministry announced in a statement on its Facebook page. His death comes months after his wife, Darlene, revealed that he had been diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. At that time, the family said their focus was on his quality of life in the time remaining rather than pursuing medical treatments that might diminish this. Cunningham was born in 1935 in California and received the calling to ministry when he was 13. He founded YWAM in 1960 and would become one of the world's most prominent Christian youth organisations, encouraging and inspiring countless young people to get involved in missions and training them for the field. His passion for youth mission was awakened when he experienced a remarkable vision in 1956 of waves of young people crashing into all the earth's continents. In addition to overseeing YWAM and its various offshoots, he was also an author, writing Christian books about faith, missions and ministry, including *Is That Really You, God?*, *Making Jesus Lord*, *Daring to Live on the Edge*, *Why Not Women?*, *The Book that Transforms Nations: The Power of the Bible to Change Any Country*, and *We Can End Bible Poverty Now*.

World News

Vatican allows transgender baptism



LGBTQ rights campaigners welcomed a Vatican statement that transgender people can be baptised as a step towards a more inclusive Catholic Church but denounced caveats that provide cover to those who object. In a document published on Wednesday (Nov 8), the powerful Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, one of the leading departments that manage the affairs of the Holy See, said transgender believers can be baptised if it would not cause scandal or confusion. The document, written in response to questions from a Brazilian bishop and approved by Pope Francis, also raised no objections to baptism for the children of same-sex couples, either adopted or born through surrogacy. But by putting it in black and white, the Vatican appears to be insisting on the importance of the vision promoted by the pope since he took office in 2013, that the Church should be "open to all". Just weeks after

taking office, he famously said that if someone was gay, searching for God's guidance and had goodwill, then "who am I to judge him?". But many conservatives object to what they see as an "LGBTQ lobby" in the Church, which they accuse of seeking to change core doctrine.

Francis has made clear he believes homosexuality is a sin, while official Church doctrine states same-sex acts are "intrinsically disordered". The statement came just days after the closing of the general assembly of the Synod, a nearly four-week discussion among bishops and laity on the future of the worldwide Catholic Church. The meeting highlighted significant geographic and cultural differences on critical issues. But its conclusions avoided taking a firm position in many areas, including the blessing of homosexual couples, to which conservatives are vehemently opposed.

The Israeli government approved a four-day pause

The Israeli government approved a four-day pause on Thursday, November 23, for their military campaign against Hamas based on the hostage release agreement. Qatar reportedly brokered the deal between Hamas and Israel, which is to release dozens of hostages in exchange for several days of cease-fire on the part of Israel. In the daring and vicious raid conducted by Hamas on October 7, they captured roughly 240 people. Palestinian militants killed around 1400 Israeli citizens, which sparked a worldwide outrage. The reported deal ensures the release of 50 hostages for 150 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. Amidst hopes for the war to be over with the agreement, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu mentioned that his country's war with Hamas is not over. Israel is said to be resuming its war effort to kill Hamas after the cease-fire elapses. The release of hostages will begin at 7 am EST on Friday, November 2023. according to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz. No soldiers are expected to be among the women released.

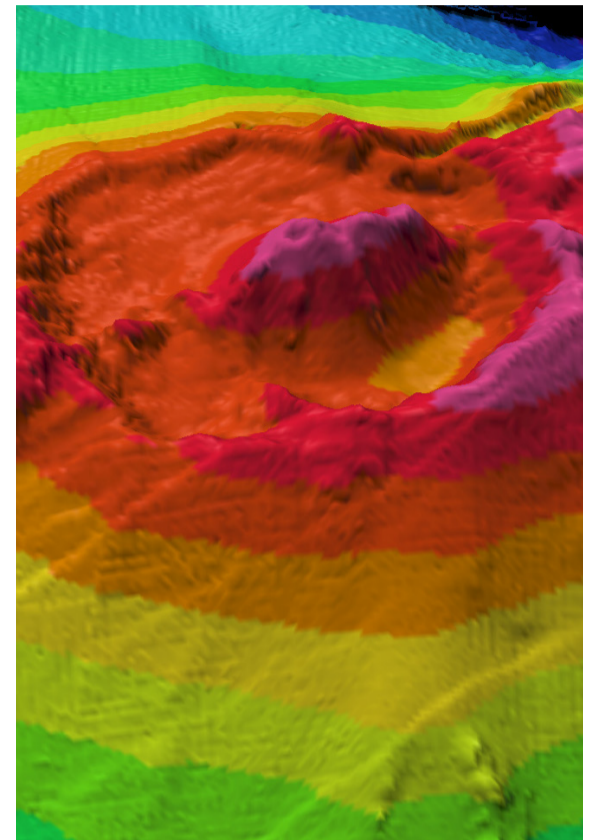
Israel and Hamas have reached a deal to exchange 50 of the hostages



The agreement should also see 150 Palestinians held in Israeli jails released and a significant increase in humanitarian aid allowed into Gaza. Mediator Qatar has said the pause will start at 07:00 local time (05:00 GMT) on Friday and the first group of 13 hostages will be released at 16:00. The US president has said the deal will end the hostages' "unspeakable ordeal" and "alleviate

the suffering of innocent Palestinian families". The Israeli government has vowed to complete its war to eliminate Hamas and return the rest of the more than 200 hostages who Hamas gunmen kidnapped during a cross-border attack on southern Israel on 7 October in which 1,200 people were killed.

World News



New Island appears 1km off Japan after an undersea volcano

An undersea volcano erupted off Japan three weeks ago, providing a rare view of the birth of a tiny new island, but experts say it may not last very long. The unnamed undersea volcano, located about 1km off the southern coast of Iwo Jima, which Japan calls Ioto, started its latest series of eruptions on Oct 21. Within 10 days, volcanic ash and rocks piled up on the shallow seabed, its tip rising above the sea surface. By early November, it became a new island about 100m in diameter and as high as 20m above the sea, according to Yuji Usui, an analyst in the Japan Meteorological Agency's volcanic division. Volcanic activity has increased near Iwo Jima, and similar underwater eruptions have occurred in recent years, but the formation of a new island is a significant development, Usui said. Usui said that volcanic activity at the site has since subsided, and the newly formed island has somewhat shrunk because waves easily wash away its "crumbly" formation. He said that experts are still analysing the development, including details of the deposits. The new island could survive longer if made of lava or something more durable than volcanic rocks, such as pumice. "We just have to see the development," he said. "But the island may not last very long."

CHINA'S HOSPITALS ARE OVERWHELMED BY SICK CHILDREN

China has reported a massive increase in respiratory illness and clusters of pneumonia in its northern parts, resulting in hospitals being crowded and overwhelmed. The Chinese health authorities have not detected any unusual or new pathogens in the data provided to the World Health Organization (WHO) on Thursday. The WHO asked China for more information on Wednesday, and as per the rule, China responded within 24 hours. The provided data suggests the increase is linked to lifting COVID-19 restrictions and due to the circulation of pathogens like mycoplasma pneumoniae, which affects younger children. It is also known as "walking pneumonia" because it rarely requires hospitalization. This pneumonia tends to spread in settings such as schools, dormitories, and military barracks, and its symptoms include cough, sore throat, fever, and headache. While most people have mild or no symptoms, a small subset may develop severe pneumonia. Authorities also informed that influenza, Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), and adenovirus have been in circulation since October.

Sam Altman is reinstated at OpenAI



Sam Altman was reinstated as OpenAI's chief executive late Tuesday, 21 Nov 2023, reversing his ouster by OpenAI's board last week. It was reported that the company's board of directors will be overhauled, resulting in the expulsion of several members who have opposed Altman. Greg Brockman, the president of the company who had resigned in solidarity, will also return to OpenAI, the maker of the ChatGPT chatbot and one of the world's high-profile artificial intelligence companies. The new board of directors will include Bret Taylor, the former co-chief executive of Salesforce; Lawrence Summers, the former Treasury secretary; and Adam D'Angelo, the current board member and chief executive of the site Quora. D'Angelo was leading the negotiations, and based on the information relayed to the public, Mr. Taylor will act as board chairman. Microsoft, who had hired Altman earlier, supported the move. OpenAI mentioned that the new board is an "initial" board, which indicates a possibility for expansion.