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POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW?



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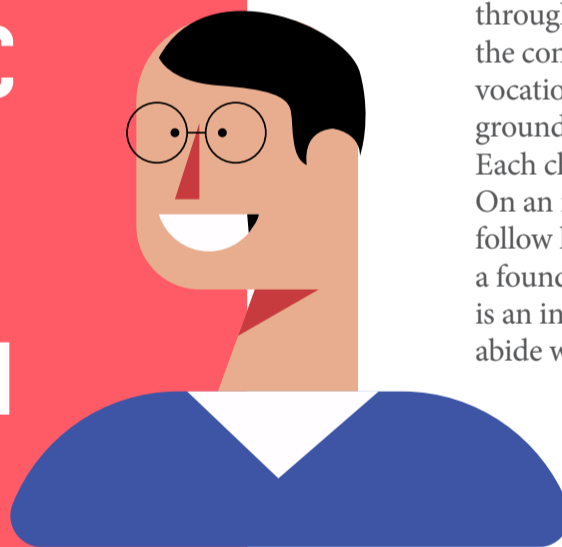
# ILLUMINER

ISSUE 42

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**DISCOVERING AND LIVING ONE'S SPECIFIC CALLING: GOD'S WILL AND VOCATION**



The most frequent question I was asked when I was young was, "What do you want to become when you grow up"? My answers differed based on changing seasons and times. However, as I grew older, it became evident that to reach our God-ordained destiny, it was inevitable to discover God's will and purpose for our lives.

Theology of work is an important theme that runs throughout the scripture. However, compared to the concept of work, job, career, etc., the 'doctrine of vocation' and 'vocational calling' stands on higher ground. The Latin word 'vocation' denotes 'calling'. Each child of God has a specific and unique calling. On an interpersonal level, we are called to 'Come and follow him' (Matthew 4), which is an invitation to build a foundation; 'Come and be with him' (Mark 3), which is an invitation to intimacy with him; and 'Come and abide with him' (John 15) which is a call to obedience.

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**"Wherever we are, in the workplace or the worship place, we are supposed to reflect the image of Christ. Our words should be honest; our work should be faithful. We should strive to receive the approval of Christ. Irrespective of our vocation, we must be dedicated, faithful, obedient and committed to the job without compromising our faith."**



**Pr Tony Thomas**  
Chitwan, Nepal,

Pastor Tony hails from Thrissur, Kerala. He earned an Electrical and Electronic Degree from Karunya University and an M.Th. from SAIACS. He has been a missionary in Nepal with the Arpan Ministry since 2014. He is married to Angela, and they are blessed with three children Luke, Mark and Karuna.

Dependence on stars for direction is not unusual in the ancient world. Thousands of centuries ago, voyagers used the position of the stars as a navigation tool to arrive at their destination. History indicates that in about 3000 BCE, the Polynesians observed the position of stars as they sailed from one Island to the other across the vast uncertain sea root of the Pacific Ocean, where there were no other signs to mark their global position and the direction towards their destination. Star was a sign of hope that would help them reach their destination and save their lives from perishing in the Ocean.

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**THE STAR OF HOPE**



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Our Advisors

**C.V.MATHEW**  
Chief Editor  
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Weekly

**T.M.MATHEW**  
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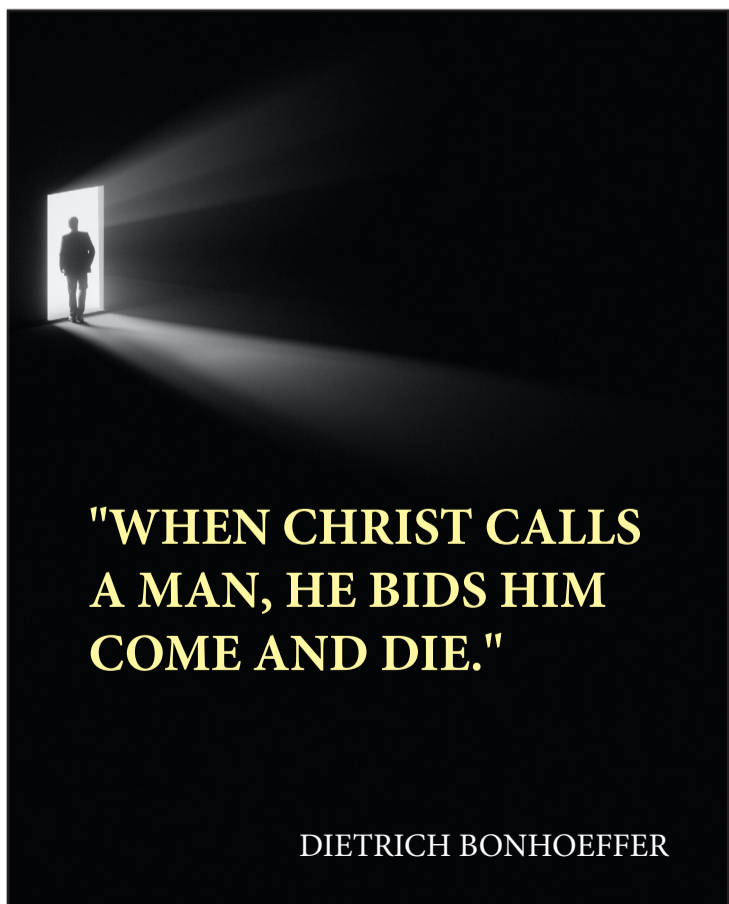
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Grace George, Pr. Jeswine James Baby, Persis Stephen, Priya Mathew, Pr Reji Thomas, Pr Tony Thomas

**Theme for January 2024:**  
**Attitude towards social evils;**  
**Commitment towards social justice**  
(Amos 5:21-24; Mt. 5:13-16; 25:31-46;  
James 2:14-26).

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FROM THE  
**editor**

**RECLAIMING THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST THROUGH VOCATION**

**T**he term 'vocation' is derived from the Latin term vocationem, which literally means "a being called." Traditionally, the term was applied for the prophetic office in the Judeo-Christian traditions, and eventually, it has come to be used for those who practice a particular profession. Most people worldwide associate vocation with one's status and identity. While the standard titles: 'occupation', 'work' or 'job', do not entail any intrinsic value or significance, the term 'vocation' signifies a more specific activity one deliberately chooses and prepares for. The primary motive for choosing a vocation is not the monetary benefit or status but a strong inclination towards it, notwithstanding its demands and cost.

However, the meaning and significance of the concept of 'vocation' are facing a paradigm shift in the current scenario of rapid changes caused by unprecedented global movement and technological revolution in almost every field. Moreover, the world is on the verge of witnessing AI replacing humans with most of the 'jobs.' Numerous studies evince that 'vocation' as such no longer exists, nor is it any more a starting point. Instead, it is a destination one reaches through a constant accumulation of experience, which later acquires some value or meaning for the individual. Today, vocation is a construct of interest, knowledge, and experiences a person will gather through regular practice. Instead of discovering the unique "calling," people invent themselves, which is yet another postmodern relative concept.

Christian perspective on 'vocation' is shaped by the Scripture, history, and human experience, which are closely interlinked. The Scripture presents God as the ground of all that exists through His creative activity. It also asserts that God's plan is unfolded through history. Human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, are endowed with an opportunity to participate in the fulfilment of God's plan. Therefore, every human who comes into the world,

"Those who follow Christ are responsible for reclaiming the Lordship of Christ in the public arena on various fronts. One of the primary ways of achieving this is by implementing it at intellectual and pragmatic levels through everyone's vocation."

regardless of their varying abilities, gifts and talents, has a significant role to play in the will of God. All those who engage in any activity that fulfils God's will in stewardship and sustenance of His created world find fulfilment in all they do.

Any vocation, therefore, perceived through the lens of God's plan is valuable and significant. In Bishop Leslie Newbegin's perspective, the gospel is a "public truth" rather than a private affair. Gospel, as the 'public truth', signifies that the Lordship of Christ pervades all facets of human life. One's commitment and devotion to Christ are reflected in one's daily practice with the full understanding of nurturing a just and healthy society. The 'secular' post-modern understanding of vocation that excludes the divine is driven by other selfish motives that benefit only a fragment of society. The isolation of the Church and its affairs from the public arena is defeating God's purposes and plan. Newbegin's observation decades ago, "If God is driven out, the gods come trooping in," has become a tangible reality today. Those who follow Christ are responsible for reclaiming the Lordship of Christ in the public arena on various fronts. One of the primary ways of achieving this is by implementing it at intellectual and pragmatic levels through everyone's vocation.



## Aligning Vocation with Divine Purpose: A Call and Responsibility

**“ WE LIVE IN A SOCIETY THAT OFTEN MEASURES CAREER SUCCESS BY WEALTH, FAME, AND INFLUENCE, NEGLECTING THE CREATOR WHO CREATED THIS WORLD FOR HIS GLORY. THE RECOURSE IS TO POSITION OUR CREATOR AT THE CORE OF OUR EXISTENCE AND FAITHFULLY FULFIL THE RESPONSIBILITIES BESTOWED UPON US.”**



**Pr Reji Thomas**  
Kottayam, Kerala

Pr. Reji Thomas teaches the History of Christianity at the IPC Theological Seminary Kottayam, Kerala. He also serves as the Dean of Academics and resides with his family in Kottayam.

**L**ife and work are divine gifts from God. These delightful and precious gifts imbue us with a profound sense of accountability and responsibility towards our Creator. How people live and conduct themselves must harmonize with the purpose for which God created this world. An array of contributing factors influences the pursuit of a vocation, and embracing a specific vocation entails a multifaceted process. Furthermore, the sustainability of one's commitment to that vocation is contingent upon various aspects. This journey, though complex, is undeniably worthwhile. To discern our calling precisely and faithfully fulfilling it requires a robust perspective on God's design for our lives. Developing the proper outlook draws our attention to the biblical account of creation, a pivotal historical event that marks the beginning of everything. Drawing principles from the creation account, we find guidance on navigating this intricate but rewarding path toward fulfilling our divine calling.

First and foremost, acknowledging God's sovereignty is paramount, as it unequivocally underscores His supreme authority over every facet of existence. As the fountainhead of life, God firmly establishes His supreme dominion over all (Gen 1 & 2). This prodigious cognisance should permeate our thoughts and guide our actions. The entrusted privileges and responsibilities we enjoy are divine gifts from God, and any accomplishments or successes we achieve reflect His favor towards us. Recognizing that God is the ultimate owner of our endeavours, businesses, and possessions is imperative. Genuine spirituality encompasses embracing the lordship of our Creator and wholeheartedly yielding to His will.

Secondly, it is essential to acknowledge that everything created by God is inherently good. The recurrent declaration, "God saw that it was good," following each act of creation accentuates the notion that God took immense pleasure in His creative work (Gen 1:4,10, 12). He held a deep appreciation for His creation, recognizing its potential to enhance the beauty and value of the universe, thereby making it a more hospitable and delightful place. There was a complete absence of hierarchies in importance or significance; every aspect of creation held equal importance and meaning. Following this, humans were entrusted with the substantial responsibility to care for the entirety of creation (Gen 2: 15). The expectation is to be faithful stewards of the earth. It is vital to accept that no vocation should be regarded as inferior or less significant, for by diligently fulfilling our responsibilities, we actively contribute to the well-being of humanity and, in doing so, enhance the goodness of the world.

Thirdly, it is essential that our foremost allegiance lies with our Creator, manifested through unwavering obedience to God (Gen 2: 17). The principles and moral compass of our vocation should be firmly rooted in His divine wisdom and teachings. It is all too easy to deviate from the standards and directives set by God, driven by self-serving desires and avarice. True spirituality requires wholehearted compliance with God's will and a willingness to accept His blessings by His divine plan.

We live in a society that often measures career success by wealth, fame, and influence, neglecting the Creator who created this world for His glory. The recourse is to position our Creator at the core of our existence and faithfully fulfill the responsibilities bestowed upon us.



## DISCERNING THE DISTINCTIVE CALL OF GOD

"The way to discern God's distinctive call is this: foster a progressively deeper relationship with Him through intentional acts of submission, prayer, meditation, and heightened awareness of our gifts and opportunities, all guided by the Holy Spirit."

**T**he call of God is a key concept in the Bible, and it varies from a broad and universal calling to a more precise and individual calling. The former is much more apparent as the Scriptures paint a clear picture of God's call that applies to all, beginning with salvation (Romans 8:29-30), and extending to holiness (1 Peter 1:15-16), love (Matthew 22:37-39), evangelism (Matthew 28:18-20) and so on. The latter, however, requires spiritual introspection, deep devotion, and discernment.

Numerous biblical examples illustrate individuals receiving a specific calling tailored to their role in God's divine plan. Abraham was called to be the father of nations (Genesis 12:1-4), Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Exodus 3:1-10), David to be the king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:2-13), Esther to save her people from genocide (Esther 4:14), Mary to bring the Saviour into the world (Luke 1:26-38). Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15, Romans 11:13, 15:16).

Similarly, every believer in Christ is under a distinct and individual divine call (Ephesians 2:10). The passage in Ephesians 4:11-12 underscores this, highlighting diverse roles within the body of Christ for the benefit of the Kingdom. Moreover, our talents are crucial clues to our specific calling, intricately connected to God's purpose. In the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30), Christ urges and expects us to invest and multiply these talents to fulfil our unique calling. Our talents are not random; God purposefully grants them to equip us for our specific calling.

However, the awareness of God's call without clarity on its specifics can be frustrating, as shared by many in the church today. Practical steps like the following can guide believers in

understanding God's will and discerning their specific calling:

- 1. SUBMIT YOURSELF:** In examining the examples of individuals in the Scriptures receiving a specific call from God, common factors of humility and trust emerge. These individuals exhibited a profound willingness to empty themselves and wholeheartedly surrender to God, placing their complete trust in His wisdom and divine plan above their own. For instance, Isaiah's call coincided with his complete surrender and repentance (Isaiah 6:1-8, Proverbs 3:5-6)
- 2. PRAY FERVENTLY:** To figure out God's specific call, make prayer a habit involving both speaking and listening. Share our hearts, express our hopes, and then have a quiet time. Let God speak to our soul in that stillness. Paul and Barnabas received the call for a specific mission as they engaged in prayer and fasting. (Acts 13:2-3)
- 3. MEDITATE THE WORD:** Dive into the Scriptures regularly, drawing inspiration from those who discerned and obeyed God's call. Pay special attention to passages that resonate with us, as those texts are often evidence of the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Psalm 119:105, 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- 4. IDENTIFY YOUR GIFTS:** God often calls individuals to serve in areas where their unique gifts align. As mentioned above, our talents provide clues to our calling. Therefore, reflect and identify our talents and skills and connect them to our unique calling by relying on the Holy Spirit (Exodus 31:1-6, 1 Peter 4:10-11)
- 5. PERCEIVE OPPORTUNITIES:** Be sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit,

discerning openings and closures in life. Circumstances subtly hint at God's guidance. The Holy Spirit guides and counsels but does not dictate; it's our responsibility to seize revealed opportunities. (Acts 16:6-7, 8:26-39, John 14:16-17)

Patience is crucial throughout this process, cultivating a profound closeness with God, renewing the mind, and ultimately knowing His will and specific calling.

Therefore, the way to discern God's distinctive call is this: foster a progressively deeper relationship with Him through intentional acts of submission, prayer, meditation, and heightened awareness of our gifts and opportunities, all guided by the Holy Spirit. As aptly expressed by an unknown source, "Your calling is not defined by what you do but by who you are in Christ".



**Pr. Jeswine James Baby**  
Bristol, UK

Pr. Jeswin is the associate pastor of Mount Church Bristol. He also leads a non-profit organisation called Christian Action for India (CAFI). He has earned BA and MA in Theology. He is married to Fiby Thomas and lives in Weston-super-Mar



## YOUR WALK AND YOUR WORK- A CHRISTIAN'S VIEW

"In committing to the Lord, we trust His ability and interest to accomplish what is best for our lives. What Do I Understand? Having trusted in the Lord and committed ourselves to His will, we must acknowledge His will and mould our minds and behaviour to understand His plan."



**Persis Stephen**  
Cochin, India

A former lecturer of Bioinformatics at Union Christian College, Aluva. Presently associated with St. Mary's Educational Academy. A mother of two wonderful girls.

**A** Christian's faith influences all aspects of our daily life, including our career or professional life. The work-life we have chosen and how we go about it must go alongside our walk with God. The World works on instant gratification and a sense of entitlement. Many Christians tend to forget to look to God and The Word of God as our guiding light.

The Bible gives numerous examples of direction and goal setting that help us live faithful lives. Living a God-planned life requires much thought. The wild ecstasy that many associate with spirituality does not produce faithful living. Instead, a commitment to God that results from understanding His Word creates the foundation and motivation for a God-honouring life. We must scrutinise our presumptions about God and about ourselves. Without them, the whole idea of God's will for our lives is ridiculous. Numerous Scripture passages assure us of God's concern for every facet of our lives, from the momentous to the trivial. For instance, He numbers our hairs (Matt. 10:30) and records our tears (Ps. 56:8) as well as our movements, thoughts, and life patterns (Ps. 139:2-6). This sparks joy in our hearts that God knows us on a personal level, and He has a plan for our lives. Living a God-intended life is thrilling because He has a meaningful plan for our lives and communicates with us so that we can know His plan. To better understand and follow God's direction, let's ask ourselves a few questions: Am I saved? It would be meaningless to ask God for leadership while still rebelling against His will concerning salvation.

A saved person knows that his relationship with God is correct and may confidently claim God's promises for guidance. "Who then, are those who fear the Lord? He will instruct them in the ways they should choose" (Ps. 25: 12) Am I obedient to God's word? The attitude toward God and His Word is paramount, and our priorities reveal these attitudes. Indeed, the Bible does not contain a specific answer to each of the questions we may face, but we are mistaken if we use that truth as an excuse to neglect the Scripture. Am I Delighting in the Lord? Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart (Ps. 37:4). We are instructed to find our happiness in God. He will then assume the responsibility of granting all we need for life and godliness.

Have I Committed Myself to Do God's Will? Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He will do it (Ps. 37:5). In committing to the Lord, we trust His ability and interest to accomplish what is best for our lives. What Do I Understand? Having trusted in the Lord and committed ourselves to His will, we must acknowledge His will and mold our minds and behaviour to understand His plan. Following this will give us a clear picture of what God has in store for us and help us choose a vocation worthy of our calling. In whatever vocation we choose, always remember that we are ambassadors for Christ wherever we are. Constantly reflecting on our walk and work will make us worthy to stand before the throne of grace on the day of judgment.



# Unity in Diversity

"God places each of us in various ministries to serve Him in the world. When everyone works together, amazing things will be accomplished for God's kingdom!"

**A**nts, bees, wasps, and termites are social insects. Let's look at the termites, commonly known as white ants. Termites or white ants are insects that congregate to form a powerful colony for themselves; they are the ones that damage our properties, such as wooden furniture. They are such strong insects that if we neglect the termite establishing its own structure of colonies in there, the entire wooden furniture will be damaged and useless.

The colony of these termites includes a king, queen, soldiers, and workers. The role of the king and queen is to produce offspring; soldiers are to protect the colony or nest from foreign invaders; and workers work together to create the colony or nest and care for one another. None of the king or queen, soldiers, or workers can survive without involving one of the castes. They all rely on one another for the proper management and survival of the colony or nest.

In the same manner, God has given each of us in the church different ministries, the five-fold ministries. The five-fold ministry is a vital aspect of what keeps the body of Christ functioning effectively. God has chosen for every member of the body of Christ a specific role to play that fulfils God's will and accomplishes his or her unique purpose in the world, which is important

for the church. "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:11, 12). In the eyes of God, we are all equal, and none of us is superior to the others. No man is a spectator. To work together for His Kingdom, we need each other just as the plant parts require all of the roots, leaves, and branches to operate correctly.

The enemy may attack us as we carry out our ministry together. Satan despises unity, whereas God blesses it. When people with different ministries gather together, God enables us to overcome Satan's attack, much as termite soldiers come together to fight their enemy. The call comes first, then the challenges, and the fulfilment. In the meantime, keep persevering and believing. God places each of us in various ministries to serve Him in the world. When everyone works together, amazing things will be accomplished for God's kingdom!



**Grace George**  
Nova Scotia, Canada

Grace George is an Agricultural Entomologist. She holds a B.Sc. (Agriculture) and an M.Sc., (Agricultural Entomology) from Annamalai University and Pondicherry University, respectively. She resides in Nova Scotia, Canada, with her husband, Adv. Clinton Kalleri Reston and daughter Hazel.



## POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW?

**A**lthough delivering a baby is typically a happy event, many postpartum women develop depressive symptoms and disorders. Patients may manifest postpartum blues consisting of mild depressive symptoms that are generally self-limited or more severe syndromes of minor or major depression. Untreated postpartum depression can result in adverse consequences for the mother and infant.

**DURATION AND ONSET:** The first 12 months after birth is usually called the postpartum period. Among patients with postpartum depression, the onset occurs before or during pregnancy in approximately 50 per cent.

**RISK FACTORS:** The primary risk factors are previous depression, antenatal depression, and high levels of postnatal stress. In one study, it was found that postpartum major depression was five times more likely in women who were depressed during pregnancy compared with women who were not. The secondary risk factors are stressful life events (e.g., marital conflict, emigration, or the COVID-19 pandemic) during pregnancy or after delivery, poor social and financial support in the puerperium, etc. Young age, single marital status, multiparity, partner violence/abuse, unintended pregnancy, fear of childbirth, childcare stress, and season of delivery (e.g., postpartum depression may increase during the time of year when daylight is diminished) are a few instances.

**CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS:** The depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, change in appetite or weight, sleep disturbance, fatigue or loss of energy, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, suicidal ideation and behaviour and neurocognitive dysfunction are the main symptoms. Other comorbidities included are eating disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, and substance use disorders.

**COURSE OF ILLNESS:** Untreated

postpartum depression may resolve spontaneously or with treatment or develop into a persistent (chronic) depressive disorder. Postpartum major depression lasts at least one year in 30 to 50 per cent of patients. Patients who recover from an episode of postpartum depression are at risk for recurrences.

**ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES:** Postpartum depression impairs maternal functioning. They will have issues with breastfeeding, impaired bonding with infants, suicidal thoughts and even may cause infanticides. Infanticide during postpartum depression may be more likely to occur in women who are psychotic or were previously admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Mothers who kill their infants often try to kill themselves. One study found that among 80 postpartum women who committed suicide over 15 years, two killed their infant before killing themselves.

**WHEN TO SUSPECT THE DISORDER:** Postnatal depression may be present in women who manifest anxiety about the health of the infant, concern about their ability to care for the infant, despondency, lack of interest in the infant's activities, lack of response to support and reassurance, nonadherence to postnatal care, and substance use disorders.

**TREATMENT:** The baby blues usually fade independently within a few days to 1 to 2 weeks. For mild to moderate postpartum depression, psychotherapy is the initial treatment rather than other treatments. Antidepressants are a reasonable alternative if psychotherapy is not available, not successful, or is declined, or if the patient has previously responded to antidepressants. In addition, combination treatment with pharmacotherapy plus psychotherapy is helpful for some patients. Exercise, healthy lifestyle choices, social/peer support, parenting education, avoiding isolation and couples/family therapy

also help. Post-partum psychosis requires immediate treatment, usually in the hospital. Treatment may involve medicines and electroconvulsive Therapy.

### CONCLUSION

The already stressful, exhausting period following a baby's birth is more difficult when depression occurs. But remember, postpartum depression is never anyone's fault. It's a common medical condition that needs treatment. So, if you're having trouble coping with postpartum depression, talk with your healthcare provider. Ask your provider or a therapist about local support groups for new moms or women who have postpartum depression. The sooner you get help, the sooner you'll be fully equipped to cope with depression and enjoy your new baby.

*Resources: Uptodate.com and mayoclinic.org*



**Priya Mathew**  
Dallas, USA

Priya Mathew is a Family Nurse Practitioner and working in the Department of Endocrinology at a U.S. Government Hospital in Dallas. She has written Christian devotional songs in Malayalam. She is married to Wesley Mathew and resides in Dallas with their two children.

Continued from Page 01

COVER STORY

## Discovering and living one's specific calling: God's will and vocation

When it comes to vocation, God calls individuals both to church-related and non-church-related work. For example, Aaron and his sons were called to serve as priests for the Lord (Exodus 28:1). Simon and his brother Andrew were fishermen but were called to fish for people. (Mark 1). Barnabas and Saul were set apart for the work to which they were called (Acts 13). On the other hand, though Nehemiah was a prayer warrior, he continued to be the king's cupbearer. Daniel, being a prophet, continued to serve in the King's civil service at that time. The above two experiences are not lower or superior to one another. God honours both of these. Being spiritual does not mean living a secluded life. We are part of a society which needs Christ. We hold our testimony and mark our borders while being in society. Daniel marked his border, and God honored that.

A person chooses a vocation based on the available opportunities, their skills and their heart's passion. However, many people work in jobs they don't like simply because they are forced to limit themselves to the circumstances around them. "The heart of a man plans his way," says Solomon, "but the Lord establishes his steps"

(Proverbs 16:9). We are to plan in the present, but we can do so in the confidence that the Lord is acting in our lives and in our circumstances, calling us to His purpose.

Most of us would have asked this question when we felt the path ahead was unclear. "Lord, where do I fit? What's next for me?" "Lord, where do you want me to serve?" The answer to this question is that God is calling us to Himself, and the choice of vocation is wide open. Whether it is to serve God in ministry or business, God invites us to join him where he is at work. Life becomes truly liberating when our God-given gifts, abilities, and passion intersect with God's grand plan.

Thus, we ask the question, Is vocation my choosing or God's calling? As we come closer to God in prayer, He reveals his heart's desire to us. As we start hearing His voice, His guidance and affirmation of the call assist us to make the right decisions and move in the right direction. As we continue to live in that specific calling, we should remind ourselves that no matter what, We are called to be imitators of Christ. Wherever we are, in the workplace or the worship place,

we are supposed to reflect the image of Christ. Our words should be honest; our work should be faithful. We should strive to receive the approval of Christ. Irrespective of our vocation, we must be dedicated, faithful, obedient and committed to the job without compromising our faith.

"Wherever we are, in the workplace or the worship place, we are supposed to reflect the image of Christ. Our words should be honest; our work should be faithful. We should strive to receive the approval of Christ. Irrespective of our vocation, we must be dedicated, faithful, obedient and committed to the job without compromising our faith."

Continued from Page 01

## THE STAR OF HOPE

While the first evangelist, Matthew, depicted the very first advent story, he included the dramatic visit of the wise men from the East following the star that stood above the manger where baby Jesus was laid. According to the story, the wise men's resolution to visit the palace of King Herod, disregarding the direction of the star following their own imagination, proved to be a fatal mistake that led to the blood bath in the towns and villages of Palestine, which claimed the lives of numerous innocent children. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, entered history when darkness was hovering over nations because of political strife caused by power-hungry rulers and religious leaders who manipulated common people by exploiting them in the name of spiritual tradition and practices.

The commemoration of the Lord's advent this year encounters a similar life situation to the time of Jesus at the geographical location where it was initially staged more than two thousand years ago. Every time the birth of Christ is celebrated, it makes a solemn decree to the world that the king of kings and Lord of Lords appeared on the face



of the earth as a fragile, helpless babe, humble and vulnerable. Yet, He conquered people's hearts not through bloodshed, dominance and violence but through unconditional love. Those who notice the glimmering of that star of hope are set on a journey to a glorious destiny. Still, many disillusioned by their own imagination and intellect continue to land in palaces of Herods as the wise men from the East did, and invite disaster and violence. This Christmas, when we see the streets, trees and buildings decorated with colour lights and twinkling stars, it may direct our attention to the true star of Hope who emanates the ray of hope into a broken and dark world.

"BUT YOU ARE A CHOSEN PEOPLE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, GOD'S SPECIAL POSSESSION, THAT YOU MAY DECLARE THE PRAISES OF HIM WHO CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS WONDERFUL LIGHT.."

-EPHESIANS 5:20





## Pope Francis permits blessing of same sex couples



The Vatican released a document from the Pope on Monday morning allowing Catholic leaders bless gay couples. The document explicates on a previous decision by Pope Francis earlier this year. The new policy distinguishes between a blessing and a wedding, insisting that Biblical marriage is only between a man and a woman. The document described the blessing as “a seed of the Holy Spirit that must be nurtured” and that homosexual couples should not be deprived of “mercy and closeness to God.” The declaration also stipulates that such blessings may not be given at civil unions or in any context resembling a wedding to “avoid any form of confusion or scandal.” This policy was received with harsh criticism from some Catholics with some saying that the church is “crumbling” and some others deeming the declaration as “the most unfortunate public announcement in decades”.

## World News

WHEN GOD CALLS YOU TO SOMETHING, HE IS NOT ALWAYS CALLING YOU TO SUCCEED, HE'S CALLING YOU TO OBEY! THE SUCCESS OF THE CALLING IS UP TO HIM; THE OBEDIENCE IS UP TO YOU.

DAVID WILKERSON

Happy Holidays



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## UK Home secretary revamps Rwanda asylum plan

## World News



British Home Secretary James Cleverly signed a new treaty with Rwanda on Tuesday to overcome a court decision to block the government's controversial policy of sending asylum seekers to the East African country. The Rwanda plan is at the centre of the government's strategy to cut migration and is closely watched by other countries considering similar policies. But last month, the United Kingdom's Supreme Court ruled that such

a move would violate international human rights laws enshrined in domestic legislation. Since that ruling, Britain has been seeking to renegotiate its agreement with Rwanda to include a binding treaty that it would not expel asylum seekers sent there by Britain - one of the court's primary concerns. On Tuesday morning, Cleverly arrived in Rwanda's capital, Kigali, and met with the country's foreign minister, Vincent Biruta, to sign the agreement.

He said there was now no "credible" reason to block the deportation flights because the treaty addressed all the issues raised by the Supreme Court, and no extra money had been given to Rwanda to upgrade the deal from the existing memorandum of understanding. "I hope we can now move quickly," Cleverly told a press conference in Kigali. Under the plan, Britain intends to send thousands of asylum seekers who arrived on its shores without permission to Rwanda to deter migrants from crossing the Channel from Europe in small boats. In return, Rwanda has received an initial payment of 140 million pounds (\$180 million) with the promise of more money to fund the accommodation and care of any deported individuals. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is under intense pressure to cut net migration, which hit a record 745,000 last year, and end the flow of asylum seekers who pay people smugglers for their Channel crossings, often in overcrowded, unseaworthy boats. Britain's immigration minister, Robert Jenrick, said the government had to act because those arriving on small boats were effectively breaking into the country. The vast majority of those arriving in Britain came via legal routes, and the government also announced plans to cut those numbers, raising the minimum salary they must earn in a skilled job.

## Hong Kong votes in the "Patriots-only" election



Hong Kong's first "patriots only" district council elections saw a turnout of 27.5 per cent, the government said on Monday (Dec 11), a record-low number for a race that had shut out all opposition candidates. The city last held district council elections at the peak of huge, sometimes violent, democracy protests in 2019, recording a historic-high 71 per cent turnout that delivered a landslide victory for the democracy camp. But a clampdown on dissent - aided by a sweeping national security law imposed by Beijing - has included a drive by authorities to weed out anyone deemed politically disloyal from public office after the protests; Sunday's voting day stretched to midnight after a rare 90-minute extension was granted following

a failure in the digital system to confirm voters' eligibility. Despite the extra time, the government's official website was updated on Monday morning to show a final turnout of 27.54 per cent, just shy of 1.2 million out of 4.3 million registered electors having gone to the polls. Previously, the lowest turnout rate since the city's handover to China was 35.82 per cent, recorded in 1999. City leader John Lee had thanked the "more than 1 million" voters at around 1.45 am on Monday for coming out. After voting on Sunday, he said this year's election was "the last piece of the puzzle to implement the principle of patriots ruling Hong Kong". "From now on, the district councils would no longer be what they were in the past - which was a platform to destroy and reject the government's administration, to promote Hong Kong independence and to endanger national security,"

## EU draws up regulatory framework for Artificial Intelligence (AI)

European Union lawmakers struck a deal agreeing to one of the world's first major comprehensive artificial intelligence laws. The landmark legislation called the AI Act, sets up a regulatory framework to promote the development of AI while addressing the risks associated with the rapidly evolving technology. The legislation bans harmful AI practices "considered a clear threat to people's safety, livelihoods and rights." The law comes amid growing fears about the disruptive capabilities of artificial intelligence. In a news conference, Roberta Metsola, the president of the European Parliament, called the law "a balanced and human-centred approach" that will "no doubt be setting the global standard for years to come." The regulatory framework, which classifies AI uses by risk and increases regulation on higher risk levels, was first proposed in 2021. The riskiest uses for AI are banned. According to the law, those include systems that exploit specific vulnerable groups, biometric identification systems for law enforcement purposes and artificial intelligence that deploys manipulative "subliminal techniques." Limited risk systems, such as chatbots like OpenAI's ChatGPT or technology that generates images, audio, or video content, are subject to new transparency obligations under the law. But AI's disruption reaches far beyond the world of big tech. Educators have struggled with generative AI's ability to complete schoolwork assignments; artists and musicians have grappled with the potential for AI-fuelled imitation; and even the media industry has seen its controversies.

## North Korea tests Ballistic Missiles



North Korea tested an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) in July of this year which has the potential to travel more than 9000 miles and reach the United States. Recently, they conducted another test of a solid-fuel missile that flew more than 600 miles before falling into the ocean between the Korean Peninsula and Japan. The launch of such missiles is considered as a violation of United Nations' security resolutions, and was condemned by American, South Korean, and Japanese officials. American and South Korean officials warned Pyongyang that any nuclear attacks would lead to the end of regime of North Korea. Pyongyang criticized the arrival of the nuclear submarine USS Missouri in Busan, South Kora.

## U.S. homeless increase drastically



The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reported that the homeless population across the nation have increased drastically to 12 percent over the past year. According to the report released on Friday, the number of homeless people is at a record high since the government started its yearly survey in 2007. The surge of homeless population came primarily from those who became homeless for the first time in the past year. The homeless veterans increased by over 7 percent even with 38,000 homeless veterans being housed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The homeless population increased all across the country despite efforts to curb it.

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