

The Herald

· OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF SRI LANKA ·



“The true follower of Christ will not ask, “if I embrace this truth, what will it cost me?.” Rather he/she will say, “This is truth. God help me to walk in it, let come what may.”

— A. W. Tozer.

“THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE” - SEE INSIDE
ALSO INSIDE - “HYMNS FOR LIFE”

**THE WHOLE TRUTH
AND NOTHING BUT THE
TRUTH !****FOLLOW
THE
TRUTH**

In a world and time of so many conflicting truth claims – and even the claim that there is no absolute truth - and when many find it difficult to know what to believe it is good to give some thought into the whole truth and nothing but the truth ! So the focus on this issue of the Herald is on the theme “The Truth Must Be Told.” I hope you will find what is written insightful and meaningful

With the modern times being a market place of ideas sustained by an information explosion and widespread travel, one is exposed to all kinds of ways of thinking. Spiritual and religious ideas from other cultures now confront us on a daily basis. How can we know for sure that some religious authority is telling the truth? Is their word a genuine one or an empty claim?

Do we know the truth ? Is it important to know it ?

Before Christ was crucified, He had faced Pilate and told him, “You are right in saying I am a King. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” And then Pilate asked “What is truth?”. (St. John 18: 37-38)

Is it an innate desire in every man and woman to hunger for the truth? Or, should we go on in this life without bothering ourselves with it?

According to Jesus, it is possible for us to know the truth. He said, “if you hold to my teaching you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth....”

So the question will always be, is it really necessary for us to know the truth. Jesus also said, “the truth will set you free”! That’s how important the truth is. If we want to experience and enjoy true freedom, we have to know the truth. On the other hand, we can do whatever we like, be wherever we desire, have whatever we want, even plan whatever we dream, but in the absence of truth, we are not free !

Jesus also went on to clarify what or who the “truth” is. According to Him, “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” He is the truth. (St John 14:6). And because He is the truth, His Words are also the truth. “Your word is truth (St. John 17:7). He told Pilate, “I came into the world to testify to the truth.” The Psalmist in Psalm 119, said, “All your words are true..” (vs 160)

The power of truth is not just about the ability to discern right from wrong but it is about the transformative power that the truth holds.

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The truth, as revealed in the Scriptures has the power to change lives, to heal, to liberate and to bring about a profound understanding of God's love and purpose in our lives.

The power of the truth is not just a concept or a doctrine. It is reality that we can experience in our lives as we know Jesus the Way, the Truth and the Life and the power of His living and true Word.

This whole truth must be told in season and out of season, especially in our day, when truth in any form is at a minimum and what is good and true are gasping for breath everywhere ! And the so called "church" is no exception!

MEDITATION

By Tamara Rebeira.

ANCHORED IN TRUTH !

In a world filled with uncertainty and confusion, the pursuit of truth can sometimes feel like searching for a needle in a haystack. We are bombarded with conflicting messages and opinions, making it difficult to discern what is real and what is not. Yet, Jesus offers us a profound promise – if we know the truth, it will set us free.

The truth He speaks of is not just a set of facts, but Himself. He declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). To know the truth is to know Jesus, to understand His teachings, and to live according to His word. When we anchor our lives in the truth of Christ, we find freedom – freedom from the bondage of sin, freedom from fear.

During my transition from a 14-year-long employment stint at one place, it took me months to find a new job. I remember vividly struggling with feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. No matter how many applications I submitted or cover letters I meticulously wrote, it felt like I wasn't doing enough and wasn't gaining any ground. Each rejection email or lack of response chipped away at my confidence, making me question my skills and worth.

It was during this time of uncertainty that I remembered to rely on my faith. I spent time in prayer, seeking God's guidance and reassurance. I turned to Scripture, and found motivational passages that spoke directly to me. One passage that stood out repeatedly was Philippians 4:6-7, which reminded me to bring my anxieties to God and trust in His peace. This was easier said than done, but gradually I experienced a shift in my perspective.

I realised that my worth wasn't tied to my employment status or the number of job offers I received. My identity and value were rooted in being a child of God, fearfully and wonderfully made and in my dependence on Him. Ultimately, I did find a new job, one that was a perfect fit for my skills.

Looking back, I see how God used that difficult period to teach me valuable lessons about trust, patience and reliance on His truth. He reminded me that even in moments of doubt and fear, His plans for me are good, and His truth is a firm foundation on which I should remember to stand.

Living in the truth means more than just intellectual agreement, it involves a transformation and a commitment to align our lives with God's word. It calls us to live with integrity, where our actions reflect our beliefs. This can be challenging, to say the least! However, as followers of Christ, we are called to be light in the darkness, living out the truth. And this becomes a testimony to God's grace and power.

(Tamara is a Deaconess and the Secretary of the Dehiwela Local Consistory).

The truth will set you free

By-Dishan Joseph

31. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples. 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”- St. Johns Gospel

“The truth will set you free” is a common saying in academic circles that want to promote academic freedom and the power of learning. Many universities have this statement emblazoned on a sign near the entrance of a building. But “the truth will set you free” did not originate in academia; Jesus said it in John 8:32. In context, Jesus’ statement has nothing to do with classroom learning. In fact, John 8:32 speaks of a higher form of knowledge than is capable of being learned in a classroom. Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples’” (John 8:31). *True discipleship is more than intellectual assent; those who are really followers of Christ will “hold to” His Word.* That means they will not only accept His teachings as truth, but they will also obey His teachings. In a postmodern world that denies that truth can be known, the question is more important than ever to answer. *What is truth? Jesus says the truth will set you free; James refers to God’s word as the perfect law of liberty.*

Jesus had just finished a speech at the temple where He delineated differences between Himself and His listeners. “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins” (John 8:23–24). The result of Jesus’ message was that “even as he spoke, many believed in him” (verse 30). Then, in verse 31, Jesus begins to speak just to those who had believed. *Jesus is the Truth (John 14:6).* Knowing the Truth will set one at liberty—free from sin, free from condemnation, and free from death. A popular worldview is pluralism, which says that all truth claims are equally valid. Of course, this is impossible.

The Greek word for truth is *aletheia*, which refers to “divine revelation” and is related to a word that literally means “what can’t be hidden.” It conveys the thought that truth is always there, always open and available for all to see, with nothing being hidden or obscured. The Hebrew word for truth is *emeth*, which means “firmness,” “constancy” and “duration.” Such a definition implies an everlasting substance and something that can be relied upon.

Even though Rome gave them an exceptional amount of autonomy, they were keenly aware of the Roman presence around them in the form of soldiers, governors, and empirically appointed kings. When Jesus said the truth would set them free, however, He was not talking about political freedom. *The freedom Jesus offers is a spiritual freedom from the bondage of sin—that is, release from the lifestyle of habitual lawlessness. From a philosophical perspective, Truth is that which corresponds to reality. A foundational principle of philosophy is being able to discern between truth and error, or as Thomas Aquinas observed, “It is the task of the philosopher to make distinctions”*

Truth is not simply what is coherent or understandable. A group of people can get together and form a conspiracy based on a set of falsehoods where they all agree to tell the same false story, but it does not make their presentation true. We have seen this kind of truth manifest for 7 decades, before political elections! Truth is not simply what is believed. A lie believed is still a lie. Some will admit that absolute truth exists, but then claim such a stance is only valid in the area of

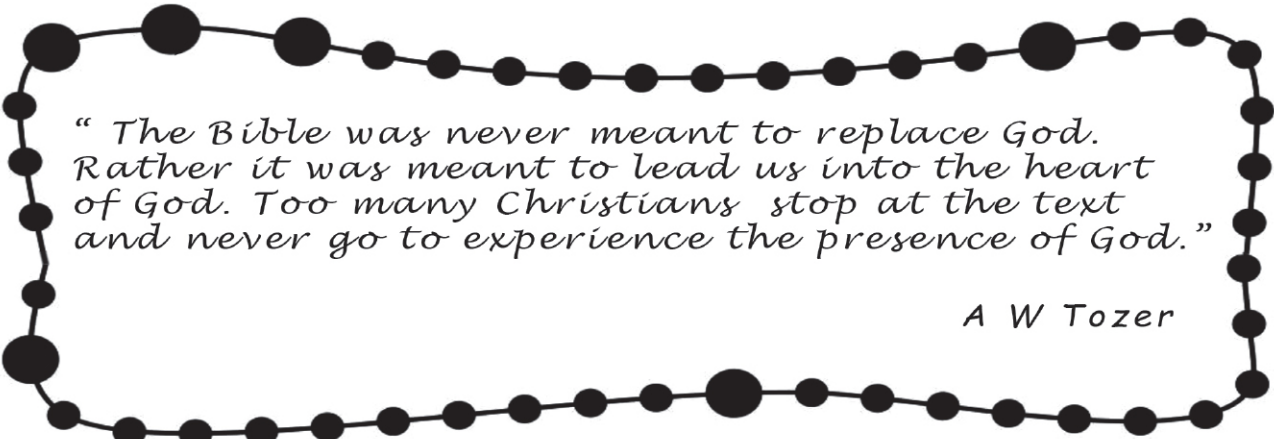
science and not in matters of faith and religion. Again, Jesus is the Truth. Science and history-can both prove his life and prudent teachings.

Eastern meditation's goal is to empty the mind. It is to center on oneself internally. You find the answers to the universe within yourself. Biblical meditation is quite the opposite. It is to meditate on specific objective truth in Scripture. It is to find truth and reality outside of oneself in God and his word.

I recollect an incident during a holiday visit in the mist covered salubrious hills. My classmates were talking about meat- pork to be precise. One said that the “upcountry” pork tasted better due to the fresh atmosphere. So we walked for about 45 minutes up a hill to eat this magical pork curry. The meat was succulent. On our way down that hill, I noticed a freezer truck heading up. This was a popular brand. Of course the pork was processed and from Colombo. So the majority opinion that it was from the “serene hills” was proven wrong. It was not the truth. I realized another truth that night-climbing up and down a hill gives you knee pain!!

We are all a work in progress awaiting the final step of our redemption, our glorification when Jesus comes again and we are resurrected. Meanwhile, we continue in that work of progress. I want to truly be a disciple of Jesus. It costs something to truly be a disciple of Jesus. It means that we have the joy of reading, studying, and meditating on God's word with the objective of obeying everything Jesus has commanded us to do in the power of the Holy Spirit. I am talking about Spirit-empowered obedience. This is freedom. May we follow the one truth.

(Dishan is a writer attached to the “Ceylon Daily News.” He is a member of the CRC Dehiwela.)



“ The Bible was never meant to replace God. Rather it was meant to lead us into the heart of God. Too many Christians stop at the text and never go to experience the presence of God.”

A W Tozer



The Truth That Makes You Free: Understanding John 8:31

Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples" (John 8:31, ESV).

Hey everyone! Today, let's dive into a powerful verse from the Bible that speaks directly to our hearts and lives as young Christians. John 8:31 is a verse that challenges us, encourages us, and shows us what it means to truly follow Jesus

What Does It Mean to Abide in Jesus' Word?

First, let's unpack what Jesus means when He says, "If you abide in my word." The word "abide" isn't something we use every day, so let's break it down. To abide means to remain, stay, or live in something. Jesus is telling us that if we want to be His true disciples, we need to live in His word. This means making His teachings and His truth a central part of our everyday lives.

Why Is This Important?

Living in Jesus' word is crucial for several reasons:

1. **Foundation of Truth:** In a world filled with so many voices and opinions, it can be hard to know what's true. Jesus' word gives us a solid foundation of truth. When we abide in His teachings, we have a reliable guide for making decisions and understanding the world around us.
2. **Strength and Guidance:** Life can be tough, and we all face challenges. By staying rooted in Jesus' word, we gain strength and guidance to navigate difficult times. His teachings provide comfort and direction, helping us to remain steadfast in our faith.
3. **Transformation:** Abiding in Jesus' word transforms us from the inside out. It shapes our character, molds our attitudes, and influences our actions. As we immerse ourselves in His teachings, we begin to reflect His love, grace, and truth more clearly.

How Can We Abide in Jesus' Word?

Here are some practical steps to help us live out John 8:31:

1. **Read the Bible Regularly:** Make a habit of reading the Bible every day. Start with the Gospels to understand Jesus' life and teachings. Use a devotional or Bible app to guide you if you're not sure where to start.
2. **Memorize Scripture:** Keeping God's word in our hearts helps us to recall His truths when we need them most. Pick a few key verses and commit them to memory. You'll be surprised at how often they come to mind throughout your day.
3. **Pray Daily:** Prayer is our lifeline to God. Talk to Him about what you're reading in the Bible, ask for understanding, and seek His guidance in applying His word to your life.

4. **Join a Bible Study or Youth Group:** Surround yourself with other believers who are also seeking to abide in Jesus' word. A community of faith provides support, encouragement, and accountability.
5. **Live It Out:** Finally, put Jesus' teachings into practice. Let His word influence your choices, your interactions with others, and your overall outlook on life. Show love, grace, and kindness, and stand up for what is right and true.

Conclusion

John 8:31 is a call to deeper discipleship. Jesus invites us to abide in His word, not just to read it, but to let it dwell in us richly. As young Christians, this means making His teachings the foundation of our lives. By doing so, we become His true disciples, grounded in His truth, strengthened by His presence, and transformed by His love.

Let's take up the challenge to live in His word every day. As we do, we'll discover the incredible journey of following Jesus and the abundant life He promises to those who truly abide in Him.

Remember: "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples." Let's live it out together!

Blessings & Best Regards,
Joshua Aldons.

Youth Page

Edited By: Joshua Aldons

Dig Deeper

There are so many motivational speakers in the world today who claim to the truth of the world. They all want you to follow them on Social Media and join their events. But rarely do they reach out to meet you where you are.

Jesus Christ extends His Word & teachings to you because he has a plan for you. You don't need to reach out far. He is just a prayer away! He is the Way, the Truth & the Life!

He is knocking at the door of your Heart, so Let Him into your life today!



Just For Laughs

What did the pastor say when he lost his sermon notes?

"Looks like I'll be preaching the truth straight from the heart today!"

Why do Christians make good detectives?

Because they always seek the truth!

How does a Christian scientist determine the truth?

By testing their faith!



Rest In Peace

One Sunday morning, the pastor noticed a boy staring up at the large plaque that hung in the foyer of the church. The plaque was covered with names, and small Sri Lankan flags were mounted on either side of it. The boy had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the pastor walked up, stood beside him and said quietly, "Good morning, son."

"Good morning, Pastor," replied the young man, still focused on the plaque. "Pastor, what is this?" he asked.

"Well, son, it's a memorial to all the men and women who have died in the service."

The boy's voice was barely audible when he finally managed to ask, "Which one, the 7:15 or 17:00 service?"

Children's Page

Edited By
Amanda Fraser

Hi boys and girls,

Have you ever played a game called Truth or Dare? In this game, you must choose between answering a question truthfully or doing a dare. You never know what kind of question or dare you will get so it can be hard to choose.

When we choose to follow Jesus it's also kinda like playing truth or dare, except we know the truth about Jesus being God's son and how He died to save us from sin and the dare is to live in a way that makes Jesus happy.

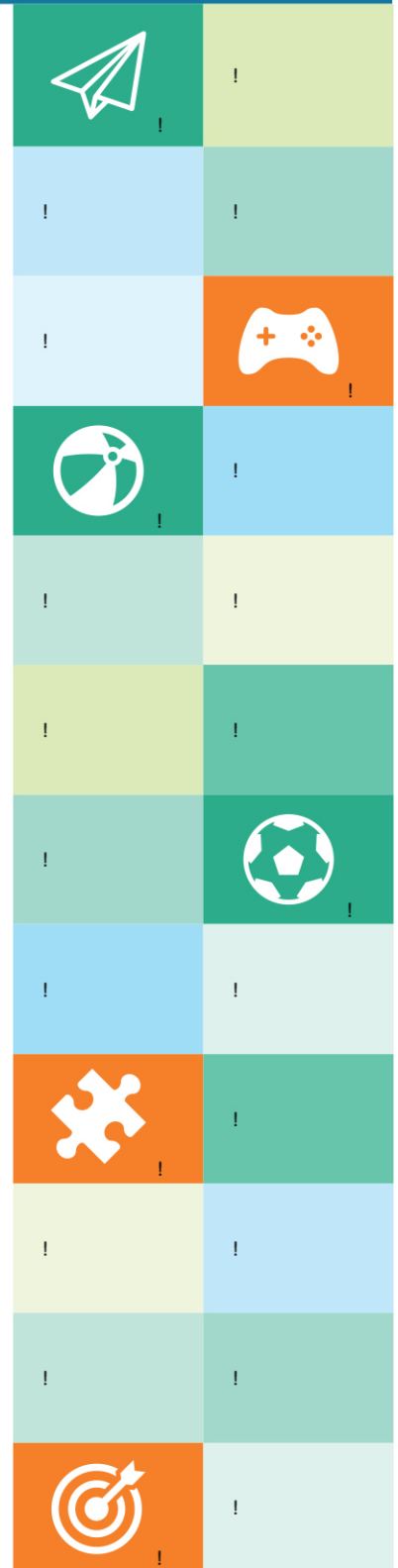
Knowing the truth "frees" us because we won't be tricked by lies that push us away from God.

Sometimes it can be quite hard to make good choices huh? But the truth is, Jesus always promises to help. When I feel angry, I try to take a deep breath and count to 5. That usually helps me to feel calmer and make a better choice.

I hope you will remember that next time you face a challenge.

With lots of love,

Aunty Mandy





A Child Is Known By His Doings

by Margaret Cagle

Children, listen to this bit of advice.

In all your dealings, be kind and nice.

"Even a child is known by his doings," you see,

So try to be as good as you can be.

Nobody approves of a child who is bad,

And it also makes your parents feel sad.

People may call you "imp" or even "brat".

I'm sure your parents won't like that.

Children, behave the best that you can

And grow into a lovable lady or man.

People then will say you are so kind,

And you're the best friend one can find.

Just make your work pure and make it right,

And try to serve God with all your might.

You're known by your doings, Scriptures say,

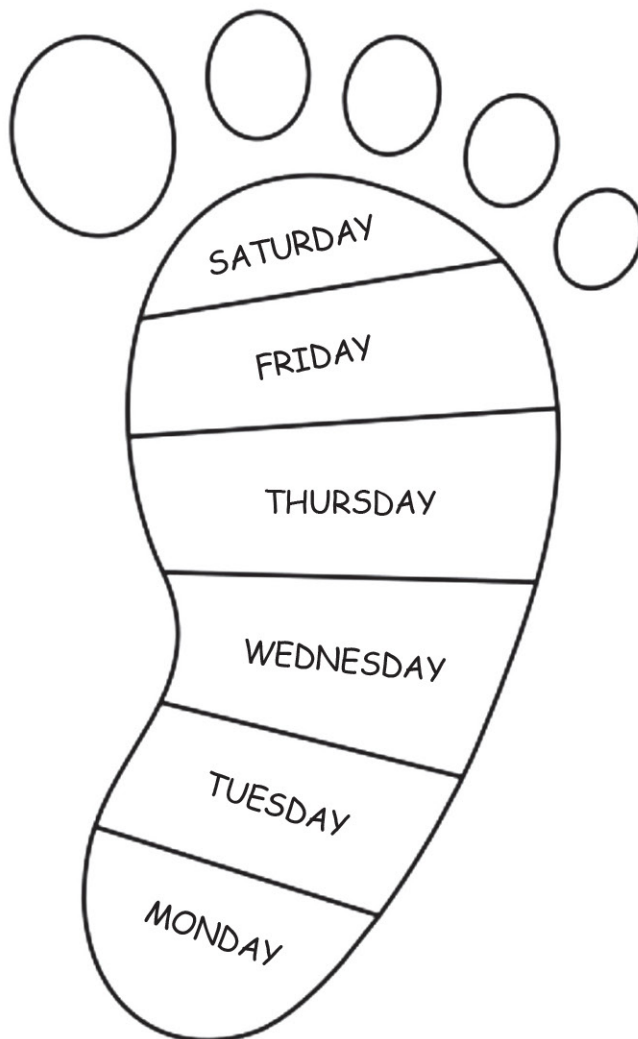
So be on your best behaviour each day.

Name _____ Date _____

FOLLOWING JESUS

This week I follow Jesus by doing this...

Color in the foot day by day as you follow Jesus!



Faithful Grandparenting

By Marsha Nawamanie

Psalm 92:12-15

The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,
they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;
planted in the house of the LORD,
they will flourish in the courts of our God.

They will still bear fruit in old age,
they will stay fresh and green,
proclaiming, "The LORD is upright;
he is my Rock,
and there is no wickedness in him."

I have enjoyed writing articles on parenting for the past several years. I truly believe that there is nothing we do that is more important than raising our children to love and follow Jesus. I feel that I have covered most of the topics that I am qualified to deal with in the past issues. If you are a parent of young children, I hope you have read them. If you think I have missed something, please write and let me know.

However, most of my friends now are of the age where their children have left the "nest" and are married themselves. So now what do we do? The "empty nest" years can be quite an adjustment for some people. Relationships might need modification. We now have more time for our spouse, for recreation. It is a time for communication in our marriages, and for new ways of doing and looking at things. Some people can't let go so easily and keep meddling in their children's lives. We need to learn to let our children go, and make their own way. I often spoke of our home being like a raft on the raging river of life. Now is the time for your children to start their own rafts.

If you are fortunate to have grandchildren, this can be a special time as we enter the World of being a Grandparent. This is a wonderful stage of life, with opportunities to touch our grandchildren's lives, without the responsibilities of a parent. All of the fun without the discipline issues. It is also an opportunity to be of service



to your children, who are often so busy they can't focus on some of the most important issues in raising children in the Christian faith.

You will always be a parent to your children, but now your role moves from that of primary coach to a cheerleader in the stands. Occasionally they may call for some coaching advice, but overall, the role is changed to cheering them on in the parenting process. You have to be very careful about giving advice where it is not requested. Do your best not to be overly judgmental with your children. Be available, make it known that you are there to help if it is needed.

Remember when you were a new parent, how you reacted to criticism or "advice" from others. Give encouragement and love to help them use common sense in becoming godly parents. And remember to pray for them, now, more than ever.

One of the greatest ways grandparents can help is as babysitter if there is a need for that. There are so many dangers these days leaving young children with strangers. A grandparent can provide a consistent place for a grandchild to stay while parents are working or going to various appointments. A child will get accustomed to "grandma's house" and will have less anxiety and stress. This will only work if you are no longer working.

Watching your grandchildren gives you an opportunity to mold their values and beliefs. Be sure you have good books and toys to help them grow intellectually and in their faith. There is nothing like one-on-one time with your grandkids. And serving this role will



greatly decrease the stress levels for your children.

The quality of your relationship to your grandchildren is often related to the quantity of time you spend with them. Make yourself available and look for opportunities to spend time with them. You might pick a special day each week when you make an appointment to spend time with one or more of them. This can give their mother or father a needed break, and give you time to do something special to develop your relationship with your grandchildren. Remember they grow up very fast, and relationships built with young kids will usually continue into the teen years.

Do you drive? Offer to be the driver for the grandchildren who are going to school. This is a great time to connect, but make sure the phones are off and there are no distractions so conversation can flow. Ask them how school went, what they learned. Always have a topic or issue you can start a discussion on. Hopefully there will be enough interest to keep them from falling asleep.



If a grandchild has an interest in some sport or activity like music or painting, you can be the one to find a class for them and take them, and encourage their talents. Never force these though. Look for things they are genuinely interested in, not what you did, or what you wish they would do.

But what if you live far away? With so many children going abroad, this can be an issue. If you are not able to live where your children are living, try to maintain contact digitally, on



the phone or through emails. Make a special day when you send information or make an online call to them. Try to plan an extended visit to the family, wherever they are. And when there are school breaks, bring them to spend time with you. Plan some outings to special places that meant a lot to you as a child. An extended vacation with grandchildren is a powerful way to develop your relationship.

Don't take things for granted. Think about what kind of role or legacy you want to have with your grandchildren. They grow up very fast. Ask yourself some questions:

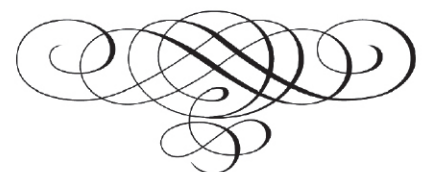
- How will you pray for your grandchildren?
- What is your biggest concern about being a grandparent?
- What role do you want to play in their lives?
- What interests and hobbies can you share with your grandchildren?
- What adventures would you like to share?
- How will you transfer your faith to your grandchildren?
- What were the things that influenced you when you were young? (Books you want to share, movies, etc.)
- What is unique about your family? How can you pass that on to them?

We will continue in the next article to talk about how to pass on your faith to your grandchildren. It isn't easy to follow Christ today, so they need all the encouragement they can get.

Material based on the book:

Faithful Grandparenting, Practical Ideas for Connecting the Generations, by Becky Danielson and Carol Olsen, Equip Press,

Marsha Navamanie and her husband Ron have been working with the CRCSL in Sri Lanka for the past 23 years. They recently returned to the U.S.A.





Hymns for Life

By Robert J. Keeley

I was planning the music for a church service a few weeks back. I lead a small ensemble and was thinking about the flow of the service centered on Psalm 129. Everything was in place except for a postlude that would fit the joyous theme. As I looked through our hymnbook, I saw “There Is a Redeemer,” by Melody Green. That would be a great choice, I thought.

That Sunday, after the closing song, the congregation was dismissed with God’s blessing, and the ensemble began to play and sing “There Is a Redeemer.” There are always a few people who stay to listen to the postlude, but this week something else happened. Twenty or so people remained and soon started singing

along. We did not have the number from the hymnbook listed, nor were the words projected on the screen, but we soon heard people joining us on the chorus: “Thank you, O my Father, for giving us your Son and leaving your Spirit ‘til the work on earth is done.” Many of the congregants knew all three verses too.

“There Is a Redeemer” has a rich text and a memorable melody. When leading this song, I always want to slow down a bit on the third verse so we can savor the words “When I stand in glory, I will see your face.” Singing that song with my brothers and sisters in Christ, many of whom I’ve now known for decades, often brings a lump to my throat.

Songs do that. Artfully composed texts matched with beautiful melodies speak to us in a unique way. The message of Scripture expressed in song sticks with us often more easily than in any other form. Many of us can sing multiple verses of Christmas carols, for example, without looking at the words or the music. Hearing these songs over and over through the years has placed them firmly in our minds and our hearts. There is a good chance that you can sing much of “Joy to the World” without looking it up. The message of Psalm 98—the basis of that carol—is in your memory whether you realize it or not.

That’s the power of song in the Christian life. It is a true gift to be able to carry these songs with us! As I

reflect on the songs that have shaped me, I find that I often turn to them to comfort me or to lift me up when I need to be reminded of something. The often-beautiful texts remind me of how dear certain Christian truths are.

Thinking about why certain hymns are important to me has helped me come to love them even more, so I offer this short list of songs, old and new, that live in my memory. I encourage you to make your own list and to think or write briefly about why certain songs have meaning for you.

‘Great Is Thy Faithfulness’ (words by Thomas Chisholm, music by William Runyan, 1923): As I get older, I recognize the importance of God’s faithfulness in my life and in the lives of those I love. The repetition of the title in the chorus and the musical phrases rising along with the words lift the message up and invite us to proclaim it loudly. Many Christians, regardless of denomination, know this hymn well, and it’s great for singing with a group.

‘I Sought the Lord, and Afterward I Knew’ (words by Jean Ingelow, 1878; music by Jean Sibelius, 1899): Like many hymn tunes, Sibelius’ FINLANDIA has been used with more than one text, but this is the one I grew up with. The hymn helps me articulate the complex story of how we come to faith by succinctly expressing the mystery of how our search for God begins with God’s Spirit moving in us first. As with “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” the language is not modern, but its beauty coupled with the lilting melody adds weight.

‘In Christ Alone’ (words and music by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, 2002): Compared to the previous songs on this list, this one is quite new. It is well known, though, because the melody is easily singable by a congregation and the text speaks powerfully

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of one of the most comforting messages of the gospel: “No power of hell, no human plan can ever pluck me from his hand.” Almost as soon as this song came on the scene 20 years ago, people recognized what a gift to the church it was.

‘My Soul in Stillness Waits’ (words and music by Marty Haugen, 1982). This is another relatively recent song (if you can consider 45 years ago recent!). It’s usually sung during Advent. I remember singing this at a worship conference, and each time we sang the refrain “For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits; truly my hope is in you,” we waited longer on the word “waits” each time we came back to it. I’ve never forgotten that, and it has placed that refrain in my mind, especially during Advent when I read Psalm 130 (“I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning”) or when I struggle to understand what God is doing. The haunting melody reinforces the idea of a God who moves in mysterious ways yet is the One in whom my hope is found.

I could go on and on, but space limits me to listing just a handful of the hymns I carry with me. How did all these songs get into my heart? Simply through repetition. I have been singing some of them for as long as I can remember. Others have been added to my life more recently. I did not try to memorize any of them. But I sang them often enough that I started to learn them. Over the years those memories are refreshed, and now I hardly have to look at the hymnbook or screen.

There is a lesson here for those of us who help select music for worship. We are tasked with choosing songs that fit what is going on liturgically, but we also want to pick songs with rich texts that will endure in the lives of our congregations—regardless of the song’s age. If the churches I have belonged to sang only old songs, I would not have learned two of the songs on my short list. We shouldn’t sing only the old hymns. On the other hand, if my churches constantly added new songs to their repertoire, I would not have sung any of them enough to have learned them well. It’s a tricky balance, and with the flurry of new songs being written for congregational singing over the past few years, it is becoming more challenging for worship leaders to choose well. **B**



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+++ CHURCH NEWS+++



❖ PALM Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Services.

Special services were held in many of the local Churches in commemoration of these events on the Christian Calendar. Palm Sunday also saw the participation of the children in the worship services, whilst Maundy Thursday gave room to the traditional service organised by the WMU of the CRC Dehiwela, on the theme “Great Enough To Be Humble,” with Anuradha Mack bringing a message. The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper brought the service to an end.

The traditional United Service on Good Friday, took place at Wolvendhal with the participation of Pastor Andrew Cottling, Revds; Faber and Jansz. Pas Ananda Jayawardena preached the Sermon. A Service was also held at the CRC Dehiwela in the evening at which Revd: Jansz gave the message.

Easter Sunday saw large attendances at all local services, at which the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was also administered. The “Little Lambs” Montessori also conducted an “Easter Service” on the 26th of March, with the participation and involvement of the children. Pas Sunil Gunasekera, gave the Easter reflection.

❖ 135th Anniversary Service



The Maligakande Congregation commemorated the 135th Anniversary with a well attended thanksgiving Service held on Sunday the 21st of April, 2024, on the theme, “God’s Greatness”. The se-

vice began with a welcome extended by Pastor Augustine Paul. Pastor Lakmal Wijeratne, the present President of the CRC SL Preached the Sermon. Pastors Andrew Cottling, Chaminda Ratnayake, Pephchal Rickson, M. Sashikumar, Sunil Gunaskera and Revd: Stanley Nelson also participated. A Time of fellowship followed.



❖ Visitors...

Delegates from LUME a branch of the DVN (“The Far Neighbour”) of the Netherlands on a visit to the Island convened a meeting with the CRC SL President, Pas Lakmal Wijeratne, Vice Presidents, Pas Pephchal Rickson, and Bro. Steve Schubert together with Revds Stanley Nelson and Shirley Faber to discuss collaborative efforts in working amongst women and addressing their specific needs. Interest was expressed to continue to working with the CRC SL along these lines.

A former Elder of the CRC Regent-Street and Administration Manager, Bro Godfrey Ebenezer and his wife Padma, were here on a brief visit from Sydney. They attended worship services in some of the CRC Churches in addition to spending time with family, extended family, Church family and friends. Padma, who was the founder President of the CRC SL Women’s Federation was also hosted by the Federation, to a time of fellowship on Sat the 25th May, at the CRC Bambalapitiya, at which time Padma gave a trilingual Message on “Lydia”. Having emigrated to Sydney years ago, Godfrey and Padma continue to have a keen interest in the ministry and mission of the CRC SL.

Roger Foenander and David Mutton, together with

a group of friends from different parts of Australia were in the Country for a few weeks. Roger and David have been stalwart supporters of the Diaconal Ministry of the CRC Dehiwela through many years and more recently have been supportive of the “Caring Hands” Ministry. Constantly involved in raising monies for the needy and during times of varied disasters in the Country, Roger and David have blessed many in these ways throughout the Country. Both of them together with those of the group were present at the “Caring Hands” program held on the 3rd of June at the CRC Dehiwela and they also hosted all the leaders and volunteers to “high tea” that afternoon. A meaningful time of fellowship, information and interaction was enjoyed by all present. Roger together with his family were members of the CRC Dehiwela, prior to their emigration to Australia a number of years ago.



❖ **The Music Ministry Choir**

This interdenominational choir, directed by Ishan de Lanerolle and accompanied by Niranjan de Silva gave musical leadership at two services of the CRC SL. On the 28th of April they led worship featuring some great hymns of faith at the CRC Dehiwela, at which Revd: Charles Jansz ministered the Word, on Sunday the 12th of May, they were featured at a Mother’s Day Service of Blessing, together with many reputed soloists, including Rohan de Lanerolle at the CRC Bambalapitiya. Revd: Roshan Mendis, preached the Word on that occasion. Both Services saw many from the CRC SL as well as from other denominations, being blessed through presence and participation.

❖ **IN Memoriam.**

Ingrid and Darrel de Zilva-History and fiction are replete with stories of dynamic duos – the Bible too. Abraham and Sarah. Moses and Zipporah. Ruth and Boaz to name a few. But none perhaps were as great as Priscilla and Aquila.

Some have concluded that the Scriptures suggest that without Priscilla and Aquila the Church might not have turned out the way it is today.

Irrespective of whether we can agree with that statement or not, I can safely say that without Darrel and Ingrid, perhaps the Dehiwela English language congregation would not have turned out the way it is today. At a time when there was no full time Pastor, Darrel, well supported by Ingrid, together with Bro Steve Schubert, ministered and sustained the work at Dehiwela. They found the preachers, visited and prayed for the congregation and did what was necessary pastorally and administratively.

Darrel served the Dehiwela congregation as an Elder for many years and also served the Denomination as Treasurer and Book Keeper giving much of his time and energy to fulfill these tasks with absolute devotion. Honest to a fault, his faith was visible both in the Church and in the market place of the corporate world.

Ingrid supported his every endeavour taking care of the home and the family with great care love, whilst supporting the ministries at Dehiwela in many ways, as a supportive wife of an Elder. Ingrid’s giftedness lay in her culinary skills, which she put to great use, cooking loads of food for Church and Denominational occasions. Those skills she used to the maximum, when it came to family occasions too. And family, extended family, friends and neighbours were the beneficiaries.

Darrel loved the Word, spent much time in prayer and had a great passion to share the gospel. His passion resulted in the formation of a Sunday School at Quarry Road, which gave birth to a fully fledged congregation. His commitment to this work resulted in him raising funds for building a permanent place of worship or purchasing one. After many years of growth, due to logistical reasons this ministry was amalgamated with the Sinhala Ministry at Dehiwela. His home was also at one time opened for regular Bible Studies.

The “Direction”, the “Herald”, and other devotional magazines were his reading companions.

Even though he declined physically within the last couple of years, his mind was alert and clear. He remembered people, their names, dates and events that were part of his life with amazing clarity. At a time when many have very short memories, I was glad to see so many whose lives Darrel and Ingrid touched, at their funeral services. Darrel supported any ministry and any pastor or leader who had a passion for the Kingdom of God. Some he did financially too. Church politics was not his cup of tea. Gossip and slander were not part of his life style. Peacemaking was foremost in his thinking. He was truly a good man in fullest sense of the word. No wonder, someone writing to me, when informed of his passing said, "the CRC would not see the likes of Darrel again." I personally hope that this would not be true, because the CRC can do with many more people like him in leadership.

If Darrel could have had a third name added, "Nathaniel" would have been the most appropriate. As Jesus said, of Nathaniel, he was "one in whom there was no guile." No falsehood. Not two faced. No deception. No treachery. Full of integrity and a true son of spiritual Israel.

Ingrid and Darrel loved each other in life for over fifty years and could not be separated in death. Within ten days they found each other again. This time, in the nearer presence of their Lord, in that Heavenly home, also sharing the joys of reunion with those who had gone before.

We do praise and thank God for their blessed lives, genuine faith and the legacy of the golden memories of faith and faithfulness that they have left behind.

Sharne Labrooy-Sharne Labrooy, was called to her eternal rest on Monday the 18th of March, after an affliction bravely borne with much hope and faith.

Sharne was the eldest daughter of Harvey and Sonia Parsons who lived in the shadow of the CRC Kohuwela, through many years. Sharne and her sisters, Sheryl and Sharlene grew up within the Kohuwela CRC community attending Sunday School and the ministries of that time.

(The "News" in these pages is gathered from the Bulletins published by the respective local churches and available in the Church office. Any other news of events or involving the membership could be sent directly to the Editor of "The Herald," for publication according to the established criteria. – Ed.)

The Seminary students who lived in residence in the Kohuwela premises were befriended by the family and soon were objects of their hospitality in many ways, which included a hearty meal now and then.

After relocation and her marriage, Sharne and family found themselves worshipping at the CRC Dehiwela. Sharne was a vibrant personality, also blessed with much humour which was characteristic of the Parson and Vanlangenberg sides of the family and it was always pleasant and enjoyable to visit, converse and be regaled with much laughter! Sadly, a couple of years ago, things changed for Sharne following a diagnosis that took toll of her health in different ways. In and out of hospital and faced with various medical processes, Sharne continued to face each day with great hope in the God of Hope. She enjoyed her last birthday with family and friends with that vibrant spirit she was known for, sustained by the hope that the Lord had healed her and would continue to do so.

But the Lord had better plans and things changed again. The affliction made its appearance again, took its toll and Sharne passed from life to death. Sharne was well prepared for that since her faith in the Lord remained constant and we can be assured that she is now enjoying perfect peace and rest, free from the frailties of this earthly life.

Together with family and those who knew and loved her, we do thank God for her life and the rich memories of an overflowing hope and much courage, that held to the very end.

❖ Deaths.

"Forever with the Lord..."

Sharne Labrooy on Friday 22nd March, 2024 of the Dehiwela Congregation.

Darrel de Zilva on Monday 1st April, 2024 of the Dehiwela Congregation.

Brian Isaacs, on Sunday 12th May, 2024, of the Regent-Street congregation.

Wendy Pereira on Wednesday 5th June, 2024 of the Wellawatte congregation.

Does God Always Accept Deathbed Conversions?

Many treat conversion as little more than a magic spell, like a “get out of jail free” card played at a crucial moment in a losing game.



Michael Wagenman is the Christian Reformed campus minister at Western University in London, Ont., where he invites undergraduate students to put their faith into loving service and mentors graduate students. His most recent book is *The Power of the Church: The Sacramental Ecclesiology of Abraham Kuyper* (Wipf & Stock, 2020).

MANY WEBSITES CONTAIN lists of people who are said to have converted to Christianity shortly before their deaths. Sometimes these stories are corroborated by relatives and friends. The truth of these stories are sometimes debated because both believers and non-believers sometimes use them to advance a religious or philosophical agenda.

Wikipedia, for example, mentions the debate about Charles Darwin's deathbed conversion to Christianity. Those who take a dogmatic position in the “faith vs. science” debate can rally around and use his contested story one way or another.

I find the question of deathbed conversions unsettling. The topic is often engaged in an abstract and depersonalized way. But what if we reflect on how it might relate to a particular person's fate before God?

Take your beloved grandmother as an example. Her rejection of God's grace and the other choices in her life might have been for you a source of so much pain and misery. You've spent decades praying for her, pleading with her, and patiently hoping for her to experience the living God. All through the cancer treatments, it seemed that she was becoming even more bitter in her rejection of faith. But then, at almost the last moment, you witness a change of heart, a deep grief about the pain she has caused, and a desire to embrace the forgiveness and hope of Jesus. You are elated, even while you also know the heartbreak of this not happening earlier.

Could her change of heart have been a charade—a trick to comfort you in her dying days? It's possible. Many treat conversion as little more than a magic spell, like a “get out of jail free” card played at a crucial moment in a losing game. Some might scheme that

a quick prayer with their dying breath could tip the scales of eternity in their favor. Some might think it's a safe gamble, whatever the stories might be afterward.

But believing that we can outstrategize God with our cunning wouldn't be a deathbed conversion. Dietrich Bonhoeffer called it “cheap grace.” When it comes to the renewal God works by grace in the rebellious human heart, it is entirely God's doing. We only respond—like taking a breath after CPR has been administered. Conversion isn't really something that we do; it is always a free gift from God that we can only receive.

So what exactly are we seeking when we ponder this question? Are we looking for certainty, for ourselves or our loved ones (or our enemies)? Are we looking for a guarantee beyond the covenant grace and faithfulness of God? Are we struggling to trust God with another person's life—or our own? Faith means being humble before God and acknowledging that God and God's grace will accomplish the good God intends for us and our world. It's not something we can ultimately figure out.

What we're really grappling with in this question, I think, is God's offensiveness. When we don't live in grace, when we believe that everyone must pay their share, when we assume there's no free lunch, when we must have ultimate control over our lives, then the idea of God's boundless grace becomes a stumbling block—How could God accept *them*? How could God ignore everything they've done?—until, of course, we find ourselves in that place of last resort, with nowhere else to turn but to God. Then don't we all want a God like the one we come to know in Jesus, one who will even take a thief on a cross with him, through a dying gasp, into paradise? **B**

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TAIL LIGHTS

by C.N.J

M P H !



I am sure many of us know the abbreviation in the title when it comes to a vehicle. It is an abbreviation for *miles per hour*- a way of calculating the speed at which a vehicle or plane is travelling and can travel. In recent times this abbreviation is also being used in the game of Cricket to describe the speed at which a ball is being delivered – especially when it comes to pace!

The other day I received a post where a certain person was speaking on the success of Singapore moving from a third world Country to a first world one. The person used the acronym M P H – defined very differently from what it has been known for. The Speaker mentioned, **Meritocracy, Pragmatism and Honesty !** Sadly, absent in most Countries, including our “tear drop,” certain Organizations and even some Churches!

And complementing that speech, another added the remark that in Singapore if people are not God fearing they are Law fearing ! I thought of so many in our day everywhere, who neither fear God or the Law. It also brought to mind the story that Jesus told about the Unjust Judge and the Importunate Widow. The profile of the Judge told the story of many today – he did not fear God or care for (fear) man! (St Luke 18: vss 1-8).

My memory was also jolted to a quotation that I have used in my sermonizing...**“Fear God and you will have nothing to fear”** – not even the law – and that major step must be part of the DNA of all, especially, those who claim to have been brought from darkness to light, whether in the first world or in places aspiring to get there !!

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