

LIGHT

6 Marys

Empty Vessel

**TEST OF
TIMES**

James

The Book of Faith

*SOVEREIGN
PURPOSE*

SALVATION PLAN

*SUFFICIENT
PROVISION*

An online publication by

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CENTRE

CONTENTS

Six Marys of the New Testament

3

Test of Times

8

Empty Vessel

11

James, The Book of Faith

13

Do You Enjoy Your Prayer Life?

15

The Meaning of Life

16

KOINONIA (Authentic Christian Fellowship)

17

Six Marys

of the New Testament

We as women have a special calling from God to serve Him. We can see some good examples in the New Testament. Many women became followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their lives were transformed. They ministered unto the Lord even with their possessions. They followed the Lord Jesus as far as the cross.

Please read Mark 15: 40, 41. "There were also women looking on afar off; among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him and ministered unto Him and many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem".

Can you see there the number of women mentioned? The Lord was preparing a big company of women to serve Him and to build His Church after He ascended up into heaven.

Psalms 68:11 says "The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those who published it". Though the English does not have the word 'women' in that verse, some other languages have this as referring to women. "Great is the company of women who published it". Throughout the history of the Church God used women mightily to accomplish His purposes.

In Mark 15:41, the verse that we have read just now, we have the name Mary mentioned twice. There were at least 3 Marys at the scene of crucifixion. Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the less. I wonder if you knew how many Marys are mentioned in the New Testament. There are at least 6 Marys mentioned in the New Testament. I would like to identify each one of them. Let us also see what spiritual lessons we could learn from each of them. Please turn to the scripture verses and try to identify these Marys.

1. Mary the mother of Jesus.

Through Mary the mother of Jesus we learn about "Total surrender to the Purpose of God". This is something we very often fail to do. We like to serve Him by preaching, teaching or singing. We do not think about the purpose of God that He wants to accomplish in and through us.

Mary was a young woman, may be in her late teenage years when Angel Gabriel visited her. The angel brought her some strange news. That is that she was blessed among women and that she through the Holy Spirit will conceive a baby in her womb. This was something that might have brought a great deal of

fear in her instantaneously. But can you see her overcoming her fear and answering the angel in an equally unusual way? Luke 1:38 – “Mary said, behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word”.

Yielding ourselves to the plan, purpose and the will of God is the most difficult thing to do. We very often don't like the plan of God. We pray for things that are not in the plan of God.

God was planning to bring His Son to this world as a human being. He wanted a real woman of faith who will not resist the plan of God. She knew the kind of ridicule and humiliation she would have to go through when her pregnancy gets to be known. She was going to have a baby outside wed-lock. What a disgrace! But we see a glimpse of her character of faith when she said, “Be it unto me according to Thy word”.

She was facing the following risks when she obeyed the purpose of God:

- She could have been accused of having a bad character.
- Joseph could have broken the engagement after realizing that she was pregnant. See Mt.1:18 & 19.
- She could have even faced death by stoning when she could not give an explanation as to how she was pregnant.

God is looking for women who are willing to take risks to fulfil His purposes. God wants us to come out of our comfort zones and work for Him. The Bible has many examples of such women. Ruth the Moabites, Rahab the harlot of Jericho, Deborah the prophetess, Lydia of Philippi and the list goes on. Please think of great women in

the Bible. Several women are mentioned by Paul as co-labourers together with him.

The history of the Church also gives us details of such great women of God. There have been great women missionaries who surrendered their lives to God to fulfil His purpose. They were willing to pay a price. We must try our best to overcome our selfish lifestyle. Very often we think of our own family, children and future plans. We spend a great deal of time praying about those things. We are not concerned about the purpose of God.

2. Mary Magdalene.

She was called Magdalene because she came from an area called Magdala. Through her we learn about the value of true love and devotion to the Lord. She became the first human being to have seen the Lord Jesus Christ after His resurrection. The details of this are written in John 20. We may need to do a deeper study of the Bible to understand the great privilege this woman had to see the Lord on the resurrection day.

When the Lord appeared to her, the Lord said something remarkable in John 20:17. “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father”. But few minutes later we find the Lord allowing other women to touch His feet and worship Him. Matthew 28:9. When we compare these incidents with Hebrews 9:12, there is room to believe that the Lord ascended to the Father soon after resurrection with His own blood. The Lord has most probably appeared to Mary Magdalene even before He ascended to the Father. If this argument is true, what a great privilege this Mary had! Why was she given such a

privilege? Only one reason. Her true love and devotion to the Lord.

Let us look at some points about her life:

- She had been demon possessed when she first met the Lord
- The Lord drew away 7 demons from her. Please see Luke 8:2.
- She was present at the crucifixion. Please see Mark 15:40
- She was alone near the sepulchre. Please see John 20:11

She did not know that the Lord was going to rise again from the dead. She only knew that He had died and had been buried. She came to anoint the body of the Lord. Why worry about a dead person anymore? She cannot expect any more blessings from the Lord. But still she came to the sepulchre.

She was so sad that the body was not there in the sepulchre. She said that she was willing to take the body herself. John 20:11-15. This shows us her devotion to the Lord who delivered her from the power of the devil. This kind of love and devotion drew an immediate response from the Lord. Please read John 20:16. The Lord could not hide His identity any more.

We lack very much in this area of true love and devotion to the Lord. Very often people follow the Lord Jesus because of the blessings they can receive.

But this lady was not like that. She was so thankful to the Lord for the transformation of her life. Her life would have been so miserable with 7 demons inside her. The Lord delivered her from

such a miserable condition and that was sufficient for her to love the Lord Jesus with all her heart.

Have you experienced salvation and forgiveness of sins through the Lord Jesus? Will you faithfully follow the Lord if He is not going to give you any more earthly blessings?

3. Mary the sister of Martha (aka Mary of Bethany)

This Mary is also well known by us in the scriptures. She is mentioned regarding 3 incidents in the Bible. First one is Luke 10:38-42 when the Lord Jesus visited Bethany and Martha welcomed the Lord Jesus to her house. The second was when Lazarus had died and the Lord Jesus came to Bethany as in John 11. The third time was when the Lord Jesus was hosted to a meal by Lazarus, Martha and Mary. At that time Mary anointed the feet of the Lord Jesus as found in John 12:1-3.

There is something common to all 3 occasions when Mary was mentioned in the above passages. Can you say what that is? Please read these verses and pick up the common thing. Luke 10:39, then John 11:32 and again in John 12:3.

Did you see that all 3 times we find Mary at the feet of the Lord Jesus? There is an important lesson that we could learn from Mary of Bethany. That is to spend time at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. This speaks to us of three things that we should do at the feet of the Lord Jesus. All believing women should be engaged in this threefold exercise. Reading the Bible at the feet of the Lord Jesus, Worshiping the Lord at His feet and Praying at His feet.

Specially, married sisters must find at least one hour to do these three things at the feet of the Lord Jesus. Though you may not be a preacher, the knowledge of the scripture is so important to a mother and a wife. You have to steer the family according to your knowledge of the Word. Even your husband might go wrong at times. He might take wrong decisions. You may have to show him what the Bible says about the matter.

Worship is a special ministry given to the sisters. Read the song of praise of Hannah or read the song of praise of Mary the mother of the Lord. God has given the woman the special ability to worship and praise Him. We must fully use that ability to glorify Him.

Then the ministry of prayer. Oh how much we need to pray for our children. They are growing up in a wicked world. Only prevailing prayer could save them from the evil out there. God will always answer the prayer of a mother. Even after many years He will answer your prayer. We cannot be leaders of the Church but we could pray for the leaders. We cannot preach but we can pray.

The great lesson we learn from Mary of Bethany is the secret of spending time at the feet of the Lord Jesus.

4. Mary the mother of Apostle James the less.

This Mary is mentioned several times in the New Testament and has great significance. She was the mother of Apostle James as you find in Mk 15:40. James the less was one of the twelve Apostles of the Lord Jesus. He was called James the less to identify separately

from James the son of Zebedee. It is possible that he was short in stature as well. He also had a brother called Josès. This lady is also known as the wife of Cleopas in John 19:25. She witnessed the crucifixion of the Lord according to Mt.27:56. She visited the garden tomb to anoint the body of the Lord Jesus as in Mk 15:47 and 16:1. She was also most probably among the sisters who worshiped the Lord on the day of resurrection as found in Mt.28:7-9.

Thus, this Mary could be easily identified as one of the first women disciples of the Lord Jesus. A disciple is a follower of the Lord. She followed the Lord all the way. And she was rewarded for that by the Lord giving her to see the risen Lord and worship Him. There is a great need today for women disciples. All the time a woman is seen as a person attached to her home and engaged in raising children and cooking meals for the husband. Yes, all that can be true but we could be and we should be disciples of the Lord Jesus as well. We must discipline ourselves to follow the Lord meaningfully. Reading the Word and studying it, witnessing to others and systematic prayer life should be seen in us. If at the end of our lives people talk of us as a disciple of the Lord Jesus that would be the greatest honour.

5. Mary the mother of John Mark

We find her name in Acts 12:12. It was to her house Peter came after being miraculously released from prison. That great miracle happened in answer to the prayer of the Church (Acts 12:5). This prayer meeting was held at the residence of Mary the mother of John Mark. We later realize that she was also the sister of Barnabas. The lesson we

learn from her is how to be bold in the Lord during times of persecution and do great exploits for the Lord.

There was persecution in Jerusalem and King Herod had beheaded James. He arrested Peter and was going to do the same to him as well. In such circumstances we would have been very discouraged and afraid. We would have said “all our leaders are now being put to death, let us also run and hide somewhere”.

No! She knew the answer was in prevailing in prayer. She also knew the power of the prayer of the Church. So she had decided to open her home for believers to gather secretly and pray for Peter’s release. How wonderfully God answered that prayer. Peter knew that he was released because of that prayer. That is why he came there as soon as he was released and he found them still praying.

God wants us to be bold even during times of persecution. And also we must know that the answer is in prevailing prayer and not in hiding in fear. She was a great example to her son John Mark who later became a great man of God. He wrote the book of Mark. In Daniel 11:32 we read “the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits”. This was a right description of this lady Mary the mother of John Mark.

6. Mary of Rome

We read of this lady in Romans 16:6. “Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us”. What a great and commendable description! Through her we learn how to be useful in Lord’s work especially in the area of showing hospitality to God’s servants and God’s

people. She has taken much trouble to look after Paul the apostle and others with him when he was on his missionary journeys. We do not know where she lived at that time. But now she had moved to Rome. Paul thought it is necessary to send his greetings to her in his letter because she was such a great blessing to them. In Revelation 14:13 it says “their work do follow them”.

This speaks to us of great reward we receive when we labour faithfully. Our Lord Jesus said ‘Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me’ Mt 25:40. Let us remember that always. God may send His servants to us and we must show them hospitality without grudging. Do not say ‘I cannot cook for these people’. Do not say ‘I do not know when this man will leave’. Serve the Lord joyfully. The reward will be yours.

So we have great lessons to learn from all the 6 Marys in the Bible.

1. Mary the Mother of the Lord Jesus – Total surrender to the Purpose of God
2. Mary Magdalene – True love and devotion
3. Mary of Bethany – The secret of spending time at the feet of the Lord Jesus
4. Mary the mother of Apostle James the less – True discipleship
5. Mary the mother of John Mark – How to be bold in the Lord during times of persecution and do great exploits for the Lord.
6. Mary of Rome - How to be useful in Lord’s work especially in the area of showing hospitality to God’s servants.

- Anne Jayasundara -



TEST OF TIMES

At some point of time every human being born into this world will go through a difficult time period in their lives. And the nature of such troubles will vary from person to person. Christian believers are not exempt to these troubles. While the people of the world would interpret their troubles & sorrows in different ways and attribute it to fate, curse and other factors, a true Christian believer will look at it in a God centered point of view. As believers who have been saved and owned by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, we need to realize that all difficult circumstances of life are used by God to teach us important lessons that we need to learn.

Even during this period of time as the whole world is faced with this global pandemic of COVID 19, we as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ need to realize that God is testing us to teach us some lessons that are beneficial for our faith and living.

So let us consider what areas are tested in our lives through the TEST of TIMES.

1) Test of our FAITH in God

When we go through trying times in life I believe that first of all God is testing our FAITH and specifically our FAITH in Him. And when we talk of faith it is a vast subject, but I have categorized it into 3 main areas where God tests our faith during difficult times of life.

a) FAITH in the SOVEREIGN PURPOSE of God

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

Romans 8:28

"Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places."

Psalms 135:6

Our Faith in God is tested in relation to the **Sovereign Purpose of God**. No matter what happens in our life we need to remember and believe that God has a purpose behind it all

and that He will make it good for us. Though every individual circumstance may not be very pleasant, the Lord will put together all these circumstances of life and bring about some good for our lives. It is like when we make a particular food item we use many ingredients, and each ingredient is varied in its taste and flavor but when it is all put together and cooked, the end result is a very tasty dish. So God will make all things **work together** for good, and not as the world would paraphrase it "*everything happens for good*".

We also need to note that when we go through difficult circumstances, God will not explain the reasons behind it, and He doesn't need to do it, because He is the **Sovereign God** fulfilling **His Sovereign Purposes**.

When Job went through all that suffering, God was silent through it all and then, when God began to speak, He never did explain to Job all that took place behind the scenes and the purpose behind all that suffering. But instead God exploded on Job His splendor and majesty and Job finally said this in Job 42:1-6 "*Then Job answered the LORD, and said, I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*"

So whenever we face difficult circumstances in life, and go through the test of times let us remember that God is interested in testing our faith, and our faith in the Sovereign purpose of God.

b) FAITH in the SALVATION PLAN of God

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Acts 4:12

Secondly when we face the test of times, God is testing our faith in the **Salvation Plan of God**.

When we experience trying times in our lives we must test our lives and see whether we have truly placed our faith in the only true and living Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. All other gods are man-made, so called gods. But the Lord Jesus Christ alone is God and the only Saviour, who can save us, and has saved us from sin through His sacrificial death on the cross. We may come out of our difficulties or we may not, and sometimes die with it, but what matters is, do we have the assurance of sins forgiven by the Saviour Lord Jesus Christ? Only if you have faith in the Salvation plan of God you will have that assurance that God is with you and will see you through in times of trouble.

This period of global pandemic in a way has made people to realize the need of God in their lives and the need of a Saviour and Salvation. There have

been reports of how people in different parts of the world who have been living complacent Christian lives and still others who never gave a thought about God, turning to the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins and salvation. How about you? Do you have that firm assurance that all your sins have been forgiven by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that you have been born again, and you have the Lord Jesus in your heart and life as Lord and Saviour? Remember God is using the test of times to test our faith in the Salvation Plan of God. Make sure you know and believe the Lord Jesus not only as Saviour but also the Lord of your life.

c) FAITH in the SUFFICIENT PROVISION of God

***"But my God shall supply all your
need according to his riches in glory
by Christ Jesus."
Philippians 4:19***

Thirdly, when we face the test of times, God is testing our faith in the **Sufficient Provision of God**. This sufficient provision is not just limited only to the material things in life but even emotional, spiritual and many other things that we need in our lives.

During this period of lockdown due to the COVID 19 pandemic, all means of help from man was unavailable, and limited, and all were faced with need in their own lives and unable to help one another. And during this time our Faith in the sufficient provision of God

for daily needs, healing, comfort, encouragement, grace etc. was tested. And those who had true living faith in the sufficient provision of God experienced the faithful provision of all kinds of needs being met by the Lord in miraculous ways.

Personally I myself experienced this provision in abundant measure as I learned the lesson to put my faith in the sufficient provision of God. And I have been hearing testimonies of how the Lord had provided for His people and for the glory of God many believers testified that more than in a normal circumstance that during this time of lockdown they have had enough and lived well.

So remember dear friend that the Lord is using the test of times to test our Faith in God in relation to the Sovereign Purpose of God, the Salvation Plan of God and the Sufficient Provision of God. Has your faith been tested in these areas and will you come out victoriously?

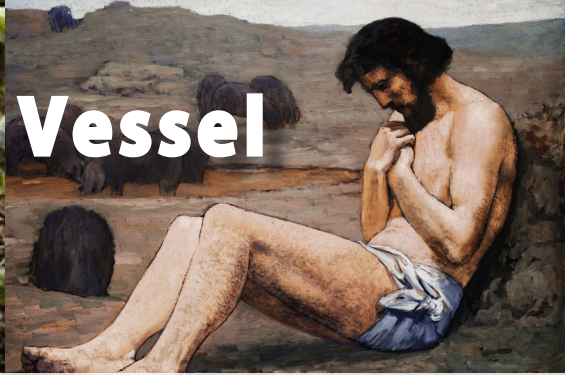
***"That the trial of your faith, being
much more precious than of gold that
perisheth, though it be tried with fire,
might be found unto praise and
honour and glory at the appearing of
Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen,
ye love; in whom, though now ye see
him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with
joy unspeakable and full of glory"
1 Peter 1:7, 8.***

To be continued...

- Dinesh Malcolm Paul -



Empty Vessel



I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty. Ruth 1:21

In the book of Ruth it is mentioned of a family called Elimelech, Naomi, and her two sons Mahlon and Chilion leaving Bethlehem Judah to live in a foreign country called Moab because of a famine. Over time Naomi lost her husband and her two sons and were left with their wives. Naomi returned to Bethlehem with her daughter in law Ruth. Naomi complained to the people in Bethlehem "Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty."

Looking at what Naomi said in Ruth 1:21 one might think God had treated her unfairly, but if you read the book of Ruth carefully you will agree God is good.

As I was thinking about the line "I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty", I was reminded of the life of a prodigal and a back slidden believer.

"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want." Luke 15: 13 -14

We can see from the above verse that the prodigal son ventured into a foreign land with all his inheritance which he had possessed from his father. Without any regard for his father, he left his home. When the prodigal son had spent all his living and was in need he began to think of his father. He realized he needed his father and his love. He was ready to return home, acknowledge his father and ask for his forgiveness. He was even ready to become a servant in his father's house. He returned back home in his right senses. His father received him not as a servant but as his son who was lost with no love and care.

We need to be more concerned how God sees us. As long as we are full of our own self, we will not have room to consider God. In order for God to work in our lives, he needs to empty our self-will, self-ambitions, selfishness, self-confidence and self-pity. Before you came to trust in Jesus what did you think of yourself? Did you think you were successful? Were you king of your domain? It was at rock bottom you were willing to consider Jesus. Our success and all our achievements are a hindrance in knowing our creator God. That is why God has to bring us back empty so that

He can fill us with His life.

I am able to identify my life with the Prodigal son as I also left Sri Lanka in 1998 with my inheritance, pride, arrogance, and self-confidence abandoning my responsibilities, to fulfill my dark desires. As I wasted my life in riotous living and began to be in want. I could not fill the emptiness with all the worldly pleasures. One night when my life was completely wasted in alcohol and drugs I thought to myself "is there anything more to life?" I heard the voice of God saying "stay your life will change". I said "why not" and thought to myself let me see what can happen if I stay and attend the church service I was invited to attend 31st of December (watch night service) before the dawn of the Millennium. I wanted to see what God could do in my life if I gave my heart to Jesus. With the dawn of year 2000 I gave my heart to Jesus. After 20 years I can say with confidence "God is good and His love endures forever".

Through God's afflictions, our lives are made empty for a greater purpose. In God we are vessels made ready for the Master's use.

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." 2 Timothy 2:21

When we were made empty of self-confidence, self-reliance and pride, we were empty vessels for God to fill. Only through affliction the prodigal son awoke to the answer of his misery. Only through tragedies in Naomi's life that she realized

she needed to return back home. Only through emptiness in my life I understood I needed to be saved.

The Prodigal son gained back the love of his father and sonship. Naomi recovered all and gained a heir to her inheritance. I gained the joy of salvation and the beginning of an amazing journey in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we obey God's calling in our affliction we will experience God's blessings in His great plan of Salvation for us. Is He calling you today?

***"Before I was afflicted I went astray "
Psalms 119:67***

***"For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."
Psalms 107:9***

- Dhinuka Boralessa -

Greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1)

**Eternal Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ
(vs 8)**

**He is the creator of the universe
(vs 2,10)**

**He Upholds all things, even now
(vs 3)**

**Suffering Saviour
(vs 3)**

**Resurrection of Christ
(vs 5)**

**He is our intercessor
(vs 3,13)**

**He is coming again
(vs 6)**

JAMES

The Book of Faith

FAITH

WORKS

An extract from a Bible study conducted by Neville Jayasundara

The book of James is well noted among Christians due to a specific reason. We find this book emphasizing "Good works" and making certain statements that has raised many questions.

For an example, James 2:14, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?"

Now immediately, a believer who is reading this book will get the question regarding the doctrine that he has been believing up to now – "Salvation by Faith".

Look at chapter 2 verse 24, it will aggravate the problem now. "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

We know that in all the Pauline epistles we have been studying about salvation by faith. We read in Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"

James says, "Man is not justified by faith only but by works also".

Paul says, "Man is justified by faith".

Furthermore Paul is confirming that in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

So, it is quite reasonable for us to question and see as to whether there is a contradiction in the teaching of the Bible.

Then we must try to understand how both these statements – one made by Paul and one made by James – are true, and how can we reconcile them?

It is not very difficult when we understand it is the usage of words what a person meant by a certain word. When Paul speaks about justification, he is actually speaking about justification before God. But when James is speaking, he is talking about justification before man – how man will accept this person as a righteous person.

James 2: 1, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons."

What does this mean? James is addressing to a group of people who have already placed their faith in the Lord Jesus. So, his arguments are based on faith – faith of the Lord Jesus Christ – those who have faith in the Lord Jesus, how they should behave.

The purpose of the writing of James is not to show us how to get to heaven but rather, how to live on the earth. It is a true reflection of the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount is not given to us as the formula for salvation –

how to be saved, No! – how to live on the face of the earth. If you want the formula of salvation, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved (Acts 16:31)"

Now James was addressing these words to the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad according to 1:1. Then immediately another misconception that is, James is talking to the pure Jewish people. Yes, his primary audience was Jewish but not only Jewish; there is an added qualification, Jewish Christian because in 2:1, he is talking definitely about the faith of the Lord Jesus.

There was a great error among the Jewish people during the time of the Lord Jesus, what was that? They became hypocrites. They knew the Law, they knew everything but in practice they were not right. Definitely they were having a form of godliness and form of religion but denying the power of the Word of God.

So even after them becoming Christian believers there was a greater danger on their part to go into that kind of a system because they were used to that. So we can say, he was writing to the people of Jewish origin who professed faith in Christ.

Jews were well known for their knowledge of the Ten Commandments and all the law but that was not seen in their lives. Same situation could happen to them again after they become believers. To us also it is applicable.

So James' argument is that since we have believed in Christ, now we need to make sure that we live as Christians.

This book can be actually studied in the light of faith – The Faith we can have in our heart.

It is actually a book about faith more than works to show whether the faith has worked in deed in your heart.

James 1:3

Your Faith

James 1:6

Ask in Faith

James 2:1

Faith of the Lord Jesus Christ

James 2:5

Rich in Faith

James 2: 17

Dead Faith

James 2: 14

Faith that cannot save you

James 2:18

Proof of Faith

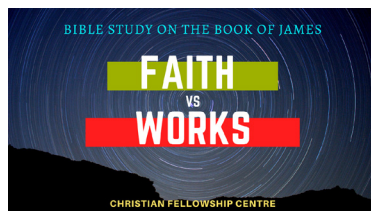
James 2:22

Perfected Faith

James 5:15

Prayer of Faith

[Watch the full series of Bible Studies on The Book of James via YouTube](#)





Do you enjoy your prayer life?

“When we cannot pray as we would, it is good to pray as we can.”

— Charles Spurgeon

Indeed prayer is a joyful experience. Basically it is a spiritual communication with God. It's about, when you talk to God and God responds to you.

We can talk to God about anything that is in our heart because He already knows what we are going to say.

“For your father knows what you need before you ask Him”

Matthew 6:8

God loves each and everyone of us. He wants you to speak to him and to bring all your worries, your cares, your joys and your concerns to him.

Jesus said, “Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do” in John 14: 13

Have you experienced Him in prayer? Keep praying to Lord Jesus Christ and He will answer and even

lead us through every season and make everything beautiful. Our faith in God will build strong and effective relationship with Him.

We often wonder why our prayers are unanswered and so easily give up on praying. But the Bible says, **“Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD”** Psalms 27: 14.

Have faith and wait on the Lord. It takes courage to wait for the Lord. We are talking to the creator of the whole universe and God who can change anything, anywhere and at anytime according to His will.

Pray to him and experience Him in your prayer. He will make a way for you.

God bless you!
Kaneshi De Silva



The Meaning of Life

Why are we here on Earth?

This is an old philosophical question, although there are many approaches to answer it. One being, scientific which promotes the theory of evolution and the other, more reliable, approach is theological which involves the faith that God created human being in His own image and likeness (Genesis 1:27).

We were not created in the likeness of birds or fish or any other wild animal thereof but we were created in resemblance of our creator, thus a feature of the divine is embedded in us and that very reason implies the responsibility we have in God's eyes, we are created like Him, the answer is in us.

All it takes to find that out is to read the Word of God prayerfully. At

the end of all, there is only one thing that matters. That is to fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man; for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil, as it is written in Ecclesiastes 12: 13 & 14.

We have gifts given by God, talents we have been blessed with. Giving meaning to our lives means to employ them in God's service. Our talents and gifts may be useless if not put into His service. After all, the meaning of our existence is to glorify God with whatever and however we can. Giving glory to God is the goal; the form in which we give it to Him is what gives the goal meaning.

- Ephraim Rajkumar -

KOINONIA

AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP (Part 01)

The Greek word "Koinonia" is used eight times in the New Testament. Seven of those are translated as **share**. One other time, it is as **participate**. So, if you put it altogether, this word Koinonia or Fellowship means partaking, contributing, sharing and linking together in common partnership.

Simplified definition for Fellowship would be, "Two people in the same boat rowing in the same direction to reach the same destination with common goals in mind", which is a very practical definition.

But the definition I love the best is as follows:

"An inner unity among believers because of their union with Christ, expressing itself outwardly with one another to accomplish God's will" (Swindoll)

In Acts 2:42, we are introduced to the four anchors of the early church. Those are:

- *The apostles' teaching*
- *Fellowship*
- *The breaking of bread*
- *Prayer*

I want to recommend these four anchors for your spiritual growth. If you don't engage in these four anchors, you won't be stable and steadfast and you certainly will not grow in your spiritual life.

So we will look at two main points about Christian fellowship.

A) The **BASIS** of Christian Fellowship

In 1 John 1: 3 we read that our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. So if I were to break that down, here are the three commonalities that we have in Christian fellowship

- **Common LORD** - Each one of us repented of our sin and we knelt at the foot of the cross and we trusted the Lord Jesus Christ alone to be our personal Lord and Saviour. So we all have a common Lord, The One who loved us and gave Himself for us.
- **Common LIFE** - As a result of having the common Lord, we have a common life. Now by common life, I mean, we have the very life of God flowing through us. That is what is meant by eternal life. Because of our sin, we were cut off from the life of God; we were devoid of God's life. But when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to live inside of us, we are the recipients of divine life; supernatural life; also called eternal life. And because of the indwelling Christ we also can now experience abundant life – a life of fulfilment, meaning and purpose.
- **Common LOVE** - The Bible says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. In other words, God keeps pouring His love into

our hearts. We come to experience this love in deeper and fuller ways day by day. But then that love does not remain inside of us. It spills over to fellow believers and, as you broaden it, to a hurting world.

B) The **BAROMETER** for **Christian fellowship**

How do you measure Christian fellowship? Before we look at the eight ways that we can measure Christian fellowship, we need to define what is meant by the “Universal Church”

The Universal Church

The Universal Church is all born-again believers in the Lord Jesus the past 2000 years, from the day of Pentecost to the present moment, everyone who is born of the Spirit - we are the Universal Church.

“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor 12:13)

INDWELT by the Holy Spirit

Every authentic believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. Romans 8: 9 says, “If any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” So, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

IMMERSED into the body of Christ **(IDENTIFICATION)**

The word “Immersed” means, that we are brought into a very wonderful unity and oneness with fellow believers all across the world

and we are given an identification. We have an identification, a label as it were, we belong to the Lord and we belong to each other.

The Local Church

The Local Church is defined by geography making it easier for believers in that particular locality to come together for the purpose of fellowship. So, every authentic believer must be part of a local church. It has got to be intentional. It’s true that you are a part of the universal church, but it is your responsibility to find a suitable local church very close to where you live so that you can have fellowship with fellow believers. If you are isolated, you do so to your own detriment. It is very unhealthy to live a isolated Christian life. You won’t survive; you simply won’t survive. You need a body of believers. That is the importance of the local church.

Why has God placed, planted us in a local church?

The analogy of an orchestra playing a symphony.

God has composed a symphony called His eternal plan (Ephesians 1:9-11). To play this great symphony He has formed an orchestra called the church. And to each one in the orchestra, God has given a part and an instrument to play called their spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 12). “God’s purpose in all this was to use the church to display His wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 3:10) The purpose of the church is to hold God up to the world and display every aspect of His glorious being for all the world to see.

We are going to look at 8 measurements or purposes as to why you should be part of a local church; why should you have Christian fellowship?

1. To **D**eepen my faith

Your faith will be a shallow faith if you are not a part of a fellowship.

*“Your **faith** in God has become known everywhere” (1 Thess 1:8)*

*“We sent Timothy..... to strengthen and encourage you in your **faith**”
(1 Thess 3:2)*

*“Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your **faith**”
(1 Thess 3:10)*

2. To **D**elight in corporate Worship

“Our worship to God is unacceptable unless we make things right with our brethren” (Matt. 5:23, 24)

3. To **D**emonstrate my love

*“He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him”
(1 John 2:10)*

*“...for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”
(1 John 4:20)*

4. To **D**EVELOP godly character

It is God’s great classroom for the development of Christian character. We are benefited by both, the strengths and weaknesses of the fellowship.

The mature ones help to strengthen and encourage us, while the weaknesses and the less mature give us the opportunity to practice such characteristics as patience, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, etc. (Gal 5:22, 23)

5. To **D**ISCOVER ways to serve God

*“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds”
(Heb 10:24)*

6. To fulfil the **D**IVINE Commission

*“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”
(Matt 28:19, 20)*

*“...in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.”
(Phil 1:5)*

7. To practise the **D**ISCIPLINE of accountability

*“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted”
(Gal 6:1)*

*“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed”
(James 5:16)*

“Nothing can be more cruel than the leniency which abandons others to their sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than the severe reprimand which calls another Christian in one’s community back from the path of sin” (D. Bonhoeffer)

8. To lift up the **DISCOURAGED** and **DEPRESSED**

*“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ”
(Gal 6:2)*

“Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed” (Heb 12:12, 13)

*“Warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone”
(1 Thess 5:14)*

Questions:

- Am I growing in my faith and encouraging others to grow in their faith?
- Am I regularly joining with fellow believers’ to worship the Lord in spirit and truth?
- Am I genuinely loving others in the church in practical ways? Do I have any resentment toward anyone?
- Am I displaying the fruit of the Spirit in all my relationships in the local church?
- Am I diligently serving the Lord in the local church or am I a mere spectator?
- Am I actively involved in the sharing of the Gospel in partnership with fellow believers’?
- Who is holding me accountable in the local church? Am I submitting to godly leadership?
- Am I caring of fellow believers’ and helping ease their burdens?

- Benjamin Devadason -

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CENTRE



(+94) 112581901
(+94) 773595533
cfellowship@sltnet.lk



www.christianfellowshipcentre.com

 CFC Colombo

 Christian Fellowship Centre