



“They are trees planted by streams of water; they bear fruit; their leaves do not wither; in all that they do they prosper.” Ps 1:3

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The Theme for 2014: “LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD” *Deut. 6:5*

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LET THIS CHRISTMAS BE LIFE CHANGING

Will Christmas change our lives? Let us think about that for just a moment. Will our lives be different on December 26th and the days that follow because of Christmas? Will we be happier? Will we have more peace in our life? Will we be better persons? Or will we simply have more things and owe more money and have to work more hours due to the debt accumulated?

If we are completely honest, Christmas does not really change our lives all that much. Largely, we celebrate Christmas as a great holiday; Christmas trees, Santa, decorating the house, getting together with family and friends and remembering what Christmas was like when we were kids. The shopping, the parties, and all of the busy activities that go to make the season are a part of how Christmas goes. But when everything is said and

done, the only real change Christmas brings to our lives is that it makes us a little bit poorer and a lot more tired.

The purpose of Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ, was to bring a change to our lives. “Jesus came so that we may have life, life in all its abundance.” (*Jn 10:10*). Our lives on a day to day basis, our job, our relationships, our families, our spirituality, all should be radically transformed by Christmas. Not transformed by our celebration of Christmas, but transformed by Christmas itself.

When the angels announced the birth of Christ they said, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great **joy** that will be for all the people. For today in the town of David, a Savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **peace** to those on whom his favor rests” (*Lk 2:10-14*). The angels tell us that the arrival of Christ in our world, Christmas, is to be joyful, it should be something that helps to take away our fears, and it should bring us peace. Does Christmas quell our fears and brings us true joy and peace? No? But it should and it can. Christmas can change our lives if we will allow it to happen.

Christmas will change our lives if we allow ourselves to experience genuine LOVE. God is love. We have all heard that said many, many times. The Apostle John wrote those words in his first letter to the Christian community. “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, because God is love.” (*I Jn 4:7-8*).

At Christmas we celebrate God becoming flesh, becoming a man so that he could free all men from the power and penalty of sin. God became a man because he loves us. He became a man so that he could show us the way to Him.

There once was a farmer. One winter evening, just before dark, he heard something hit the bay window in the dining room. He went to investigate and saw a small bird flying into the window repeatedly. Farther out in the yard he saw a whole flock of little songbirds. He realized that these were birds migrating south and they had been caught by an early snowfall. They were cold and scratching through the thin snow in search of food. The one bird had seen the light and had tried to get into the house where it was warm. The farmer had an idea: He had a large barn where the birds would be safe and warm and there was plenty of hay on the floor so they could find seed. He put on his coat to go out and open the barn doors. He did... but the birds did not come in. He turned on a light hoping that would attract them. No success. He sprinkled seed on the ground to make a path for them to follow. They ate some but did not come close to the barn. Fearing for their safety, he decided to take more drastic measures. He planned to circle around behind the flock and chase them into the barn. **THAT TOO DIDN'T WORK!** After running himself tired, he dropped to his knees. Finally a thought hit him--- "If only I were a bird. Then I could tell them about the warm barn and the seed. I could save their lives."

That's what Christmas is: Jesus becoming one of us so that we can understand God's plan. Jesus becoming one of us, so that He can tell us where to find safety. Jesus becoming one of us so that He can save us. In Christmas – God becoming man – we get to experience genuine love. "For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him." (*Jn 3:16-17*).

God loved us so much that he gave His Son, not to condemn us but to save us. That's an amazing love. Christmas changes our lives by allowing us to experience genuine love and by providing us with lasting PEACE. One of the great things about Christmas is that, if we truly accept in faith what God gave us, His Son, then we can experience peace... Peace with GOD. "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," (*Rom 5:1*).

Jesus; that baby born in a barn and laid to rest in a manger, came so that we could have peace with God. Sin separates us from God. Sin puts us at odds with God but Jesus came in order to pay for our sins. He came in order to bring us forgiveness. His death upon the cross paid the penalty for our sins. When the relationship between man and God is fixed, we then experience peace with God, peace with others and peace with ourselves. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth.” (*Jn 1:14*). Jesus, full of grace and truth, came from the father, he became one of us so that he could pay for our sins and restore the relationship we were created to have with God. His birth, his death and his resurrection give us purpose in our lives. And in Christmas, Jesus provided the way for us to know God. We are given hope and a purpose at Christmas.

Conclusion: How does Christmas change my life?

It is not through the gifts or the memories made. It is not through the time spent with family and friends. It is not through any of the celebrations of the holiday. Christmas, as we celebrate it does not change our lives. But Christmas – as the birth of Christ, the Son of God made flesh, the birth of Jesus – Immanuel – God with us, changes our lives by - allowing us to experience genuine love, by providing us with lasting joy and peace and giving us a purpose in life.

This Christmas let us allow Christ to be the reason for and the center of Christmas and let’s all go meet our Blessed Mother, lead her to the manger of our heart and beg her to lay the Divine Infant in it. AMEN.

- *The Core Team*

ARE WE BUSY? SEEK FIRST GOD’S KINGDOM...

Well, it is a real struggle to get out of bed every morning; though I always follow my wife, and morning after morning, try and spend as much time in prayer and scripture as possible. Of course there are days when I enjoy generously in solitude with the Lord and there are many days in which my

time with the Lord is short, hasty and haphazard. The day I know I had sufficient time in the morning, I experience genuine communion with God. Of course, there is nothing like that wonderful experience, of being, praying and spending time with the Lord early in the morning. For quite some time, and quite many years, I fell rather quickly from the spiritual mountaintop to the real world of chaotic rushing in the morning to get our sons to school, wife and myself to work on time and hustle bustle of life compounded with prayer community service and involvement.

Why do we get caught up in the rush of life when we know stillness is so rewarding? One obvious answer seems to be that we are victims of the culture of success and competitiveness that pervades our generation. Our life style, standard of living, our jobs, positions, our standing in the society, top grades in academics for our children, etc. We buy good villas, plots or flats we can afford and then work long hours to make the loan payments. We enroll our children in sports, and music lessons because we want them to be the brightest and the best. We work long and hard, come home to drive our kids around to multitudes of activities, and then fall asleep at night without even trying to carve out some quiet time with the God of all creation who blessed us with His mercies which are new every morning. But there are other reasons to consider for our constant frenzy of activity. We are afraid for our children. We want to construct a safe, productive life for them in a world that seems dangerous and uncertain. So we run, searching for meaning and safety, determined that our children will rise above the culture that surrounds us.

Also, busyness makes us feel important. Ask how our jobs are going, and frequently we will talk about how busy we are. This seems to offer a sense of job security. If we are busy, we must be needed. Likewise, in a broader sense, busy family and church lives assure us we are needed. People depend on us. We are working hard for God, community, church, ministries, etc. Most important, sometimes we stay busy because we don't really want to have time to think. When families are involved in a constant whirlwind of activity, they don't have to communicate. Problems can be pushed below the surface because there is no time to deal with them. With distorted logic, we think if we don't talk about these problems, they must not exist. We may have good jobs, prosperity, lovely car and talented

children, but we construct a false sense of security concerning the health of our families.

What are the results of chronic busyness? Experts say, the frenetic pace of activity we maintain in our families can lead to adverse stress reactions such as domestic violence and uncontrolled anger. "For example," the expert says, "a dad commutes an hour to and from work each day. He has a stressful day at work. Then he comes home and sees that his teenage son has neglected to follow routine daily instructions given to him. He blows up and takes out the built-up frustration from his busy day on his son."

Constant busyness also inhibits our children's abilities to entertain themselves. They forget how to simply be still, and they claim to be bored if they're not moving from one activity to the next. Many times children want to spend time with their parents instead of going somewhere. I believe teenagers even want to spend more time with their parents than we think they do. They find their security in a stable, rather predictable family life instead of a constant rush of activities.

Husbands and wives can become strangers to each other if they let their busy lives prevent them from spending time with each other. I have a friend who used to work 12--14 hours a day in the hospitality industry. He says he came home from work one night and realized he didn't even know his wife anymore. He quit his job and began to re-evaluate his lifestyle and took up another job where in he could spend more time with his wife and two children.

Making a marriage last a lifetime requires intimate communication, not just physically but emotionally and spiritually. Through intimacy, husbands and wives become "one flesh" as God designed. Without intimacy, they are merely two people living in the same house. Not only does compulsive activity cause us to become strangers to our husbands and wives, but God Himself becomes a stranger to us. Tragically, when we lose sight of who God is, we begin subconsciously reshaping Him in our image, making Him into something that can fit into our lifestyle.

We play mental games with ourselves, believing things like, "It is OK that I cannot tithe because I would not be able to make my loan payment if I did." Or "God understands why I do not pray or read my Bible as much as I used to. I have long working hours and a family to take care." "God knows why I am irritable with my children. I had a tough day at work."

Just as a good marriage requires intimacy, a growing relationship with God requires intimacy as well. Intimacy with our Heavenly Father will not grow if we don't take the time to communicate with Him. Without an intimate relationship with God, Christians are not distinguishable from secular culture. We are defined simply by church and prayer community attendance and involvement instead of who we are as children of Heavenly Father.

Our attempts to be successful, raise gifted children, and maintain a sense of security and value are futile if they are rooted in physical realms instead of spiritual ones. Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ... Seek first his kingdom, and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (*Matt 6:25, 33*).

Is your family too busy? Experts say your family might be too busy if parents or children are experiencing increased irritability and fatigue. Parents, do you truly know your children? What are their friends' names? What are their favorite subjects in school? What special challenges are they dealing with right now? How much time they spend inside the house and outside? What is their favorite pass time and what are they involved in? Are they busy on lap tops, social networking, constantly on mobiles messaging, face book etc. If you do not know the answers to these questions, you may not be spending enough time with your children. Another indication that your family may be too busy is if everyone's priorities are based outside the home. If work, school, or outside activities are more important to family members than their relationships to God and the health of the family, priorities are misplaced.

How can we eliminate misplaced busyness and put God's work first?

Some simple steps will help. Let us analyze our daily activity and see where we spend our time and energy and what are our priorities and how they help us and our family, community and society?

First, turn off the TV. For the last 36 days I have watched the TV for just an hour and realized that how much time I have for myself, family and community. We may not realize how much time we waste sitting in front of a television set. Keep a journal of your family's viewing habits for one week. You may be shocked at the hours your family could reclaim if the TV was turned off. If we are unable to turn off the TV completely, let us minimize watching. Second, re-examine the activities in which your children are involved. Being on a sports team is great. Dance and activity classes are wonderful. Learning to play a musical instrument is valuable. But does your child need to be doing all these simultaneously? The key is balance. If you build more free time into your children's lives, they can learn to initiate fun and learning according to their interests. Then all of you can make better choices about activities in which to be involved. Third, commit as a family to stay home together at least two to three evenings a week. Eat supper at the table, talk, or play board games. Put your mobiles on silence mode. Let the answering machine catch the phone calls. Allow the family the time to know one another, pray together, play together, laugh and let go.

Finally, we must realize that God most often speaks to us in what the Bible describes as a gentle whisper. The tired and frustrated prophet Elijah complained to God that his enemies were trying to kill him. "The Lord said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper" (*1 Kings 19:11-12*). Most of the time, the voice of God is a whisper, not a roar.

As the scripture says, "The still small voice - or the interior or inner voice,

as it is also called - is the preferred and most valuable form of individualized communication for God's purposes. God usually addresses individually those who walk with him in a mature, personal relationship using this inner voice, proclaiming and showing forth the reality of the kingdom of God as they go."

In our busyness we want God to get our attention in a dramatic way. But instead of looking for a fire or an earthquake, we should be still and listen for the whisper of God. As we hear the whispers of God, we get to know Him better. The better we know God, the more transformed our lives become. We are shaped into His image instead of vainly attempting to shape Him into ours. We discover value in being children of God instead of judging ourselves by the culture in which we live. May the Grace and Peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit guide and lead us to live a balanced, healthy, joy filled and fruitful Christian life.

- *Felix Menezes*

COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION! Everyone discusses it, studies it, practices it, some even spend money to be experts in communications. Even big and small companies spend money to be thorough in this department so as to perform well individually or in their business. The world has invented sophisticated gadgets to make communication perfect, faster and safer.

But despite the improved Communications skills, we may feel, like one famous Author once wrote "I know, that you believe you understood what you think I said, but I am sure you realize, that what you heard is not what I meant."

A good communication involves more than good speaking. It also requires very good listening. It is common sense that if we listen well we understand well and do well and do the right way, which means we have success in what we do.

Jesus - the Master Communicator was very often misunderstood. Jesus is the Truth; He always spoke the truth and spoke very clearly. But we, the hearers jumbled up His message, rejected it or turned a deaf ear to His message.

(Jn 8:43)- Jesus himself asks us this question “**why do you not understand what I say?**” And Jesus Himself answers this question in the following line “**because you are not able to listen to my Word.**” Why were there such poor listeners? Or even now, why are there such poor listeners or why are we such poor listeners? Is it because Jesus failed to communicate or that Jesus is a bad communicator? **No**, not because Jesus failed to communicate, but because the listeners failed to hear the Truth. And why the Truth not heard? Because His truth made us face up to the need to change. The Change in social life, the way we live – our worldly life, our friends circle where we compete with the standard they live, sometimes even sacrifice to so many things, to live the Truth.

At times you hear some brothers or sisters saying “God is getting through to me” Is it that God communicates better to that brother or sister? No, because that brother or sister **HEARS THE WORD AND WILLINGLY CHANGES TO WHAT JESUS SAYS**. We have to be like little Samuel (***1 Sam3:1-10***) – Samuel’s response to God’s call was, “**SPEAK LORD FOR YOUR SERVANT LISTENS**”. We need to be like Samuel, willing to pause in the midst of our life's turmoil and hear the voice of our Lord. The Lord speaks to us through His appointed or anointed servants, His disciples,– priests, through missions - the Word of God spoken vibrantly and more precisely, His written word- the Scriptures. But do we listen to them or to His word?

We need to listen to God and make listening to God our best Communicating skills. God wants to hear you and me say to Him ‘speak Lord I am listening’. And we can hear His voice only if we pray and read the Word of God and wait on Him. Pray and pray and wait on Him to hear Him speak. More often we keep talking and talking while He patiently listens to us, but do we wait on Him to hear what He has to say?. God communicates with us through His Holy Spirit. All scriptures are true forever. Scriptures cannot be wrong or false. Men in the past or even now

try to change or distort the Word but God's Word is indestructible, timeless and trans-cultural giving guidance to all people who read and listen to Him. It does not need to be rewritten but only to be gratefully embraced as Truth and obediently put into practice. **Abide in His word for His Word is Truth and the Truth will set us free!** So let us make listening to God our best Communicating skill.

- *Renato Gomes*

A QUICK JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

We are now all familiar with this title 'A QUICK JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE' as almost all of the MIPC prayer group members have responded with enthusiasm and registered for the Bible Study Course.

This 8 week course is structured to give us a general overview of the Salvation history, taking us through the Bloodline of Jesus from Genesis to Acts of the Apostles, a quick helicopter ride so to say, over the history of God's plan for man's salvation, known as the 'Narrative thread' concentrating on the specific chapters from 14 narrative books.

Divided into 8 sessions, each session with a distinct theme and colour, Jeff Cavins introduces each of these sessions in his inimitable style, to drive home the most important events of that period that makes the study both interesting and enjoyable. Each session is divided into 3 parts; an overview of previous week, viewing of the DVD for the day's session, and finally the group discussions.

Wanting to have a personal experience of a Bible Study Course, a small group of 11 parishioners approached the parish priest for his advice and permission. His appreciation and willingness to support with a place to assemble was a step further to achieving this dream. The journey was not without hurdles but commitment and perseverance eventually paid off. 8 weeks later it was like a dream come true. The Bible Study is now being conducted for all Catechists and the MIPC Prayer Group. Interest amongst parishioners is growing. There is a request to a conduct bible study for teens and the youth which we hope would also be possible in the near future.

In conclusion I would say, though the 8 week journey was short and quick, the experience is beyond measure and surely one that would last a lifetime.

- *Bible Study facilitators*

Feedback on “A Quick Journey through the Bible”

On the whole, the Bible Study was good and made me to think and retrospect as to how good God is and how perfectly he planned creation, from one generation to another in the form of a “story”, which through this Bible Study was quite interesting to understand, though I missed three sessions, I made up for it these holidays, but will miss the next due to the ongoing novena of St. Francis Xavier. Thanks & God Bless (*Savio Martyres*)

It has been a very good experience to me to get deeper knowledge of the Word of God. To be sincere, before I knew the bible just for knowing sake, I had never put my heart in to it while reading it and at times I found very difficult to teach children before I was not sure of some simple things. When I joined prayer meeting I did not know there was a bible study just going to begin. since long I wanted to join prayer meeting but as usual obstacles, duty, kids, etc, etc. I joined the prayer meeting just the first day of bible study and I was really so happy, I thought this is what I wanted. I thank you Lord for giving me this beautiful opportunity. I just wanted somewhere the start button to press, and it happened, and definitely it will continue and the interest will grow. Thanks you so much for all your support and help. (*Elizabeth*)

Following is my experience & knowledge received from the Bible Study: The Bible Study and Timeline is a Gift from God. We learn more about the stories in the Old Testament about God's Kingdom. How God has created the Universe and Mankind in his own likeness and image. How Adam & Eve sin against God and we also are in the same boat today. We can now understand so much of Salvation history and sacraments come alive in our daily life. Through this Bible Study we can Trust God more and more and know His commandments and put into practice in our daily life. Special God Bless to all the MIPC Core Group members for giving us

this opportunity to do this Bible Study for all the members. Thanks & God Bless you (*Joseph Concessao*)

Thank you very much for regularly sending material for our Bible study course. I feel really blessed for getting this opportunity. It has greatly helped me to get a better understanding of the Bible. In the past I made many attempts to read the Bible but did not find the continuity or meaning, so I used to discontinue reading. This Bible Study course helped me to get a continuity in the narrations, which helped me to get a better understanding. I got more insights. It has made me realize and understand God's great love for his children and the lengths He goes to, to fulfill His promises. It has made me realise that like the Israelites, I fail so often to trust in our God, but he is there ready to forgive and help me to go forward, if I repent. Now the Bible has become more meaningful that I prefer to read and understand, than spend my leisure time in reading other secular literature. Regards (*Lily*)

Peace of Christ be with you. Thank you for the answers of Bible Study of session 6 and 7. For me, Bible Study has been interesting from the beginning. Clippings are more informative. It has increased the thirst of reading Bible and to know more about it. It helped for a deeper experience and understanding. Sometimes I felt that time is not sufficient to read and it was too much. But at the same time, I have enjoyed every class, as God speaks to us through these scriptures. Brother, being our mentor, your guidance, advice and answers are also helpful. I have decided to continue reading the Scripture readings with the same spirit. Regards & Prayers, (*Anitha*)

First of all I thank MIPC for conducting this study. I have read the Bible part by part and never had such an experience as I go through this helicopter ride. There are a lot of things I have come across in the Old Testament. First of all my life also is like the Israelites, sometime in wilderness, desert wondering, exile then return to the Lord and again same cycle starts from the beginning. I have grumbled, disobeyed, idol worship like spending more time in watching TV, browsing on internet, giving importance to materialistic world than Prayer. When hard storms hit in my life my prayer life becomes powerful for some days and other times it is

like lukewarm. Bible study helped me i) to broaden my insight to understand better and made me to realize my shortcomings and failures. ii) To put trust in God in all situations, especially to praise and thank Him in hard times. iii) while reading I was eager to know the events taking place in every period iv) it also taught me to change my ways and live the Word. v) I came to know many do's and don'ts. vi) I could share my experience with children reminding them very often to say their daily prayers and to read the word. vii) I also send them Bible verses to recite it and to put trust in the Lord in their difficulties. (*Jacintha*)

Thank you for all your hard work and helping us to grow in God's Kingdom. I have given below a small sharing on my Bible study. Though I read and knew many of the Bible books, it was little difficult for me to understand. This course has helped me to connect the different stories of the Bible and see how it systematically fits into God's plan of salvation. This programme also teaches the way that is easy to remember. It helps to read the scripture in a systematic way and check where I stand today. It also clearly shows how God's kingdom continues in the church today and our responsibilities to spread it to others. I sincerely pray that our God may always help us to keep our presence in Him and lead us into His direction. Thank you and God bless you (*Walter*)

Thank you for your email. Bible study is very good. It has helped me to understand the Old Testament. Hope to read and understand the Word of God properly in the near future. God bless. Regards, (*Felix*)



The Bible Quiz on the Book of Deuteronomy received a warm response, but the ONLY all correct entry was by **Mrs. Ethel Fernandes**. Hearty congratulations to her for this effort.

We sincerely thank all who sent in their answers for the same and urge you to continue to participate in large numbers.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Here are 10 Christmas Bible quiz questions for our children to think about and answer.

Many of these are basic knowledge questions, so we hope to have a very good response.

1. Who told Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem?
2. Who told Joseph the baby's name was to be Jesus?
3. Can you list 5 names of Jesus found in the Bible
4. What are the meanings of the names Jesus and Emmanuel?
5. The shepherds and the wise men went to see Jesus. Which group followed a star and which group went to find the baby because an angel told them where to look?
6. When the shepherds went looking for Jesus, what was the sign they were to look for?
7. Herod asked the wise men to inform him where the baby Jesus was. Why does the Bible say he wanted to know this?
8. What are the three gifts which are mentioned in the Bible as being given by the wise men?
9. What is the name of the priest who was told he would not die until he saw the Savior?
10. Two of the four Gospels do not mention the birth of Christ. Which two are these?



Romans 15:13

PRAY THE 6.30 AM CALL



***MIPC Prayer Meeting: Every Thursday at 8:00 pm in the Parish Hall.
General Intercessory Meeting: Last Monday of every month at 8:00 pm.
Community Mass: Every 1st and 3rd Friday at 8.30 a.m.***