

July - September 2015

# ARMOR OF GOD

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH



## The Nature of Man

The Potter & The Clay • How to Have a More Effective Prayer • The Need to Forgive



## The Feast of Tabernacles 2015

The Church of God International in the Philippines celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in three locations this year. These were in Tagaytay City (where the bulk of the brethren from Luzon and Visayas converged); Lanao del Norte in Mindanao and Iloilo City in Western Visayas. To use an already worn out expression, it definitely was “the best feast ever”. Attendance was high in all locations, and several baptisms were made in Mindanao and Tagaytay City.

It is important to note that all of God's festivals are to be kept earnestly whenever their season comes. You cannot keep one and do away with the rest because the meanings are inter-related. All seven of them reveal the step by step sequence of God's over-all plan for mankind. While they are mentioned in some sections of the Bible – the main list of these annual festivals are found in Deuteronomy 16 and Leviticus 23.

However, one festival that seems to “stand out” from among the seven is the Feast of Tabernacles. Why is this so? If duration is what makes it appear “special”, the Days of Unleavened Bread is also kept with the same number of days—seven. Definitely the Feast of Tabernacles is not “superior” compared to other feast days. It only happens to be the only festival that require the observers to celebrate it away from their homes, and move to a place that God has chosen (Deut. 16:13-15; Deut. 14:26) - this time through a decision by the church ministry based on the “binding and loosing” principle granted by Christ (Mat. 16:19).

Truly, it is one joyful occasion. During this season, the feast keepers are to spend the tithe money they saved for the purpose - for anything that will make them joyful during the entire festival. This is one feast where God commanded His people to rejoice and be extra generous to those who have

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## ARMOR OF GOD

July - September 2015 • Circulation: 20,000

The **Armor of God** magazine is published by The Church of God International (Philippines). It is made possible through the freely given tithes and offerings of members and fellow laborers of **The Church of God International**.

**Publisher:** Rene D. Corpuz

**Editor-in-Chief:** Eleno S. Mellomida

**Writers:** Winston S. Co

Ferdie S. Padilla

**Layout:** Cornelius L. Mellomida

### PHILIPPINES

Church of God International, P.O. Box 2450  
MCPO Makati City, Metro Manila 1264 Philippines  
Phone: (632) 995-0294 • Fax: (632) 995-0577  
Website: <http://www.cgiphils.org>  
E-mail: [cgiphils@yahoo.com](mailto:cgiphils@yahoo.com)  
Mobile: (63917) 811-6365

### UNITED STATES

Church of God International  
P.O. Box 2525 Tyler, TX 75710  
Phone: (903) 939-2929  
Website: <http://www.cgi.org>  
E-mail: [info@cgi.org](mailto:info@cgi.org)

### AUSTRALIA

Church of God International  
P.O. Box 171 Boonah, QLD 4310  
Phone: 011-61-7-5463-2949  
E-mail: [h-thaupt@bigpond.com](mailto:h-thaupt@bigpond.com)

### CANADA

Church of God International, 1299 Oxford St. East  
P.O. Box 33034 London, Ontario N5Y 5L4  
Phone: (519) 741-0455  
Website: <http://www.cgicanada.org>  
E-mail: [johncoish@rogers.com](mailto:johncoish@rogers.com)

### JAMAICA

Church of God International,  
P.O. Box 776 Kingston 19 Jamaica  
Phone: 1-876-925-2260

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# The Nature of Man

by Winston S. Co

Many have attempted to draw up theories, philosophies and theologies on the nature of man – yet most have floundered to come up with satisfactory explanation about what man really is. What is man? What is man made of? What is his nature? Is the nature of man mysterious? If it is, can it be unlocked? Is man here today and tomorrow fades away? Or does he have a worthwhile purpose out of his temporary existence?

To the wise of this world, including the majority who are piously devoted to the Christian faith, these are confounding questions - and the answers are likely foreign to their understanding. Despite knowledge and information apparently “bursting to the seams”, mankind is still groping in the dark regarding his own nature. But there is an impeccable source of information about man. And this article will help you uncover the nature, the composition and the whole being of man.

## What is Man?

The nature of man is not a mystery. Man is the crowning glory of God's creation. God has revealed His master plan for mankind in the pages of the Bible - from Genesis to Revelation.

While many have drawn up theories through secular and scientific methodology about man's nature, yet the only source of profound understanding on the subject is the revealed knowledge from the Word of God.

The first question is “What is man?” Man is a creation of God. Mankind was created on the sixth (6th) day of creation. Of all God's creation, man alone is special. God prepared man's habitat for 5 days before creating him on the sixth day. The entire creation and fashioning of earth is for man. The atmosphere, vegetation and animal life are part of the ecology that sustains human life. The centerpiece, pride and joy of God's creation is man.

Man is unique. All living things were created after its own kind; except man who is fashioned in the image and likeness of the Creator – the God kind. Notice: Then

God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:26-27).

The Hebrew word for man is ‘Adam’. Man is called ‘Adam’ in the Scripture which means “ruddy or redness”. It refers to “Red Earth” or simply called “Clay”. Man is literally made from the dust of the earth – clay to be more specific. “The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” (Genesis 2:7)

Of all the creations, it is only man who God breathed into the nostrils before he became a living being. The spirit – the life source – that God puts in man makes him unique. It endowed him with intellect, reason, logic, feeling, emotion and creativity including a high functioning capability and competence.

Therefore to be alive, to be self-aware, conscious, active, functioning and sustaining is to be like God. What we are experiencing today – this physical mortal life – this awareness – is a foretaste, a preview of what God is like. This is the gift that God has endowed upon mankind. Man created in God's image and likeness is not only talking about shape and form or composition. Rather, it talks about the functioning capacity and the ultimate potential of mankind. Hence, God gave governance and dominion over the whole earth to man (Genesis 1:28).

## The Nature of Man

Man is composed of physical materials from the ground. Almost 99% of the mass of the human body is made up of six elements: oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium, and phosphorus. Only about 0.85% is composed of another five elements: potassium, sulfur, sodium, chlorine, and magnesium. All of the elements needed for life are relatively 'common in the earth's crust – the clay. Therefore, we are made from dust and at death we return to dust (Genesis 3:19).

Man is composed of physical materials, of flesh and blood, weak, perishable, mortal. Man's construction and composition is made inferior or lower than the angels. Angels are powerful, spirit beings compared to mankind. The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 8:4-5: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor." Indeed, human beings are created lower than the angels.

## The Composition of Man

The Bible says man is fashioned in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27). God formed man from the dust of the ground. From dust comes man and from dust he returns (Genesis 3:19). When Adam was first formed, he was lifeless – it was just a body.

Therefore man – his material body – is made from the dust of the earth. It is physical, material, composed of matter – clay to be exact. The creation process of man is recorded in Genesis 2:7. The body that was formed from the dust of the ground was inanimate and lifeless.

## Breath of Life

When God blew into the man's nostril the breath of life, he lived. God gave it life and the body became alive. Genesis 2:7 says: And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Breath in Hebrew is *nshamah* which means puff or wind. When the breath of the Almighty entered into Adam it gave life, vitality and intelligence. Then Adam became a living soul. Soul is *nephesh* in Hebrew which means living being. *Nephesh* or living being refers to all animals that have breathe and life in them, including man. Job clarified: The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life (Job 33:4).

Job 32:8 further declares: But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him

understanding. The verse defines breath of the Almighty as the spirit in man. The Hebrew word for spirit is "*Ruach*" and "*pneuma*" in Greek meaning wind, puff or breath in English. Therefore, in scriptural context the spirit in man is synonymous to the breath of God - the life-giving agent in man.

## Understanding Man's Nature

The nature of man is defined in Genesis 2:7: "And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." The scripture is clear that Adam was made from the dust of the earth (the body) and the breath of God (the spirit) gave him life. The man became a living being (the soul).

Now, let us express the nature of man in a simple equation:

$$\text{Adam} = \text{Body} \\ \text{Breath of God} = \text{Spirit in Man}$$

Therefore:

$$\text{Body} + \text{Spirit} = \text{Soul}$$

## Is the Soul Immortal?

The immortality of the soul is not an original Christian concept. The Bible does not teach about the immortality of the soul. The Bible plainly teaches that the soul that sins it shall die (Ezekiel 18:4).

The principle of this fundamental truth can be found in the writings of the apostle Paul: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23). The penalty of sin is death, not souls infinitely tormented for eternity in hell fire. The scripture clearly tells us that everlasting life is a gift from God. Since eternal life is a gift to the faithful, it is not something anyone possesses inherently at birth.

Think about it, if man has an immortal component that continues to live after the physical death, then mankind already possessed the power of immortality within himself. Therefore, if one has an immortal soul that lives on after death he does not need Christ – because he inherently has eternal life already.

But, Jesus in John 3:16 said that only those who believe in Him will have everlasting life – because eternal life or immortality is a gift! Eternal life is a gift and that the gift is pre-conditioned upon accepting Christ as our personal savior.

In Matthew 10:28, Jesus declared, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.

Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” Did Jesus suggest the possibility of an immortal soul? On the contrary, Jesus said both the body and the soul can be destroyed. Therefore, the soul is not immortal.

### **What is Death?**

What happens at death? Death is the cessation of life. Jesus said: The spirit gives life, the body counts for nothing. (John 6:63). The spirit is the life source. Death is the result when the breath of life is taken away from a person. The scripture describes this as breathing his last. Job 14:10 “But a man dies and is laid low; he breathes his last and is no more.”

Again, consider Job 34:14-15; “If He set his heart upon himself, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh shall perish together. And man shall turn again unto dust.”

Psalms 104:29: “When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.” When God takes away the breath of life the man dies and the life source returns to God who gave it. The spirit is in safe keep with God until God gives it back at the resurrection. The bible says that once the body is dead, consciousness ceases. Apart from the body, the spirit does not have its own consciousness. In Ecclesiastes 9:5 we read that the ‘dead knows nothing.’

Therefore, the equation for death is expressed as:

$$\text{Soul} - \text{Breath/Spirit} = \text{Death}$$

### **Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the spirit of God as distinguished from the spirit in man (1 Corinthians 2:6-16). However, our human spirit can be infused with God's Holy Spirit through the process of baptism and the laying on of hands (Acts 2:38). This fusion or in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit is the hallmark of a true Christian in which the Holy Spirit becomes our earnest deposit of eternal inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14).

The formula for someone with the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit is:

$$\text{Body} + (\text{Spirit in Man} + \text{Holy Spirit}) = \text{True Christians}$$

### **Man's Ultimate Destiny**

The scripture says we are to become children of God to share and participate in the divine glory (2 Peter 1:3-

4; 2 Timothy 2:10; Philippians 3:20-21).

The ultimate goal and destiny of man – the reason for the entire creation – is the bringing forth of the Children of God. This is the gospel of the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached. The Kingdom of God is a kingdom composed of God-like beings (Hebrews 2:10-11).

This glorification happens at the resurrection. The change happens at the resurrection of the saints. Notice 1 Corinthians 15:35-50. At the resurrection, the perishable to imperishable and the mortal is changed to immortality. The saints will be given a spiritual body. Immortality and everlasting life is a gift and this gift is given to the children of God at the second advent of Christ. The Apostle Paul declared in Romans 8:16 “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.”

Therefore, the equation for the children of God is:

$$(\text{Spirit in Man} + \text{Holy Spirit}) + \text{Spiritual Body} = \text{Glorified Children of God}$$

### **Summation**

What is the nature of man? The basic composition of man as revealed in Genesis is Body + Spirit in Man = Soul. Any other assumption or interpretation that does not agree with this equation is not biblical and is therefore wrong.

What is exciting and inspiring is that when our spirit is joined with the Holy Spirit and eventually given a spiritual body, then our hope would come true (Spirit in man + Holy Spirit) + Spiritual Body = Spiritual Children of God. We would have become spiritual children of God adopted into the Kingdom He has prepared for us.

Therefore the simple equations of man are:

$$\text{Body} + \text{Spirit in Man} = \text{Soul}$$

$$\text{Soul} - \text{Spirit in Man (Breath)} = \text{Death (dead lifeless body)}$$

$$\text{Body} + (\text{Spirit in Man} + \text{Holy Spirit}) = \text{True Christians}$$

$$(\text{Spirit in Man} + \text{Holy Spirit}) + \text{Spiritual Body} = \text{Glorified Children of God}$$

That is glorious! **AG**



# The Potter & The Clay

by Eleno S. Mellomida



**P**ot-making is an ancient occupation. It is not a difficult livelihood because the materials are easily available and the tools needed are minimal. In olden times bare hands were used to form the desired shape of the clay. Today, pot making has modernize its production using advance technology to come up with exquisitely designed—highly priced earthenwares.

The Bible compared God to a potter. Isaiah wrote: Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand (Isaiah 64:8). And God has the sole prerogative to form mankind the way He wanted it to look like (Rom. 9:20). In Genesis 2:7 God formed man out of the dust of the ground. Adam, the first man, means “red clay”. God formed the first man and woman into His own image and likeness using clay (Gen. 2:7).

## God the Molder

However, even if man has already been formed after the image and likeness of God, he is

still physical and material in nature. He does not possess the complete composition of a God. Jesus said “God is a Spirit... (John 4:24), and He alone has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16); yet man is mortal, subject to death and decay (Eccl. 3:20). Thus, the first stage of man's creation is limited to the physical and material aspects only. The man whom God created is not yet a complete representation of the entirety of God's image and likeness.

The divine nature, which only God possesses at this time, has not been infused yet into the nature of man at this stage. Man's completion into becoming the image and likeness of God will only happen when he is “born again” as a spirit-composed divine son of God. And Jesus defined in terms unmistakable the state of the “born again” saying, “Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:7-8); and no one has yet

attain that status, except Jesus (Col. 1:18). Aside from man's physical appearance, what more does he need then to completely attain the image and likeness of God?

It is unfortunate that from the moment of man's awareness, he has been highly influenced by the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the great dragon, the serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; Rev. 12:9; 20:3). What then is God's formula to put an end to the phenomenon? How will God pursue the unfinished “portion” which man needed to be able attain to the full measure of becoming like God? Does He have a plan for this? Definitely He has!

## The Conversion Process

He will start working on the conversion of man's nature. From wickedness to righteousness, from human to divine. God wrote the 10 commandments with His fingers on tablets of stone, but now He will write it in the hearts and mind of man. Notice: “This is the covenant

that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them," then He adds, "their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." (Hebrews 10:16-17). And God will use His Spirit to ensure that what is written in man's heart will be continually refreshed time and time again everytime man is confronted with choices that has something to do with submitting to God's will or defying them.

To be molded into God's image and likeness, man needs to internalize God's law. The law serves as a mold. And God's law is a reflection of His character; so that when man reaches the kind of maturity attuned to God's standard through faithful observance of His laws, he is about to acquire the nature of God and eventually be born into God's family by a complete change from mortal to immortality (1 Cor. 15:51-52) enabling him to become a full-pledged member of the God family.

God is hands-on in creating His most important masterpiece. The word "form" in Gen. 2:7 is "*yatsar*" in Hebrew. It means "mold into a form and squeeze into a shape", just as a potter would – complete hands-on application to produce the intended design of the product. God's law is like a mold. Since His law is written by His own fingers; so in a way we are indirectly shaped by His hands. We then are supposed to be soft and pliable like a clay.

So, how will the potter ensure that the clay hardens to its desired form? He will expose it to heat - trials. Fiery trials served as an 'oven' to harden one's mettle in conformity with God's mind. Peter said: In this you greatly rejoice,

though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 1:6-7). Trials are necessary tools to form the needed shape of the clay (Christian) so that when exposed to the heat, the clay (Christian) should not move out of the mold allowing it to be formed in accordance with the design of the potter.

## **Two Characteristics of Clay and Its Relation to Christians**

### **• Clay is common and not of high value**

Why of all things did God use clay to create the most important "piece" of creation? Clay, as a material, is easily available and of little value until converted and processed into some expensive earthenwares.

Comparatively speaking, regardless of how one personally rates himself, here's Paul's assessment, "For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself (Gal. 6:3).

In like manner, God tells us about the category of people He is calling to be part of His church. 1 Cor. 26-29 reads: "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the

world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence."

These are the kind of "materials" God intends to convert into glorified sons and daughters of His. It's like creating something valuable out of "cheap" materials. The best minds, those with impressive credentials, with bold letters after their names to reveal their impressive credentials – will find it hard to consider and believe the God of the Bible. Their career and status make it hard to allow the truth of God to occupy a section in their minds. That's why most of the respondents of the truth are those under the "simple minded" bracket. The Bible says not everyone are of the "noble and mighty" category.

### **• Clay is soft, compliant, pliable, elastic, workable, flexible, squeezable, bendable, non-resistant – easy to form.**

One of the famous Christian song that regularly reverberates within the walls of Christian congregations is "Amazing Grace". The next line says "that saved a wretch like me". Followers of Christ will look at God's mirror – the Bible – then examine themselves – and find the same condition Paul rated himself in Rom. 7:24 when he admitted, "O wretched man that I am..." (wretched - *gk. talaiporos* - miserable - despondent, dejected, woeful).

Perhaps, the reader may have already 'arrived' at the highest level of accomplishment in life, and so does the apostle Paul. Yet Paul, without reservation traded everything in favor of God's truth.

Notice: But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:7-11). Paul focused his interest on the promise of a resurrection from mortal to immortality-wholly unmindful of whatever accomplishment he had in life.

The Christian's first and foremost concern is to reform his thinking and work on personal problems first - get rid of anything that resembles vanity, pride and self importance. He'll strive to be meek,

His divine family - by inference 6000 years. In fact, in one occasion He attempted to "tear out" and let go of it because of man's extreme wickedness (Gen. 6:7), but He relented and pursued it - a clear indication that He really is determined to expand His family through humans. Today, He looks down on His people and find them wanting still (2 Peter 3:9); yet He is not giving up on them yet.

Now, what if the clay hardens into a totally different shape? What if by stubborn refusal it did not conform to the image of God - it keeps going out of the mold, resisted the hands of Him that formed it, went his own way in utter disregard of the Maker's wishes? Much as God wants to mold us into His image and likeness - yet we did not bend, nor pliable, didn't soften, nor compliant, but keep resisting the hands of the molder - then an

**Clay is almost of no value, yet God used it to form man in His own image and likeness. It is for this reason that those whom God is calling now will consider the opportunity priceless.**

submissive and quick to listen - wanting only to absorb the truth of God. It is one of a sincere manifestation of absolute surrender - complete divestment of self-importance; and God will find it easy to form him into His image and likeness.

### **The Patience of God**

The potter needed extra patience if he is after perfection; and he has to be conscious with time as well, otherwise the clay will harden and is no longer elastic enough to be formed. God allocated ample time for man be worthy of inclusion into

accounting that will definitely pose a grave danger on those who are given a chance for salvation will be made when the time comes (Rom. 14:12).

But God doesn't leave us without warning, Isaiah 26:10-11 says: "Though grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness; even in a land of uprightness they go on doing evil and regard not the majesty of the LORD. O LORD, your hand is lifted high but they do not see it. Let them see your zeal for your people and be put to shame, let the fire reserved for your enemies consume

them."

What happens to those who incessantly defy the tender touch of the potter? Isaiah 26:14: "They are dead, they will not live; They are deceased, they will not rise. Therefore You have punished and destroyed them, And made all their memory to perish."

### **The Time to Change**

When the clay hardens it is fixed, no more adjustments, that's why the time to mold it according to its desired form is NOW. God's mercy may reach its breaking point (Rev 22:11) and the clay will revert back to its worthless status - clay again. No one among God's people ought to end up becoming a worthless clay or dust again, thus this admonition: Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." (Heb. 3:15; Heb 4:7)

Another warning in Joel 2:12-13 reads: "Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."; So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm."

Clay is almost of no value, yet God used it to form man in His own image and likeness. It is for this reason that those whom God is calling now will consider the opportunity priceless because the "good for nothing piece of clay" will become a member of the God family to dwell forever in eternity.

**AG**





# How to Have a More Effective Prayer

by Rene D. Corpuz

**M**any of us believe in God, but how many of us have a really good and active relationship with Him? A very essential component of a good relationship is communication—specifically, a reciprocal communication. However, none of us can 'believably claim' that the Father personally talks with us. We do, however, talk to Him at various times and in many different ways—we call it 'prayer'!

## How Does God Talk to Us?

Indeed, how does God talk to us? And how would others be able to confirm that God did talk to us? It's less complicated than we might think. In Hebrews 1:1-2, we read: "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers *by the prophets*, has in these last days spoken to us *by His Son*..."

The Entire Old Testament Scriptures are written by the prophets according to the inspiration of God—thus through these writings of the prophets—God has spoken to us. (II Timothy 3:16)

If you have a red-letter Bible, you will find that the first four books of the New Testament are nearly colored red in its entirety—these are words directly quoted from Jesus the

Christ—God's Son. And according to Jesus himself, "he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him" (John 8:26), "I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:28), "I speak that which I have seen with my Father" (John 8:38), "For I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak..." (John 12:49-50).

Thus, it is clear that both the Old and New Testaments of our Bible are in reality God speaking to us through the prophets and through His Son—and every time we open our Bibles—God is talking to us.

According to God's Son, Man must live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). Through Bible

Study, we are actually allowing God to feed us with spiritual nourishment, and more than that, this is God's way of communicating with us—which is essential to building a good relationship with His sons and daughters. Through the Bible, God tells us who he is, what he wants, and who we are in his heart.

Let us explore the other half of that relationship—of how we can effectively communicate with God.

### What is Prayer

The Online Oxford Dictionaries define 'prayer' as “a solemn request for help or expression of thanks addressed to God or an object of worship.”

Prayer is how we talk to God. Prayer is not a kind of magic chant nor does it bring “magical” results. Its effectiveness comes as a result of good communication and a good relationship with the Father who has the power to give us what we ask for. While prayer essentially means an act of supplication, a request, a plea or asking for a favor, it is not limited to *asking* for material and non-material gifts from God. Prayer is also how we express thanksgiving and praise, or just plain chatting with God.

### The Elements of an Effective Prayer

The essential elements of an effective prayer are: Humility, sincerity, faith and persistence. Let us examine an example of an effective, and not effective prayer presented by the Lord Jesus and glean a few lessons from it.

“Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: **“Two men went up**

**to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax**

**collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”** (Luke 18:9-14, NKJV)

Here we have two persons praying, both of whom were listened to by God, but only one received a favorable response. What's the key difference between the two prayers? **Humility**. This is the first key element of an effective prayer. The prophet Isaiah wrote of it as well, Isaiah 66:2: “For all those *things* My hand has made, And all those *things* exist,” Says the LORD. “But on this *one* will I look: On *him* who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.”

The second key element of prayer is **sincerity**. We cannot hide anything from God, so there is no point in boasting before His

presence. David wrote of it in this manner, Psalms 51:6: “Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts...” Another example is in I Chronicles 28:9: “As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal

### **Prayer is how we talk to God.**

**Prayer is not a kind of magic chant; its effectiveness comes as a result of good communication and a good relationship with the Father.**

heart and with a willing mind; *for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts*. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.”

The third key element of prayer is **faith**. “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. *But let him ask in faith*, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind” (James 1:5-6). And in Hebrews 11:6, “But without faith *it* is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” This is not blind faith. We are pleading and requesting from God who is a Creator—One whom we know has more than enough power to grant our requests and pleas. His ways of answering and granting our requests might be different from what we expect—but He certainly answers positively.

The fourth key element of prayer, especially when you are begging for something from God, is



**persistence.** Jesus taught 'persistence' in praying in a very odd manner in Luke 18:1-7: "Then He spoke a parable to them, *that men always ought to pray and not lose heart*, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' "Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I

whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. "First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." "Yes, Lord," she replied, "but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter." She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. (Mar 7:24-30, NIV)

Lesson-filled and intriguing scenarios come into play in this encounter. The Greek woman is without doubt 'resourceful.' Jesus

believed Jesus can drive the demon out of her daughter. Have she met the Lord before? Had she heard that the Lord had the authority to send the demons away? She sought the Lord for that very purpose, and her 'prayer' was granted.

All of the above examples are primarily prayer of non-material nature, what would be interesting to ask is "does God respond to requests which are material"? And the answer is yes, He actually does! (I Chronicles 4:10, the prayer of Jabez asking for larger territory and Genesis 24:12-14, the prayer of Abraham's chief servant requesting for the success of finding a bride for Isaac).

There will be times when we please God enough, He gives us bonuses even when we do not ask for them (2 Chronicles 1:11-12, Deuteronomy 28:1-2, Psalms 1). When we pray, we should not dictate on God, or set the terms. We have to let Him act and respond according to His will and according to His way. God knows best, He really does. After all, the model prayer Jesus taught His disciples included a very insightful phrase: "Thy will be done..." To utter these words in our prayer means we entrust everything to God fully-knowing that He knows "what" is best, "when" is best, and "how" is best.

Remember, God listens to our prayers—in fact, he listens to all prayers—but He favors the prayers of those who please Him more than anyone else and gladly grants their pleas. Start building a good relationship with God today, all it takes is to begin with a prayer done in humility, sincerity, faith and persistence... **AG**

## Four essential elements of an effective prayer: Humility, Sincerity, Faith and Persistence.

tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

### The Syro-Phoenician Woman


Jesus encountered a Greek woman while they were in the region of "Tyre and Sidon" as Mark describes it. While this was an 'actual encounter,' it was in a way a situation where the elements of prayer come into play.

"Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman

did not want to be found or "disturbed" but she found Him anyway. How she found the Lord we are not told. She would have visited a few inns before finding Jesus and his disciples. When she was likened to 'the dogs,' she took no offense and humbly asked for 'crumbs' that fall from the table as her fair share. Despite the obvious show that Jesus did not want to help her out, she persisted, and insisted that she'd be fine with 'leftovers' if that's all that Jesus was willing to give her. And it worked. More importantly, she had unwavering 'faith.' How she came to know Jesus we would wonder for a good while. What we do know is she definitely

# The Need to Forgive

by Ferdie S. Padilla



**W**e all have heard and read about forgiveness. It is a central teaching to true Christianity. What we have heard or read in the past may have dealt with the concept of forgiveness and why it is necessary. The reasons of course are varied and many of them are good ones. For example, the more that we harbor grudges against anyone, the more harmful it will be for us because it would cause us a lot of stress. And it goes without saying, it does affect our mental health as well our physical health. In other words, the whole man or woman is greatly affected when one does not learn to forgive. The longer we hold on to an unforgiving attitude towards another, the more stress we experience. Time will come that mere mention of the person's name will cause our blood to boil. Why? Because we now have contempt for the other person. We have come to associate that person with

everything unpleasant that we have experienced. And thinking about that insult, that hurt, will only make us stressed out because we are reminded of the incident. And the more stress we experience, the more chances of us getting sick. So it's not healthy to have an unforgiving attitude. The best thing to do is "let it go".

## **Forgiveness - Crucial to Relationships**

Forgiveness is a crucial element in our relationship with God and fellowman. Relationships will not last long enough without it especially when we are talking about our own interpersonal relationships. Because we are humans, it is inevitable that we will experience hurting another or we will be at the receiving end and being hurt in the process. Take forgiveness out and our interpersonal relationships are doomed to fail. Families are destroyed when husbands and

wives or parents and children don't learn forgiveness. Friendships are lost when forgiveness is not practiced. In fact, its criticality is highlighted in the sample prayer that Christ gave when He was asked by His disciples how to pray. Let's turn to Luke 11:1-4 (NIV) "One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation." The sample prayer provides for asking for forgiveness from God and us also forgiving others. Why was it incorporated in the sample prayer? For the reason that we all have relationships, so that while praying to God, we would be reminded of the need to forgive others and seek forgiveness



from God. We all fall short of the expectations of God. Nobody really is able to keep all His commandments perfectly. That's why we need to ask forgiveness from Him. We all fail, one way or another, in our dealings with fellow man. That's why we need to forgive them and them to forgive us also. And while doing the actual praying we would see the need to actually do it. It would not be right for us to ask for forgiveness and not to forgive others. It would not be right for us to pray forgiving others but not doing so. That would be hypocrisy on our part. These provisions were incorporated into the sample prayer so we would really take forgiving others seriously and to emphasize its importance that we should take it to God when we pray to Him.

So no matter what relationship we are talking about – whether between husband and wife, parents and children, among relatives, employers and employee, between colleagues or between friends or neighbors – it is very important to note and practice the need for forgiveness. Of course, this is easier said than done. But we really have no choice as we shall see later.

### **Why Forgive – from Perspective of Relationships**

Now let's examine a little bit more the need to forgive from the perspective of relationships since we have mentioned that it is critical to relationships. Why is there a need to forgive? To answer this, we have to examine a little bit more what happens when someone sins against somebody or when we sin against God. When we sin against God, we are separated from Him. This we can read in Isa 59:2 (NIV)

“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.” The verse illustrates the extent of this separation: God will hide His face from us and will not hear us when we ask something from Him. This separation means what it says. There is a divide between us and God when we sin

His forgiveness. We are restored back to our relationship with Him. Just imagine if God doesn't forgive us when we ask for forgiveness. We would not have the chance to be with Him for all eternity. We would not be able to enjoy His blessings, not in this life or the one to come. But happily for us, God does open the door to a meaningful and

## **Take forgiveness out and our interpersonal relationships are doomed to fail.**

against Him. This divide or gap means our relationship with Him is not what it used to be. There is this separating wall, so to speak, between us and Him. Now, we all know what happens when two individuals do not meet eye to eye. Would they be willing to stay together in one place at the same time? Probably not. The one who was offended would probably stay away from the other. There is a divide between them more than the physical separation. The relationship is broken. It wasn't what it used to be. People will not be in talking terms. Even if one is willing to talk it over but the other person is not willing to do so, then the relationship is still broken. It takes two to tango as they say.

As we can see by now, forgiveness is the first step in mending a relationship. It has the potential to restore relationships to what they were before and possibly make it even stronger and more meaningful. And that is precisely what we experience when we repent of our sins and ask God for

fulfilling relationship with Him when we repent and God forgives us. We can become at one with Him again as richly portrayed by the festival we observe called the Day of Atonement. In the same way, when we forgive others who have sinned against us, we are opening the door for reconciliation. We are inviting the other person to a restored relationship. And when we say restored, we mean exactly that. What does restored mean? According to the online version of Merriam-Webster dictionary, it means “to return (something) to an earlier or original condition by repairing it, cleaning it, etc.” Take note of the word “original”. If we used to trust the other person, we are now again to trust him or her. We know we have forgiven someone when we are able to deal with the other person the way we used to. How is this done? To borrow from one of our ministers, we also forget what was done to us. If we keep on harping on the past, we cannot move forward. It will be an endless cycle of hatred. But if we

forgive and forget, we can move on. When we forgive, we are opening the possibility for a revived, renewed and strengthened relationship. Forgiveness, is therefore, a key to a win-win situation.

We can glean the answer to this in the context of a family relationship, which is what God has in store for all of us (since we will be made part of His divine family). All of us have the potential to become children of God. All of us are potential brothers and sisters in

loss or to our loss? The other person, for all we know, will make it into the Kingdom of God because our forgiveness of him or her is not a prerequisite for entering God's Kingdom. It is only God's forgiveness of the other person that matters. He or she can always ask forgiveness from God for his or her sins against us. And God will forgive him or her regardless of whether or not we forgive him or her.

### Conclusion

Dear reader, as repetitive as it may sound to all of us, we cannot underestimate the need for forgiveness. A true Christian should show this character trait more than anyone else. Yes it is very difficult to actually forgive and forget. But trust God when He said we should forgive others when they sin against us. The truth of the matter is when we forgive others, we will be the main beneficiary of our own action. Forgiveness removes a lot of unwanted things in our lives. It frees us from anger, from depression, from sleepless nights, from sickness and a host of other things that takes the joy out of our lives. In other words, if we do not learn to forgive, our lives would be very miserable. We do not want that kind of life. And when we do forgive, we are showing that we are indeed God's children. Remember, our God and Father and His Son are very forgiving. That is why we all have this hope of seeing each other in the Kingdom of God because out of this forgiving attitude, He opened the door for our salvation.

**AG**

## **Forgiveness is the first step in mending a relationship. It has the potential to restore relationships to what they were before and possibly make it even stronger and more meaningful.**

### **Salvation Depends on Capacity to Forgive**

We have mentioned a while ago that really we have no choice but to learn forgiveness. We will now see why. Our very salvation depends on our capacity to forgive (and forget). Jesus Christ said something about forgiving others that affects our salvation: Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV) "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." This is our Lord's very own teaching. And we can be sure He was serious when He said this. The passage is saying that God made it a condition to forgive us if only we would also forgive others. It's not enough that we are sorry for our own sins. We should also forgive others. It's a scary thought if we analyze that passage a little bit more. The implication is that if we do not forgive others, we too, will not make it into God's Kingdom. Why? Because God has not forgiven us. The death penalty still hangs over our heads. Now, why would God make it mandatory?

Christ. If someone sins against us today and we do not forgive him and God lets us get away with it, what is that teaching us? It is teaching us that it is alright to bear a grudge against someone. It is alright to seethe in anger over someone who has wronged us. Now, since we have not learned to forgive the other person, today in this lifetime, what guarantee is it then that we will not have this unforgiving attitude when we are already in the Kingdom? So you see it was for a good reason that God required we learn forgiveness today. God is actually guarding against an unforgiving attitude creeping in us and taking root. It is an attitude that can easily branch out to other bad attitudes and actions: contempt, violence, hatred and murder. God will not want children who are like this.

So the earlier and more earnest we practice forgiveness in our lives, the better it would be for us. When we come to think about it, when we learn to forgive, it is not the other person who benefits but us. What now if we do not forgive the other person? Is it to his or her



## **The Feast of Tabernacles 2015 (continued from page 2)**

less among their brethren; and God promised to bless His people in return for their faithful observance (Deut. 14:26-27).

Thus, in all probability, the extra preparations by those tasked to teach; the musical presenters; the various committees; the generous sponsors and others who greatly contributed to make the festival more enjoyable for everyone - is definitely one aspect that makes the celebration more "special".

Yet, regardless of the material considerations attached to the celebration, the fulfilment of what the festival stands for should serve as the main source of encouragement. Why? Because the Feast of Tabernacles is a reflection or the "shadow" of the forthcoming "new world order". This upcoming set-up will not be led by men of corrupt minds, but by the saviour of mankind Himself—Jesus Christ. He is coming to take over the kingdoms of this world and reign over it with His saints (Rev. 11:15), then the elusive peace, happiness and prosperity that mankind has been longing for will finally become a reality. The theological term for this is The Millennium – the 1,000 year reign of Jesus and the saints on earth upon His return (Rev. 5:10; Rev. 20:4-6). This in a "nutshell" is what the Feast of Tabernacles represents.

God's Holy Days are not celebrated just to gratify the fleshly cravings like the traditional holidays. Each of them has its own significant meaning for man to understand and keep it. Each one is relatively interwoven in unmistakable succession—in an orderly fashion, arranged by the Creator Himself, so that each step will make us understand the purpose God is working out for the good of humanity. Without these festivals, and without proper understanding of their meanings, one's commitment and devotion to the Christian faith is incomplete.

If you believe God is your creator, it is only reasonable to know from Him why He created you. Question: Does God have a plan for mankind? If He has can we know them? What are the clues, if any? Certainly He has a plan, and His Holy Days will lead us to understand them; and the publication offered below will help enlighten you on this regard.

(For more understanding on the Festivals of God, request a FREE copy of the booklet "God's Seasonal Plan". Contact number is at the back page)

**Eleno S. Mellomida**

**"Thy word  
is a lamp  
unto my feet,  
and a light  
unto my path"**

Psalms 119:105

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