



The Christian Connection™



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A Quarterly Newsletter from Christian Resource Network, Inc.

SOARING COMMUNICATION FOR CHRIST

Hope in times of Crisis



Millions of people, including children, throughout the world face the devastating plague of poverty. Poverty is a state where one is unable to obtain the necessary food, clothing, and shelter to live a basic life. The major effects of poverty are violence, human trafficking, starvation, illness, and death.

Stealing, obtaining money illegally or rebelling against the ruling establishments or Governmental authorities to obtain justice, tend to trigger violence. Worldwide, an estimated 25 million people are displaced by conflict. Children and parents separate, their children eventually are sold to human traffickers with no hope

of ever seeing the light of day. Statistics show that 27 million people are held in slavery worldwide. Survivors are forced to leave their homes, face starvation, illness and death. Day to day, they face starvation for want of food, fresh water and a need for shelter. In 2010, an estimated 13.6% of the world population of 6.8 billion, or 925 million people were undernourished. Nearly all of the undernourished are in developing countries. They die from starvation, malnutrition and diseases such as malaria caused by drinking contaminated water.

This article proposes the question: "Can we have hope in light of the poverty and other instabilities we are experiencing in the world today?"

Let us define and compare the world view of hope to the Biblical view of hope. Dictionary.com defines hope as, "the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best." This definition is based on one's feeling that an issue or problem can be changed to what one wants. I believe Biblical hope is not based on feelings but is based on believing and having trust in God, regardless of the outcome. This statement is based on the premise that one can stand on God's promises.

God's promises include his love, his faithfulness, his care, his forgiveness and his provision.

We can stand on God's promises in the midst of insecurities and injustice. The Bible tells us how the Israelites triumphed over the Egyptians who had enslaved them. God appointed Moses (Exodus 3:7-8) and his successor Joshua (Joshua 1:2) to lead the Israelites to the land of Canaan. God guided them by day and by night (Exodus 13:21), providing manna in the wilderness when they had no food (Exodus 16:4), and turning the sea into dry land for the Israelites to walk through (Exodus 14:22), thus preventing Pharaoh and his army from overtaking them (Exodus 14:23). He forgave the Israelites for their rebellion and remained faithful to them bringing them into Canaan, "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:7-8).

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The Christian Connection is published by the Christian Resource Network Inc., a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization whose main mission is to provide support to those who are experiencing emotional pain. Other related services include women's small group training and mentoring services.

If you would like to donate to Christian Resource Network, Inc., or advertise in *The Christian Connection Newsletter*, or be on our email list, please contact the editor or visit our website. We need your help.

Email:

Jblake@Christianresourcenetwork.org

Mail

Christian Resource Network, Inc.
P.O.Box 190971
Boston MA 02119

Website

www.christianresourcenetwork.org

Telephone

617.282.6182

Editor

Joan M. Blake

Assistant Editor

Leah M Blake

(Hope in the midst of crisis, cont'd from page 2)

When the great prophets, including Ezekiel and Jeremiah, and other prominent people were exiled to Babylon in 586, God did not forget them. When the Persians captured Babylon in 539, God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah to King Cyrus of Persia, to make a proclamation regarding the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem which would require that the people of Judah return to their homeland (2 Chronicles 36:22; Ezra 1:1). When the Jews returned, they found that the Babylonians had completely burned and destroyed the city (Nehemiah 1:3). When Nehemiah heard of it, he prayed, confessed, and asked God's forgiveness regarding his people's disobedience and reminded God that these were His people, and that He promised that if they would repent that He would forgive and bring them from exile to their homeland (Nehemiah 1:5-11). God, once more, responded to the cries of His people; he supported Nehemiah and gave him favor with his employer, King Artaxerxes, who gave Nehemiah time from his job and letters to governors in each province to acquire the needed resources and labor to rebuild the walls (Nehemiah 1:6-9). God gave Nehemiah wisdom to secretly examine the devastation (Nehemiah 2:13) and tools to strategically manage the workforce so that the work would be finished on time (Nehemiah 4:13-23). God strengthened Nehemiah during times of opposition from others who did not want to see renovation and renewal in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 6:9).

You may ask, "What is God doing about renovation and renewal worldwide?" While we would like God to instantly rid the world of poverty, Governmental corruption, violence, immorality, hate, and wild-spread injustice, we do have a responsibility to repent and ask God's forgiveness for the sins of the world. We need to pray, believe, and understand that God is still in control of the entire universe which He created, and, because He has a plan and a purpose for each of us, His creation, we can have hope.

We can have hope because hope doesn't disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us (Romans 5:5). The Holy Spirit lives in the believer's heart. He is our comforter and guide (John 14:25, 26; John 16:13-15). We do not hope in ourselves but hope in God (Psalm 31:24). God is before all things (Colossians 1:17) and in Him everything exists. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending (Revelation 1:8 kjv). In Him, we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Because God is an all knowing and mighty God (Isaiah 9:6), all things come from Him and He knows all things before they even occur. Our destiny is in His hands and we can submit the world's problems and our lives to Him, to work things out according to His plans and purposes. That does not mean that we should sit idly by while the world is falling apart. On the contrary, no! Millions of workers have answered God's call to minister to the poor and the needy, to provide deliverance and healing, and to preach the message of salvation to a dying world.

Regardless of what you have done or who you are, you can receive salvation and the gift of eternal life by simply confessing and repenting of all your sins and acknowledging your need for Jesus Christ who died for your sins and rose again (John 3:15-16). By this grace, you are saved. You cannot save yourself. Salvation is in Jesus Christ alone (Acts 4:12). God will forgive you of your sins and you will be on your way to recovery. Since you are led by the Spirit of God, you become one of God's children (Romans 8:14), and He will become your God, the God in whom you put your trust.

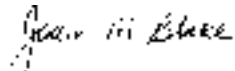
King David referred to God in Psalm 119 verse 114 as "My refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word." King David regarded God as his hiding place and protector. Just as a soldier uses a shield to protect himself from the enemy's targets and to avoid death, God protected David from King Saul who tried to kill David his successor. David depended on God's power through his word and received the protection he needed.

(cont'd on page 4)

(Hope in the midst of crisis, from page 3)

Regardless of what we are facing today or the crises that are happening worldwide, let us put our hope in God and in His word, knowing that God will protect and preserve us. Hope is not what is seen or what the world can offer; rather, it is what is not seen (Romans 8:24-25), that is, life eternal and "Him crucified," Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior (1 Corinthians 2:2).

In Christ,


Editor/Publisher

PRAYER OF SALVATION

Lord God of the Universe
Creator of everything
I come to you in desperation,
Desiring to have an intimate relationship with You
And to invite Jesus Christ to be my Lord and Savior.

I confess and repent of my sins
And ask for your forgiveness.
I accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior,
The One who died on the cross and rose again,
Paying the penalty for my sins,
So I could have salvation and eternal life.
I pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Prayer was taken from *Prayer and Meditation*
by Joan M. Blake, author.

PRAYER AND MEDITATION

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SAVE THE DATE NOVEMBER 3 & 4 2012

Christian Resource Network Inc., will host its annual healing and deliverance service on Friday, November 3, from 7-9pm and its Network Breakfast on Saturday, November 4, from 8:30am to 12:30pm at ENC, 23 East Elm Ave, Quincy, MA. 02169. Come and be renewed!!

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PASTOR'S CORNER

Building a diverse community that is committed to seeing lives changed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Excerpts from Pastor Balla's message)



A diverse community

God's agenda has always been and will always be, to reach all people of all races and cultures. To get a glimpse of what heaven is going to look like, let's refer to Rev 7:9: "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the lamb." In heaven you will not see a Brazilian Church, an Italian Church, an Irish Church, a Chinese Church, an Indian Church, a white Church or a black Church, instead, you see one huge colorful Church consisting of people from every nation. To build a diverse community will require that a group of people come together and use their God given diverse skills and talents. While we are a diverse community and want to see greater diversity among us, we realize that our goal is not simply celebrating diversity, but "Loving God."

Loving God

Jesus has summarized the whole law of God into two straightforward commandments: "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is equally important: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:37-39 NLT). This should be the core of all that we are and all that we do. Only out of our love for God, we can love others. When we love others we want the best for them. What is better than introducing them to Jesus? How do we do that? That brings us to the next piece of our vision, "Sharing the gospel."

Sharing the gospel

One of the main reasons we exist as a Church is to see souls saved and lives changed. If we can summarize Jesus' mission on earth into one sentence it would be, "TO SEEK AND SAVE THE LOST." The parable of the lost sheep explains the mission of Jesus. In this parable we see the heart of a good shepherd who would not rest but go to any distance and experience any hardship until the lost sheep is found. In his own words Jesus said, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). Elsewhere, we read how Jesus was not content with a few who were saved but expressed concern over those who were not yet saved. In John 10:16, He states: "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." If Jesus was and is concerned about the lost, you and I should also be concerned about the lost. The lost hear the Gospel message from people God sends and through the working of the Holy Spirit. Proclaiming the Gospel doesn't mean simply telling somebody "Jesus loves you" or giving them the four Spiritual laws booklet. More than that, it is holistic. We must preach the whole gospel which touches the body, soul, and mind.

The Gospel Message

Titus chapter 3:3 in the Message version summarizes: "It wasn't so long ago that we ourselves were stupid and stubborn, dupes of sin, ordered around every which way by our glands, going around with a chip on our shoulder, hated and hating back. But when God our kind and loving Savior God stepped in, he saved us from all that. It was all his doing; we had nothing to do with it. He gave us a good bath, and we came out of it new people, washed inside and out by the Holy Spirit." Our Savior Jesus poured out new life so generously. God's gift has restored our relationship with him and given us our lives back. And there's more life to come - an eternity of life! This truth is too good to keep to ourselves. We must share it with everyone.

Rev. Francis Balla, is the senior pastor of Evangelical Congregational Church of The Atlantic in North Quincy MA. He served with Youth With A Mission in Hyderabad, India for twenty years. He holds a M.Div in Urban Ministry from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Please checkout the Church Website. www.eccquincy.com. The Church is located at 65 Newbury Ave, Quincy, MA 02171. Sunday service is at 10:30a.m.



The Kingdom of God Seen from the Bus
By Cherry Gorton

The journey on the Silver Line down Washington Street in Boston offers the best of the diversity in the city. First is the Foodies' Market where everything organic and exotic is available in the best Whole Foods Tradition. Reindeer meat anyone for your Christmas feast? The next block has the Don Quixote Market where everything Spanish, and everything Cuban is available. The following block has the Ming Super Market. This market offers every possible food the Asian community desires, including the best snow peas and ginger root in the city. The final market is my favorite, the Tropical Food Store. One of the oldest markets in the city, it specializes in spices for jerked meat and curries from Caribbean cuisine. I can get christophene, a gourd-like vegetable that shreds into a great coleslaw and my powdered mix for Tamarind Tang.

On the bus itself, I can overhear cell phone conversations in at least four languages, all going on simultaneously. When I get off at Downtown Crossing and walk up to Boston Common, there stands Paul Revere, looking just like he stepped out of his portrait hanging in the Museum of Fine Arts. He is standing in front of Dunkin Donuts, sipping a hot coffee and eating a donut. The next day, Sam Adams is standing at the same spot. Both men are on their breaks as docents for the National Park Service. Only in Boston!

The trip home every night on the bus from Haymarket out to my apartment in Salem is vastly entertaining. One gentleman boards the bus in Lynn. He is usually wearing the hideous make up of a ghoul or a vampire, and once a ghostly pirate. He is a character in the Nightmare Gallery and we often discuss how he applies the make-up. We are both fans of techniques in make-up from Corson's Guide. Another one of my fellow passengers works a concession at Fenway Park during the Red Sox home games and always has interesting trivia to share. On the other end of the social spectrum, my seatmate is often a young man who ushers at Symphony Hall and we share classical music favorites.

One night I sat next to a talkative gentleman who works as a janitor at Harvard University. He asked me where I worked. When I told him that I am a librarian and instructor at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary's Boston Campus, the Center for Urban Ministry, he grinned and said his son often mentions the librarian there, since he is working on his Master of Divinity. Despite its diversity, the world is a small place after all!

All this urban diversity points out to me that God delights in diversity. He does not want us to live in a cookie cutter world or be puppets on a small stage. Instead, he created us, so that we, as creators in His image, produce a marvelous outpouring of urban creativity that is varied, colorful, interesting, and awe-inspiring. The urban world reflects the "rainbow people" of God and the richness of the lives we lead. Whenever, I ride the T or a city bus, I am introduced again to the marvelous wealth of the Kingdom of God.

Cherry Gorton is an Instructor and Co-ordinator of information and library services at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston, MA.

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