



Welcome

Dear ACFI Family,

To many, New Year means new goals, new aspirations, growth in spiritual and aspects of your daily job. Beginning of the year when Mani decided to take a break from leading the board he was wanting to spend more time with the family and still continue to play an active role in the church as a member. I am happy to have known him for the past 6 years as a friend and brother and want to thank him for all that he has done to ACFI. The ministry that Mani and his family have been doing is reflective of someone who loves the Lord dearly and gives their 100% for the expansion of His Kingdom.



The board elected me as the Chairman of the board and with complete humility I took this new challenge. God leads me every step of the way, and I am sure that God has big plans this year for ACFI. Our theme for this year is from 2nd Corinthians 4:7

“ But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all – surpassing power is from God and not from us.

Together as a church we are seeing exciting things unfurl in Children’s ministry, Student’s ministry and Outreach ministry. God just keeps giving us opportunity to reach out. Angel Emmanuel and other children’s ministry leaders came up with the idea to introduce a combined worship for children of all ages before they get dispersed to their respective classes. I want to thank each teacher for their dedication and investment they make in shaping the future of our children.

As part of the Student ministry we had our kick-off to Prem Milan group. It means "United in Love." We had 3 Hindu students attend this dinner and they were certainly touched by the love of Yesu (Christ). Our hope is to CONNECT and develop relationships with these students so that they can start experiencing the love of Christ through us. I want to thank Onesi Gnaniah and others who are helping in this ministry.

I want to welcome Harry Maddela and Vinod Emmanuel who joined the board in Jan 2008. We have started to support two new missions in India and I want to thank Patrick Pitchappa for the vision and dedication that his leadership provides in leading this ministry. Our men’s and ladies ministry are led by vibrant leaders, Harry Maddela and Sujatha David. I want to thank them for their leadership.

South Austin Fellowship continues to meet monthly, every 2nd Friday. I want to thank Mani Rajaia and John Cherukuri for their leadership and support they offer to those families. Deepu continues to lead the worship ministry. He wrote the lyrics and composed the retreat theme song. I thank Deepu and the worship team for their passion.

We are looking forward to our Annual Family retreat to be held on April 25th – 27th 2008 and excited to have Bro. Suresh Babu, founder of Power of Gospel Ministries, be our special speaker at this retreat. I encourage you to come and invite your friends as this will be a blessing to you, friends and family. Looking forward to seeing you in our family retreat!

In Him- Josh David

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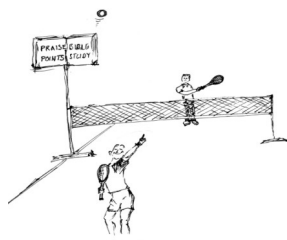
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ACFI ministries

include:

- Prayer
- Outreach
- Children
- Worship
- Ladies
- Men
- Web
- Students
- Music
- South Austin Bible Study

Men's Ministry - Bro. Harry Maddela



"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23)

It's the New Year and just about the time that "New Year Resolutions" are broken. Oh yeah, it's tax time as well. There has to be more to life and that is exactly what our Men's Ministry is all about. Our desire is to use our collective strength to be all who God created us to be and to positively impact the lives of others. Last month we launched our first annual Men's outing session for 2008. Needless to say we were encouraged to see over 17 ACFI men in attendance. We were in awe and once again reminded of the power found in unity.

A quick recap:

Men..... thanks for coming! It was a super turnout

- We had a good bowling sessions.
- Encouraged all members to participate in ACFI and contribute to his and others spiritual development.
- We talked about attendance; specifically on the need to pray and the power of prayer.
- We briefly talked about the bigger picture

and the compelling need for us to participation and the need to seek power beyond our own.

- We talked about leading ACFI family to a higher level of spirituality.

Lastly we closed in prayer as a group. It was cool to have 15+ guys of ACFI pause and lift our hearts to God.

This year ACFI Men's Ministry is structured for Capturing, Creating, Sustaining and Supporting the Momentum of Men's Ministry.

"One Vision, One Mission, One Word...Transformation"

God desires for men to step forward strongly. Your mere presence gives strength to others who may be weary or searching. Together we have the opportunity to take a stand and move the front lines forward. Our action makes a positive impact in the lives of family, friends and those we connect with everyday. Changing the very course of their destiny. It's a great time for the men of Grace to connect if only for 60 minutes.

We hope to see you every month on the third Friday 7pm @GCC for Bible Study and Special programs to enhance Men's life as he attempts the exemplary walk with God.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23)

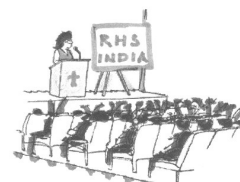
Outreach Ministry - Bro. Patrick Pitchappa

The ACFI Board has decided to increase our support to missions in India and support 2 more missions in India in addition to the 4 we are already supporting. Hence ACFI has started supporting a new mission called "Reny's Children" in Bangalore, India. Reny's Children (<http://www.renyschildren.org>) is a Prison Ministry. This is a ministry of Prison Fellowship of India. It is a unique ministry which cares for children of prison inmates. Most of the time, children are left with nobody to care for them when

their parent(s) are convicted and taken to prison. Reny's Children ministry identifies these children and brings them to the children's home they run in Bangalore. Please check their website for more details and pictures.

We are in the process of identifying another mission in India to support. Please let me or Josh David know if you have any suggestions. Please make sure that the mission you are recommending has FCRI approval to receive foreign funds.

If you are not contributing towards missions, please prayerfully consider doing so. If you have been contributing already, please prayerfully consider increasing your contribution to missions ACFI supports in India. Our Sunday Worship bulletins have information about all the missions we currently support. In order to contribute, please make a check payable to ACFI and mark "Missions" in the memo field. You may drop the check in the offering bag.



Ladies Ministry - Sis. Sujatha David

How about that 'treasure'?

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 2 Corinthians 4:7

We have heard wonderful messages on this verse; each word in the verse speaks volumes! I am looking forward to other truths that God is going to teach us from this year's theme for ACFI.

Have you recognized that you already have this treasure? Yes, the verse says we HAVE this 'treasure' in 'jars of clay'.

Have you had a chance to meditate on what 'this' treasure is? Have you identified this treasure you have in you? Have you reconciled to the fact that you have this all-surpassing power?

Do you acknowledge that the treasure in you is to show that the all-surpassing power is from God and not from you? Not my abilities, my talents, my knowledge, my wisdom, my smarts, my...my...but the power is from God.

Do you know this God of all-

surpassing power? Do you merely 'Believe in God' or do you 'Believe God'?

Ladies, come; join us in the monthly Ladies Bible Study as we explore answers to these questions. As we continue our study of the book 'Believing God' by Beth Moore, in the past couple of months, we studied 'Believing God's Word is alive and active in you', and 'Believing God has been There All Along'.

This study has been a good resource in our walk with God, in Believing God & knowing him personally. The exercise of looking into my past & in doing so acknowledging God's presence in every event of my life, whether at that time I was aware of it or not, has been very introspective and encouraging.

We have a few more sessions on this study; I hope you can join us as we discuss 'Believing God' to get you to your Gilgal, when Victory Demands Your All and for the Rest of Your Days.

In the 'Getting into the Word' session, for this year we are reading the books of 1 & 2 Corinthians. New games conducted by different ladies keep this section interesting.

New this year, is the 'Bible Quiz'. Ladies can do this at their pace over the month. This is another way to know the Word of God & in doing so know God.

I encourage you to renew your commitment to your 'Sister in Christ'. If you are not currently participating, drop me a note & I can send you information & set you up. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9

Thank you for the various roles you are taking on in the church & in the ladies ministry. I appreciate your commitment and fellowship.

What a great treasure God has entrusted in us! Will you step out in faith and start 'investing' the treasure you have?



Do you know this God of all-surpassing power? Do you merely 'Believe in God' or do you 'Believe God'?

UT Ministry - Bro. Onesi Gnaniab

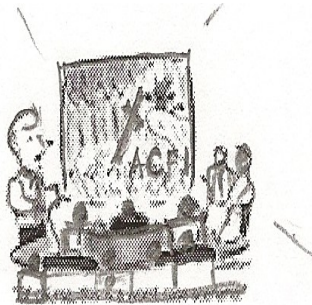
We are excited to see what the Lord has in store for reaching the UT Students with the love of Yeshu. This ministry is called "Prem Milan" which means "United in Love". We had a great potluck dinner gathering on Saturday, March 1st at the UT Baptist Student center. Three of the students that attended were Hindus and were really touched by the dinner, game, discussion as well as the connection that we as an ACFI body made with them.

We plan to meet on a monthly basis at the UT Baptist Student Center through the end of this school year and we'll start again in the Fall. At these meetings, we will discuss topics that are critical to student life and we will integrate the message of Yeshu's love. We also hope to build on our relationships with these students by inviting them our houses for dinner, providing them a place to stay during holiday weekends as well as facilitate other opportunities for these students to connect more with us.

If any of you are interested in helping with food for these monthly gatherings, or being open to connecting with these students on a regular basis, please contact me and let me know.

Thanks for all your prayers and support!

Prayer Ministry - Bro. John Ramesh



Dear ACFI Family,

ACFI ushered in the new year 2008 in prayer at the feet of our Lord Jesus Christ asking Him to be in control of ACFI through out this year. Prayer has been and always will be the foundation of ACFI and keeping that in perspective we continue to have concerted prayer in the form of Home fellowship All night prayer and Power house prayer. We just finished a 40 day chain fasting prayer during this lent season. **Homefellowship** : Are held every 3rd Saturday of the month in the homes of ACFI families.

Jan 19th **Mohini and Ravi Ponnuswamy** opened their home and it was also the dedication of their new home. Pastor Robin Paul conducted the home dedication and the congregation went around each room and several prayed for the Lord's blessing on each room. We had a wonderful worship time followed by an lively discussion on the scripture passage **Luke 6:46 -- 49: The Wise and Foolish Builders**. We learnt how to be a wise builder.

Feb 16th **Ebeny and Patrick Pitchappa's** home it was. Rev. Sherwin's family from Dallas joined us with his

brother's family from Lulling, TX. The discussion was on **John 4: 34 - 38** and ACFI studied how to do the will of the father and finish His work. Aaron's birthday (Feb 9th) was also celebrated during this time. It was a wonderful time of worship, prayer and fellowship

March 15th at **Alice and John Ramesh's** home and was also the 75th Birthday of John's dad Mr Gnanasigamani . John's dad testified of the miraculous way in which the Lord has saved his life from the point of death. Uncle Kruppiah Boylapalli prayed for him and blessed him. The scripture passage discussed was **John 12 :1 - 10** We learnt how to serve him like Mary did

All Night Prayer : Were held on the 4th Fridays of January and February, March all night prayer was cancelled as it coincided with Good Friday and ACFI has a Good Friday service

Jan 25th at **Naveena and Onesi Gnaniah's** home was a time of reflection of the wonderful way the Lord has lead us through 2007 . It was also a time to share praise and prayer points. and We spent the whole night at the feet of the Lord praising Him and placing our requests at His feet.

Feb 22nd **Vicki and Ramki Sunderaraman's** home it was Pastor Robin Paul lead a time

of praise and worship and the enabled us to pray for several requests and praise Him for victories won

All Night prayer going forward will be combined with the power house prayer and held on the first Friday of the month starting @ 9PM instead of 10PM.

Special Prayers :

Wednesday Prayers were held intermittently at the Boylapalli home to pray for Esther's healing and the family as they go through their tests The Lord has been with Esther during her chemotherapy treatments and strengthened her. The family's trust in the Lord has energized all of us.

We just concluded a forty day chain fasting prayer during lent. It started on Ash Wednesday on February 6th and ended on Palm Sunday March 16th. About 35 people participated in it for the glory of God. We had several requests for prayers from people outside ACFI. We are privileged to serve God and stand in the gap.

We have a team of dedicated prayer warriors who have committed to pray fervently and confidentially for the prayer requests. If you have any special needs please feel free to email me and I will alert the group and God will answer your requests.

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Children's Ministry - Sis. Angeline Emmanuel

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6

Sunday School for kids, Toddler - 6th grade, takes place in our class rooms during our worship services. It is a great opportunity for students to learn the Word of God in an exciting and practical way. Through weekly Bible lessons and activities kids will see the Life of Jesus come to life.

In the year 2008, the Sunday School teacher's decided to start Kid's worship time before their classes.

Every Sunday each class conducts kid's worship time for about 10-minutes, worship time specifically designed for the children which includes songs with actions, story, prayers, and much more. Students, Preschool, Early-Elementary must be picked up by a parent at the conclusion of service. Thanks to Onesi, Shalini's and Vicki's classes for their special song in ACFI worship time, which occurs every second Sunday. A Warm welcome to Sanjana to the ACFI Children's ministry!

Web Ministry - Bro. Careth Jefferson

Greetings from the ACFI web team. We have a lot of exciting initiatives happening on the web front. The ACFI web team re-grouped under the leadership of Nagaraju Valasagandla and Harry Maddela in February to chart out the future for ACFI website. As the Lord lead us in this web ministry we revisited our vision for the web site. Our vision for the website is as follows

- To be the online face of ACFI to the outside world
- To serve effectively to the needs of the Church members

The proposal for taking our current website to a new level was mooted. Some of our wish list for the new web site are listed below

- Represent the ministries of ACFI (Mission, Worship, Children, Men's, Ladies, UT Student's) in a more inviting graphical manner, with the ability to delve deeper for more information
- Online Calendar of events which can sync up with our Outlook calendar. One global place for effectively communicating ACFI events.
- Publish ACFI special regional songs online.
- Display our theme for each year on the web site. (e.g "Jars of Clay")

Some new features introduced today in our website are as follows

Feature 1: Events section on the front page to enable members to invite friends to our church.

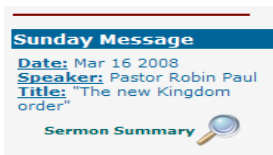


Feature 2: ACFI Blog site is an online board to post what God has put in your heart to share with others. It could be anything which the Holy Spirit has revealed to you during our Church service or our Home Fellowships.



<http://acfi-christianliving.blogspot.com/>

Feature 3: Proactively make next week message title and summary available in advance to help you prepare your hearts for God's word.



Short Term Goals:

- A tool to update the next Sunday Message Title and summary instead of the manual approach done today
- A page to post our annual calendar of events

Long Term Goals:

- Build the conceptual design of our new web site.

Conclusion:

We are privileged to have a great web team excited to serve the Lord in the Web site ministry. As we embark on the new web site plan we pray that God will give us volunteers to support development. We put our faith in Him in guiding us in each and every step of our web site plans.

South Austin Bible Study - Bro. John Cherukuri

South Austin Group was born on May 5th, 2007 at Brother Mani's home and we had our first bible study on Jun 8th, 2007. Since then we have been meeting second Friday of every month at different homes in South Austin. On an average we have about 4-5 families show up every week. We have a great time reading, understanding and spending time in God's word and of course food/fellowship with fellow-brothers and sisters. Study is very interactive and often times we have some interesting questions like "Why is resurrection important to Christianity, Role of Holy Spirit in our lives, If disciples cast lots to choose the 12 disciple then can we do the same thing in our day2day decision making and so on .. But the essence of our bible study remains same "LAG" [Learn, Apply and Grow] quite contrary to the abbreviation itself. We try to make sure this meeting is not a social gathering where we come to meet friends, have some food and go home but that it is more about getting to know our Marvelous Lord and to apply his teachings in our day2day lives. We come every time to the bible study keeping the following verses in mind. In effect these are the theme verses for our bible study and hopefully one of these days we will memorize them.

Psalm 42:1 => Just as the deer panteth for water, so should our souls long after him.

Psalm 119:10 => We have to seek him wholeheartedly and not just partially.

Psalm 119:105 => Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Let his word be the blueprint for our lives. Let his word be the compass, the guiding force of our lives.

Proverbs 9:10 => Fear of the Lord means to humble ourselves in reverence/respect and submit our will to his will and our lives to Him alone. Knowledge of God is knowing Him as a person, getting to know his Character and His commandments.

Isaiah 43:7 => To realize that we are all created for His Glory. So everything I do/say/think bring glory and honor to Him.

Goal for Next Quarter:

1. Continue studying the book of Acts. We want to develop others in the group to lead the bible studies besides Brother John.
2. Move to bi-weekly instead of monthly as the gap is long between bible studies
3. Invite new families to our study group and hopefully together we will learn from each other.
4. Reach out to UT students by being available to their needs. Help them out in whatever way we can and hope that will open an opportunity to tell them about Jesus.
5. Do picnics in the future so we can have some outdoor activities as a group.

Here are some excerpts from our last bible study:

Bible Study on Acts 2 : 22-36

Verse 22 Jesus was a man accredited [attested, approved] by God.

How do you see Jesus as man ??

Some said compassionate man, humble man, man without sin, obedient to God, did lots of miracles. This is how God accredited Adam to be. Pure/Holy/Submissive to God. Remember God created Adam in his own image.

Application: We should never think that Jesus could not go thru temptation since he was fully God. That is not true. He is fully God and also fully man. He was tempted, he wept, he went thru the same temptations we face but yet did no Sin. That's what God expects us to be like his Son Jesus Christ. We have to remember that when miracles happen in our lives, glory goes to God and not us.

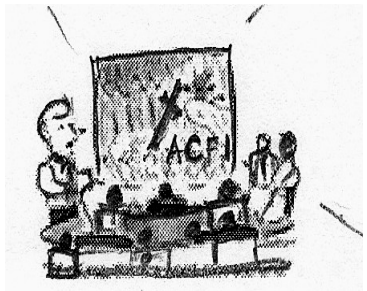
Verse 23 God's whole plan of salvation [to send Jesus Christ to the Cross] was planned long before it ever happened. God doesn't change his plan midway thru it.

Application: Sometimes when we go thru financial problem, health problem, job problem, we may not be able to answer the "why" question except to realize the whatever it maybe God will bring to fruition in His time. As it is said in Jer 29:11, he has plans only to prosper us.

Verse 36: Peter now takes his testimony from "Jesus who was man in verse 22" to Jesus who is " Lord and Christ". Lord refers to Deity and Christ refers to messiah ship. Christ is Greek meaning for "Anointed one" which is same as the Hebrew meaning of Messiah. Peter was telling the gathered Jews that look the messiah you were looking for is none other than Jesus himself. Also not only is He the messiah but he is God too.

Application: Is Jesus the Lord of your Life ?? Are you still waiting for the Deliverer ??

If so think again ...



Music Ministry - Bro. Arundeeep Mittra

The year 2007 went by glamorously and 2008 dawned on us victoriously. Music ministry has been yet a continuing passion for us at the ACFI choir. We have at least another addition to the team- Eva Mohini. Welcome aboard!! Bro. John Cherukuri has been actively participating and blessing us with new songs and leading them as well.

We started off the year 2008 with great pomp and the team includes:

Bro. Mano Paul- guitar	Bro. Isaac Mani- electric guitar
Bro. John Cherukuri- guitar/back-up vocals	Bro: Vinod Emmanuel- guitar
Bro. Jason Mani- Drums	Myself- Keyboards/ Back-up vocals
Bro. Patrick Pitchappa- Vocals	Sis. Ebeeny Pitchappa-Vocals
Sis. Melody Mittra- Vocals	Sis. Eva Mohini- Vocals



A bigger blessing for us is to see Pastor Robin Paul and Sis. Kiran David pick up the tambourines and liven up any song. Needless to say, we have had special appearances by Master Aaron Pitchappa and Ms. Sanjana on the Violin and Master Jed Ramesh and Ms. Rachel David on the piano. It is amazing to see our kids growing up and how they evolve into budding artists. Praise the Lord!

Sadly to say, in the last 8 weeks or so, we have not had a full choir/band due to school/college activities. We really miss our instrumentalist brothers: Jason and Isaac. God willing we will get back together again.

The upcoming months are prep work for the ACFI annual retreat. A wonderful theme song- *We are Jars of Clay* has been composed and successfully uploaded to the web for a quicker learning experience. We are still working on the song selections for the retreat.

It is great to see the responses of our members when they are requested to sing special songs for the offertory. It is my ambition to see every family on the stage at least once to make a joyful noise on the stage for the glory of God our Father.

Again, thank you for the privilege for allowing me to serve on the music team. The invitation still stands for anyone who is interested in being part of the team, whether or not you can play instruments. Just come and join us for a time of fun, frolic and prayer.

They That Wait Upon The Lord - Pastor Robin Paul

Too many of us involved in today's vibrant commercial world have become time-conscious, result oriented and are moving at an alarming fast pace. New ideas and sophisticated gadgets are continually being introduced to minimize "wait time". Having to wait is calculated as a waste of time and consequently loss of money. And nobody wants to be a loser in an ever increasing competitive environment. Of course, there are financial gains in working hard, but if spun out of control, it will be at the cost of forfeiting inner peace and developing physical deficiencies. What is the use of a comfortable bed for a person suffering from insomnia? or a table spread with mouth-watering food before a person with high blood pressure and diabetes?

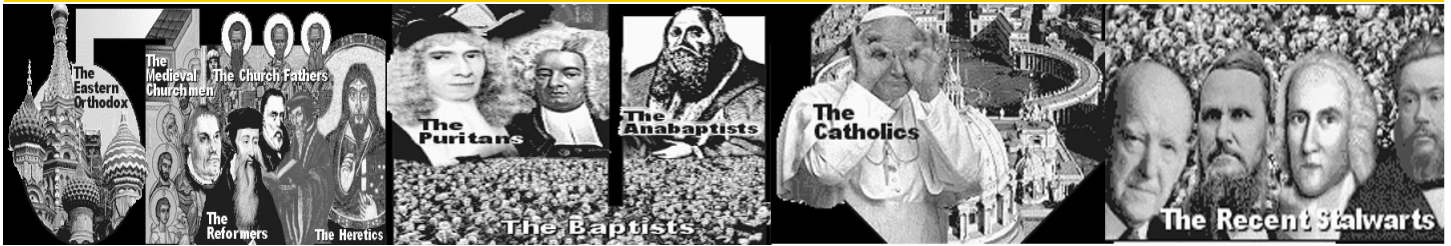
The spiritual capsule Isaiah 40:31 will revitalize you, stir up and restore your strength and performance capability. It is "waiting upon the Lord". Interestingly, the word for 'wait' in Hebrew, is 'qavah' - to bind together by twisting. So, to team up with Jesus you have got to slow down your mind and relax your body. The gospel reveal Jesus was never in a hurry and was never late. He was on time, every time and was always successful.

There is no specific time or length of time to 'wait' and any convenient place will do. Isaiah 41:1 tells how to wait: "Keep silence before me". Just be silent and regard with respect that He is God (Psalm 46:10) and allow His infinite wisdom and inexhaustible grace to rub off on you.

When someone who knows nothing comes into the presence of the One who knows everything, and the one who knows nothing, keeps speaking all the time to the One who knows everything, that is not prayer. There is a dynamic presence of God in quiet intimacy. The Lord enjoys time with us and He will even whisper in your heart saying; "Thanks for waiting on Me". That's how much He loves you.

So, why stoop when you can walk tall? Why sweat when you can rest in His enablement? Having a meaningful time-slot for "waiting upon the Lord" each day, at any convenient place and time, will make a difference in you for the day.





My Christian Ancestors - A bird's eye view of Church History by Vinoth Rajkumar

This series is written in the interest of the history of our religious ancestors, and to understand what went on after Christ, the spread of Christianity and the formation of churches. We do hope this will open some opportunities of study and spark some interest in you all.

Why Church History?

We should be looking at church history not only to learn what has happened in the past but also be able to understand that God has given us a work/plan to do as well.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that binds and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." Hebrews 12:1.

Sometimes the church in the depths of failure, has backslidden and turned away from the truth.

Isaiah 40:8 says *"The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."* We see that even in the church the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the truth and the word of God, marches on, and sooner or later it is picked up by some other more faithful group and begins to make its way again in the world. The church history depicts how the church grew from a very tiny group of people in an out-of-the-way province, part of the Roman Empire, to a mighty movement that compassed many parts of Europe and reached out to Asia, Africa, and Latin America even in the years before 1500 AD.

This will be a learning exercise for ACFI as well, because we look at real people facing real problems and trying to solve those problems one way or another. As we get into church history we will feel a connection with our extended Christian family, not only extended now throughout the world but also extended through the past. We will discover our ancestry and our roots, Christian people who have gone before us and who have run the race with perseverance that God set before them.

What is Church History?

Church history begins at the very beginning, with the creation of Adam and Eve. According to the Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter XXV), *the church consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all* and that includes people all the way back to Adam and Eve. But we will not go back that far, rather, we will start in the post-Apostolic period, about the year 100 AD. Sometimes church history is referred as the Third Testament. The Old Testament is the First Testament, the New Testament is the Second Testament, and church is the Third Testament. All three are a record of God's faithful people and those people who prove to be unfaithful. The Old Testament has many of those, as do the New Testament and church history. And the history of the church will continue, as we continue to study the record of God's work in the midst of His people.

Christianity was a small sect of Judaism that originated in an unimportant Roman province without great power among its early followers. However, of all the possibilities for the triumph of any one religion in the Roman world, Christianity was the only one that did triumph. The role of the apostles is somewhat uncertain. It is highly probable that Thomas made it to India, and Peter died in Rome; we know that John went to Ephesus and was in prison for a time on the island of Patmos. But the legends about the other apostles are probably just legends. Legend has it Scotland claims Andrew the Apostle built churches, which is also claimed by Russia. If that is the case then Andrew would have had to travel widely and evangelize in many different places and in many different languages.

The Lord gave the Great Commission to the apostles, but He also gave it to everyone. We know that the ordinary Christians were missionaries. In the early period, the second calling of every Christian was to be a missionary. The Gospel was carried by merchants along the trade routes and by soldiers from post to post as these Christians went throughout the empire and also into the East, one loving heart setting another on fire. These Christians were able to witness by word, but they also witnessed by deed. *Tertullian of Carthage (a theologian, early church father), who coined the word Trinity* put it in famous words: "Blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Someone has said that martyrdom was the opportunity of the early church for mass evangelism. They did not hold great rallies and public preaching services, but as thousands watched Christians die, that was their opportunity for mass evangelism.

To start with, we can look at the spread of Christianity as a **cultural movement**. The first of those cultural movements was the transition from Judaism to the Gentile world. The earliest Christians were of course Jews. Because of the resistance on the part of Jewish Christians, including some of the apostles at first, it is one of the marvels of history that Christianity could enter a second phase. In Acts

we have Antioch, the Jerusalem Council, and above all we have the visionary work of the Apostle Paul, who went to Rome, was imprisoned, was released, traveled back to eastern Mesopotamia, and then was rearrested and taken back to Rome and put to death during the persecution in Rome by Nero in 64 AD and we see Christianity moving from its Jewish roots into the Gentile world. This happens just in the nick of time because the Jewish state disappeared in the wars of AD 70 and 135. That is one way to look at the spread of Christianity, from a Jewish sect to a religious faith embraced by Gentiles far and wide as well as by Jews.

The second way to look at the spread of Christianity is to see it as a **social movement**. When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth he said, “Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were influential, not many were of noble birth.” That continued to be true for the church throughout the Roman world. The early church was largely made up of common people sometimes called the people of the lower classes. The opponents of Christianity were not slow to notice this and use it as an instrument against the Christians. There were many poor people who were members of the early church. Women were accepted as full members of the church. It is probable that in the early church, as throughout most of church history, women made up a larger percentage of the church than men. Even more remarkable, slaves were also accepted as full members of the church and participated equally in the worship of the community. In fact, we think that a slave named Callistus became bishop of the church of Rome in the early third century, perhaps the most important post in the Christian church at that time. Many of the people who embraced Christ and joined the Christian church were poor people. But there were some, as was also true in Corinth, who were from the higher classes.

By Nero’s time, the 60s AD, Christianity was beginning to infiltrate the noble families of Rome. Paul, writing from prison in Rome to the Philippians, said, “All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household.” So even at that early date there were some Christians who had a high place in government. There is evidence that in Emperor Domitian’s time, the 90s AD, the emperor’s cousin and wife were Christians. Clement of Alexandria in the late second century (united Greek philosophical traditions with Christian doctrines) wrote a sermon titled, “What kind of rich person can be saved?” The very fact that this church father would preach a sermon on this topic shows that people with wealth were beginning to become part of the Christian church. Clement’s writings show that he did not have a very clear idea that salvation is by faith alone in Jesus Christ.

Geographical Movements:

In Acts we see the beginning of the movement of Christianity to the West up into Asia Minor, from there to Greece, and from there to Italy, and perhaps even into Spain. By the end of the first century Asia Minor had become the most Christianized area of the Roman Empire. Though there are very few Christians in that area now, at the end of the first century Asia Minor was the center of Christianity. There were other places that had also become Christian in part. By 185 AD Christianity had spread more widely in Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy, and had also spread all the way to Gaul (the region of Western Europe). There was persecution in the city of Lyons in Gaul in the year 177 AD, during which a Christian bishop was put to death. There was a Christian center up in Germania. There were Christian Churches in different parts of Spain. There were also Christians in different locations in North Africa, which was then part of the Roman Empire. North Africa from Egypt to Numidia (the eastern border of modern day Algeria), and Mauretania (corresponding to western Algeria, and northern Morocco) were included in the Roman Empire. There is a belief that Mark first established the Christian church in Alexandria. It is hard to know how to treat some of these church traditions about the establishment of the church in different places because almost every church everywhere wanted to claim a big name. Later, Christianity moved further south into Africa outside the bounds of the Roman Empire into Nubia and Ethiopia. Acts tells us of the beginning of the story of the spread of Christianity to the West. But it also went to the East. The first New Testament translation was in Syriac in the East. The first Christian hymnbook, The Odes of Solomon, was produced in Syria. The first known church building was in the East, in Edessa or Eura Europis—both have claims on that. An archeology team from North Carolina State University thinks they have discovered an even earlier church building in Acaba which is also in the East, in Jordan. The first Christian king and state may have been in Armenia or Eastern Turkey, 100 years before Constantine. There are two aspects of the eastern spread of the church. The first aspect is to focus on is the spread of Christianity to India. The tradition is that the apostle Thomas went to India. There are Christians in India who still look back to Thomas as the founder of their church. And there is another tradition that in the late second century, about 120 years after the martyrdom of Thomas in India, another missionary left the Roman world, this time from Alexandria in Egypt. The head of the catechetical school there (roughly the equivalent to a president of a seminary now), Vantenis, left his important center in the Roman world “in order to preach Christ to the Bramans and philosophers in India,” as St. Jerome said in the fifth century. Not only does Christianity spread very early to India, but it also spreads into Syria, to Edessa, and the little kingdom of Armenia in Turkey, just across the Euphrates. From Edessa Christianity spread to Arbela, across the Tigris near ancient Nineveh. This area produced a very famous Eastern theologian whose name was Tatian. He was chiefly known for the Diatessaron, that is, The Life of Christ, that he compiled from the four gospels. Then Christianity spread, amazingly, from Arbela into Persia and all the way into Afghanistan. By the end of the second century there were churches as far east as Persia and modern-day northern Afghanistan. So the church spread from Syria to Mesopotamia to Persia to Afghanistan, and down into India before the second century AD. The Christian faith was unquestionably spreading across the continent of Asia as vigorously as it spread into Europe.

Conclusion:

This episode concludes with a bird’s eye view of the first 200 years of spread of Christianity. We just need to understand the religion/faith/knowledge we enjoy is something that is inherited and spread like wild fire by people like us. We are not only seeking our religious ancestors but also the lessons learnt as part of their struggle, which is a lesson to us and our church. In the next episode we will look at persecutions against the church and its people.





One Min Message - Bro. Mano Paul

Our Mission – Turn the World Upside Down!

Prelude – God created man in His own image (Gen 1:27); God put man in charge, to have dominion over fish, fowl and living thing (Genesis 1:28).

The charge that the Jews of Thessalonica brought against Paul, Silas and Timothy was “These that have *turned the world upside down* have come hither also” (Acts 17:6). While at face value, the charge seems to be absurd, deeper analysis reveals a lot more than is explicitly evident. God’s plan was for man to have dominion over *all* living things (the world), which included the serpent, and *Sbaibban* (*Satan – Adversary*) who took the form of a serpent and deceived man into disobedience against God. By succumbing to Satan’s rebellious offer, man allowed the world, whom he had dominion over, to “Lord” over him, causing a *Reversal* in the order that God had instituted, which was ‘Man over world’. Turning the world upside down, is in essence then, *putting the world where it belongs - back in order, reversing the reversal, restoring God’s order.*

Further analysis of the accusation reveals that this charge was brought against Paul, Silas and Timothy, when Paul was witnessing by proclaiming Jesus’ redemptive work on the cross by his Death and Resurrection (Gospel) and their allegiance to the *one* Jesus, as King (Acts 17:2,3 & 7). ***By being a witness for Jesus Christ, they were turning the world upside down.***

To be a witness then is to then proclaim the Gospel and be faithful to the King, Are we a witness? Are we turning the world upside down? As a witness, we are *Bridge Builders*. We have been given 2 pieces of wood and 3 nails to build the cross -‘The ONLY Bridge’ for man to be restored back to God. We are tasked to build the bridge in the shielded minds of those who don’t know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior.

But let’s be true to ourselves. I am guilty of not being a witness, proclaiming the Gospel as much as I should. Fear of *rejection, ridicule* and *persecution* (mental and/or physical) prevents me from being a witness for Jesus. Repeatedly, I need to be reminded from the scriptures (the Bible), God’s people and my Family of ‘The Mission’. I often need to be reminded of a story, I once heard. There was a conversation that took place between the angels of God and Jesus. The angels ask Jesus, “How is the world going to hear of the Gospel?” Jesus responds, “I left 12 men to be my witness, who will tell someone, who will in turn tell someone else, who in turn will tell someone else ... until all in the world come to know of it.” The angels question Jesus, “Are you sure you can entrust such a comMISSION (Matthew 28:18) with these earthlings, Is there a Plan B?”

Interestingly, the word for witness in Greek is ‘martyr’. To be a witness of Jesus is to be a martyr, willing to lay one’s life down for Jesus, just as Jesus did for us. To be a disciple of Jesus is not to just COUNT the cost, but PAY it (easier said than done). Can it be said of us that “For us to live is Christ and to die is gain” or will Jesus rebuke us saying that “We are a generation of *little faith*”, often forgetting His promises, “Fear NOT” and “Lo, I am with you ALWAYS – Be my Witness.”

Are we being a witness for Jesus Christ, the one who being God, took the form of Man, suffered and died and rose again from the dead, to restore man’s relationship with God, and restore things back to God’s original order. If you were to face a trial today, will someone be able to charge you with “***He/She is turning the world upside down?***” Think about it. There is no Plan B.

Kid's Korner - Sis. Shalini Rajkumar



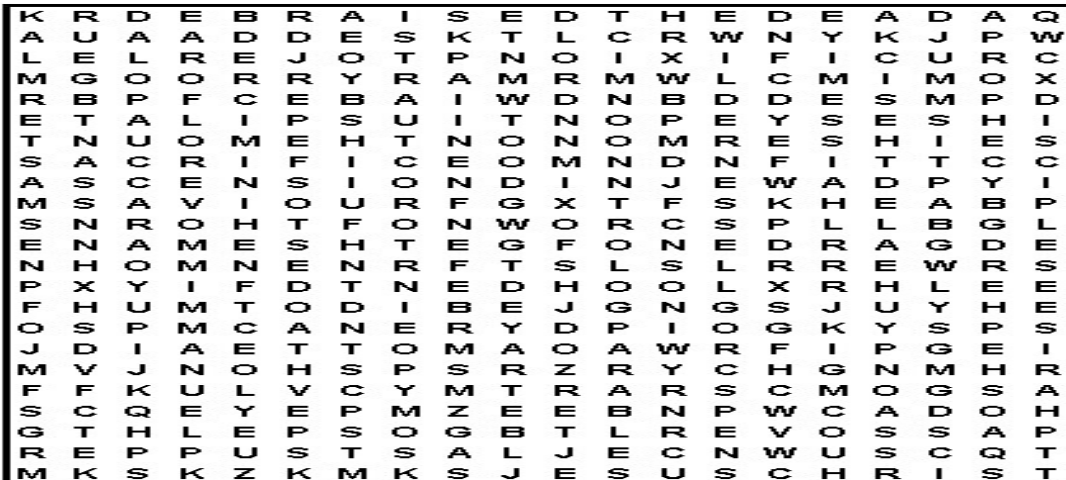
Know your Bible

1. What was the color of the robe placed on Jesus?
2. Who carried the cross for Christ?
3. For how long did Jesus remain after his resurrection before he ascended into heaven?

I WANT YOU TO FOLD UP MY BURIAL CLOTHES, WAIT FOR MARY, AND REMEMBER THAT THIS IS SERIOUS ... NO HIDING AND YELLING "BOO"

Read John 20:1-18 for the message

Word Search - Jesus Christ



- | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| ARRESTED | HEALED THE SICK | PONTIUS PILATE | SHEPHERD |
| ASCENSION | IMMANUEL | PROPHECY | SINLESS |
| BAPTISM | JESUS CHRIST | RABBI | SON OF GOD |
| BETHLEHEM | JEW | RAISED THE DEAD | SON OF MAN |
| BETRAYED | JOSEPH | RESURRECTION | TEMPTATIONS |
| BREAD | LAST SUPPER | RIGHTEOUS | THREE DAYS |
| CROSS | LORD | SACRIFICE | TOMB |
| CROWN OF THORNS | MARY | SAVIOUR | WALKED ON WATER |
| CRUCIFIXION | MASTER | SERMON ON THE MOUNT | WILDERNESS |
| DISCIPLES | MESSIAH | | WINE |
| FLOGGING | NAZARITE | | |
| GARDEN OF GETH-SEMANE | PARABLES | | |
| GOSPEL | PASSOVER | | |
| | PHARISEES | | |

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

News and Events



- The ACFI annual family retreat is to be held on APR 25, 26 & 27 at Sandy Creek Bible Camp, Brenham TX. The event will be hosted by ACFI and the speaker will be Bro. Suresh Babu (www.powerofgospel.org). The theme for the event will be 'JARS OF CLAY'. Please refer www.acfi.cc for more information on this event.
- The upcoming Sunday school events are
 - Sunday School Final Exam on May 24
 - Sunday school final day on Jun 07
- We thank the families who have opened up their homes for the upcoming Home fellowship and the schedule is as follows
 - Sunitha & Vasu Gattu's home on Apr 19
 - Angel & Vinod Emmanuel's home on May 17
 - Kiran & Arun David's home on Jun 21
- The schedule for the All Night prayer is as follows
 - Ebeny & Patrick Pitchappa's home on Apr 4
 - Alice and John Ramesh's home on May 2
 - Sujatha and Joshua David's home on Jun 6
- There will be a baby shower for Martha Cherukuri to be held on Apr 12

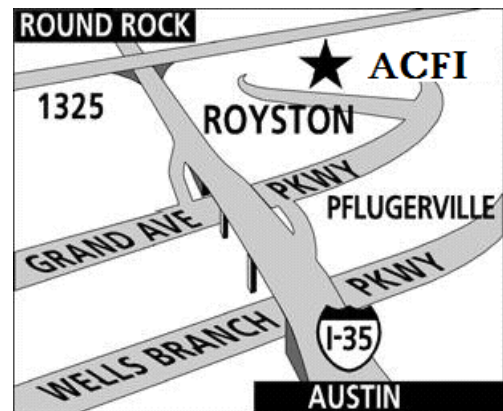
Austin Christian Fellowship of India (ACFI)

Location

Grace Christian Center
1500 Royston Lane,
Round Rock, TX 78664

Mailing Address

Austin Christian Fellowship of India
PO Box 5672
Round Rock, TX-78683



Program Schedule

Worship service - Sundays , 5:00 PM
ACFI Night Prayer - 1st Friday , 9:00 PM
Home Fellowship - 3rd Saturday , 7:00 PM
Ladies Bible Study - 3rd Friday , 7:00 PM
Men's fellowship - 3rd Friday , 7:00 PM

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If you would like to contribute to the newsletter or have questions about the newsletter please send an email to rvnoth@gmail.com

