

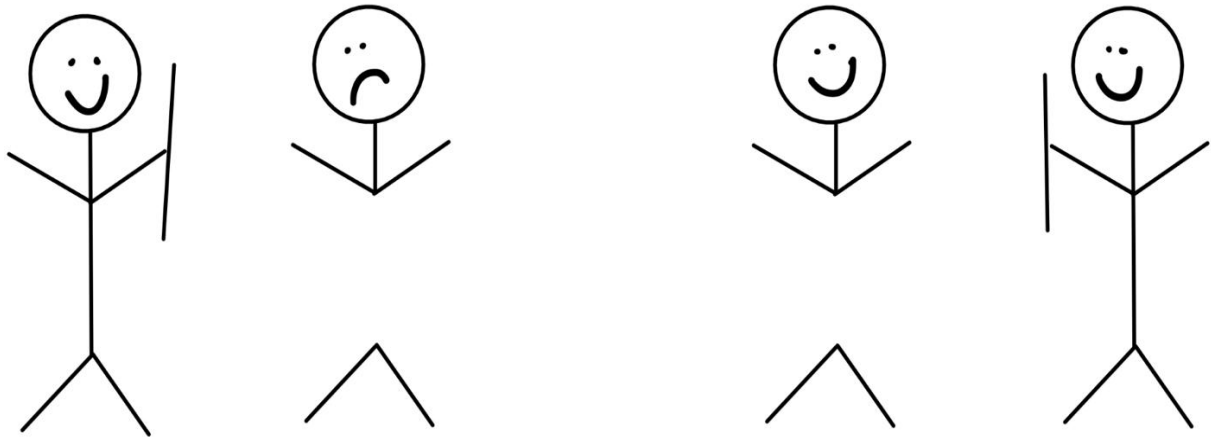
JOEL 3:16 MATT 5:16

# SALT SHAKERS

Issue 73



AUG 2024



*I've got your back*

*Me too*

*Friendship Day*

*Abound in love*


*Jonah (9)*

*Kids' (Race)*



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# Friends and Friendship



**Pastor Josiah Tan**  
Minister of CERC

## Friends and Friendship – Part 1 of 6

*CLM's note: Did you know that International Day of Friendship is observed on 30 July each year? It is a United Nations day that celebrates the role of friendship in promoting peace across diverse backgrounds and cultures. As Reformed Christians, how should we view friendship?*

### Intro: What does 'Friends and Friendship' mean?

This is a crucial question for young Christians to ponder and meditate upon.

On one hand, the Bible tells us that those who are brothers and sisters in Christ are our friends. 3 John 14 says, "But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name."

On the other hand, the world entices us to be its friends. Proverbs 1:10-15 warns, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, ... Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path:"

Young people, Satan would have you believe the lie that God's Word is silent on whom we can be friends with. 2 Corinthians 6:17 commands us, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." God emphatically commands us not to be friends with the wicked world, but to come out from among them and be spiritually separate from them.

Young people, let us not in pride think we know better than God. James 4:4 teaches, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." To say that whom you choose as your friend is unimportant is to declare that having God as your enemy, is unimportant to you.

Young people, I understand your heart and your concerns. You see the bitter battle with the world stealing your church friends. Your heart is heavy for each other in this spiritual battle. We want to be equipped with God's Word so that we can be the best possible Christian friends to each other. By God's grace, we desire to be instruments in the hands of

our Sovereign Redeemer, like David was to Jonathan and Jonathan to David. I salute you.

So, we ask ourselves three questions: First, what does 'friends and friendship' mean? Second, how are we to choose our friends? Third, how are we to be good friends to each other?

What does it mean to be friends and have friendship? According to 2 Corinthians 6:14-16a, to be friends with another is to be yoked together. It is to have fellowship, communion, concord, part, and agreement with another. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"

Each of these words helps us understand the full reality of calling someone your friend. To call someone your friend is to say that you and your friend are yoked together, that is you two are working and labouring towards the same ultimate life goal. To call someone your friend is to say you share fellowship with them. In other words, you share with them the same walk of life, lifestyle, and life principles. To call someone your friend means you share communion, that is, close spiritual sharing and intimacy. When two are friends, they have concord, which is harmony. So their natures are in sync like a symphony. According to God's Word, friends also share the same "part"; that is, they share the same inheritance with each other, either as heirs together of the grace of life or sharing together in the wages of sin which is death. Biblically, to call someone your friend means you share full agreement in beliefs, faith, assent, and creed. For ease of remembering, we can define friends as those who share three things: Bond, Walk, and Heart.

We often toss the word "friend" around loosely in our everyday language. But the Word of God gives us deep insight into the true nature of friends and friendship.

### Question for reflection:

- What are some misconceptions among us concerning what friends and friendship is?
- Why does the bible speak so much concerning friends and friendship?



- How can we grow and help each other grow in being discerning of who we spend time with?

## Friends and Friendship – Part 2 of 6

### *Learning from God What They Truly Mean*

To grasp the true meaning of friends and friendship, we must turn to Jehovah God, The Friend, and His relationship with us. Only by diligently and prayerfully reflecting on what Scripture reveals about God's friendship with us can we understand how to be friends with each other.

The first crucial step is recognizing and believing that God is our friend. James 2:23 speaks of Abraham, "...and he was called the Friend of God." Just imagine! The God who created heaven and earth considered Abraham His friend. We're speaking of the one true and living God, infinite, eternal, transcendent, and independent—whom Scripture describes as, "All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" (Isaiah 40:17-18). He said to Abraham, a mere mortal, "you are my friend."

How can we, who are unworthy and flawed—like Abraham, who even lied and put his wife at risk—be considered friends with the perfectly holy and righteous God? It's because God unconditionally chose us to be His friends. "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend." (Isaiah 41:8). We did not choose God first; He chose us. This choosing was from eternity past, before the world existed, and it extends into eternity future. God chose to be our friend forever and ever.

Still uncertain that God is our friend? Consider what Jesus said to His disciples and to us, "Ye are my friends" (John 15:14). God incarnate, dwelling among us, declares to us, "you are my friends." The Son of God, uniting the human and divine

natures in His person, says to us, "you are my friends." The One who is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption declares to God's people, "you are my friends." The One who hung on the cross for our sake, to save us, says to you and me, "you are my friends."

So what does it mean when Jesus calls us His friends? It means He has bound Himself to us and us to Him in a bond of love—a bond that can never be broken, that is unconditional, where He promises to care for us body and soul, no matter what the cost. It is because of this bond that Jesus says to us "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

This bond is a bond of love. True sacrificial love. The Bible speaks constantly of God's friendship with us. Scripture calls this friendship that God has with His people the Covenant. Every time the word "covenant" appears in Scripture, we are to think "the friendship of God with us". Hebrews 13:20 speaks of the "blood of the everlasting covenant". We can read it as the blood of the everlasting friendship. For it is by the shedding of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we are cleansed from all our sins and by the blood of Christ, our friendship with God is sealed.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13) Who is your greatest friend? Who died the ultimate death for you? Who endured the eternal death of hell so that you could have everlasting life? What greater proof of His friendship toward us is there than the cross at Calvary?

### Questions for reflection:

- How should our hearts and lives be impacted by the truth that God is our friend?
- How does God as our friend shape who we choose as our friends?
- How would you encourage someone who is tempted to think that God is no longer his friend?

Greater love hath no  
man than this, that a  
man lay down his life  
for his friends"

(John 15:13)

Who is your greatest  
friend?



# “Abounding in Love One Toward Another” (1)



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1 Thessalonians 3:12 “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:”

The dominant concept in the passage above is “love.” It’s the main thought that governs everything else in the text.

Without ‘love’ we have nothing to abound in. Without ‘love’ we have no way of interacting and fellowshiping “one toward another.” Without ‘love’ one toward another, then our life within the church becomes very bland and boring. It becomes mechanical and wooden....to the point of being lifeless. Without love, there’s no true spiritual life.

Can we do without love? A family isn’t a family without love. A congregation isn’t a family of believers without love. How important is love? 1 Corinthians 13:13 “And now abideth faith, hope, charity [love], these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” Love is the greatest of all those good spiritual gifts, and then by implication the greatest and most excellent way for us to behave toward another.

Let’s start off with a simple definition of love. Love is a deep, firm, sacrificial affection for another. It’s not a superficial ‘liking’ of another. Rather, love is that deep heartfelt affection that will go to whatever lengths to draw the object of that love close and closer. So close in fact, that the Bible calls love “...the bond of perfectness” (Col. 3:14).

## The Character of Love

To better understand love, let’s consider the character of love. This is love in action. Take a moment to read 1 Corinthians 13 which is the outstanding chapter in the Bible regarding love.

From a general point of view, we note two things concerning love.

First, love is full of knowledge and understanding. God’s love for us is an understanding, a compassion, a pity for us in our distress of sin. And in 1 Corinthians 13, how is love presented? It’s presented as a love that stands in relation to the neighbour – love is longsuffering, love is kind, and all the rest. This implies that we know the neighbour and have an understanding of the neighbour. And that’s a characteristic of love. Love knows the neighbour...the joys and the happiness of

the neighbour, but also the trials & afflictions. Love, therefore, isn’t an unintelligent dismissal of the neighbour, but it’s an understanding and knowing of the neighbour.

Secondly, love is active. Love is busy serving others and relating to others. That’s the nature of God’s love to us. The love of God doesn’t simply remain a strong desire in the mind of God. If such were the case, then the love of God really would be impotent. But God’s love is active. God in his love lifts us out of our misery and brings us to himself. That’s the active love we’re to demonstrate toward the neighbour. Notice all those descriptions of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4ff – love suffereth long, love is kind, love envieth not, etc. You note that ‘love’ is the subject, but then followed by all these verbs. That tells us that love is busy! Love is active! Love doesn’t sit around and do nothing. Love doesn’t isolate itself from the neighbour. But knowing each other and one on another’s struggles and joy....then we do something! In love we walk alongside and demonstrate our compassion, even in the way that God has demonstrated His love for us.

Specifically, there are a number of ways in which love manifests itself. Here we examine the various characteristics of love from 1 Corinthians 13.

Love is longsuffering (v. 4). God is longsuffering to us-ward (2 Pet. 3:9). God lets us suffer long because the end is our good, even our salvation. That means God is patient with the trials and afflictions he sovereignly places in our lives. God doesn’t remove the affliction right away, even though we suffer and cry. The reason is because God has determined and therefore makes these evils work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17). So God is long-suffering to us. He knows the pain and affliction in our lives is for our good and for our spiritual welfare.

In our lives, love manifests itself as being longsuffering. Parents are longsuffering with their children. Though parents can see the sadness of the child’s face when discipline is necessary, yet parents are longsuffering with that child and will administer that discipline. Furthermore, love is longsuffering when we must give a word of rebuke to a family member walking in sin. Love is longsuffering in this instance and is willing to inflict that pain for the restoration of that family member.

Love is kind (1 Cor. 13:4). Kindness here refers to something



that is useful and beneficial. The root word for kindness is “grace.” When we are being kind, we are being gracious. In his love God gave the most useful gift in all the world – the gracious gift of our Saviour come in the flesh for our salvation. So also in our lives, love is kind and finds ways to provide for the needs of the brother or sister who needs us. And then to provide something that’s beneficial and useful. It is not a kind act to provide all the useless things out of my closet that I would otherwise get rid of. That is not being kind when we pawn off our junk to others. But love’s kindness and graciousness comes out in that we are ready and willing to sacrifice of the things we hold dear so that the neighbour may have what he needs.

Now a description of what love does from a negative point of view.

Charity envieth not (1 Cor. 13:4). This word “envy” simply means ‘desire.’ Here it refers to those wrong kinds of desires. It’s speaking about coveting those things that don’t belong to me. In the church of Corinth there was a lot of envying going on. One person had a certain gift and another member said “I want that gift of tongues! I want that gift of prophecy!” That envy then turns to strife, and strife leads to division. What happened in the Corinthian congregation can certainly happen in churches today. When a man or woman becomes envious of the position or gifts that another person is gifted with, and lets that envy turn into despising the neighbour for what they have and what we want! That is not what love does. Love is not envious. But love is happy for the neighbour in what they have, and love is content with what God has given me. Love envieth not.

Further, “charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.” (v. 4) Both of these descriptions indicate that love has nothing to do with pride. To be vaunted up speaks of one who has a very high and conceited view of himself. Such a person who vaunts himself thinks that he is always right. Such a person does not listen to the advice and wisdom of others, but demands that others listen and obey him! One who is proud in this way becomes angry and frustrated and annoyed with others when things don’t go his way. Love though doesn’t behave that way and vaunt itself and puff itself up in pride. Love is humble. Love is willing to listen to others. Love is willing to admit that I am wrong and the neighbour is right.

“Charity doth not behave itself unseemly” (v. 5). This is speaking of inappropriate behavior. It is a behaviour that is disgraceful and shameful. Sometimes that happens in the church when somebody acts inappropriately. The inappropriate behavior manifest itself in pride or envy, or not being content with the lowly position of being a doorkeeper in the house of God. Such a person puts up a stink. There’s always a scowl on his face. What is all the above, but inappropriate, disgraceful,

and unseemly behavior! A man makes himself miserable and makes sure everybody else in the church knows it. Love does not behave that way. Love behaves in a very meek, modest, and dignified way.

Love “seeketh not her own” (v. 5). This means that love does not seek anything in return. That speaks to the question “what is our motivation for being kind and hospitable to others?” Is it this – “If I do this.....then maybe they will return the favour. Maybe they will return the favour to a greater degree than I first showed them!” That’s not love. Love doesn’t say “I will love you because I know there is something in it for me down the road.” On the contrary, love is selfless. Even when there’s no prospect of return. Even when the person does not even say “thank-you.” Yet I am called to love, and to keep on loving, because love does not seek her own.

Love “is not easily provoked” (v. 5). This means that love does not erupt in anger when I have been wronged. It may be the case that you have been wronged. It may be the case that somebody else in the church has hurt you in some way. What is our response? Love doesn’t lash out with angry words and accuse and threaten. On the contrary, love responds wisely and soberly and biblically. Love is not easily provoked.

Love “thinketh no evil” (v. 5). This means that as Christians we are not out seeking revenge. Love doesn’t say “you have hurt me, and now I am going to hurt you in return.” Love doesn’t reckon evil with evil. Love doesn’t harbour that grudge. Rather, I am ready and willing to forgive! Maybe the other person never says “sorry.” Yet I’m willing to forgive because love thinks no evil. Love thinks very charitably of the neighbour. Love says “He/she is a child of God. They pray for the forgiveness of their sins. If God forgives their sins, how can I hold this against them?” Love thinketh no evil.

Let me add one more characteristic of love. I call it “the remembrance of love.” 1 Thessalonians 3:6 states “But now

Love is a deep, firm,  
sacrificial affection for  
another.



when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you." An aspect of charity is that we have "good remembrance" of the saints. The members in the church in Thessalonica were mindful of Paul. They thought about Paul. They prayed for Paul. They prayed that God would make it possible that one day they might see Paul again. This is the remembrance of love! It is when we are mindful of the saints in our own congregation. Mindful of God's people in other congregations and other places of the world. Our hearts go out to them. We pray for them. We do what we can to be of good comfort and good cheer for them.

All these are the characteristics of this love that we are to increase and abound in.

### **The Supreme Demonstration**

Finally, there is an activity of love that becomes the culmination of all the above. This becomes the absolute supreme demonstration of love. Here I underscore that part of the definition of love — sacrifice. Love is that firm, deep, sacrificial affection for one another.

Love can do all the things from 1 Corinthians 13. Love can be kind and meek and longsuffering. Love can be nice and uplifting and so many other things. But if that love is not willing to sacrifice, then it is a false love. Then it simply becomes a pretence. If that love is not willing to sacrifice, then all that kindness and longsuffering becomes a show. Without sacrifice, love is exposed to be very shallow, vain, and only skin-deep.

What kind of sacrifice does love give? It gives the ultimate sacrifice — the sacrifice of one's own life! Consider the following texts: John 3:16a "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son"; 1 John 4:9 "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him"; John 15:13 "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Pause for a bit. Meditate on the love of God toward you.

Has God been kind to us? Yes. Longsuffering. Absolutely. Gracious and merciful? Without a doubt. But is it all a show? Is it an empty, meaningless, shallow, and vain love that God shows to us? The answer is 'no.' Why not? Because of the confirmation of that love — Jesus Christ laid down his life! Jesus Christ became a sacrifice for our benefit and for our salvation.

Why is the sacrifice of one's life the supreme demonstration

of love? Because you cannot give anything more than your own life. Once you have given your life, then you have given everything. That is why Jesus says in John 15 "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." That's the love of God for us. That's the love of Jesus Christ for us. The supreme demonstration of love.

Adding to the beauty of that firm deep sacrificial love of Jesus Christ for us is that we did not deserve it. It was not that we made ourselves to be lovely, or did something to make ourselves stand apart from the rest of the human race. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

When we speak of love and of our duty to abound and increase in love, I trust you understand that it goes all the way back to the love of God for us in Jesus Christ who became a sacrifice for us. If we do not understand the greatness of God's love in giving us his only begotten Son, the greatness of Christ's love in laying down his life, then we will never go on in our lives to emulate that love.

This is the more excellent way. The greatest of these is love. The other gifts are great in and of themselves. Faith and hope and mercy and all the rest. But love is so great! Love is the controlling principle. Love is that drive behind all those other gifts. This love is what we are called to increase and abound in. To that we will turn our attention next time.

# Salvation is of the LORD (9): Jonah's Displeasure and God's Mercy (Jonah 4)



**Pastor Marcus Wee**  
Minister of CERC

Jonah's preaching at Nineveh was used by God to bring about the true repentance of the Ninevites. In the way of the Ninevites' repentance, God averted judgement on them. God "repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not" (Jon. 3:10b).

We saw last time that God's 'repentance' is an anthropopathism, the use of human ("anthropos") emotions ("pathos") to describe something in God. The immutable God does not actually change, though it may seem to be so, from our perspective. This anthropopathism highlights God's abundant mercy, taking pity upon His people and sparing them for the sake of Jesus Christ.

In Jonah 4, we go on to consider the account of Jonah's displeasure, and God's mercy.

## The Account

Jonah was displeased at the outcome of the Ninevites' repentance, and God's sparing of them. Jonah 4:1-3: "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. [2] And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. [3] Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live."

The source of Jonah's displeasure was God's mercy, which He had shown to the Ninevites. It was precisely because Jonah knew that God was sending the gospel to the Ninevites, in His mercy, that Jonah had refused to go to Nineveh to preach, in the first place. Now that Jonah had preached to the Ninevites, and that God had used the preaching to turn them from their sins, Jonah was greatly displeased with God. Jonah was so displeased, that he would rather die than live.

God then put a question to Jonah: "Doest thou well to be angry?" (4:4b).

Instead of answering, Jonah, in his rage, went out of the city, and waited to see if God would still destroy the city after all. But God was not yet done with Jonah. He had a lesson to teach

Jonah, just as he did in the belly of the fish. This time, God used a gourd plant to do so. V. 6: "And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd."

The gourd plant, with its wide-spreading leaves, gave Jonah relief from the heat. However, just a day later, God prepared a worm that "smote the gourd that it withered" (4:7b).

Jonah, exposed to the heat of the blazing sun in the cloudless sky, became faint. This led him to express the same sentiment: "It is better for me to die than to live" (4:8b, cf. v. 3b). Once again, Jonah was expressing his displeasure, his anger towards God, as God's question indicates: "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" (4:9a).

Jonah, however, does not relent in his anger, but expresses it yet more vehemently: "I do well to be angry, even unto death." (4:9b)

The account then ends with a rhetorical question by God: If Jonah could have pity upon the gourd plant, for which he had no part in cultivating, how much more ought not God have mercy upon the city of Nineveh, which had 120,000 infants ("sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand", v. 11b) and much cattle?

## Jonah's Displeasure

Jonah's displeasure, his vehement anger at God, is startling, given that he is likely a believing child of God. God had dealt with Jonah in abundant mercy, turning Jonah back to Himself, first through the storm and then by the great fish. Jonah, as a sign to the Ninevites, was a living testimony of God's grace that raises sinners out of spiritual death into spiritual life. Yet, despite experiencing God's great, undeserved mercy towards him, Jonah was now angry at God. And the reason he was angry was that God had shown the same great, undeserved mercy towards the Ninevites.

Jonah's displeasure was rooted in self-righteous pride. Jonah, the Israelite prophet, had judged in his self-righteousness that the Gentile Ninevites did not deserve God's mercy. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, the up-and-coming world power,



who would soon destroy Israel and take her children captive. Jonah did not want to do his enemies any favours. That was why Jonah had refused to go to Nineveh to preach, the first time. He knew that God would be merciful to the Ninevites in granting them the gift of repentance in response to the preaching of the gospel, and he had rather die than to obey God.

Jonah was self-righteous, thinking that he and his fellow Jews were more deserving of God's mercy, than were the Gentile Ninevites.

In his self-righteousness, Jonah was also proud. So proud, that he dared to find fault with God's mercy, when he himself had been an undeserving recipient of it. So proud, that he dared to dictate to whom God ought to show mercy: not to Ninevites. So proud, that he would rather die than to submit to God's will for the Ninevites' salvation.

And even when God continued to deal with Jonah in gentle mercy, not rebuking him harshly, but asking the gentle, searching question "Doest thou well to be angry?" (4:4b, 9a), Jonah neither relents nor repents, but rather persists in his self-righteous, prideful anger.

Jonah's displeasure is startling, but it is an accurate portrayal of how we are, at times. We may not be so bold as Jonah to vent our anger directly at God, or to state explicitly that we are somehow more worthy than others to be saved. But we may inadvertently think that we are better than others because of our Reformed church membership, or our knowledge of theology, and begin to speak and act that way.

Or, we may be as Jonah for a time, angry and bitter at others. At those who may have hurt us in some way; at the office-bearers, because things in the church are not done according to our expectations. Anger and bitterness that, though manifested towards others, and though we would not admit it, actually stems from anger and bitterness at God Himself.

The account of Jonah's displeasure, his self-righteous pride, is not for us to wag our finger at Jonah and to feed our own pride, but rather, for us to reflect on our own pride, repent of it, and confess it to God.

### God's Mercy

In response to Jonah's displeasure, God was merciful. God was merciful, not to consume Jonah in His righteous wrath, as Jonah deserved. God was, as Jonah described, "a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil" (4:2b).

God's patience is seen in His gentle dealing with Jonah,

repeatedly asking him, "Doest thou well to be angry?" (4:4a, 9a). God is the all-wise, all-merciful Father, who pities his children, knows our frail frame, and deals with us accordingly (Psa. 103:13-14).

God's gentle mercy is an example to us in our dealing with one another: parents with children, office-bearers with members, and members with one another. When we confront sin, we ought to do so in mercy. Such mercy at times can take the form of gentle, searching questions, to help one see his own sinful heart, giving him the time and space to repent, and trusting the Holy Spirit to use the word brought, to that end. That being said, such mercy also does not exclude more drastic measures (spanking for children, more direct confrontation, or escalation in church discipline), as God Himself showed in His chastisement of Jonah, through the storm and the fish.

Ultimately, God is merciful to His people, in Jesus Christ. In ourselves, we deserve nothing but eternal condemnation for our sin. We sin against God and forfeit God's mercy, time and time again, like Jonah did. We at times even presume to be angry at God. Yet God, in His mercy, does not leave us to ourselves, but comes to us and searches us, and turns us back to Himself.

Are we walking in self-righteous pride, as Jonah was, angry and bitter towards others and towards God? Let us not harden ourselves against God and his Word, when it comes to us, searchingly, "Doest thou well to be angry?" Rather, let us humble ourselves before God, submit to his will, and repent of our sin. We thank God for dealing with us, in mercy. Indeed, salvation is of the LORD.

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to us...and turns us  
back to Himself.

# Interviews with CERC's First-Generation Christians - William Ow (Part 2)



## William Ow

The interviewee, William Ow, is married to Sally and they have one daughter. He attended First Evangelical Reformed Church before joining CERC about 15 years ago.

The interview was conducted, transcribed and edited by CERC Christian Literature Ministry members.

*Interviewer's note: Part 1 was published in our May 2024 issue.*

### What was a trial you faced in your calling, and what encouraged you during it?

I worked on the fourth floor of the office building. There was a Human Resource administrative staff on the same level. She fainted one day and then said she wanted to resign because she had seen a ghost in the office. Those who heard that were alarmed.

To allay the concerns, the company consulted a geomancer. He came with his complicated compass (Figure 4) and after assessment, pointed out 3 things:

1. There indeed was a spirit at the ceiling of one of the columns.
2. On the ground floor, there was a particular door facing east which spirits would use to enter.
3. The building opposite had a metal grille gate which could be opened to facilitate delivery trucks dropping off goods. There was a vending machine beside it. The second floor also had 2 windows for ventilation of the toilets. Overall, the windows and gate could be interpreted as a dragon which was coming to eat nearby buildings, including mine.

*Figure 4 Geomancer's compass (Chinese Geomancer's*



*Compass, n.d.)*

As I was in charge of facility management, I was tasked

to do specific things to address this issue.

- Obtain the needed materials: aluminium foil, bronze coin with a square hole in the middle, purple washing powder, red thread, red paint, joss stick urn.
- Use the aluminium foil to wrap the bronze coin and washing powder, and use red thread to secure the aluminium foil. Place the aluminium foil bundle at the level 4 ceiling of the column that the spirit was at.
- Between my office building and the opposite one, paint 2 red lines on the road within the compound.
- Opposite the ground floor door which the spirit would use to enter, dig 800mm, place a joss stick urn filled with purple washing powder, in the hole, and cover it.

I was dismayed when I heard what I had to do, but also convinced that due to my faith, I would not be able to carry it out. I told HR that they would need to find someone else to do it. The HR representative, a non-Christian, laughed at me and wondered why I could not do it. Then, I was also worried that I might lose my job.

A few days later, I was informed to see the Managing Director, a German. It was stressful as I wondered whether he would serve me immediate notice of job termination. Instead, he shook my hand and told me that he also believed in God. I thanked him for being understanding that I would not be able to carry out what was asked. When asked further on the reason, I shared that it was like asking a Muslim person to buy pork, or asking a person who is against guns to buy bullets for someone else to shoot. I also reminded him of what happened to King Saul when he invoked a spirit (1 Samuel 28:5-19). He acknowledged what I said and told me that the meeting was over. I could not tell whether this would turn out well for me, but decided to wait and see.

After 1 to 2 weeks, my supervisor approached me and told me that HR had asked him to do the necessary. I was surprised as my supervisor was a Catholic. He said that he saw it as part of work and was alright to do it. I said that I could not separate work and religion, and my



Christian identity remained even at work.

A few months later, I received an envelope. Before opening it, I thought it was time for me to say goodbye to the company. To my surprise, it was a letter of promotion. I can only thank God for this blessing.

Another issue that I had to make a stand on was working on Sunday. In my line of work (electrical engineering), a project may require us to work on Sunday to finish. I decided that I would be willing to work on Saturday, so that I would not have to work on Sunday. While unhappy, my supervisor eventually resigned himself to this, and would tell others that I was not available to work on Sundays. It made me uncomfortable when some of my team members, who are Christians, had to work on Sundays.

### **Which Bible characters inspire you/ left an impression on you?**

One Bible character from the Old Testament that left an impression is Moses, and one from the New Testament is Paul.

Moses showed me how real God is in spite of our weaknesses. Moses was fearful about being the leader to lead Israel out of Egypt. God told Moses not to worry as he would give him the words to speak. See how Moses trusted God and went with the staff to meet Pharaoh. We need to trust God fully. Can you imagine being in a situation where you need to challenge an authority? When I spoke up at work, each time I would ask God to be with me.

Paul persecuted Christians, yet God chose him. When God chooses and uses you, there must be something that God wants you to do. When Paul had to face the Roman Empire, he was not fearful.

### **Any advice for the younger generation?**

Fear not, when you are at your workplace. Always remember to be a good testimony. Even if someone mocks you, smile it off. Remember that everyone is looking at you when you proclaim to be a Christian. Glorify God rather than man. Don't ever fail in your testimony. Work as hard as others. Remember who your Master is at work. Obey your Master.

In addition to my supervisor, I even told another Managing Director who asked me to come back to work on Sunday, that I would not. I prayed for strength and held my ground. That said, we also have to discern whether it is a work of mercy or necessity. When the

substation breaks down and there is no power, would restoring power be a work of necessity? There was once I did go to the Science Park on Sunday afternoon to check out the substation after an explosion that disrupted the power.

When you are being tested, you will have to make a choice on whether to stand your ground. There will be consequences for your actions, whether positive or negative. For myself, there was the possibility I could lose my job, but I knew I could not lose God. My colleagues who knew what I had told my supervisor and Managing Director in relation to not working on Sunday, were amazed at my courage (or perhaps foolhardiness in their eyes). In all of this, I can only thank God for blessing me at work.

### **References**

Chinese Geomancer's Compass. (n.d.). Science Museum Group. Retrieved July 2, 2024, from <https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co55597/chinese-geomancers-compass-magnetic-compass>

# Race and the Christian



**Cassia Lee**  
Member of CERC

*This article has been adapted for young readers. The original article was published in Salt Shakers issue 68 (Dec 2022).*

Racial issues have been around for a long time. Racism means treating people unfairly because of how they look or where they come from. It started with terrible things like black people being enslaved and a group called the Nazis in World War II hurting people who were different from them.

Recently, when COVID-19 began in Wuhan, China, some people unfairly blamed Chinese people. In the USA, there was a sad event where a white police officer treated a black man named George Floyd unfairly. These things show that racism is still a problem today.

Now, there is a new term called 'BIPOC'. It stands for Black, Indigenous, People of Color. It is used to talk about how these groups of people sometimes face violence and unfair treatment. People from South Asia are also part of this group.

In Singapore, some people believe in something called 'Chinese privilege'. This means that being part of the majority race (Chinese) might give people advantages. In 2021, there was a news story about an Indian-Filipino man who was criticized just because he was dating a Chinese girl. This shows that racism can happen even among different Asian groups.

As Christians, how should we handle these issues? Do we ever think one race is better than another? Sometimes, people might think certain races are smarter or more beautiful than others. These questions can make us realize if we have any unfair thoughts about people from different races.

In the Bible, it says that all people are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). This means we all have value no matter what we look like or where we are from. Moses, a great leader in the Bible, married women from different

racess. This shows that God does not want us to separate from or think that we are better than others because of our race.

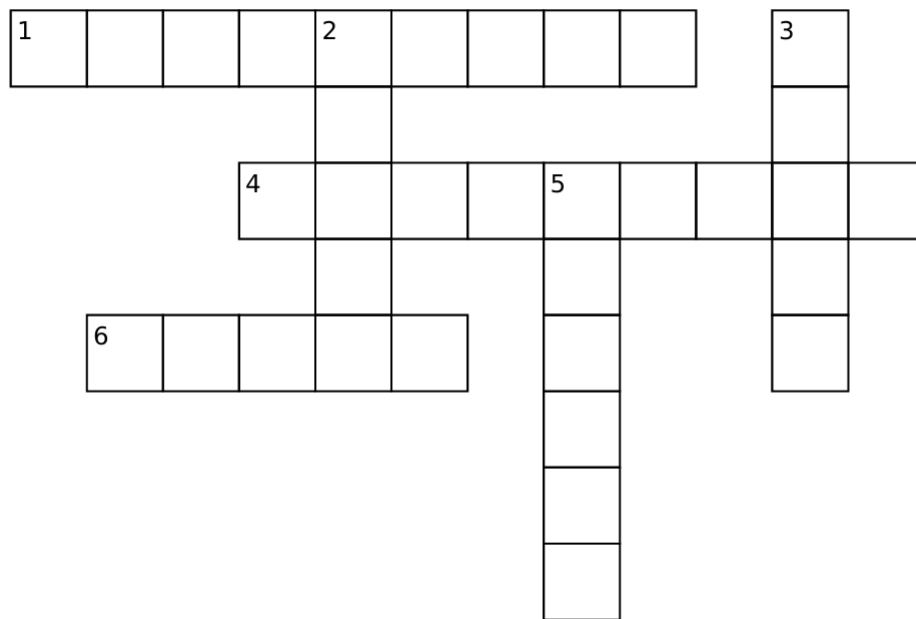
Jesus taught us to love our neighbour, no matter what they look like or where they are from. He told a story about a Samaritan helping a Jew in need, even though Samaritans and Jews did not always get along (Luke 10:25-37). This teaches us that we should treat everyone with kindness and respect.

In Singapore, we have many chances to meet people from different races. Our neighbourhoods are like big melting pots where different cultures come together. It is important to learn about and respect each others' cultures and traditions.

If someone says something mean or unfair about our race, we can remember that God does not love one race more than another. The Bible promises that in the end, God will judge us not by our race or where we are from, but by our hearts.



## Crossword Puzzle Racism



Down:

2. We are all made in the \_\_\_\_\_ of God
3. God judges each person's \_\_\_\_\_
5. This means treating people unfairly because of how they look or where they come from

Across:

1. Some people believe in Chinese \_\_\_\_\_ in Singapore
4. Jesus told a story about this person who helped a Jew in need
6. Old Testament leader who married women of different races

# Missionary Report from CERC-Kolkata Mission Field (April 2024)



**Rev Emmanuel Singh**

CERC's missionary pastor in the CERC-Kolkata Fellowship, India

*"For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;"*  
Philippians 1: 5

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are thankful to God for CERC Singapore Church's continued prayer and support in the mission work. It is my privilege to share the latest mission report with you.

Before that, I want to share with you some of the situation in India. Currently the church is under persecution. Recently a pastor from an independent church was beaten brutally and later he died in the hospital. Every day, someone in the Northern part of India is being persecuted for the Christian faith. At present, the weather situation is bad too, with heat waves around 40 to 43 degrees Celsius, making our few saints very sick. We need continued prayer and guidance on the mission work. Sometimes we feel very much isolated over here - we do not find like-minded Christians or some church nearby with whom we can exchange our ideas and burden; we are a small reformed testimony like an island surrounded by the polluted waters of Arminianism and pagan extremists, apostasy within Christianity with the false gospel and opposition outside of Christianity from pagan extremists trying their best to suppress us.

**Bible Studies:** There is a change in the Bible studies. Right now, we have it three days in a week. Due to the distance and heat wave weather, saints are not able to join in person, so we made it online by using Google meets apps and conference call on phone. Our Bible study is divided into three groups:

- **Tuesday 9 PM to 10:30 PM** for the newcomers who are seeking Christian faith. We do Bible study on the Gospel by telephonic conference call. Around 300 people attend.
- **Thursday 9 PM to 10:30 PM** Pre-confession Class for the new visitors. Four families attend class. So far, we have completed doctrine of Scripture, doctrine of God and now we are studying Anthropology.
- **Saturday Bible Study 9PM to 10:30 PM:** Bible Studies for CERC saints. We have started reading the book of Philippians, using study guide written by Carl Haak. We have completed chapter one last week.

**Sunday Preaching:** For the past few weeks I was preaching on Reformed Eschatology. I preached on the heretical view of premillennial dispensational theology and its prominent

feature, the Rapture. I also preached sermons on Palm Sunday, Good Friday and two sermons on Easter Sunday; and one sermon on Christian Giving. I will continue to preach on the Belgic confession and Heidelberg Catechism.

**Gospel Meeting:** We have had two Gospel meetings this year. One was on 4 February 2024 in Abhirampore area which is the village around 25KM from our CERC Kolkata. We had around 100 to 150 people coming to hear the gospel. On 11 February 2024, we had one more Gospel meeting in our Church premises. The same group again attended to hear more on the Gospel and some clarification of the Christian faith.

**Church Camp:** From 15 to 17 March 2024, we had CERC Kolkata's Church Camp. Our Church camp theme was 'Holding fast the confession of our Faith', and the text was taken from Hebrew 10:23. Rev. Tan took all the messages of this camp and Rev. Singh took the devotion. The saints in Kolkata were blessed, enjoyed the word of God, and were encouraged. We missed the fellowship with Singapore saints and hope that next year, we can have fellowship with them. The camp site Dhyana Ashram was good for us as per our price and standard but this place may not fit the Singapore saints. Still, we invite you to come and we will arrange some hotel near by the camp site. A few new families also joined our church camp from the Gospel meeting. Altogether this camp went well by God's grace.

**Church Order for the saints:** After the worship service with the saints, we discuss the Church Order. This is a minor confession of the church. The church must know its church order with biblical exposition. The Church Order has been translated and is undergoing final proof reading. Hopefully we can print it by next month.

**Prayer points for you to pray:**

1. Pray for the spiritual growth of the church. There are many newcomers who need special care on the Reformed Faith.
2. Pray for the persecuted saints in Kolkata and around us.
3. Pray for the church building which is still an essential need for us for worship.
4. Pray for the sick people in CERC Kolkata.



Gospel Meeting at Abhirampur Village



After Gospel Meeting Lunch Fellowship in Village



People are attending Gospel Meeting at our Church by this kind of Transportation



Photo of Church Campers



# COVENANT LIFE IN PICTURES



The young people at the CKKS retreat in June



Getting acquainted with the Bleyenbergs over dinner during the retreat :)



Games at our annual church camp in Desaru



All of us at church camp, with camp speaker Rev. Bleyenberg and his wife, Deb



Ordination of Deacon Huggy Lee



CERC Council.  
Remember to pray for our officebearers!

