Mission Update

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ESAU

A LIFE OF CONTRASTS

Esau, the elder twin of Jacob, son of Isaac and Rebekah, and grandson of Abraham, is one of the most complex personalities in the Book of Genesis. Known for his physical strength, hunting skills and independent spirit, he became the father of the Edomites. His life presents a striking contrast between material prosperity and spiritual priorities, personal failure and forgiveness, family rivalry and national legacy.

A SWOT analysis of Esau offers valuable insights into his character, choices, opportunities and enduring lessons for Christian living.

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STRENGTHS
The Man of Ability and Generosity

Physical strength and practical skills: Esau was a skilled hunter and outdoorsman, capable of providing for himself and his family (Genesis 25:27). His physical ability and independence distinguished him from Jacob, who was described as a quiet man dwelling in tents.

Leadership and enterprise: Esau accumulated considerable possessions and established himself in the hill country of Seir. His household and livestock became so extensive that he and Jacob eventually separated to accommodate their wealth (Genesis 36:6–8).

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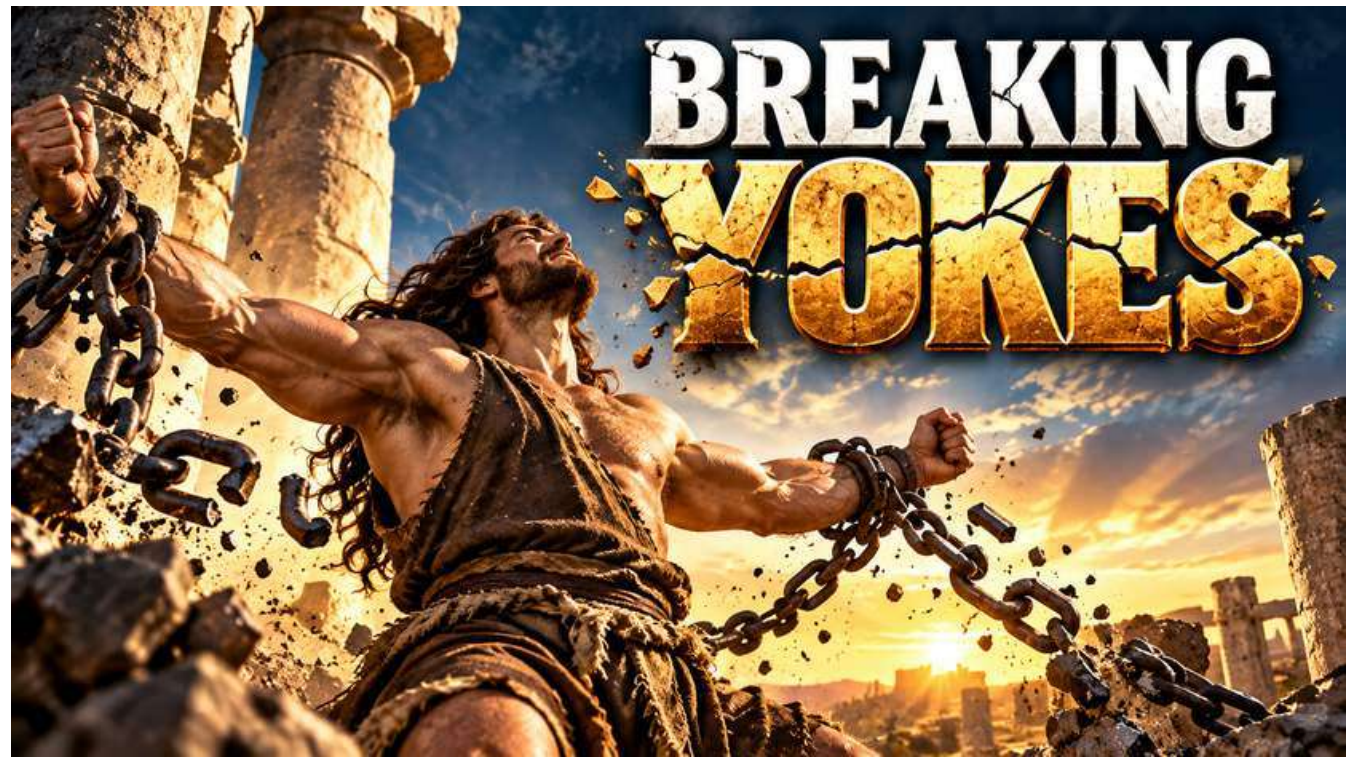

The Purpose of the Anointing

In Isaiah 10:27, the Lord prophetically declared to the remnant of Israel that a day was coming when their burdens would be lifted from their shoulders and the yoke of oppression would be removed from their necks. But God's promise went beyond merely removing the yoke. The yoke would be destroyed! What had once held them captive would lose its power over them. And the reason? Because of the anointing!

The Hebrew word shemen, commonly associated with oil, is often connected with the anointing. Interestingly, the Hebrew expression in Isaiah 10:27 has also been translated as fatness or richness, conveying the idea of abundance and increase. While translations differ in how they render this passage, the spiritual truth remains powerful: God's power is greater than the yoke of oppression. The anointing does not merely make the burden lighter. It breaks the power of what holds us captive.

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Dr. Giby Raphael



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He serves as CEO of Revobots Inc., a US-based humanoid robotics company, and Associate Pastor of Faithcity Church. His vision is to elevate one million marginalized families through job creation, technological innovation and sustainable development.

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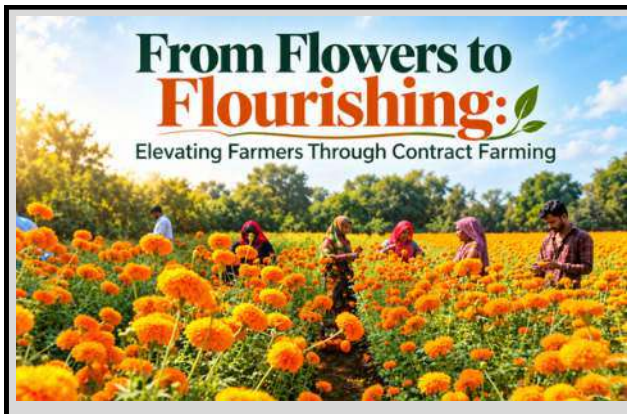

A promising journey towards farmers' prosperity is taking shape in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, through the contract farming initiative of Elevate A Million Pvt. Ltd., in collaboration with AVT Natural Products Ltd.

The project has reached the harvesting stage, with marigold farmers beginning to reap the fruits of their labour.

Launched as a pilot covering 500 acres and involving approximately 60 farmers, the initiative connects farmers with technical guidance, organised procurement and reliable market linkages to improve farm profitability and reduce market uncertainties. Building on this initial experience, the project aims to expand its reach and bring more farmers into a sustainable, market-driven agricultural value chain.

This initiative is part of a larger vision: to elevate one million farming families across India by 2033. The goal goes beyond increasing agricultural

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One of the most vivid demonstrations of this principle is found in the life of Samson (Judges 13–16). Before Samson was born, the Lord set him apart as a Nazirite, consecrated for a divine purpose: to deliver Israel from the oppression of the Philistines (Judges 13:5). Samson judged Israel for twenty years during the period when Israel had no king. The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, enabling him to accomplish extraordinary feats of strength. He struck down the Philistines, tore apart a lion with his bare hands, and repeatedly escaped the traps set by his enemies.

The Philistines feared Samson because they could not understand the source of his strength. They tried repeatedly to discover his secret, restrain him, and bring him under their control. Yet every attempt to bind Samson reveals a profound spiritual lesson for us today. The enemy still uses similar tactics to bind God's people.

1. The Bowstrings

Breaking the Laws of the Natural (Judges 16:9)

The first attempt to bind Samson involved seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried. A bowstring is designed to withstand tremendous tension. Its very purpose is to stretch under pressure without breaking, storing energy that can propel an arrow forward. Its strength lies in its resistance to snapping. Yet when Samson was bound with these fresh bowstrings, he broke them as easily as a thread exposed to fire. Sometimes the enemy attempts to bind us through what appears to be the unchangeable laws of nature, established patterns, or circumstances that seem beyond our control. But what appears permanent in the natural is not beyond the power of the supernatural God.

2. The New Ropes

Breaking the Bondage of New Circumstances (Judges 16:12)

When the bowstrings failed, they bound Samson with new ropes, ropes that had never been used. These were not old, worn-out ropes weakened by years of use. They were new, strong, and presumably capable of restraining him. Yet Samson broke them as though they were mere threads. Perhaps you have just emerged from a difficult season. You have fought battles, shed tears, endured disappointments, and finally begun to experience a little peace. You thought the struggle was over. You thought you had finally entered your season of rest. And suddenly, another challenge appears. A new problem. A new opposition. A new burden. A new uncertainty. The enemy may invent new strategies, introduce new circumstances, and create new obstacles. But none of these can diminish the power of the God who delivered you before. The same God who broke yesterday's strings is able to break today's ropes. Your circumstances may be new, but God's faithfulness is everlasting.

3. The Hair

When the Battle Becomes Personal (Judges 16:13-14)

Having failed with bowstrings and ropes, the enemy attempted something different - Samson's own hair. The first two attempts involved external objects. But now the binding involved something that belonged to Samson himself, something attached to his own body. Now the battle had become personal. Now it is our own body. Our own health. Our own mind. Our own emotions. The pain that refuses to leave. The disease that threatens our future. The discomfort that follows us day and night. The anxiety that steals our peace. The fear of death that haunts our thoughts. The insomnia that robs us of rest. Even when the battle becomes personal, the power of God remains sufficient!

4. Remember Me, O Lord

The Anointing That Restores (Judges 16:28)

The final chapter of Samson's life presents perhaps the most moving revelation of God's mercy. Samson had experienced extraordinary victories, but he had also made devastating mistakes. Through repeated compromise and misplaced trust, he revealed the secret of his Nazirite consecration. His hair was cut, his strength departed, and he was captured by the Philistines. The man who had once broken every chain was now bound. The man who had once defeated armies was now a prisoner.

The man who had once walked in extraordinary strength was now blind, humiliated, and forced to grind grain in a prison. But his story did not end in the prison. And in the final moments of his life, standing between the pillars of the Philistine temple, Samson lifted his voice to God. And the anointing fell again, more powerfully than ever before. No mater the condition of our heart, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us (1 John 1:9). Samson's final prayer was answered. God strengthened him once more, and in his death Samson struck a greater blow against the Philistines than he had during his life (Judges 16:30).

Through Jesus Christ, we have the assurance that sin and death do not have the final word. We can approach God in faith, seek His deliverance, and trust His power even in our deepest weakness. I pray that whatever situation you are going through, if you cry out to God, and in the presence of His anointing that flows through you – the yoke will be broken!

Dr. Giby Raphael

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production — it seeks to raise farmers' per capita income, strengthen family livelihoods, create economic opportunities and enhance their dignity and status in society

Through technology-enabled agriculture, sustainable farming practices, value addition and strategic partnerships, Elevate A Million aims to make farming more rewarding and resilient.

From 500 acres in Sagar to a nationwide movement, every farmer empowered brings us one step closer to elevating a million families.

Elevate A Million Pvt. Ltd. (EAMPL) is an agri-tech and rural development enterprise committed to transforming agriculture and empowering farming communities across India. Guided by the vision of "Elevate One Million Families by 2033," the company promotes sustainable farming, contract farming, Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) development, value addition and market linkages to enhance farmers' income and livelihoods. Through strategic partnerships, innovative technologies and market-driven agricultural solutions, EAMPL aims to make farming more profitable, resilient and sustainable—enabling farmers to achieve economic independence, dignity and a better quality of life.

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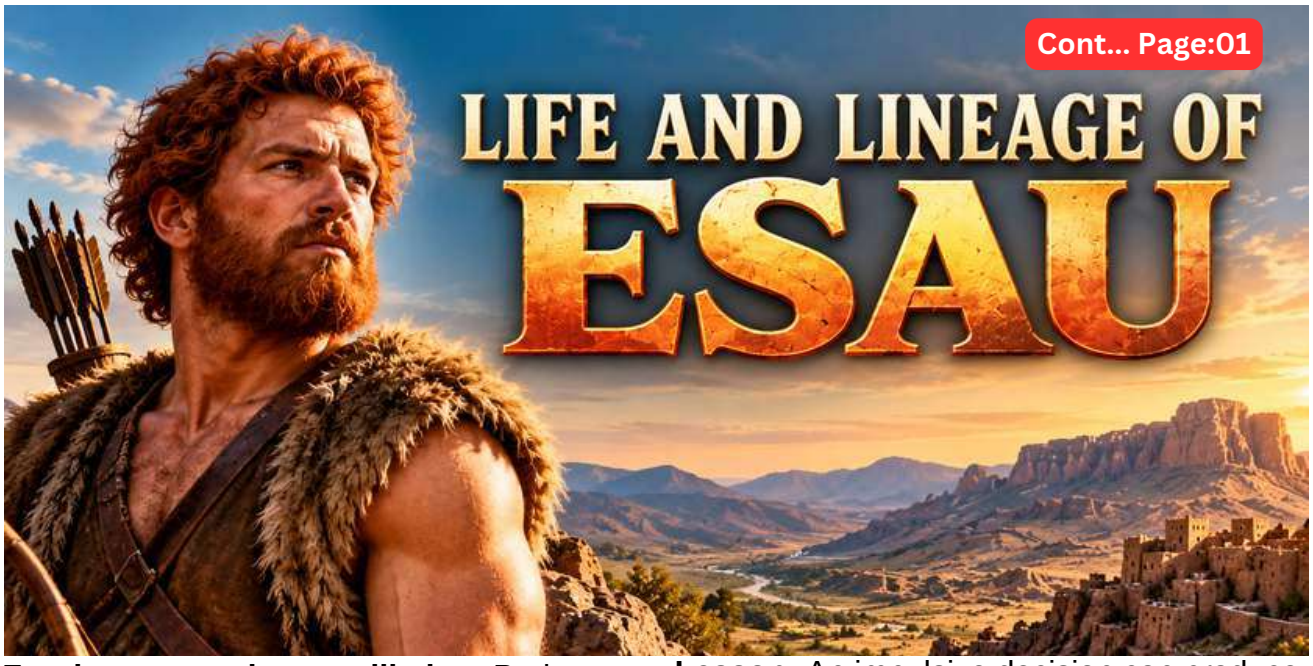



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Forgiveness and reconciliation: Perhaps Esau's most admirable moment came when he met Jacob after approximately twenty years of separation. Instead of taking revenge for the deception surrounding Isaac's blessing, Esau ran to meet his brother, embraced him and wept (Genesis 33:4). His response demonstrates the power of mercy to overcome bitterness.

Lesson: True strength is revealed not merely through physical ability or material achievement, but also through generosity, emotional maturity and the willingness to forgive.

WEAKNESSES

The Cost of Short - Sighted Choices

Impulsiveness and immediate gratification: Esau exchanged his birthright for a bowl of lentil stew when he returned hungry from the field (Genesis 25:29–34). He allowed a temporary physical need to outweigh a lifelong inheritance. Hebrews 12:16 uses Esau as a warning against treating sacred privileges carelessly.

Disregard for spiritual heritage: As the firstborn of Isaac, Esau occupied a significant position within the family through which God's covenant promises had been transmitted. Yet his decision revealed a failure to appreciate the spiritual significance of his birthright.

Anger and resentment: When Jacob received Isaac's blessing through deception, Esau became deeply distressed and threatened to kill his brother (Genesis 27:41). His anger intensified the family crisis and forced Jacob to flee.

Family conflict: Esau's marriages to Canaanite women, Judith and Basemath, grieved Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 26:34–35). He later married Mahalath, a daughter of Ishmael (Genesis 28:8–9).

Lesson: An impulsive decision can produce consequences far beyond the moment. Spiritual privileges, integrity and relationships should never be sacrificed for temporary satisfaction.

OPPORTUNITIES

From Firstborn to Nation Builder

The privilege of the firstborn: As Isaac's elder son, Esau possessed the natural privileges associated with primogeniture. However, before the twins were born, God declared that the older would serve the younger (Genesis 25:23). The unfolding story reveals that divine purposes cannot be understood solely through human expectations or birth order.

Territorial expansion: Esau established his household in Mount Seir, a rugged region south of the Dead Sea in present-day Jordan (Genesis 36:8–9). Its mountainous terrain offered strategic advantages, while Edom's position near important regional trade routes and the Arabah copper-producing region contributed to its historical significance.

Nation building and political leadership: Esau's descendants developed into the Edomite people, with tribal chiefs and kings recorded in Genesis 36. Genesis 36:31 notes that Edom had kings before any king reigned over the Israelites. This highlights the political organisation that emerged among his descendants.

An opportunity for reconciliation: Esau's reunion with Jacob offered an opportunity to end a personal feud. His embrace demonstrated that a painful history need not determine every future relationship.

Lesson: Opportunities for achievement, influence and reconciliation should be guided by wisdom, humility and an awareness of responsibilities beyond personal ambition.

THREATS

Rivalry, Consequences and Historical Conflict

Strategic rivalry: Jacob's actions deprived Esau of the blessing he expected from Isaac. Although Jacob's deception was wrong, Esau's earlier disregard for his birthright also shaped the family's tragic circumstances (Genesis 25:34; 27:36).

Familial and cultural tensions: Disagreements over marriage, inheritance and parental expectations deepened divisions within Isaac's household.

Generational hostility: The relationship between Edom and Israel remained troubled across centuries. Edom was subjected to Davidic rule (2 Samuel 8:13–14), later rebelled against Judah (2 Kings 8:20–22), and became the subject of prophetic condemnation, particularly for its hostility towards Jerusalem (Obadiah 10–14).

The Edomites' later history continued under the name Idumea. Herod the Great, who ruled Judea under Roman authority, came from an Idumean family background.

The threat of inherited bitterness: Esau's reconciliation with Jacob stands in contrast to the hostility that later characterised relations between their descendants. Personal forgiveness does not automatically resolve wider political, social or generational conflicts.

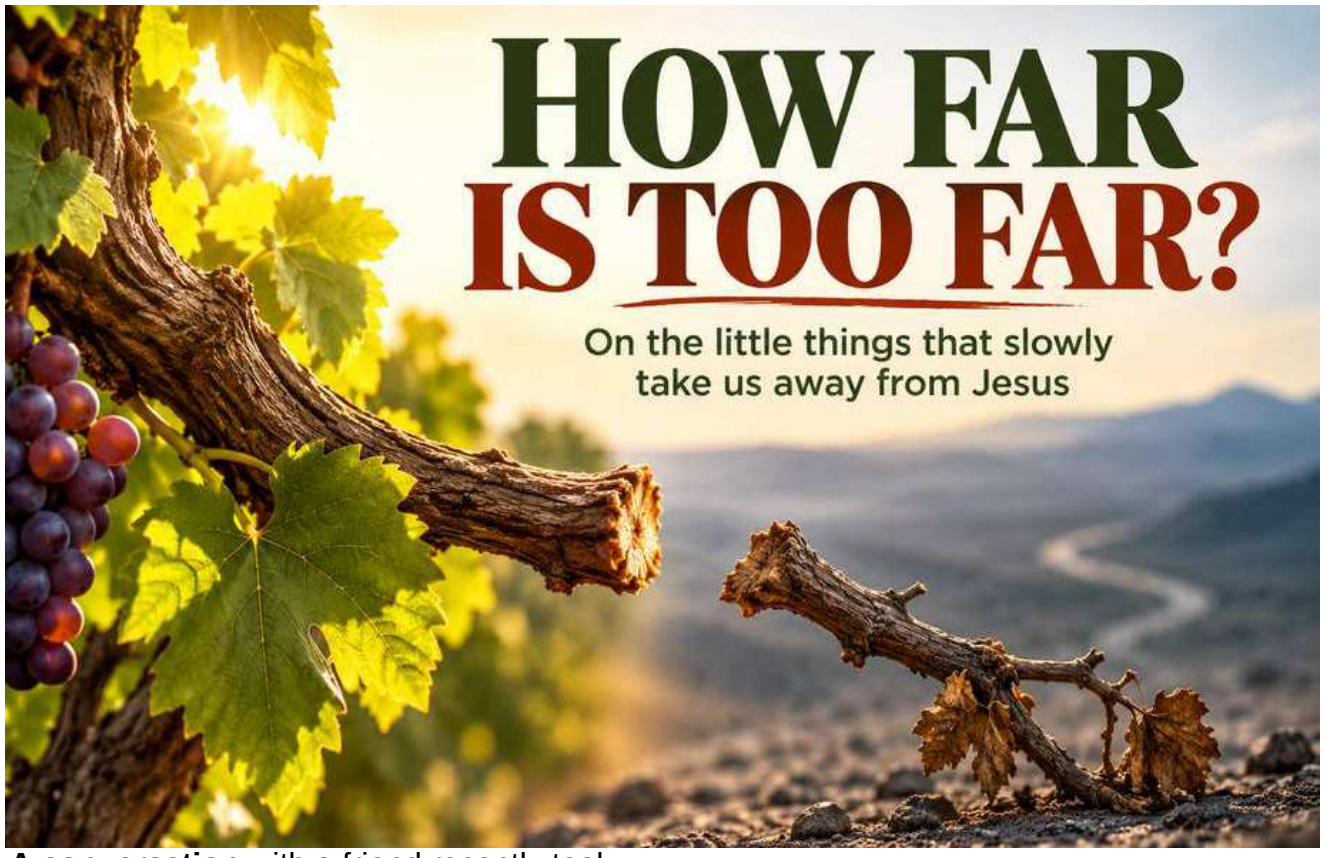
Lesson: Unresolved resentment can become a legacy of division. Families, communities and nations must actively pursue justice, peace and reconciliation rather than perpetuating old grievances.

CONCLUSION

What will we choose?

Esau's life is a study in contrasts: strong, prosperous and forgiving, yet short-sighted in exchanging his birthright for immediate gratification. Though he lost Isaac's principal blessing through Jacob's deception, he built a nation in Seir and demonstrated the power of forgiveness despite deep betrayal.

His story challenges us to recognise our strengths, confront our weaknesses, seize opportunities for growth and guard our spiritual lives and relationships against lasting harm.





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A conversation with a friend recently took me back to a passage of Scripture that I have read many times. It is found in John 15:1–8, where Jesus describes Himself as the true vine and us as the branches. As I reflected on that passage, one simple picture stayed with me. Imagine a branch separated from a vine. Now, take that branch and place it just one centimetre away from where it was attached. Then take another branch and move it one kilometre away. The distance is different, but neither branch is connected to the vine anymore. Neither can draw life from the vine.

That thought left me asking myself a question: How easily can we become distant from Christ without even realising it? We tend to imagine drifting away from God as something dramatic, something that happens when a person openly rejects their faith or makes a deliberate decision to walk away from Jesus. But what if the drift begins much earlier, through a series of small, seemingly insignificant choices? What if we have been moving away from Him without even noticing the direction in which we are heading?

It Doesn't Always Begin With Something Big

I don't think most of us wake up one morning and decide that we no longer need Jesus. Sometimes, we just get busy. We get busy with college, work, relationships, family, dreams, and the thousand little things that fill our days. We tell ourselves that we will spend time with God tomorrow, read the Bible when things settle down, or pray properly when life becomes a little less hectic. And tomorrow becomes the next day, and the next day becomes another week.

Nothing seems to have gone terribly wrong. Life goes on as usual. We laugh with our friends, make plans for the future, work towards our goals, and carry on with our routines. But somewhere in the middle of all this, something begins to change. We stop talking to Jesus the way we used to. His Word no longer occupies our thoughts as it once did. We become a little more comfortable with things we once knew we needed to surrender. We start making decisions without considering what He has said.

Perhaps that is what makes drifting so dangerous. We can be moving away from someone without ever making a conscious decision to leave.

The Little Things Matter

When we think about walking away from God, we tend to imagine the big things: a deliberate rejection of faith, a life-changing compromise, or a decision to follow our own way instead of His. But what about the little things? What about the time we know we should spend in prayer but keep giving to something else? What about the truth in God's Word that we know we need to obey but would rather avoid because obedience is inconvenient? What about the compromises we keep making because we convince ourselves that they aren't really a big deal?

I'm not saying that missing one morning of prayer means you have walked away from Jesus, or that every moment of spiritual weakness means God has abandoned you. Our relationship with Christ is not held together by our ability to have a perfect day, every day. But I do think we need to be honest with ourselves. Sometimes, the little things reveal what is happening in our hearts. We may not have stopped believing in Jesus; we may simply have stopped living with a daily awareness of how much we need Him.

For young people especially, the distractions are real. We are trying to figure out our future, build careers, maintain relationships, meet expectations, and find our place in the world. None of these things is necessarily wrong. But even good things can gradually take the place that belongs to Christ. We can become so occupied with building our lives that we neglect the One in whom our lives are meant to be rooted.

You Can Look Alive and Still Be Disconnected

Think about a freshly cut branch. For a while, it may still look green. Its leaves may retain their colour, and it may appear almost indistinguishable from the branches still attached to the vine. But looking alive and receiving life are not the same thing. The branch may retain the appearance of life for a season, but it has lost its connection to the source from which it receives nourishment.

I wonder how often we confuse the two in our spiritual lives. We can know Christian vocabulary, attend Christian gatherings, listen to sermons, sing worship songs, and maintain the outward routines of faith while neglecting genuine dependence on Christ. We can become familiar with the things of God while growing careless about God Himself. We may still know what to say in church, but have we become less attentive to what Jesus says to us through His Word?

In John 15:5, Jesus says, “apart from me you can do nothing” (ESV). He reminds us that we were never designed to live independently of Him. This is a humbling truth, especially when we are young and trying to build something with our lives. We want to become something, make our parents proud, build meaningful careers, find someone to love, serve God, and do something that matters. There is nothing wrong with wanting to live a meaningful life. But what if we become so good at managing our lives that we forget how desperately we need Jesus?

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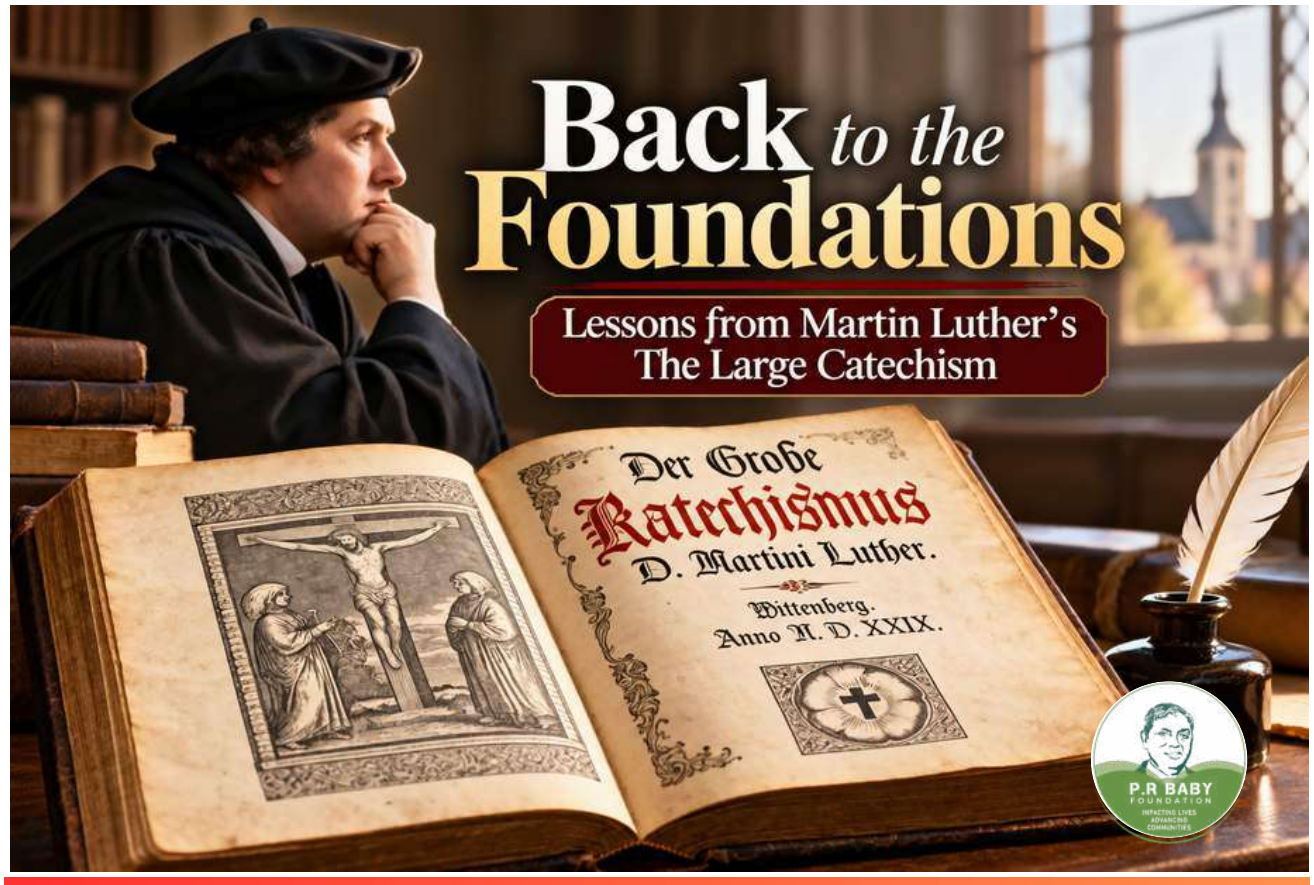

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In a world overflowing with information, the Church must never neglect the foundations of faith.

We live in an age age when information is available at our fingertips. Sermons, Christian books, podcasts, and theological discussions are accessible to millions. Yet, amid this abundance of information, a fundamental question remains: Are we growing in our understanding of God's Word, or are we merely accumulating knowledge?

Nearly five hundred years ago, Martin Luther recognized the importance of grounding believers in the essential truths of Christianity. In 1529, he published the Large Catechism, a theological teaching resource designed especially to help pastors, teachers, and Christian leaders instruct believers in the faith. His message remains relevant today: **we never outgrow the foundations of our faith**.

Returning to the Essentials

The Large Catechism emerged during the Protestant Reformation, when Luther recognized that many Christians lacked a clear understanding of basic biblical teaching. He understood that reforming the Church required more than challenging errors; it also required teaching God's Word faithfully and systematically.

The Catechism explains five principal subjects: the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Through these foundational teachings, Luther sought to connect Christian doctrine with everyday life.

His approach reminds us that spiritual maturity does not mean moving beyond the fundamentals. Rather, it means understanding them more deeply and allowing them to shape our character, decisions, relationships, and service.

A Faith That Shapes Our Lives

The Ten Commandments teach us to honour God and live responsibly toward others. Faith must influence our conduct, integrity, relationships, and treatment of our neighbours. A Church that teaches biblical truth must also demonstrate that truth through lives of holiness, compassion, and justice.

The Apostles' Creed directs our attention to the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christianity is not merely a system of moral principles or religious practices. It is a response to the God who created us, redeemed us through Jesus Christ, and works in us through the Holy Spirit.

The Lord's Prayer teaches us dependence upon God. We seek His kingdom and His will, ask for daily provision, seek forgiveness, and pray for deliverance from evil. In ministry, where plans, programmes, and responsibilities can easily dominate our attention, prayer reminds us that our ultimate strength and direction come from God.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper direct believers to God's promises and the centrality of Christ. They remind the Church that Christian faith rests not on human achievement but on God's grace and the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Together, these teachings provide a framework for a life rooted in Scripture, centred on Christ, sustained by prayer, and expressed through faithful service.

The Challenge for the Church Today

Our generation faces a paradox. Access to Christian content has increased enormously, yet many believers struggle to distinguish biblical truth from popular opinion. Some know Christian terminology without understanding Christian doctrine; others participate in church activities without being adequately grounded in Scripture. The answer is not simply to provide more information. **It is to cultivate deeper discipleship.**

Churches must invest intentionally in biblical teaching, pastoral training, family discipleship, and the spiritual formation of young people. Parents must help children understand the faith. Pastors must equip believers to study Scripture. Christian leaders must model the truths they teach.

This is particularly important for communities where educational opportunities are limited. Christian education can help nurture not only biblical understanding but also character, responsibility, hope, and a commitment to serve others.

A church that invests in teaching today is preparing disciples who can faithfully serve tomorrow.

Passing the Faith to the Next Generation

Luther's work reminds us that teaching the Christian faith is not an optional ministry. It is central to the Church's calling to make disciples. In a rapidly changing world, young people need more than inspiration; they need a firm foundation. They need to know what Christians believe, why they believe it, and how their faith should influence the way they live.

The Great Commission calls us not merely to make converts but to make disciples, **"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you"** (Matthew 28:20).

This responsibility belongs to the whole Church. Through homes, congregations, schools, leadership programmes, and community initiatives, we must create opportunities for every generation to encounter God's Word and grow in the knowledge of Christ.

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Jesus Doesn't Call Us to Independence, but to Abide

This is the part of John 15 that I keep coming back to. Jesus says in verse 4, “Abide in me, and I in you” (ESV). He does not tell the branches to become independent or to discover how much life they can produce on their own. He calls them to remain in Him. A branch bears fruit because it remains connected to the vine.

In the same way, Christian maturity is not about becoming increasingly self-sufficient; it is about becoming increasingly dependent on Christ. Abiding in Him is not simply about avoiding spiritual failure or maintaining a set of religious habits. It is about living in ongoing dependence on Jesus, allowing His Word to shape our thinking, trusting Him in our decisions, and obeying Him even when it costs us something. It is learning to walk with Him not just when life is difficult, but also in the ordinary moments that make up our days.

And there is hope in this invitation. When we realise that our hearts have grown cold, we can come to Him. When we recognise that we have been distracted, we can turn our attention back to Him. When we have sinned, we can confess our sin and seek His forgiveness. When we feel weak, we can remember that our strength was never meant to come from ourselves. We do not need to pretend that everything is fine or wait until we feel worthy enough to approach Him. We need to come to Him honestly, trusting His grace and learning to walk with Him again.

The goal is not merely to avoid becoming a dead branch. Jesus speaks about bearing fruit, a life increasingly shaped by His character and obedience, a life that brings glory to the Father. We were never meant simply to survive spiritually. We were called to bear fruit through our dependence on Christ.

So, How Far Is Too Far?

The more I think about the picture of the branch, the more I realise that the question I need to ask myself is not simply how far I have gone, but whether I am remaining in Christ. Perhaps we spend too much time wondering how much distance we can tolerate and too little time appreciating the invitation Jesus has given us. He does not ask us to discover the maximum distance we can maintain from Him without suffering the consequences. He calls us to abide in Him.

Maybe you are reading this in the middle of a busy season. Perhaps you are trying to figure out your future, struggling with something nobody else knows about, or carrying responsibilities that seem to leave very little room for anything else. Maybe you still love Jesus, but if you are honest, you haven't been giving Him the attention He deserves. Your relationship with Him may have become something you maintain rather than someone you cherish.

If any of that sounds familiar, pause for a moment. Think about the last time you opened His Word, not because you had to prepare a sermon or answer a question, but because you wanted to hear what He had said. Think about the last time you prayed honestly, acknowledging your need for Him rather than simply rushing through a list of requests. Consider the decisions you are making right now. Are you bringing them before Him? Are you willing to obey Him even when His Word challenges what you want?

And perhaps, most importantly, ask yourself this: If nothing about my life changed outwardly, but my dependence on Jesus continued to grow weaker, would I even notice?

We Were Never Meant to Live Without Him

I don't want to become so occupied with the things I am doing for Christ that I neglect my walk with Christ. I don't want to become so familiar with the Bible that I stop allowing it to shape me. And I don't want to build a life that looks fruitful to everyone else while forgetting that the fruit Jesus desires can only grow as I abide in Him. I suspect many of us need to be reminded of this, not because we have stopped believing in Jesus, but because we can become so absorbed in everything else that we forget our daily dependence on Him.

Wherever you find yourself today, remember the invitation Jesus gives us: abide in Him. Return to His Word, come to Him in prayer, trust Him enough to obey Him, and keep learning what it means to remain in Him. Not just on Sundays, not just when life gets difficult, and not just when you need something from Him, but every day. This is not about earning His love through better spiritual performance. It is about recognising that He is the source of our life and that we cannot bear lasting spiritual fruit apart from Him.

So, before you ask how far you can go, ask yourself whether you are remaining in Christ. The goal was never to see how far we could go and still call ourselves Christians. The goal is to abide in Christ, bear fruit through Him, and live a life that brings glory to the Father. And if there is one thing I hope we never forget, it is this: we were never meant to live a single day as though we did not need Jesus.

Sam Stains



Back to the Foundations

Nearly five centuries after the publication of the Large Catechism, Luther’s central concern remains our challenge: Christians must continue learning, growing, and living out the truth of God’s Word.

Let us return to Scripture. Let us deepen our understanding of the Gospel. Let us strengthen our prayer lives, nurture Christian character, and equip the next generation to stand firm in faith.

Strong churches are built on strong disciples. Strong disciples grow through God’s Word. And God’s Word must be faithfully taught from one generation to another.

The foundations of our faith are not outdated relics of the past. They are enduring truths that continue to guide, sustain, and transform the people of God.

A Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the enduring truth of Your Word. Help us return continually to the foundations of our faith. Give our pastors wisdom to teach, our families grace to nurture, our young people hearts eager to learn, and our churches a renewed commitment to biblical discipleship. May our lives reflect the truth we profess, and may we faithfully pass the Gospel to the next generation. Keep Christ at the centre of all we believe, teach, and do. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

John Alex

P R Baby Foundation is incorporated as section 8 (1) company under companies act 2013 and governed by the family, friends and well-wishers of the late Pastor P.R. Baby.
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