

CHRISTIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

“Sharing the Pain”

Bible Studies

A guide for reflections during
The Healing Ministry Week 2010

Healing Ministry Sunday
8-14 February 2010

CMAI Day of Prayer
10 February 2010

Healing Ministry Sunday
14 February 2010



CHRISTIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

Strengthening the Healing Ministry of the Church in India

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PHYSICAL PAIN

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole; and by his bruises we are healed.” (NRSV)

Is. 53:5

Cancer is both physical and emotional pain – a disease causing anxiety, both to the patient and to family members. The treatment involves the body, though the pain is multiple in nature. This is a particularly human trait, not seen in other mammals. Most of the pain and fear comes out of premeditation upon the future.

While we are in pain we tend to ignore the pain of others, yet are also able and willing to risk our own survival for the sake of others. This can only come out of love that transcends our mere biological urges. There are people who are concerned about the pain of others, care and pray for them, and this makes us human.

The love of God manifested in Christ Jesus is the sacrificial love – for “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son...” Christian intercession, in its true spirit, is one way of sharing the pain of others, since we carry in our hearts all those who suffer as we stand in God’s presence. The liturgy of the Church at its very best is intercession for God’s world in the manner of Jesus Christ whose cross stands out as a symbol par excellence of bearing the suffering and pain of the world.

Actual physical and emotional participation in the pain of others is exemplified daily by many men and women in our world, which is otherwise dominated by selfish pleasure-seekers and greedy profit-makers.

Let us always remember that suffering for others or sharing others’ pain is not for its own sake. It is for their *healing*. Their healing brings healing to us. So sharing other’s pain is ultimately *sharing of healing* and all the joy that it generates. “By his bruises we are healed.” This is what makes our humanity truly human and divine.

Prayer: God of health and healing, have mercy upon us, the miserable offenders. Amen.

EMOTIONAL PAIN

“Jesus began to weep.” (NRSV)

John 11:35

How often are we told to ignore our emotions? We are told that as Christians we are a people of the resurrection, a people of hope – we have no reason for sadness when there is loss and death. The experience of emotional pain is something that we cannot escape or avoid. It is not something that we should ignore.

In this passage from John, Jesus is a case study in dealing with our emotions. Jesus had come to resurrect his friend Lazarus, but he saw the grief in his friend’s sisters, Mary and Martha, and had his own emotional response. He wept. Weeping – it is a very human response to a very human situation. What more permission do we need to experience the emotion that we encounter? Even though Jesus knew that he would raise Lazarus from the dead, that day and again in the Day of Resurrection, that Lazarus would have life eternal, “Jesus began to weep.” He didn’t deny, but rather experienced his emotions. His sadness did not stop him from taking action, however, he brought something good from the apparent dire. (Remember Paul’s words in Romans 8:28 “All things work together for good for those who love God.”) We have influence over our personal response to emotion, but not whether we experience those emotions.

We ultimately have no basis for despair/hopelessness, yet we are given permission to experience the emotions that we have. How should we respond to the emotional pain of others? Job’s friends were onto something – at first. “They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.” (NRSV Job 2:13) What we have to offer others in pain is ourselves, our presence, our support and love, our prayers. Our words may not be as effective as our presence. Platitudes may not be as effective as our tears.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You for tears – Yours and mine. Thank You also for the hope that, in time, dries them.

1. How can we best support someone in emotional pain?
2. What about other emotions, like anger?

SOCIAL PAIN

“The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’ Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise.’” (NIV)

Luke 10:37

There is so much of pain in society today – newspaper and TV news brings them home every day. Pain because of terrorism, militancy, social discrimination, caste violence, battering of individuals, especially women, exploitation of children, being marginalised, looked down upon, broken and crushed, and several situations like these occur around us, every day, right in our community – very painful situations in the life of almost every individual. And how do we respond to these as followers of Christ?

Esther 4:12-14 – Esther was challenged by Mordecai, her uncle, to take sides with the people in distress and share the pain; Luke 10:30-37 – the Good Samaritan chose to share the pain of the victim, while the Priest and the Levite chose not to, for various reasons.

Activists invite us to join the rally to speak out for the victims of every social injustice – to come out and discuss earnestly, instead of staying in our ‘safe zones.’ Jesus took a firm stand when he was faced with social injustices. What would be our response if that call were from Jesus, today?

John 8:1-11 – An adulterous woman was brought to Jesus. The intention was to corner Jesus. Nobody cared for the woman’s distress, shame and pain in doing so. Nobody did so to the man involved. The woman was just a cog in the wheel. Jesus did not condemn, instead spoke clearly, both to the crowd by saying, ‘the one who has not sinned throw the first stone’ and to the woman, ‘if nobody has condemned you, then neither will I.’

What is the message for us and others – from the Scriptures and from the present situation as mentioned above? How can we share the pain of our people? Will we, like Jesus, get involved, stand alongside, share the pain and allow ourselves to be part of the struggle? Take a cue from those who took sides for justice for all.

Questions for discussion:

1. What are some of the issues of social pain in the area we live in?
2. Do I have unconscious attitudes that need God’s transformation?
3. How can I share the pain of somebody, today?

ECONOMIC PAIN

“Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied...” (NIV)

Read Mark 6:30-45

Economic pain, borne by millions of people around the world, is caused by several factors like economic meltdown and soaring prices. These factors are the result of the irresponsible attitude of authorities and their greed and they cause job losses and hardships to both individuals and families, affecting especially the poor in every country.

Hunger, though a social pain, is the result of faulty economy. To meet the needs of the hungry we need projects, mostly based on foreign funding, and little is raised from the home country.

Let us look at Jesus’ solution to such a situation – bring what you have and share it with others who are in pain/need. Resources need to be made available from those who have, to those who lack enough.

Sharing is not a sentiment. What is needed is sharing, caring and serving the common good. No need to make yourself poor while distributing the resources/wealth you have. There should be moral awareness about the injustice in any given situation and for the distribution of the resources that we have. Then, the sharing idea should be translated into structures and concrete actions.

Reflect on the economic injustices in your area or in the situation where your congregation/community stands. Attempt some concrete plan of action to express your commitment to the needy.

Every community has a special responsibility in this regard – the government agencies, non-government agencies, religious communities and the philanthropists. Accumulated riches should be invested to improve the day-to-day living of the common people with various plans of action. Unfortunately, this is not happening for various reasons — corruption in the system is one such reason. The religious communities also have the moral responsibility in drawing up certain plans of action – setting an example for others to follow – before moral credibility is lost.

A statement for reflection: “The sense of the holiness of life is not compatible with an exploitative economy.” - Wendell Berry.

Prayer: God of justice and peace, root out all practices of corruption and greed from our economic life. Give us wisdom and understanding to make humble efforts in bringing justice and fairness in and around our surroundings. Amen.

HEALED TO HEAL

“Jesus said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease.’”

Read Mark 5:25-34

A woman comes to Jesus in need of healing. Twelve years is a long time for anyone to get used to a disease, and to bury any sense of hope for a better world; here is a woman who had reached the end of the road! Her own society comprising of relatives and friends had already given up on her and this suggests that it is possible for someone to be socially dead before actually physically dying. The woman stands as a symbol of one who was a spent woman, crushed from all sides in society.

Jesus chooses to use the moment in her personal life when she is in search of healing and wholeness. Though it is in a public space, Jesus does not hesitate to redefine moments of healing and wholeness. His method is also quite strange. He raises a hue and cry about someone touching him though there was a crowd thronging from all sides. He does so with the definite purpose of healing the minds of people of diseases that prevent them from enjoying the fullness of life. Jesus uses the woman and her faith as an example of new ways of offering life and hope to one another. The woman is the healed healer who becomes an example of one who dares to dream of the “New Life” beyond barriers.

Jesus invites us to look beyond and be corrected of the narrow parochial walls that we have used (like caste, race, sexism) to hurt one another and invites us as sons and daughters to have a new identity in Jesus Christ.

Prayer: When our hope of fullness of life is dim because of the intensity of injustice around us, help us Lord, to have the courage to believe that You are there to redefine new life, dignity and a new identity. Amen.

SHALOM – PEACE

“Blessed are the peacemakers” (KJV)

Mtt. 5:9

The Hebrew word for peace is ‘Shalom’. Shalom means peace, completeness and welfare. It can also be used idiomatically as ‘hello’ and ‘good-bye’. It can be referred to as the peace between two individuals, parties or nations. It is the wellbeing, welfare and safety of an individual or group. It is not only a state of mind but is experienced in relationships. It is a relationship within, with God, with others and with nature also.

Hebrews 12:12 says that every Christian must aim for peace. Here the four meanings of the Hebrew word ‘Shalom’ is important. These four meanings are as per the use of vowels in the word. They are ‘Whole’, ‘Pay fully’, ‘It was worth it’ and ‘It was paid for’. So at the end, the truth is that “Peace has a price” which is to be paid for. Peace is understood in the context of hostility and division. When we say ‘Christ is our Peace’, it makes the meaning clear (Eph 2:14). Christ removed the wall of division and hostility by paying the price on the cross.

Peace is not a negative thing but is positive and active. It is not simply the absence of trouble. It has two aspects:

- a. It is that which makes for an individual’s highest good; which is to be in obedience to God
- b. It is to live in unity with others, by raising the highest realisations of making by producing the right relationship with others

It requires effort to bring peace. The writer of Hebrews equates this with healing (Heb. 12:12).

In the world, we see three kinds of people:

- a.. Peace lovers
- b. Troublemakers and
- c. Peacemakers

Jesus called us to be peacemakers. There can be no peacemaking in a wrong atmosphere. If people come together to hate, they will always hate. If people come together to refuse they will always refuse. If they come together to see no other view, they will see no other point. If people come together to love God and to love each other they will always love God and others. Then there will be peace. (Mk 11:1-6). The question is, are we peace lovers, troublemakers or peacemakers?

Prayer: God of peace, make us Your channels of peace and help us to live in peace with others. Amen.

ABOUT CMAI

The Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI), established in 1905, is a national fellowship of over 330 Christian mission hospitals and over 9000 individual Christian healthcare professionals across the country. As the official health arm of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), the CMAI is the voice of India's Christian health work, and the only organisation of its kind in the world.

The CMAI strengthens the healing ministry of the Church by:

- Strengthening mission hospitals in their efforts to reach out to the vulnerable with technically competent, compassionate and ethical care
- Equipping individual Christian healthcare professionals and making them spiritually vibrant, technically excellent and socially relevant
- Engaging churches and congregations to work with those in need
- Advocating with the government and civil society for the Christian perspective so as to achieve a just and healthy society
- Helping vulnerable communities in nine states with a special focus on poverty alleviation, substance abuse, HIV&AIDS, women's issues, palliative care etc.

These efforts are supported by seven quarterly publications that CMAI brings out: the flagship publication, *Christian Medical Journal of India*, captures and highlights Christian perspectives on health and development. Other publications cover topics on primary healthcare development, management, rational use of drugs, substance abuse, palliative care and network news.

One of CMAI's commitments is to nurture young health professionals for Christian witness in their work. To enable this, it accredits educational programmes and issues certificates to over 1500 students annually who graduate from mission hospitals and medical colleges in:

- Nursing – ANM, GNM, post-diploma programmes (under Indian Nursing Council)
- Allied health professions – medical laboratory technology, radiology technology, counselling, other areas
- Clinical-pastoral training for chaplains
- PG medical training in multi-specialty practice and palliative medicine

CMAI's institution members include CMC Vellore, CMC Ludhiana, Miraj Medical Centre Maharashtra, MOSC Medical College Kolencherry, CRHP Jamkhed, hospitals of the Emmanuel Hospital Association, The Leprosy Mission, CNI, CSI, Marthoma, Salvation Army, SDA and other mission hospitals and community health programmes in cities, towns and villages across the country. We work through 13 regional committees, conducting retreats, workshops, conferences, consultancies etc to strengthen Christian health work and witness.

CMAI's individual members belong to health-related professions in government, private and mission institutions. We invite all Christian health professionals – doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, administrators, chaplains, community health professionals and others interested in the healing ministry, to join as members.

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