

As we stand at the cusp of a new decade and as Christmas draws near, let us take some time and reflect on how God has led us in our lives. Whether we acknowledge it or not, God has been watching over us, protecting us as a loving parent would do over their children. As parents, we know disciplining a child is painful for us, but it is needed. The child does not understand, their tears cut our hearts; but we need to instil obedience in our children for their own good. How similar it is with the Lord. All our anger or resentment at what we think should be the way we should be in, but God seems to have other plans. We cannot understand it, but we need to trust Him.

In the latest Decision Magazine (you can read at [www.billygraham.org](http://www.billygraham.org)), there is an excerpt of a sermon given by Billy Graham in 1982. I encourage you to read it. The angel tells Mary, 'You have found favour with God'. Now we would consider favour as good things. From a macro perspective, yes it was but when you come into the micro aspects, it was a struggle. She was with child before getting married to Joseph. She had to tell Joseph and what would be his reaction?

Many a time, we read the Bible without looking at the intricacies involved. Just imagine Mary's predicament. In cold Bethlehem, with birth pangs, inn after inn reject her, and think of Joseph's predicament. He was not that well to do. Probably the reason why they rejected them in time of such need. His helplessness in that situation. How heartless we are. Let's not blame the people who rejected but look in ourselves the things we do and say. Finally, the King of Kings, the Son of the Living God is born in a manger, very likely quite smelly and not that clean.

When we look at the micro aspects of our life, its not smooth. I had the privilege of growing up with my grandparents. I miss them now that they are with the Lord. I remember when I used to come home for my study holidays, the Lord impressed some things upon me. I saw Appacha was greatly blessed from a macro perspective. He was with his son and family; his daughter and family were next door and God had blessed him to see great grandchildren. While God blessed Appacha with good health right through (and same goes for Ammachi), by age 90 and above, to get up from a chair he had to attempt 4 or 5 times before he could steady himself, would doze off as soon as he started to read the paper, had some pain in his teeth and the like.

From an overall perspective, yes it surely is a blessing. But when we get to the nitty gritty, the finer details of our day to day life; there are struggles involved. I read the bio by Joni Eareckson Tada about 20 years back. My memory is a bit fuzzy, but somewhere in the introduction, there is this verse from 2 Corinthians 4. Verses 8-10 read thus: 'We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed – always carrying about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested also in our body.'

In our day to day struggles, the purpose of our Lord is to make us lean on Him more and more and not on our own strength. It's a hard lesson to learn. So today, if you are going through

difficulties; may be on a macro perspective; things are good but there are the daily struggles – sin, work issues, family etc or it could be that we feel that even the macro is bad. In both cases, our Lord Jesus says, ‘Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.’

So, this Christmas, let us remember why our Lord came and not get distracted by all the gifts and merry atmosphere. They surely can be a part but let’s do it with a thankful heart and lean on Him more to be thus right through the year and the rest of our lives. Note that Jesus says, ‘Learn from me, I am gentle and lowly in heart’. He sure is. He knows what it is to be lowly, He knows our pain, our difficulties because He has gone through it. We have someone who is patient with us, very understanding and if we go to Him, He will never cast us away. Since He is patient, results don’t happen overnight. It’s a process. He allows us to grow at our own pace. Maybe the world does not accept you, but He surely will. And more importantly, as you spend time with Him you will become the arms and legs of Jesus. You become more like Him, accepting those the world rejects, standing boldly when the world cowardly takes the easiest path which is to follow the herd. May God bless you.

Wishing you all a joyous and a blessed Christmas!