

# CHRIST CHURCH OF INDIA, DALLAS, TX



## *Illuminate*

**March 2025 | Lent:** Preparing Our Garden for Growth

### Editor's Corner

As we move from the cold of winter into the fresh, vibrant days of spring, we are reminded of God's power to bring new life from the barren and the dormant. Spring is a season of rebirth and growth, a time when the earth awakens from its slumber and bursts forth with new life. The trees begin to bud, flowers bloom, and the air fills with the scent of renewal. Similarly, Lent calls us to prepare our hearts to receive this new life in Christ, making room for growth, transformation, and spiritual renewal.

Colossians 1:10, calls us to reflect on how our lives can bear the fruit of Christ's love and grace, just as a garden bears fruit in the spring after careful tending. Lent is an opportunity to examine the soil of our hearts—what needs to be pruned, what weeds need to be uprooted, and what seeds of faith need to be planted. Let us take time to take stock of our lives, clear away the debris that weighs us down, and focus on cultivating a deeper connection with God. Whether through fasting, prayer, or acts of kindness, every small effort we make is like planting a seed that will one day bloom into something beautiful in our lives. Even the process of pruning, though it may be uncomfortable, is necessary for growth—just as a tree must be pruned to bear abundant fruit.

May this season of Lent be a time of preparation and transformation, as we prepare our spiritual gardens for the abundant blessings of Easter.

- Eban Rufus

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## A Word from Pastor | Bearing Fruit by Abiding in Christ

*Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:4-5)*

Many people have mistaken ideas about how to become a Christian. The Jews considered themselves branches because of birth, nationality, and race. Yet they refused to have vital union with Jesus Christ. Union with the Lord does not come by being born into a Christian home, belonging to a church, or observing rules and regulations.

Some say reading the Bible or other Christian books make you a Christian. Other people say that doing a lot of good works will make you a better Christian. However, we don't begin the Christian life in faith and continue it merely through faithful study and good works.

On the other hand, genuine faith results in faithful study of God's word and good works. Jesus used the illustration of the vine and the branches to describe the Christian life. Jesus referred to himself as the vine and to his followers as the branches. Using this analogy, we can learn more about the Christian life.

Good fruit is that which is produced by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Jesus told His followers,

"I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last" (John 15:16). We can become experts at "acting Christian," while experiencing no real power and bearing no eternal fruit.

**Abiding in Christ is essential to Christian growth:** v. 4 *Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.* A branch cannot bear fruit of itself. We can't be better Christians by our own power. As branches we must abide in the vine. The word abide means to keep in constant contact.

**Abiding in Christ result in Christlikeness** v. 5 *Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.* We bear fruit and become more like Christ as we depend on him to sustain us. A person who is not really attached to Jesus Christ will not bear fruit.

**Abiding in Christ results in God's kind of character:** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law (Gal 5:22-23)*

If you allow him, he will abide in your heart and make your life meaningful. My Father is glorified by this that you bear much fruit and become my disciples, Jesus said. Just like a tree, we don't bear more fruit by working harder, but by planting our roots deeper. By abiding in Jesus.

**- Rev. Dr. Ninan Verghese**





## Women's Corner

### The Spiritual Garden: Cultivating a Life that Pleases God Our Garden for Growth

As the weather gets warmer, daylight gets longer and trees get ready to burst out with blooms – Yes, Spring is finally here! There are so many reasons to love this season, but for me, the greatest joy comes from being able to garden again. It's that time of the year to get my hands dirty, clearing flower beds, raking away debris, and making multiple trips to Home Depot to purchase potting soil. Gardening has been a journey for me, one that began at a young age as I watched my parents, both avid gardeners. Over the years I have continued to learn through You Tube videos and from fellow gardeners. Each day, I eagerly anticipate to see my plants grow and my garden come to life.

In the same way, Spiritual growth is a lifelong journey. Just as we care for a garden, we must also tend to our faith and prepare our hearts for growth. Each day, we should anticipate to live a life worthy of the Lord.

As Colossian 1:10 reminds us *“So that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God”*.

What does it mean to live a life that pleases God?

**1.A life that pleases God bears fruit:** A well-tended garden brings forth fruits and burst with flowers bringing beauty and nourishment to others. In the same way, when we nurture our faith, we bear spiritual fruits that blesses those around us. When we know the Lord in a personal way, we come to understand His will and walk a life that is pleasing to Him by bearing spiritual fruits.

**2. A life that pleases God seeks to grow in the knowledge of God:** Just as a gardener carefully prepares the soil for planting, we must prepare our hearts for spiritual growth. A garden does not thrive by itself, it requires intentional care. Likewise, our faith needs consistent nurturing. Just as a gardener prepares the soil and remove weeds to make room for plants to grow, we must also prepare our hearts by confessing our sins and eliminate all distractions to make room for God's word to be rooted in our hearts. A garden cannot thrive without water and Nourishment. Likewise, we must constantly nourish ourselves by meditating on His word and grow in the knowledge of God.

So let us not become complacent but continually seek God and allow Him to work in us each day, thereby bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God to live a life that is truly worthy of Him and to please Him.

- **Shalini Rajasuresh**

### Do you Know?

Next to the number seven, the number 40 occurs most frequently in the Bible. It represents a period of testing or judgment. Lent's duration of 40 days reflects other times of trial, testing and hardship found in the Scriptures:

1. The story of Noah tells of rain falling on the earth for 40 days and 40 nights.
2. Both Moses and Elijah fasted for 40 days before beginning their missions.
3. The Hebrews wandered for 40 years in the desert after leaving Egypt.
4. It took the spies 40 days to search out the Promised Land and bring back fruit.
5. Goliath taunted the Israelite army in the morning and evening for 40 days.
6. Jonah warned the Ninevites they had 40 days until God would overthrow the city.
7. Jesus fasted and prayed in the desert for 40 days before beginning his ministry.



## Sunday School Corner

### Growing in Christ: Developing Good Manners and Bearing Fruit in Faith

*"You may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God." Colossians 1:10*

One burden that every generation has is to teach the next generation good manners. Parents, extended family, teachers, and friends all join forces to help children learn to be polite.

Our heavenly Father wants us, his spiritual children, to develop good manners as we grow-up in Christ. As we mature, by his power, God desires us to develop habits of communication with him that are proper and worshipful. Small gestures like 'Please' and 'Thank you' can make a big difference.

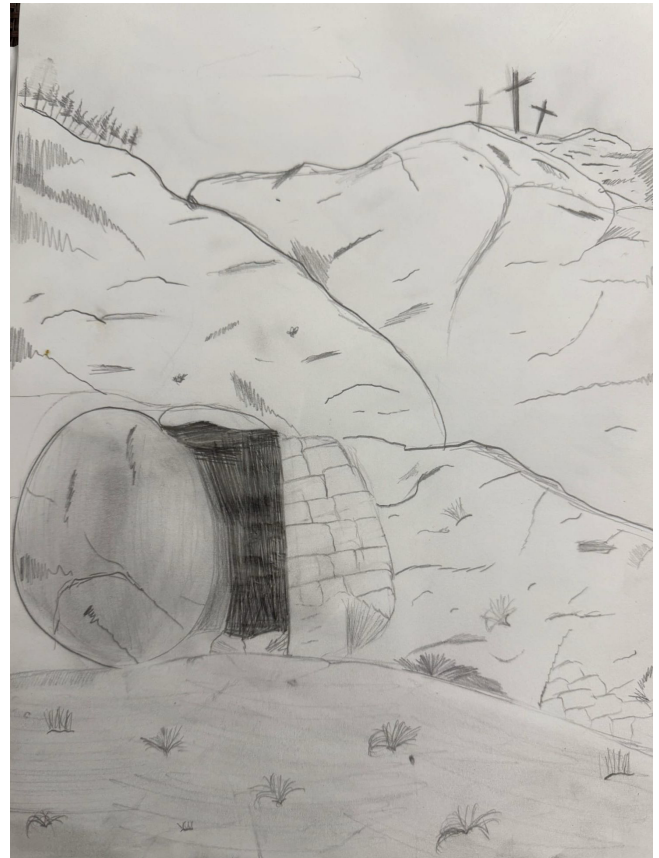
Imagine a tiny tree seed that gets planted in the ground. As it gets sunlight and rain, it grows bigger and stronger, eventually producing beautiful flowers and fruit. Likewise, when you learn about God and follow His teachings, you grow into a strong and kind person who makes good choices.

Just like when you plant a seed and watch it grow into a beautiful flower, God wants you to keep growing in your knowledge of Him and do good things in the world, so that everyone can see how much you love God.

*Grow in Christ each day and be blessed!*

- **Cynthia John**

## From Calvary to the Empty Tomb



- **Jordin Chellappan**

## Men of Faith

### From Winter to Spring: How Lent Prepares us for Spiritual Growth

For believers and Christians, Lent is considered as one of the significant season in the year. Lot of people think, Lent is all about making resolutions or giving up what they like the most. Some give up sweets or flowers, whereas few give up meat during the entire season. Beyond that, many of us have little understanding of what Lent is about.





To begin with, let's compare the Lent with gardening. The journey of Lent is like making the garden ready for the whole year. We grew up in India, a tropical climate (paradise for gardener), never worried about preparing the soil or the flowerbeds for spring. After moving to US, we were either cursing the snow in the winter or dreaming about the bright and sunny spring day. When the ground finally thawed in the spring, we knew the spring thaw meant a lot of yard work. Between the frozen winter and the fruitful spring, there were a few weekends of hard work. The dead plants and debris had to be cleared. The soil is prepared, seeds are scattered, the plants are placed and it's time to nurture growth.

Lent, like the thaw between winter and spring, is a time of preparation. It's a season when we are invited to prepare the soil of our lives for growth.

The question is, how do you prepare for Lent?

Lent prepares us to Seek God, repent, reflect, and grow spiritually. This is a time for all of us, those who have known Christ for many years and those who have yet to encounter him, to clarify and reaffirm our intentions. Will we, with intention, diligence, and discipline, seek him? God wants us to seek Him. It's the time to reflect on our relationship with God and to seek to follow Christ's will. The Christian life is a simple walk to a welcoming God that requires only childish faith.

Lent is a time to practice self-control, remove distractions, and achieve mental clarity. Prayer during Lent focuses on the need for God's forgiveness. It's also about repenting (turning away from our sins) and receiving God's generous mercy and endless love. Be compassionate, it's the time to give alms and to share God's gifts through time and talents.

To conclude, we must use this season wisely to prepare ourselves for growth and prepare our souls to bloom for the rest of the year. Identify the obstacles preventing us from seeking God, place good disciplines that will help us to truly connect with God for the entire year which will help us to find the courage to tackle any obstacles and help us to grow more spiritual.

- **Praveen Issac**

## Mark Your Calendar

### April 5

Yard Sale and Spring Cleaning

### April 12

Women's Seminar

### April 17 to 20

Lenten Convention

### May 3

Picnic at Lewisville Lake Park

### May 10 to 11

Camping at Ray Roberts Lake State Park

### May 11

Church Service at the Camp site  
(Ray Roberts Lake State Park)

### July 22 to 26

VBS

