

# HARVEST USA

A NEWSLETTER OF WORD INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES USA

## My Savior Loves the Little Children

*Zamboanga City, Philippines*



Pastor Babes Paulate visited the feeding centers in Zamboanga City, Philippines on March 16 - 18, 2019. "Our efforts to fund the teaching and feeding of children really make a difference. The children do not remain little. They grow up carrying the teachings they were taught into their adult lives. Several have joined the church and brought their families. Several have become church workers, teachers and praise and worship leaders. The future has become hopeful for them now that they have God to accompany them."

The feeding centers in Zamboanga City are located in Santa Maria, Toribio: Pasonanca, and Barangay Kabatangan 1 & 2. The route to the feeding centers take the church volunteers through a narrow path, intertwining and winding walkways. The older children help in carrying food and containers of water.

Pastor Randy and Grace Sevilla lead the teaching and feeding of the children in 4 sites simultaneously. The children attend church on Sunday with Sis. Grace Sevilla, Pastor's wife and their Sunday school teacher.

**Yes, we make a difference in their lives. Thank you for your generous donations to these precious children of God.**



# The **WORD** on the **STREET**



## Self-Denial in a Self-Absorbed Culture

To be sure, if you've been called "*self-absorbed*," that's not a good thing!

It denotes that you are self-centered, selfish, self-promoting, self-obsessed and egoistic, so... not good... *not good at all!* The current culture itself – dubbed as "*the selfie culture*" – seems to be promoting *selfism*. While social media, in all its types and forms, did NOT create this culture, it certainly contributed to it, made it more convenient and normalized being self-absorbed!

That's not yet the problem though – that's just a given. The dilemma is for the Christ-follower who reads Jesus' words in **Matthew 16:24** "*If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.*" To heed His words would therefore be abnormal, counter-cultural and inconvenient! *Now that's the problem.* **How does one die to the self while living in this narcissistic culture? What does Christlike self-denial look like in a self-absorbed culture?**

While the topic is complex and has very wide implications, one article cannot possibly cover all related issues and ambitiously solve this dilemma! But, here's an attempt to proverbially "scratch the surface" of self-absorption hoping that these thoughts and suggestions will cause a reflective pause to our daily grind with self-absorption:

- **Watch your Social Media consumption.**

While Social Media registration might be free, the use of it is often very costly! Just ask someone "*what's the first thing you check upon opening your eyes in the morning?*" Our desire to be noticed/liked/updated/commented on might be a factor. *Check your usage!*

- **Be an Anonymous Do-gooder**

Generosity where your left hand doesn't know what your right hand gave! When '*looking good and feeling good*' has replaced '*being good and doing good*'... and you can't tell the difference anymore. *Serving others forces the attention off of you!*

- **Simplicity**

To see and appreciate uncomplicated beauty, purity... to see the world with straightforward value and crystal clarity. Having the ability to express the fullest meaning with the fewest words... e.g. Believe. Pray. Serve. Connect. Love. Forgive. Others...

The challenge to **die to the self** is the "big idea." The three preceding suggestions are practices that, at least, start the conversation towards it. **More of Christ, Less of Me.**

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Pastor Vino B. Atienza,  
Senior Pastor, WIN Seattle/Tacoma, WA





## Legalism and Its Roots

We cannot go to any particular passage and say that this is the meaning of the word “legalism.” In fact, the word *legalism* is never mentioned in the entire Bible. In this article, I will try to explicate the proper use of legalism and you can decide whether you think it should be used that way or not. However, let us check out the way people use it, and measure it in the Bible to see if this is so.

How many times did you hear that as long as your good deeds outweigh bad deeds, you are welcome in God’s presence! They commonly use the Ten Commandments that obeying it is enough for a person to receive salvation. But the Bible is silent about this belief! In fact, Scriptures emphasize that salvation belongs to the Lord alone, and there is no other savior but Him! (Psalm 37:39, 62:7, Isaiah 43:11, 45:21). Paul reminded the brethren in Ephesus that salvation is God’s gift by grace through faith in Christ. It is not given to us because we worked for it. (Ephesians 2:8-9). In the Gospel of Luke, we were told about the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14), that those who trusted in personal good deeds are not justified in God’s eyes. In this parable, the Pharisee prays saying, “I thank you that I am not like other men... fast twice a week, give tithes, etc.” Here shows that this religious guy is a person who emphasized external obedience of God’s law. Then Luke contrasted the Pharisee with a tax collector praying, “Be merciful to me, a sinner!” This is the cry for grace. Few verses later (vv18-29), a rich man came to Jesus asking “how to inherit eternal life.” This young man too, plays the part of a religious group that promotes external obedience of God’s law, so to speak, legalism.

Legalism is a term used by Christian scholars to describe a doctrinal position that emphasize a system of rules and regulations in order to achieve salvation. In the case of the religious leaders during Christ’s time, they set up a whole system of regulations to enable them to get around God’s law. They were experts in setting up a man-made system of laws and beliefs to avoid the divine law. As a result, they led Israel astray, so that Jesus earnestly opposed them, and called

them false shepherds of Israel, as He proclaimed in the series of woes. “You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are” (Matthew. 23:15). In one occasion, Jesus castigated the Pharisees about their outer rituals saying, “You nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition” (Matthew 15:6). The legalist people believe in and demand a strict literal adherence to the rules and regulations created by themselves.

Biblically speaking, legalism is an opposition to grace. Legalism can be seen in various forms like obtaining salvation, or maintaining salvation, and excessive and improper use of law for spiritual growth. These kind of religious people had failed to see that the real purpose of the law is not to save men from sins but to expose their sins. Paul tells that “the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). The writer of the epistles to the Hebrews denoted that the animal sacrifices offered year after year cannot remove sin. In fact, these offerings are only reminders that they still had their sins, while the blood of animals cannot take away the sins (Hebrews 10:3-4). Paul was the consummate legalist, with the firsthand knowledge of relying on the works of the law. But he joyfully declared that “God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who are under the law” (Galatians 4:4). We understand from Paul that all our struggles and strivings come to an end in Christ Jesus. Reconciliation with God can only be attained by faith in God’s Son, who alone kept the law perfectly.

History reveals that Martin Luther was a victim of this belief system on the sixteenth century. He tried to reach God by being a good monk. Misguided at his young age, he went into the monastery to attempt to please God. Nevertheless, his experience brought him to even further away from God, and messed up with fear and anxiety. But in God’s own grace, He reached down to Luther, as he meditates the verse, “The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). As he started to question the meaning of this passage, so the lights came on for Luther. Then he began to understand that

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## Legalism . . .

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righteousness is available to those who have faith in Christ, not to those who would strive to achieve it through personal efforts.

Christians do have a right to judge the spirituality of fellow believers in this area where the Bible clearly speaks. But we need to be careful, because even true believers can be legalistic. Paul instructed the Roman church to be gracious to one another: "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters" (Romans 14:1). Sadly, some believers feel so strong in minor issues, but running away from more important points, "who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel" (Matthew 23:24). They make an error of demanding unqualified adherence to their own interpretation and even to their own traditions, rather than God's gracious words.

In our attempt to expose the roots of legalism, we must look at our own lives and ministries, not to throw off restraint and discipline, much less good works in general. The one who lives in right relationship with God does it by embracing what God arranges for him. We can't sustain our relationship with God through outer works. External obedience does not evolve into living by faith, rather, it only perpetuates itself in more external requirements. Therefore, when we obey God, be sure that we do it with grace; we obey because we love Christ. We serve the church, not that we are compelled but voluntarily for the sake of Christ. When someone had wronged us, we forgive as the Lord forgives our sins. Always remember that we are people of freedom, as long as this freedom does not violate the Scriptures.

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## AROUND THE US REGION

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**WIN Seattle** hosted the simulcast of the "Work as Worship" Retreat by **RightNow Media**. The seminar was **livestreaming** and featured speakers from the professional, business and entertainment worlds. It was held at the WORD Center in Federal Way last **February 22, 2019**.

It was open to the public and it featured speakers like Francis Chan (Pastor/Writer), Megan Alexander (Inside Edition), Steve Green (Hobby Lobby) and Liz Bohannon (Sseko Designs) among others.





## WIN New York Holy Week Retreat 2019

by Jal Raval

Tetelestai!

A few years back when my parents were renovating our home, I remember coming across an old bank statement of debt where this word was stamped in red ink. Curious about what it meant, my mother responded that it meant that the mortgage was 'Paid in full.' It didn't make much of an impact to me back then other than an acknowledgement of payment, but it



gave me a sense of nostalgia as the same words "It is finished!" echoed and filled the four corners of the room where Bro. Mark was sharing his reflections with us. I could only imagine what it would feel like to be free of this financial responsibility as well, but that feeling of relief does not hold a candle to the feeling of finally being free of the bondage of sin. It made me think about how our faith would be futile without the death and resurrection of our Lord. However devastating the events that transpired thousands of years ago in Calvary, it was necessary for the salvation of all believers, that without the suffering that He was subjected to, there will be no atonement of sins and no hope for sinners like me (Isaiah 53:5).

It was the first night of WIN NY's Holy week retreat where less than a hundred believers gathered to commemorate the events that led to the death and resurrection of Jesus. All the iCare leaders were tasked to share their insights on the seven last words before the Creator of the universe was hung on the cross to bear our sins so that His righteousness could be credited to our account (2 Corinthians 5:21). It was cold, dark and gloomy outside the Catskills in upstate New York on April 19<sup>th</sup>, but the discussions and testimonies by our brothers and sisters in Christ kept the ambiance warm and cozy inside the conference room. The morosity of the night before pale in

comparison to the lively and festive activities that followed in the morning. The participants from different iCares and age groups were divided into 4 teams where they competed in various games such as cheerleading, obstacle course and races. The children played outdoor games, which gave them an opportunity to put down their devices and interact with nature by chasing newts and salamanders in the woods and skipped on rocks in the streams that were adjacent to the field. The main tournament comprised of 4 smaller games that culminated to one major obstacle race. The difficulty of each level increased as the points allotted to each team rose. It was encouraging to see the everyone was laughing and enjoying during the games later that evening. An awards ceremony was held to celebrate the participants efforts throughout the competition. The Red team garnered the most points and was named Overall Champion.

The two day event culminated on the resurrection day, where Pastor Ferdie delivered a powerful message on the spirit of the resurrected Christ. Jesus never abandoned His followers when He returned and ascended to heaven. The Holy Spirit enabled early Christians to declare the wonders of God in foreign languages such as Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Cretans, and Arabs, among many others (Acts 2:8-12). God baptized and empowered them on the day of pentecost on what seemed to be tongues of fire that rested on each of them. Similarly, God's servants in WIN-NY received the baptism of the Holy Spirit as they began to speak in tongues while pastor was praying. It was indeed an experience of a lifetime!

The birth, life, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus has impacted the world through all ages. The once darken world received the light of God as Christ's ambassadors obeyed the Lord's command to go and make disciples of all nations. However, a great deal of faith is needed to victoriously walk in the path of righteousness. That is, Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).



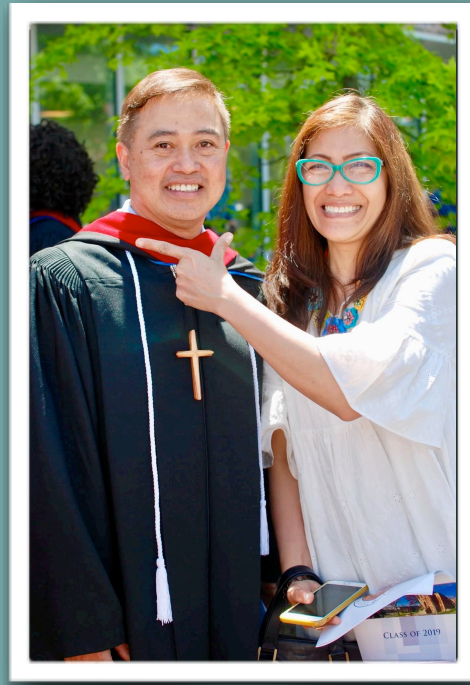


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**CONGRATULATIONS** Pastor Randy Ortiz Castro, Associate Pastor and Youth Pastor of Word Christian Fellowship International, New Jersey for completing Masters of Divinity, Theology from New Brunswick Theological Seminary, May 19, 2019.



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~ God Friendened Me