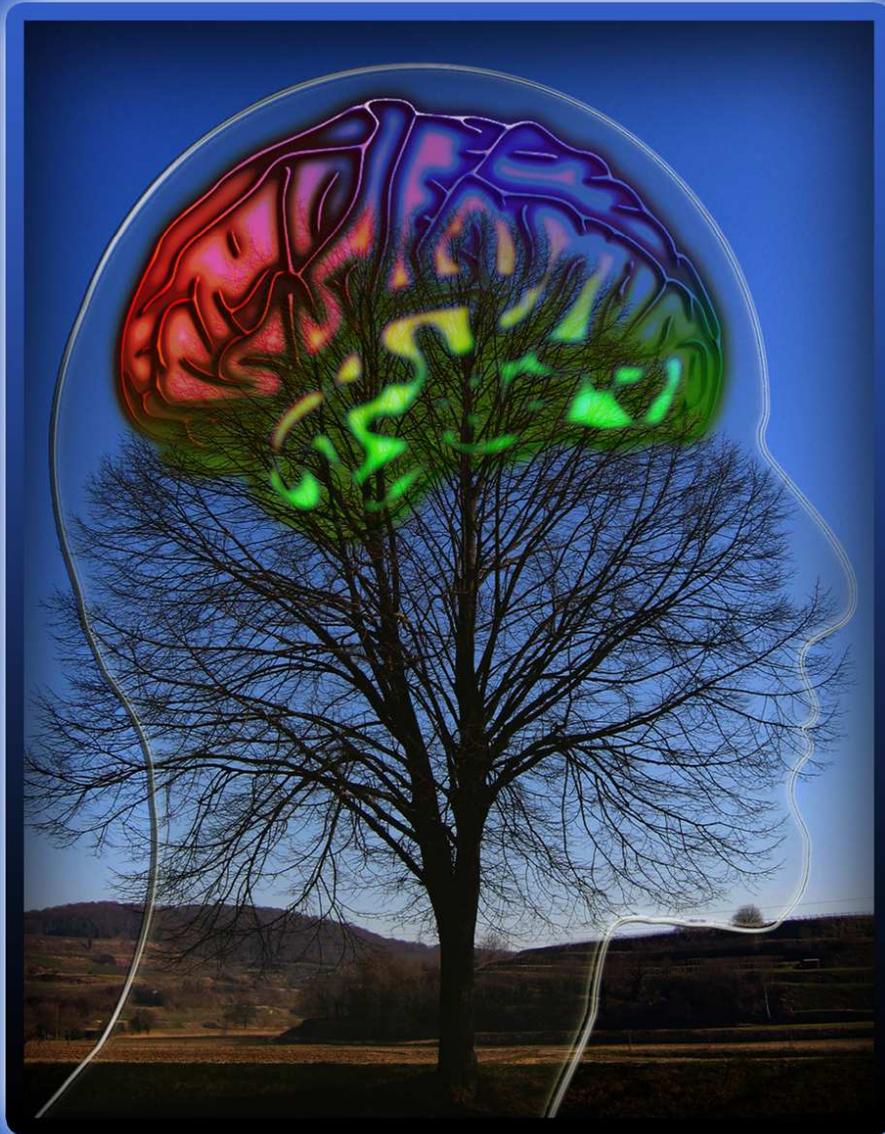


LIFE REVISION SEMINAR

ANALYSIS OF BRETHREN ASSEMBLIES AND LRS



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LRS And The Brethren

The Effect of LRS Among The Brethren!

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Life Revision Seminar (LRS)

And Brethren Believers (A Biblical Analysis)

Dr. Johnson C. Philip & Dr. Saneesh Cherian

All kinds of seemingly good and attractive spiritual movements come up around us. Many of people place themselves under the influence of these movements, report much change and blessings in their lives, and subsequently invite/motivate other believers to get involved with these movements. Life Revision Seminars (LRS) conducted by Dr. KO John is the latest to hit the Brethren Assemblies and faithful Brethren believers should know exactly what our stand is in relation to these seminars and the things taught there.

When others encourage Christian believers to get involved in something, they have the obligation to examine it first. The Scripture says, in 1Thess 5:21 Examine all things; hold fast to that which is good. (സകലവും ശോധന ചെയ്തു നല്ലതു മുറുകെ പിടിച്ചിൻ). As to whether something is good or bad needs to be analyzed in the light of the Scripture and NOT in the light of human experience, for human heart is deceptive beyond limit. We read in Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it”. Thus what looks good to the human heart need not be something truly good and that is why the believers at Berea were commended for searching for truth in the light of the Scripture, not in the light of what seems good to people.

We read about the believers in Berea in Acts 17:11 “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so”. Right from the time the Lord sent the Reformation now known worldwide as the “Brethren”, these believers are known for their Berean stand – examine everything in the light of the Scripture. They accept that which agrees with the Scripture, and they reject what does not conform to the New Testament stand.

The Need To Analyze Life Revision Seminars

Dr. John has been conducting his seminars in many places and has been attracting people from all denominations to these programs. This is perfectly within the freedom of the organizers. It is their program, and they can promote it anywhere and to whomsoever they wish.

However, of late some Brethren individuals, church leaders, and evangelists have started recommending his programs to fellow Brethren, and that needs a second look by other Brethren. What is more, some of them have become very vocal proponents of LRS and are now advocating that they received “nothing” from the assemblies in the last few decades and that this void can be filled by subjecting themselves to Dr. John’s talk for a mere 5 days.

This has in turn resulted in much confusion among the Brethren and many have started asking a number of questions. Many of these questions have been sent to me from various corners, showing that there is plenty of uncertainty among believers about the suitability of these programs for believers from the assemblies. Some of these questions are:

- Why is a non-assembly program able to offer so much to believers when the local assembly is supposed to offer the full range of spiritual blessings.
- What is the harm if believers seek spiritual blessing from a non-assembly source.
- What is the harm if believers promote LRS and encourage fellow Brethren believers to attend these programs.
- What should we think about some of the “results” seen in the lives of those who have attended these programs.
- Is there anything Biblically wrong in what is taught in LRS.

Each of the questions above leads to secondary questions, and we will handle as many of them as possible, but in a concise manner. I hope you remember how many people endorsed and promoted a certain Zacharias Tane Fomum among the Brethren and sent a large number of our young people to attend his programs. However, once his books came out in print, it became clear that his biblical stand was totally contradictory to that of the Bible. Thus “endorsement” of people who have come under the emotional net of a new teacher or teaching is not sufficient endorsement for believers from the Assemblies. It needs to pass the Berean test first.

About Dr. K O John: LRS programs are conducted by Dr. K. O. John who is a surgeon by profession. He served in Oddanchatram Christian Fellowship hospital in Tamil Nadu, India for several years. He is not practicing medicine now, instead he is serving the Lord full-time. His wife, Dr. Mary John, is still with the hospital. He is one of the

people available in India who conduct a specialized reflective seminar called – Life Revision Seminar.

Medical personnel who have any present or past connection with this hospital are known for their commitment and devotion to their profession and also to the Lord and they are a model to everyone in many ways. Thus any program conducted by Dr. John is bound to be of high quality and of great value to people who come under his ministry. We do not doubt his commitment and integrity.

About LRS: Life Revision Seminars are structured around a well-thought out and well-designed syllabus. They try to cover a vast amount of ground within a week of training, and therefore ask the prospective participants to do a thorough homework before they attend these programs.

Homework includes a good amount of Bible-reading, self-analysis, reflection about one's past life, and writing down a large number of points related to one's strengths, weaknesses, plus goals and aims. It is a fairly intense analysis using which a person completely uncovers and writes down his strengths, weaknesses, failures, and desire for success into a notebook.

Once the homework is over, the person is expected to attend the whole of the LRS program which usually lasts for 5 days. People are expected to stay in the campus because a good amount of time is needed to completely internalize the whole program. We hear that exceptions might be made to this rule of staying full-time in the campus, but that is not an important issue.

The program includes a good amount of lectures, analysis, writing down, reflection, and decision-making. The Bible is used liberally and there are also prayers and singing because ultimately this is a Christian program conducted by an evangelical Christian.

Results of LRS: We will discuss the results of LRS upon Brethren, because this document relates to LRS and Brethren Assemblies. We, therefore, have nothing to say about LRS and its result/impact upon other churches.

Most Brethren believers who attend LRS come back with great joy and enthusiasm. They feel refreshed and often make the following claims:

- In five days LRS gave them what the Brethren assemblies did not give them in all those years that they spent with the Brethren.
- There is no way in which the Brethren Assemblies can give people for their spiritual life what the LRS is able to give them.
- Every Brethren believer should make it a point to attend LRS at least once in his life.

Adverse Results of LRS: The purpose of LRS is surely benevolent, and these seminars are usually organized by devout evangelical Christians. Yet, for the Brethren assemblies, they have resulted in a number of adverse effects. We will list these adverse results first and will present an analysis after that.

1. In five days LRS successfully leaches out the loyalty of most young Brethren believers towards Brethren assemblies so that they now most of them despise the Assembly that nurtured them (and their parents) all their lives.
2. Most Brethren graduates of LRS start despising fellow-brethren as people who lack love, compassion, enthusiasm, and understanding towards others.
3. Most Brethren graduates of LRS start despising regular assembly-fellowship and participation in the Lord's Supper and many of them become completely irregular in their church going.
4. Many Brethren graduates of LRS start toying with the idea of leaving Brethren assemblies to join churches where there is ample emotional-manipulation so that their emotional cravings are met fully.
5. Many Brethren graduates of LRS abandon their former habit of reading the Bible cover-to-cover. They reason that it not "what" you read but rather "how" you read and many of them reduce their Bible-reading to just one paragraph or one Psalm of their (emotional) choice and eventually stop reading the Bible completely.
6. The concept of "separation" -- which is a core Brethren doctrine -- becomes totally repugnant and repulsive to most Brethren graduates of LRS.

7. Most Brethren LRS graduates start talking in terms of Ecumenism, inter-denominationalism, and “not giving offense” to others.

In other words, while LRS in itself is a benevolent program, and though it tries to enrich people, its result for BRETHREN assemblies are very very harmful, to speak the least. The reasons would become obvious once you read the analysis of the above seven points given below.

Reasons Why LRS Is Not Suitable For Brethren Believers:

As we said repeatedly, while LRS is a program full of benevolence towards evangelical Christians, it is not at all suitable for Brethren believers. On the contrary, it is totally harmful to Brethren believers and it destroys the core foundational truths on which the Brethren Assemblies stand. We will explain this through an analysis of the seven points mentioned earlier.

1. Despising The Assemblies: People in India and outside have noticed that after young Brethren believers attend LRS for 5 days, they come back despising the assemblies. They say that in the last few decades that they attended the Assemblies, they never received so much blessing and so much emotional satisfaction.

This is the classic Green-grass Myth. The grass in the neighbour’s garden always looks more than the grass in one’s own yard. The problem is not with the grass but the result of ignorance. It is true that the Brethren are not perfect. It is also true that there are many shortcomings in every Brethren congregation. But what they fail to realize is that every system is equally fallible – but they cannot see it in five days. Thus they are like the man who always praises the neighbour’s wife, like the woman who praises her friend’s husband, and like the children who always says that the “uncle” in their neighbourhood is better than their dad.

Any movement that knowingly or unknowingly creates the Myth of the Green Grass for Brethren believers is to be strictly shunned by the leadership of the

Assemblies. This myth has destroyed many individuals and families and it will always be here as long as people lack discernment.

2. Despising Their Fellow Believers: Most Brethren graduates of LRS start despising fellow-brethren as people who lack love, compassion, enthusiasm, and understanding towards others. This is a very very dangerous development. God has called us to love and cherish our Local Assembly exactly the way we love and cherish our own earthly families. However, the Myth of the Green Grass causes many young Brethren LRS graduates to break this Biblical Command.

The problem is that these people fail to distinguish between the mutual interaction of and interdenominational group of people with each other for five days and the interaction of people in their local Brethren Assemblies. The first one is a garden made upon Flower-pots brought from a large number of places. It is a Flower Show where everything is bright, colourful, goody goody, and full of love, laughter and cheer. However, this is only an exhibition and not real life. Real life is when one lives with them for ten years in the same congregation, and then everything begins to show – warts and all.

Since this phenomenon of despising one's fellow believers has been seen among many Brethren LRS graduates, the leadership of the assemblies should strictly discourage Assembly people from attending LRS programs.

3. Despising Church Gathering: It is seen that many Brethren LRS graduates start despising regular church attendance. The Brethren are very particular that Sunday Church gathering should never be missed, except for vital necessities such as rushing an accident victim to the hospital. In fact there are even non Brethren believers who understand this, and there is the case of the famous Olympic player who did not compete in his best program (and lost the medal) because this event fell on a Sunday.

Any program which eventually causes this kind of a deviation of practice in the Life of a young believer is to be discouraged by Brethren Leadership.

4. Desire To Leave The Brethren: Many Brethren graduates of LRS start toying with the idea that they need to move to the so-called “Local Churches” or even to Pro-charismatic churches, if not outright Pentecostal churches.

Emotion is a very powerful force, and five days of good emotion can often make people to ignore biblical truths that they have been learning for twenty-five years. It is true that often our Assemblies fail to provide an atmosphere in which people can worship the Lord with joyful emotion, but this does not mean that “emotion” ought to be given the key role.

Since the lack of emotionalism in the Assemblies has drawn many people away from the assemblies into the fold of Neo-charismatic groups, and since LRS is becoming another tool for this defection from the assemblies, the Assembly leadership needs to take a strict stand against those who promote LRS in the assemblies.

5. Abandoning Of Bible Reading: While LRS programs liberally quote from the Bible, and while they never ask people to be careless in their Bible-reading habits, still the over-all impact upon Brethren young people is shocking. Many of them start despising a systematic and disciplined reading of the Bible.

The Brethren are known worldwide as “People of the Book” because they give great importance to the Bible. They encourage their children to memorize the Scriptures, and we often see children memorizing anywhere between 1000 to 2000 verses before they pass their school 10th class. Brethren regularly encourage believers to read through the whole of the Bible at least once every year. These are spiritual disciplines that have built them into strong Bible-believing people in the last 110 years.

However, the “good” that the LRS programs offer to them, coupled with the Green Grass Phenomenon which these young people are not able to discern, results in them abandoning their Bible-reading discipline. They settle for little “devotionals” that do not consume more than 5 minutes and claim that it is “quality time” with the Bible that is more important than reading through and studying the Bible. Since this is a ground-level destruction of young Brethren, Assembly leadership should take a strong stand against our young people going to LRS programs.

6. The Concept Of Separation Becomes Repulsive: Brethren are called “Verpadu” people in Kerala. That is, “The Separated Ones”. We abandoned a good number of things slightly over a century ago. This included abandoning man-made rituals, man-made Church-hierarchy, man-made doctrines, man-made dogmas, and many similar things. We also abandoned human-ordination for the priesthood. In fact, the Brethren emphasize with the Bible that ALL believers are priests in the Lord.

While we accept ALL born again people as part of the Universal Church, and while we love and respect ALL born again believers, we at the same time emphasize that when it comes to the “Church” the separated one’s should fellowship on Sundays with like-minded separated ones only. There are a number of Biblical reasons and you should check for them in our eBooks such as “Ecumenism” and “Brethren Distinctives” which are available freely and free of cost on the net. Suffice there to say that any kind of “mingling” with leaven in the long run makes the whole dough leavened. This is another reason why responsible leadership of the Brethren should warn their believers against getting involved with programs and movements that have been shown to destroy the “Brethren Distinctives” in the beliefs and practices of these believers from Brethren assemblies.

7. Love For Ecumenism: Assembly leadership (and even common believers) have started to notice that those who undergo the LRS training gradually start promoting Ecumenism. “Let us all be one and let us hate none” becomes their slogan. While it is true that we should hate none, and while true Brethren believers never hate others, this does not mean that we abandon the concept of “Separation”

Separation does not automatically lead to hatred. Separation is only a demonstration that we are “different”. Just as the Uniform of a person from the Armed Forces shows that he is distinct, and not that he hates outsiders, our separation is a necessary part of our core beliefs and practices. It is not a sign of hatred.

Ecumenism, on the other hand, is a Satanic doctrine. According to it, all of us should abandon our core beliefs such as Bible Alone, Faith Alone, Grace Alone, and Christ Alone, and give rise to a Universal Church where everyone is free to believe ANYTHING. When our young people start thinking that way, it is time to take notice and warn them against getting involved with programs and

movements that have the potential of creating this kind of thoughts and attitudes in their Spiritual life.

Is It Part Of Personal Freedom: Some people might immediately counter our stand by saying that as to where a person goes with his family is part of his freedom and that the Assembly Leadership should not interfere in it. It looks like a very reasonable, valid, and ethically right argument on surface. However, it should be kept in mid that the concept of “Personal Freedom” applies to a believer only as long as he indulges in things that do not hurt him, his family, and his church. There is an additional Biblical situation that personal freedom is permitted only in matters that are not seductive, sinful, unethical, or criminal.

This means that personal freedom is not, and cannot be, arbitrary and limitless – particularly when it comes to promoting something among the membership of local Brethren Assemblies. That is the reason why believers do not have the personal freedom to demand bribes. That is why they do not have the freedom to use abusive language, the freedom to watch pornography, the freedom to smoke or drink (even if it is in the privacy of their homes). This is why Brethren Assemblies take disciplinary action if a Brethren believer is found to be a smoker, drunkard, or a lover of profanity. It destroys him, his family, and eventually his church from inside out. Thus the freedom-clause cannot be used arbitrarily by believers to promote or justify things.

Coming now to indulgence in interdenominational or so-called non-denominational activities, Brethren Assemblies need to be caution believers from those types of indulgences that have the potential of destroying them. Each program or movement that we come across need to be examined in the light of the Scripture. The Scripture says, in 1Thess 5:21 Examine all things; hold fast to that which is good. (സകലവും ശോധന ചെയ്തു നല്ലതു മുറുകെ പിടിക്കുക). In 1Corinthians 6:12 we read that “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any”. This means that even if something looks good, and something looks like part of personal freedom, it needs to be controlled, lest it become a thorn in the flesh for the Assemblies.

Thus we would like to submit that believers DO NOT have the freedom to publicize or propagate Interdenominational (plus so-called non-denominational)

or Ecumenical activities, howsoever good they might be, in Brethren Assemblies IF these hurt the basic stand and commitment of the Assemblies. Therefore, while individual Brethren believers might want to go and attend LRS (often to their spiritual detriment), individual believers among the Brethren should NOT be allowed to become spokesmen, preachers, motivators, or agents for LRS among Brethren believers or in Brethren Assemblies.

Private warning, moderate warning (by a couple of elders), and even open warning become necessary if they continue to promote LRS among Brethren Assemblies. What hurts the Brethren needs to be contained right from the start and those who promote it in the Assemblies need to be warned of disciplinary action against them.

Our Conclusion Having been at the receiving end of a proxy war from LRS graduates, we have the following to say:

- Our observation that LRS is harmful for the Brethren has been demonstrated once again, seeing many LRS graduates are willing to stoop down to any level and indulge in any level of proxy war.
- They have no burden for those “proxies” (such as my cousin mentioned above) whom they “use and throw”.
- Their actions are totally opposite to what they are taught in LRS because LRS and the Assemblies cannot co-exist in an integral manner within the assemblies.

Our Recommendation: Brethren assemblies worldwide need to realize that not every good thing is suitable for us. We rejected church-hierarchy and man-made priesthood though these two things have given great strength to denominational churches. We rejected these because things that are good for others are not always good for us. That is an outcome of the Brethren Distinctives.

LRS in a benevolent program, but it is not good for the Brethren. In fact it hurts the Brethren movement. Thus there should be no assembly-level endorsement for LRS. Anyone who tries to call the Brethren a Cult and then drag ignorant people from the assemblies into LRS programs should be

subjected to church discipline. The “Personal freedom clause” should not be used to hurt the welfare of the local churches.

A Post Script: Assemblies generally discourage their members from participating in Ecumenical Holy Communion. We understand that many Brethren have participated in such Ecumenical Holy Communion (with Christians from numerous denominations) when they participated in LRS programs. Kindly ask these proponents and verify for yourself!!!!



This eBook has been made available by the Brethren Research Group to warn Brethren Assembly believers about an internal danger. Its content is NOT meant for non-Brethren people who might have a doctrinal and ecclesiastic background different from that of the Brethren.

About the Writers

Dr. Johnson C. Philip is a Christian Apologist and the Principal of Brethren Theological College. He is the co-author of books such as Brethren Distinctives and Ecumenism, all to warn Brethren Believers to maintain their uniqueness and not to compromise though it has become a fashion today to compromise in essential matters.

Dr. Saneesh Cherian is a Christian Apologist and prolific writer on themes related to Brethren Assemblies and Brethren Distinctives. He is the co-author of books like Brethren Distinctives, Ecumenism, Tongues, and Systematic Theology. He also serves as the Academic Dean of the Brethren Theological College.



Together, the above two writers have been offering teachings related to Brethren Distinctives through their Malayalam Magazine known as Verpad (3000 print copies, 10,000 PDF copies and the English magazine known as The Brethren (50,000 copies PDF). They often write about people, doctrines, and movements which are harmful for the Brethren, even if they are good in themselves.

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