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Clarion

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Wholesome families begin when "two shall become one"

"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh.
What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."
(KJV) Matthew 19:6



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Chuck Swindoll (Pastor and Author)

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What's Next....
CLARION ISSUE 4
Christmas -
Come Lord Jesus

abiding | PASTORAL MESSAGE

- Wholesome Families Begin When 'Two Shall Become One' 2

connect | FEATURE

- From Tablet to Table: From Facebook to Face-off
Father and Son Connection 5
- The Importance Of Family Altars 7
- Healthy Family In Christ 10
- Living Right 13

grow | MOVIE REVIEW

- Of Gods And Men 15

grow | BOOK REVIEW

- A Family-Friendly Church: Home And Church Joining Hands 16

connect | CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Called Home To Eternal Rest 19
- Trinity Methodist Church Petaling Jaya Welcomes
New and Transferred Members 19

grow | TESTIMONY

- Roots And Shoots 20
- A Season For Everything 22

connect | CHURCH ACTIVITY

- Break Off or Multiply? 23
- Celebrating Our Church's 57th Anniversary As A Family 24
- God Uses Our Brokenness 28
- MSF Activities 30
- Walk Through The New Testament 34

TMCPJ Vision

Everyone
a Disciple of
Jesus Christ
Matthew 28: 19 - 20

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Editorial Note

- The Editorial Board reserves the right to edit all articles submitted. It does not guarantee that all articles submitted will be published.
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and email to:
clarion@trinitypj.com
- Articles should be confined to two printed pages or not more than 1,200 words.



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Lewis Loke

Services and Activities

Sunday

Worship Service (Liturgical)	8.30am
Worship Service (Contemporary)	11.00am
Worship Service (Chinese)	11.00am
Worship Service (Liturgical)	5.00pm
MYF	8.30am
Sunday School (English)	8.30am
Sunday School (Chinese)	11.00am

Tuesday

Methodist Seniors Fellowship (1st and 3rd Week)	10.30am
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Wednesday

MPS Chapel Service	1.00pm
Prayer Meeting	7.30pm

Friday

Prayer Meeting	8.00pm
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Saturday

Prayer Watch	7.00am
Counselling (The Oasis)	2.30pm
Boys' Brigade	2.30pm
Girls' Brigade	2.30pm
Baptism/Membership Class	2.30pm
Methodist Women (3rd week monthly)	3.30pm
MAF (4th week monthly)	3.30pm



Wholesome Families Begin When 'Two Shall Become One'

By The Rev. Ting Moy Hong

"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (KJV) **Matthew 19.6**

It begins with the coming together of two, male and female, to become one. From the union, a family comes forth. This may be something we have heard often but have not reflected upon, lesser still, marvel at. At the recent weddings I conducted, it dawned upon me afresh that the liturgy in a Holy Matrimony stresses upon the importance of oneness of a man and his wife, of unity held and shared between the couple.

The liturgy of a Holy Matrimony begins with an invocation that Jesus graced a wedding in Cana. Marriage is not strange to Jesus, and certainly not strange to God.

Marriage is God's gift to a man and his wife and by creating them male and female, He gave them to each other as a union we call marriage; (the two shall become one flesh **Genesis 2:24**.) He blessed them and charged them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth **Genesis 1:28**. It is intended that this union only ceases upon death. Their union is deemed to be God's act of joining them together, therefore, no one shall undo it.

The couple is then severally asked to declare their intention in the Holy Matrimony into which they had come. The question asked to each of them reads:

"I ask you now, in the presence of God and these people,

"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (KJV) **Matthew 19.6**

to declare your intention **to enter into union with one another**

through the grace of Jesus Christ.

(name), will you have (name) to be your wife,

to live together in holy marriage?

Will you love her, comfort her,

honour her and keep her,

in sickness and in health, **forsaking all others,**

be faithful to her as long as you shall both live?

The couple's coming together requires the blessings of both families as well as the community concerned.

They are asked:

"Will all of you by God's grace, do everything in your power to uphold and care for these two persons in their marriage?"

Hence, the question inviting the response of the family and community is, "Will they do all within their power to support and strengthen the union into which the man and woman have bound themselves to?"

The union is so important it needs the support of all around them to help them keep their vows and their life-long union.

The words of their marriage vows to each other

provide a glimpse of the outworking of the pledge of union:

"I promise before God and all who are present here to love you,

honour you, comfort you, and keep you in sickness and in health and

be faithful to you as long as we shall both live."

It is a promise of "being there for one another" and of faithfulness for a life-long union. The exchange of vows is followed by a powerful symbolisation of the life-long faithful union: The exchange of rings.

Just as one finds no end to the ring, their union of faithful love finds no end save for the death of one of them. Many couples choose to reiterate their coming together as one by lighting the unity candle. Here the man and the woman light one candle together to show that just speak *"...as this one candle burns undivided, so shall their love be one as they begin life together in God who has brought them together.*

From now on their thoughts shall be for each other rather than for their individual selves. Their joys and sorrows shall be shared alike ...".

The two who became one thus begins even though they have not known all that awaits them after their wedding day. It is their union wherefrom the fruit of their love will be birthed. As they journey on as

man and wife, they might not remember the confetti and the cake on the wedding day, but they shall remember the pledge for a life of oneness they have entered into with one another.

Truly, this union is not altogether without mystery in that not all about it can be explained logically. It is given to the man and his wife in their marriage. It is a gift to be embraced and upheld. Yet, it is also a union that beckons both man and wife to guard it like a precious jewel. At every crossroad they come to, they will be guarded and guided by the union God has given to them. **Should they betray that union, unrest and insecurity may assail them in ways they may not at all be prepared to face.** When they uphold their union, however, the same is strengthened - their marriage will be blessed and they will offer peace and security to each other and to their offspring.

In a time like ours, I believe the precious truth of the oneness and union given to a man and wife in marriage must be rediscovered, laid hold of and guarded jealously. The urgent call to adhere to the charge not to put asunder what God has put together must be embraced. It is said that it takes a village to raise a child, I believe it to be true that it also takes everyone to strengthen the marriage union of a man and woman.

As a community of faith, we are equipped with great resources to help one another uphold the marriage union. Firstly, we have the Holy Spirit who empowers us to do His will. Secondly, we have one another for the encouragement needed to keep faith in the Lord and His Word. As brothers and sisters in the Lord who gives marriage, we allow each other to speak into each other's life, so we that we can strengthen one another and keep our marriage vows. We have each other to share our burdens with in small groups and home fellowships. We pray for one another and we exhort one another with the Word of God and with each other's good examples in life.

On the 29th and 30th October, 2016 the Christian Education committee will be organising the Marriage Enrichment Weekend. During the weekend, married couples will have an opportunity to refresh their commitment in marriage. This will lead to the renewal of marriage vows service to be held during the Watchnight Service on 31st December, 2016.

May God grant us grace upon grace to lay hold again of the sacred oneness/unity God has given to all husbands and wives in our community of faith. The unity when upheld and laid hold of, bears the fruit of wholesome families.

May God bless you, who choose to honour the union God has given to you.



From Tablet to Table: From Facebook to Face-off *The Father and Son Connection*

By The Rev. Lai Moo Him

It is often said that a person's life and character is the product of circumstances and the environment. Generally, families today have material and social advantages as great as any generation ever had. But we are in an age where advances in technological know-how have displaced interpersonal relationship to such an extent that we hardly have time to talk to one another except through emails, text messages, Facebook, and other social media platforms.

I remember many years ago when the handphone was coming into fashion, I asked my son what he was doing, and he said "I was talking to my friend." I thought he was just "playing" with his phone and I said so, but he replied, "We communicate through SMS!"

So when it comes to raising children, perhaps we may need to go back to the basics of yesteryears. Then, father-son relationships were closer, families still had time together to talk and laugh over a meal and children never complained that it was boring.

Of course we cannot live in the past. Today, work, school, extracurricular activities, and even Church take fathers and sons in separate directions. Therefore in the light of modern developments, as Christian fathers, we have to be intentional about creating opportunities to teach our sons by spending quality time with them. What should be our goal?

The Apostle Paul wrote in **1Thessalonians 2:11-12**, *"For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God who calls you into His kingdom and glory."*

He was not actually writing to give us a model of parenting. Yet the implication speaks loud and clear. You may ask, why a father? Given the opportunity, boys tend to look to the father for guidelines. The mother will always be around, in fact, she has at least a nine-month head-start over the father. Hence it is

the father who should encourage and comfort his son and intentionally create opportunities to teach and guide that young life to negotiate the path to adulthood. Fathers need to relate in a way their sons understand; going alongside them, identifying the language in their hearts.

The most important objective – the goal of Christian fathers, is that our children may *"...live lives worthy of God..."*. (**1 Thessalonians 2:12**).

How do we do that? I want to propose that we need to show them from our own lifestyle – a process of **mentoring**. Mentoring involves commitment and God calls fathers to be 100 per cent involved to model manhood, to teach industry and resourcefulness. The good character and behaviour of any boy is developed during his early years.

In the early days of my father's business, when I was just around eight or nine years old, he would wait for me to finish school and then take me along to nearby towns. I would watch the way he interacted with his clients. I was very happy just to be with him. He would talk to me during the journey, joke at times and even show me his favourite eating places. He was very diligent and would not rest till the day was done. Throughout his life, he was very resourceful. He was determined to succeed in life and would look out for business opportunities to make money.

One thing he would not allow me to do – sleep late during school holidays. I had to be up by 7am and began the day by tidying up the factory area. I had fun times but work came first. My way of life was modelled after his, and much of my own relational skills were gleaned from these interactions. He built my foundation solidly.

Yet, by far, the most important concept is found in **Deuteronomy 6:5-7**. The Lord told Moses to tell the children of Israel, *"Love the Lord our God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your*

strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be in your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

As Christian fathers, in order to mentor the next generation, we have to show that we love God wholeheartedly, not just in our minds; not only on Sundays, but every day. Boys need guidance and training, but most of all they will look to the father. If the father neglects that role, the boys will look elsewhere. The way we act or react will have a direct impact on them.

The tablet or iPad is an excellent modern tool for research and communication plus a host of other uses when we master it. Yet one fundamental area the tablet cannot is to teach us how to communicate verbally. That is why as parents, we need to reintroduce table talk during family time or meal time. Facebook is a good social media for sharing information, but there are times when as parents, we must set boundaries. We must explain the dangers of excessive sharing and time management.

Have you ever wondered why God is so specifically detailed in **Deuteronomy 6:7** "...when you sit at home, when you walk along the road, when you lie down, when you get up"? God wants us to pay attention to our children all the time. Through our lifestyle, we are expected to show them how to live a godly life. We are to use every opportunity to show them that God is the centre of our lives! In other words, we are to build their character with godly principles.

Proverbs 22:6 in the Amplified Bible reads "Train up a child in the way he should go (and in keeping with his individual gift or bent), and when he is old he will not depart from it". Notice that training up a child also includes understanding and developing the individual makeup of the child. Every child is different. They all have different abilities, talents, characteristics, etc. They will excel if they can be trained in the direction that will bring out the best for them.

When my son decided to pursue a course in music, I had a hard time convincing my parents of his choice. They wanted him to do something else. But my wife and I persevered because we believed in him. Our daughter graduated with a double degree

in Fine Arts but eventually she decided to do what she liked best – singing. We believed in her abilities. Today both are doing well.

Character building depends very much on the parent's interaction with their children. Most ladies looking for a husband would want a man of character who will be the leader in the family – someone who can keep a marriage till death do us part; not till we live apart. My last words belong to my son, who wrote to us during our anniversary some years ago ... "If I do get married, I want our marriage to be patterned after yours."

The Rev. Lai Moo Him 黎務謙

graduated from the London College of Printing in 1972, specializing in Printing Management and Book Production. He worked in his family business but gave that up to answer the call to full time ministry in 1987.

In 1988, he went with his wife, Oi Lan, to Living Springs Ministry Training School in New Zealand, and was under the tutelage of the late Rev. Peter Morrow. Upon their return the same year, Moo Him was invited to pastor Canning Garden Baptist Church, Ipoh. He was ordained in 1994. In 1995 he enrolled in the Malaysian Bible Seminary for a year to pursue a Diploma in Christian Studies.

Upon his retirement in 2000, he joined the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship Malaysia, serving in various capacities until 2007. In March 2009, he joined Focus on the Family and is presently responsible for Church Relations in the Northern Region.

The Importance Of Family Altars

It transforms lives, builds God-pleasing families and causes churches to thrive

By Andrew Wong

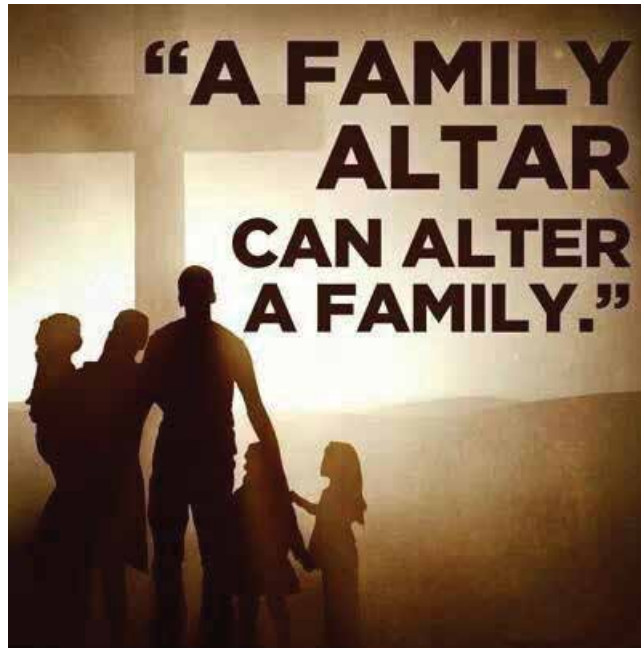
Some eight years ago, my wife and I discovered through difficult circumstances that our roles as parents cannot be based merely on human strength and knowledge.

No matter – or perhaps, because of – our good intentions, we found ourselves facing a storm of conflicts that could be described as teenage rebellion – the worst nightmare of many parents when they see their children doing destructive things in their lives, ignoring everything they’ve been taught, refusing to abide by rules and causing much distress to those who love them.

At that point in time, we knew that if we wanted to raise a family that God is pleased with, we had to do more than just have good intentions or read those secular parenting books ... we had to come before God’s throne of grace in humility and ask for the supernatural strength and wisdom of the One who knows us thoroughly and wove us into being a family in the first place.

Building our altar

Almost at our wits end for want of safe harbour, we made the decision to set up a family altar and build it up to become a central pillar in the life of our family where we could focus on Him, worship Him and be guided by His teachings according to



scripture.

Now, I may be using some construction terms in describing a family altar, but that is merely as a narrative – there is nothing hard, cold or empty about it. Indeed, it is akin to the saying that a house only becomes a home once love enters and takes residence.

When we began eight years ago, we purposefully scheduled our family altar to be

twice a week at a time that is set aside for God and ourselves, without any external interference. And while the place could change – it is mainly held around our dining table, but it has also taken place on a hotel bed when we go on holiday as a family. What is consistent is that we set aside time to put God at the centre of our focus; that we are equipped with our Bibles and jotting paper; and that we come prepared to worship Him, thank and praise Him, and discuss His teachings.

Perseverance pays

Of course, I readily admit that when we started our family altar, the storms in our family did not immediately calm down and things did not magically become smooth sailing – the rebellion did not suddenly stop.

Indeed, we still experienced many turbulent moments, many occasions when we tried to worm

our way out by saying we had “more important things to do”, and many a time we had thoughts of abandoning it.

As I did some research for this article, I discovered that the challenge of setting aside of time, plus the fact that some parents are afraid (or ashamed) to have family prayers are among the top reasons why more family altars have not been set up, or have fizzled out.

There is also the feeling that it is a waste of time – that there is no sense of joyful expectation that anything good will come out from it and that it is merely a parenting ploy to “detain” children from doing their own thing.

We must recognise that these thoughts are what Satan has planted in our heads in an attempt to block us from setting up our altars for the ultimate purpose of worshipping God and seeking only His guidance.

The inability to set aside time can be overcome by earnest desire and a determined purpose to have a family altar. If a family cannot all be brought together at one certain time, perhaps it can at another. And if its members cannot all come together at any one time, there is no reason why those who can be together should neglect this duty and privilege.

On the thought of being afraid or ashamed to begin family prayers, let us remember the words of our Lord when He said in **Mark 8:38**, *“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”*

And on the contention that it is a “waste of time”, the time for family altar should be structured so that it bears fruit that can be tasted for all to enjoy and keep coming back for more.

So do we let Satan claim the victory, or do we turn to God for strength and determination to see it set up, knowing it will be for His glory?

As my wife and I struggled with building our family altar, we gradually witnessed a ray of light shimmering from above the clouded veil ... it was a slow but progressive transformation, a mellowing of rebellion and self-centredness, an increase in care and concern for one another, a growing respect for authority, a greater appreciation for scripture ... and a desire to draw closer to Jesus.

These were the encouragements God gave us to persevere and though today, we as a family still have the occasional tumultuous moment, it has become less frequent. Over the eight years, what has developed is a growing love for our Lord, for His word and for one another so much so that on the occasions when we are unable to come together, we have this pang of discontent that makes each of us long for the time when we can once again gather as a family to worship Him.

A time to focus on God and His Word

So, what happens during family altars?

There are no hard and fast rules on content or timing, but the centre of attention must be God, His Word and His direction and guidance. As parents and leaders of our families, we must be careful not to reduce this coming together to a finger-wagging event or as our personal sounding platform for to do so would be to make God a mere spectator.

Ideally, it should be an informal, yet reverent time and should include Bible reading, prayer, and perhaps singing, with each family member playing a part.

One of the most important elements of the time is studying God’s Word and teaching it diligently to our children, for Deuteronomy 6 and Psalm 78 remind us that it is parents – not Sunday School – whom God has primarily assigned the task of training children in His way.

For families with young teenaged children, if you are looking for a structured lesson plan to help you grow in the Word, you could surf to www.kidsofintegrity.com/lessons/ where many plans are available for download together with sample prayers and how to have interactive fun at the same time.

An altar that blesses families and the church

The family altar harks back to the first book of the Bible when in **Genesis 12:7**, we are told the first thing Abram did after leaving Haran and arriving in the land of Canaan was to build "an altar unto the Lord".

This altar of worship became the centre of Abram's family life and affected his thinking, his planning and his actions. It directed his life God-ward into an intimacy with God so deep and binding that God revealed to Abram the impending destruction of Sodom before the judgment fell.

When the altar was neglected and forgotten, captivity and sorrow came upon the nation. When the altar was rebuilt, blessing and prosperity resulted.

As a parent, which would you rather have?

In addition to being a blessing to our families, the altar with God at the centre also helps to build a thriving Church.

English minister and hymn-writer Richard Baxter (1615 – 1691) in his early ministry pastored a community composed almost entirely of rich, cultured people.

But he soon found that the congregation was cold, and all was not as he had expected it to be.

Disappointed he said, "The way to save this church and the community is to establish religion in the homes of the people, and to build the family altar."

He then spent three years in visitation, determined to establish a family altar in every home in that community. He succeeded, and as a result found his church filled to overflowing.

Thus began that magnificent ministry and life for which he became famous, based on the conviction that a thriving church must have a family altar in the homes of its members.

So my brothers and sisters, in this day and age when we are surrounded by so many gods vying for our time and attention, let us be set apart. Let us be different. Let us be holy.

Let us intentionally build in our homes an altar to worship only our God ... and in doing so, joyfully receive His blessings and prosperity.



Healthy Family in Christ

(Based on the sermon series on the Book of Colossians at
TMCPJ 5pm service in July 2016)

By Lewis Loke

There are people who believe that their family was a punishment from God:

The husband doesn't love

The wife doesn't submit

The children don't obey

And the parents are harsh and sometimes difficult to be around.

I do not know if families with problems like these are being punished by God, but such families are indeed unhealthy. They are sick. Thankfully, God has a prescription that we can take to heal the broken home and that cure is found in **Colossians 3:18-21**: *"Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged."*

Take the prescription

As with all illnesses, when a doctor prescribes a medication, we need to take it the way the doctor ordered. They have those little papers that come along with the medication to tell us "how" to take our pills. We are expected to read the fine print. If we do not read and something goes wrong, we can blame only ourselves.

So, God gives us instructions on how to have a healthy family:

- Wives submit;
- Husbands love;
- Children obey; and
- Fathers do not embitter your children.

There are people who figure: "If that is the medicine, all I have to do is swallow it and I will have a happy, healthy home." They are not far off.

But there are also people who use this prescription in a way it was not intended and the result is damaged relationships and rebellious families.

Beware of misuse

How can we possibly misuse this prescription? Yes, we can, by not understanding the instructions that

accompany the medicine and by not reading the rest of what Colossians has to say about our relationship with God.

Paul's theme in Colossians is – Jesus is Lord. What does it mean for Jesus to be Lord? It means:

- He created everything;
- He is the Head of everything; and
- He is the Head of you and me.

Jesus is the Head of our families, too. He owns our relationships. When we declare that Jesus is our Lord, we are turning over to Him the keys to every aspect of our lives: Our possessions, our future, our spouses and our children.

Our families do not belong to us anymore. We gave them to Jesus when we were saved and when we say "Jesus is our Lord!"

Since our husbands/wives/children/parents belong to Jesus Christ, we are responsible to Jesus for how we treat them. **Colossians 3:18-21** is a description of how Jesus expects us to treat what belongs to Him. It is not a description of how the people in my family are to treat me.

If we do not follow this prescription the way Jesus expects us to, we will hurt ourselves and we will hurt our families.

Colossians 3:17 tells us "... whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him".

The place to start doing this in the name of Jesus Christ is with our families.

The prescription

Paul told us that we are to be ministers to those in our families.

"Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord." (**Colossians 3:20**)

In fact, Paul goes even further when he writes to the

church in Ephesus:

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honour your father and mother' (which is the first commandment with a promise) 'that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.'" (**Ephesians 6:1-3**)

This becomes a particular issue for children that are in their teens. Teenagers are in that awkward age where they sometimes want more authority than their parents are willing to let them have. This creates a power struggle in the family. However, teenagers must know that they are not at the top of their family structure in the Biblical structure of the family.

Someone once joked: "Teenaged boys no longer need parental guidance. All they need is parental money!"

That is not really the problem. The problem is, teenagers are getting old enough to be entrusted with responsibility but they are not considered old enough to make all the decisions they would like to make.

Teenagers find it hard to let go and allow their parents be parents, because at times they think they know better. Sometimes they do; sometimes they are smarter than their parents.

However, when they forget who is supposed to be in charge, they find themselves in conflict with their parents and it is frustrating, because their parents will win. Parents control the parental money. They control the parental permission of where their children can go and where they cannot. They control the parental car keys. It can be frustrating.

Into this difficult relationship, Jesus gives teenagers a ministry. He calls children to minister to parents by letting them be right (even when they are wrong). Why?

It is because children being "right" is not what Jesus is worried about. Whenever you honour your parents, whenever you obey your parents, you are showing them what it is to be a Christian. You are making it

easier for them to swallow their pride (when they are wrong). You are making it easier for them to trust you with more decisions. It is because you have shown them you respect their leadership and values.

God understands how hard this is to do but He promised, that if children will obey Him by honouring their fathers and mothers, He will make life go easier for them so that they can enjoy long life on the earth.

For added emphasis, this is the only one of the Ten Commandments that comes with a promise

So, children obey your parents.

Now, we come to an even more difficult command: Wives, submit to your husbands.

Why? It is your spiritual service as wives.

Wives, your objective is to create spiritual leaders in your husbands. You teach your husbands to be spiritual leaders by training them to lead and you can only do that by letting them make mistakes.

Does your husband make mistakes? (*A lot of laughter and agreement in the crowd*). You do it by refusing to take the position of leadership away from him and refusing to make the leadership decisions for him.

God's goal for your husband is for him to be a spiritual leader. You work with God in training your husband by displaying proper submission – a submission that honours and respects your husband so that he gains confidence enough to assert Godly leadership outside the home as well.

You might say: "He doesn't deserve for me to be submissive to him." It is hard to submit to a husband who does not deserve to be submitted to. Well, the fact is, nobody deserves to be in a position of being submitted to – except Lord Jesus.

Husbands, wives and children - we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The only person who has ever deserved submission is Jesus Christ.

Wives submit yourselves to your husbands because Jesus asked this of you. This is your spiritual service. This is part of your ministry within the family.

There was one woman who was distressed by her husband's chronic thoughtlessness. Immersed in business affairs, he seldom even remembered her birthday. "I could have tried to force him into changing his ways," she said, "but it only seemed to me that this would only make matters worse. Instead, I waited for the first chance I had to praise him for some small act of thoughtfulness. When he finally brought home a book I had asked for four times, I thanked him as if it were a diamond necklace! He looked at me oddly, but I could see he was pleased. I did this a few more times, and gradually he began to want to think about me because he enjoyed being appreciated."

What she was doing was learning to submit, and in time, she changed her husband's behaviour. Why? She did things the way Jesus wanted it done.

Now for another hard command: Husbands, love your wives and fathers do not embitter your children. Notice that God is not telling you to dominate your wife and children or forcefully assert your position as "head of the house".

That is the ungodly exercise authority in their families. How should the head of the house carry out his authority?

"Jesus called (His disciples) together and said, *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* (**Matthew 20: 25-28**).

Yes husbands, yes fathers, you are called by God to be the heads of your household but you did not earn nor own that position. It was given to you by God. In addition to that, when you proclaimed Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, you surrendered that "authority" to Jesus.

Husbands and fathers, you are to exercise that leadership in the family as Christ's agent. God will

hold you accountable for how you treat those under your care. In **1 Peter 3:7**, we are even told that God will not listen to your prayers if you mistreat your wife.

Husbands, love your wives. Fathers do not embitter your children. In so doing, you are modelling Christ for your wife and your children.

There are different types and degrees of brokenness in our families. Besides the devil's work, we should also search our hearts if there is any hurt or harm that we have brought on to our families.

Due to our fallen nature, we cannot easily obey, submit and love others but thank God, we are redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ through the blood He shed, the new life He gave and His Spirit who dwells within us.

In Christ, we have hope the power to restore our families.



Living Right

By James Chong

The urban family unit is coming under great stress in the 21st century. The need to provide the best for the children means the single breadwinner model family is becoming increasingly rare, with the wife having to be gainfully employed to maximise earning capacity.

In fact, some would argue that both spouses in most families HAVE to work just to maintain a decent life standard. They say this is especially true for families classed below the middle income group in the face of the surging cost of living in many cities of the world.

In the Malaysian context, this means less quality time (indeed, some would say just PLAIN TIME) with the children. The sad reality is, many husbands and wives have relinquished their roles as father and mother to the domestic help.

Like all human beings, there are good and bad people among our army of foreign domestic help in Malaysia. If you are lucky, she will do her best to fill the role abdicated by the parents. If not, the children will just be given the barest of care and we of course have read of cases of child abuse and kidnaps in the media.

In the worst case scenario, many children become latchkey kids. And with so many negative influences from the Internet to casual sex, it is no wonder social problems among the young in Malaysia are becoming tsunami-like in proportions.

What does all this mean for the Christian family?

Two important things are needed here. Time and leadership.

Time

We all complain about not having enough time but at the end of the day, we have to make hard choices about how we spend our time.

Yes, we have to work long hours to climb the corporate ladder BUT we also cannot give only minutes to our children. We HAVE to find time for them.

Leadership

Children have to be guided by parents. And according to the Bible, the husband is the leader. So, what kind of leader must the father be? A God-fearing and loving leader. There are no two ways about it.

Here are some pointers to build a wholesome Christian family.

- 1 The father and mother must be committed to God. Without this bedrock, everything is useless. So, husband and wife must first get things right with God before anything else. How do we do this? In "Tony Evans: The Urban Alternative", Pastor Dr Tony Evans says this: "Our earthly families are intended to reflect God's unconditional love. Husbands are called to love their wives as Christ loves His church, and wives are called to devote themselves to their husbands as the church devotes herself to Christ."
- 2 Parents cannot outsource their role to the domestic help, school teacher, tuition teacher, or even Sunday School teacher. Parents complain there is no time. But sorry folks, you have to make time for your children, again there are no two ways about it. Parents must spend time with their children, monitoring their studies, making sure they do not get into trouble and if the children are in their teens, talking to them

Here, meal times are important occasions as this is when parents can engage with them. They must also guide their spiritual life – make sure they are following them to church, attending activities in church AND PRAYING together and spending time worshipping as a family. Remember, parents

have to take care of our children's material and spiritual needs.

- 3 Some parents complain that their children do not listen to them. Others say that they have given up trying to talk to their children. But parents must ask themselves this: "Did I provide the leadership and spend time with them when they were young? or did I just shower them with gifts in place of time and care?" If parents have never acted like the head of the family and exercised authority, they cannot expect their children to listen when they decide to talk to them. Young parents must use the Bible as the guide or talk to the Church elders on how to get things right as a Christian family from the start.
- 4 Parental leadership does not mean you become a tyrant. Just as the husband is asked to love the wife completely and the wife in turn must obey the husband, the children must also obey the parents. But that does not mean the father is given dictatorial powers. As the Bible says: *"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord."* (**Ephesians 6:4**). Guide them with a combination of God's love and power.
- 5 Children, on the other hand, must not anger their parents especially in their teenage years and in the Asian context, even children in their 20s and 30s, children may sometimes find their parents' presence and authority over their lives to be annoying. God-fearing parents, by and large, want only the best for their children. Sometimes, teenagers do not understand this. And this leads us to the next point – communication.
- 6 Communication is everything in a family. This element is also tied to TIME. You need time to keep communication channels open. Or else,

parents will find themselves in the problem found in point 2. Teenagers are naturally rebellious. They will not listen to you if they find it useless, boring or not cool. So, time and communication are both heavily needed to explain why there are certain rules that children must obey. Mostly, they are for the well-being and safety of the children. As for young adults, time and communication are still important aspects in family life. Sometimes, in the 21st century world, parents may not understand why young people may decide to make certain life decisions which may seem bewildering to the older folk. Children must take time to explain, for example: "I do not need to be a doctor, lawyer, accountant or engineer to be seen as a success. There are now many very well-to-do chefs around the world. Look at Jamie Oliver".

- 7 Old does not mean old-fashioned. Young adults going out into the great big world are of course attracted to all things bright, shiny, fashionable and new. These may include new material things but they also include new trends and lifestyles. Premarital relationships, for example, are now the norm these days. Many feel that is good to live together to see if they are compatible for marriage. And there are others who just have premarital sex because it is fun and exciting. "We are already consenting adults, above 21. There is nothing wrong?" Yes, again in the local context, if we are non-Muslims, there is nothing illegal in the eyes of the law when two adults engage in consensual sex in privacy. But is it right in the eyes of God? The latter is much much more important at the end. And if parents find out, they must say something to their children to tell them it is wrong. Do not be afraid of making your children angry if they are living in sin. It may seem old-fashioned but – the Good Lord's teachings coupled with the wisdom of God-fearing parents DO NOT GO OUT OF STYLE.

Of Gods And Men

By Jessie & Eddie Chiew

- How do you live in a predominantly Muslim country and still share mutual love and understanding?
- How do you thrive in a forbidding, arid and impoverished territory and be able to sustain a living?
- How do you survive and continue to live with the constant threat of terrorism looming over you?



These and many other life-challenging questions were amply answered for us when we were privileged to watch *Of Gods and Men*, an award-winning French movie (Cannes Film Festival, 2010) with eloquent English subtitles.

The introductory scene started with a tolling of bells juxtaposed to the call of prayer from the nearby minarets.

Seven Trappist monks had elected to make their home in a monastery set against the Atlas Mountains in Algeria. They started their day and every day by looking to God, their All-Loving, All-caring Benefactor with the prayer 'Open my lips and my mouth will proclaim Your praise ...'

Throughout the day, in between their chores and activities and at the end of each day, they would be seeking God, singing the Psalms and communing with Him to re-energise their bodies and their minds by absorbing God's goodness and righteousness.

Walking with God constantly enabled them to live life to the full and expectantly, looking ahead to what God would do within them and around them. Living in constant touch with God enabled them to embrace the gift of God's presence and His grace each and every day.

Instinctively, they learnt that the way to respond to God's grace was to serve with love and with everything God had given and blessed them with. They were to honour God with heart, soul, mind and strength in everything they did and with everyone they come into contact with.

They shared friendship and love with their

immediate Muslim neighbours, sharing in their celebrations and ministering to their needs. They ministered to everyone who needed help, even a rebel leader who sought medical treatment, reminding him the sanctity of their monastery and faith.

Faced with the ever-present threat of rogue government forces and terrorists, the monks continued to commune with God and turned their hearts over for God to take over. The perpetual presence of God was the sunshine in their lives keeping them reminded that *wild flowers don't stray to find the sun as God keeps them fecund* (a statement of inspiration from the movie).

The monks continued to walk in the light as a united group even as fear and threat to life assailed them. Their fleshly fear was bolstered by the belief that Jesus himself was no stranger to what they were going through and that the day they leave this earth they would be in the peace and joy of the Lord.

It was a movie reminding us of the anchor of our faith and that *whoever wants to save his life would lose it*. We are not to fear those who can kill the body but not the soul, that when we submit to the Lord and surrender control to Him, we will be able to transcend our own limitations to walk by the Spirit.

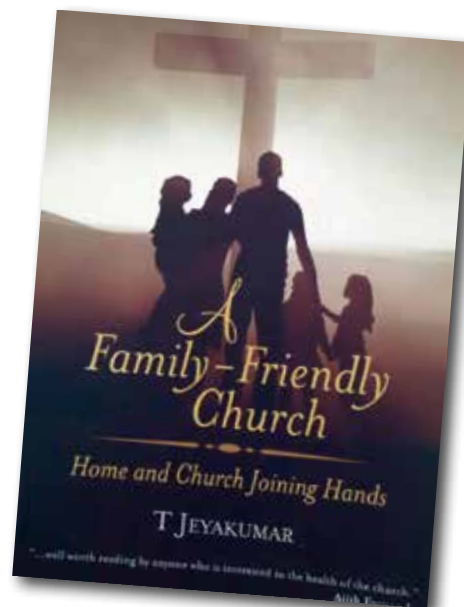
The movie - *Of Gods and Men* - came to bless us over and over, opening our eyes, ears and heart and touching all our senses. It made us realise that we can only live our lives well when God is in us and with us.

(The movie retreat of the Pastoral Counselling group was held on 20/8/16 at the Oasis and facilitated by Dr Lillian Koh).

Post-script: On the night of 26-27 March 1996, seven monks from the Atlas Abbey of Tibhirine, near Médéa, in Algeria, belonging to the Roman Catholic Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance (known as Trappists) were kidnapped during the Algerian Civil War. They were held for two months, and were found dead in late May 1996 (Wikipedia).

A Family-Friendly Church: Home And Church Joining Hands

By Daisy Naesarajoo



The book entitled *A Family-Friendly Church: Home and Church Joining Hands* by the Rev. T. Jeyakumar was published in 2014. By way of introduction, the Rev. Jeyakumar has been in pastoral ministry for more than 22 years and has pastored 10 local churches. He has been the President of the Trinity Annual Conference (TRAC) of the Methodist Church in Malaysia since 2012.

The book is divided into six chapters. Beginning with the Introduction chapter, individual chapters explore the following topics – “Biblical Basis for Family Friendliness”, “Overview of Family-Friendly Literature”, “Family-Friendly Ministry in TRAC Churches”, “A Strategy to Create Family-Friendly Churches”, and “Summary and Conclusion” as the final chapter.

In the Introduction chapter, the Author states in no uncertain terms that TRAC Churches are lacking in the area of providing family support to the increasing number of dysfunctional families in the congregation. During a retreat in Fraser’s Hill in January 2009, the TRAC Executive Board proposed a standard reporting method to the Annual Conference for all TRAC churches, known as the Four Essentials. Reports submitted will cover the following topics – “Lifelong Discipleship”, “Wholesome Families”, “A Voice to Our Nation”, and “A Vision for the World”.

Two pertinent questions are posed: What is a wholesome family? How do we, as a church, help establish and nurture that institution? The Author briefly points out the following defining factors:

- A wholesome family is where parents take an active role to disciple and nurture their children spiritually. This is where a family-friendly church can be instrumental in equipping, empowering and enabling families to do just that – at home!
- A wholesome family is in the area of bonding

where the parent-child relationship is built upon intentionally. For this to take place, a family-friendly church will not encumber parents with too many meetings and/or activities in the church that would impede on quality time such as bonding and spiritual-building spent at home.

The Author then sets the stage by stating explicitly that the family-friendly agenda has not taken priority in TRAC Churches and as such, there is a need to embark strategically to help create wholesome families. Consequently, the objective of the book is to formulate a strategy for TRAC Churches to intentionally adopt the family-friendly church model, and thus become family-friendly churches. The strategy employed to achieve these objectives are creating **awareness** and helping churches understand why families are important and how family-friendliness could be achieved; providing a **resource** to families and churches; helping churches develop a **structure** that facilitates a family-friendly church model; **equip** parents to be owners and enablers of the task of faith-formation in their respective homes; and to act as an **enabling arm** to help TRAC adopt the family-friendly model.

A commendable effort by the Author was the undertaking of an empirical study through a survey questionnaire sent out to all TRAC churches in mid-2012 to find out the following:

- a. how the churches viewed themselves based on five church models;
- b. whether churches were adopting the family-friendly model in carrying out their ministries; and
- c. whether churches held intergenerational activities and worship services.

Chapter 2 is entitled "Biblical Basis for the Family" where the Author highlights the place the family has in the Old and New Testaments. In Genesis Chapter 2, it is clear that God set up the institution of marriage and family before any other institution, even the church. From the books of Deuteronomy and Proverbs, it is noted that God gave the authority and responsibility to parents and grandparents to nurture the families by teaching them the Scriptures. Similarly, in the New Testament, the Author draws on the books of Colossians and Ephesians which emphasised the crucial importance of the family in faith-formation. The role of grandparents is also highlighted when the Apostle Paul tells Timothy, *"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother, Lois, and your mother, Eunice, and now, I am sure, lives in you"* (2 Timothy 1:5).

In addition, during the Old Testament times, the community did its part in imparting the faith, by including children in their religious observances and holy events. In the New Testament, the apostles, when writing to the church, addressed the children in the Epistles. This goes to show that parents and children worshipped together. Undoubtedly, even during those times, the church was intergenerational.

From the Scriptures, the Author very rightly proceeds with a section on Methodism and faith formation and draws on John Wesley's sermon "On Family Religion". According to Wesley, it was the duty of parents to impart spiritual knowledge, and thus contribute to the faith-formation of their children. Interestingly though, the responsibility of parents did not stop here. Wesley wanted parents to take their God-given role as spiritual guardians to three other areas of a child's life – choice of the right school for the child, choice of career and marriage.

In chapter 3, which is entitled "Overview of Family-Friendly Literature", the Author has provided a comprehensive write-up of what the literature has to say about the family-friendly church and family ministry. The work of various authors were reviewed, and although they were written in the American context, they are informative and useful for the Malaysian family. Most authors point out that the church is in a crucial position to help families. If families are weak, then the church would also be weak. This weakness is a result of the church being composed of whole families and individuals who come without their families.

Five church models are highlighted, namely, the

programmatic church, family-friendly church, family-based church, family-equipping church and the family-integrated church. The Author clearly states that the focus of this book is on the family-friendly church model because it sees the need for both parents and the church to disciple children, while at the same time recognising that faith-formation is primarily the task of parents.

It is noted that currently, TRAC churches are mostly programmatic churches, and that moving towards being family-friendly would certainly be an achievement. Studies have shown that parents are the main influence of faith in children's lives. In this regard, if the objective of TRAC churches is to be family-friendly churches, then the task of the church is to help parents be aware of these opportunities and equip them for spiritual leadership at home. As such, the church has to be in partnership with parents, to disciple them so that they in turn will disciple their children. Among the challenges to becoming family-friendly churches are:

- a. the biggest challenge is the parents – Christian parents;
- b. when parents fail to see their role as active participants in the faith-formation of the lives of their children;
- c. age-group ministries in the church which unwittingly segregate members of the same church; and
- d. parents and youth workers who resist the involvement of parents in youth ministries.

Chapter 4 is entitled "Family-Friendly Ministry in TRAC Churches". Here the Author focusses on the state of TRAC Churches with regards to being family-friendly churches by reviewing Journals and the results of the survey questionnaire. In addition, the Author used the findings from literature to measure the answers given in the survey questionnaires. Literature will tell what the family-friendly church looks like, while the Journals and survey results will help ascertain whether TRAC Churches are truly observing the family-friendly model. Acknowledging that not all that happens in church can be captured in a report, sadly though, the 2010 - 2012 Journals indicated that there was still no significant improvement in TRAC Churches in achieving the goals of wholesome families.

The survey indicated that 23 out of the 38 churches are programmatic churches, meaning that segmented ministries were carried out, without drawing families together. Parents are not discipling

and they are not equipped and disciplined to disciple their children. Whether the churches are big (with a membership of more than 200) or small (with a membership of less than 200), parents are mostly not involved in the children or youth ministries. In addition, these churches are mostly not intentionally intergenerational. The Author puts it very bluntly – “It is not enough to say that one of TRAC’s Four Essentials is to have Wholesome Families in the Annual Conference when TRAC is not even making efforts to create wholesome families. Equipping parents to do faith-formation is a major factor in helping families attain wholesomeness. If parents are not disciplined even to disciple their children, how can there be wholesome families in TRAC?” Greater efforts must be made to equip families primarily to do the ministry of discipling if TRAC intends to make churches family-friendly.

Consequently, Chapter 5 is aptly entitled “A Strategy to Create Family-Friendly Churches”. Churches and Christian families need guidance in being intentionally family-friendly, so that discipling and faith-formation can systematically take place in churches and Christian homes. For this purpose, the Author has put forward strategies at two levels – one for the Annual Conference and the other for the Local Church.

At the Conference Level, the Author has proposed the establishment of a Family-Friendly Church Board with the mission of “equipping churches to empower homes to be centres for growth of the Christian faith”. Towards this end, the Author has proposed various initiatives such as implementation of parenting courses, including making these courses mandatory, conducting marriage preparation and marriage courses, writing devotionals to be used by families in their respective homes and encouraging parents and their children to participate in mission trips.

Consistent with the mission of the Annual Conference, the mission of the Local Church would be “equipping homes to be the centres for the growth of the Christian faith; discipling adults to disciple children and youths”. The Author has drawn up a three-year road map, that is to be pursued at the Local Church level, parent level, supportive adult level, children and youth level. This road map is based on the understanding that a family-friendly church must be intentionally intergenerational, to draw families to worship together in the church service. The intergenerational service should have sermons that are friendly to all generations.

Organisations usually find it extremely difficult to review their own structure. However, the Author has proposed a bold initiative to review existing structures in the church. Although the Methodist Book of Discipline spells out an array of committees to be formed in the local church, the Author is of the view that churches should be creative and review the need to form these committees, so as to enable families to spend more time with each other. Based on his experience, it is sometimes easier to work without committees!

In the final chapter (Summary and Conclusion), the Author explicitly states that based on the Old and New Testaments, as well as existing literature, including the teachings of John Wesley, parents are to be the primary faith-formation leaders in the homes and the church should not usurp this task. Instead, the church’s role is to complement the family in faith-formation and equip families to do daily faith-formation at home. In this regard, the church must create opportunities for families to worship together and not segment them into age-based and gender-based ministries. While giving emphasis to the family, a noteworthy point is the attention drawn to those who do not come from Christian families, those who come to worship without their families, those whose families are not intact, or those whose families are not close by. The church must never forget that it is a larger family of God and the needs of everyone must be met and addressed.

Personally, I found the book to be very reader-friendly, with the issues, concepts and ideas being clearly articulated. It is an open, frank and thought provoking book, which challenges families and the church to re-examine their roles and responsibilities, to move in tandem with the demands of the 21st century. Drawing from multiple sources – the Bible, existing literature, an empirical study and his vast personal experience, the Author successfully expounds the need and rationale for establishing a family-friendly church where the home and church must join hands. In this context, the Author has succeeded in fulfilling the objective of this book, that is, to formulate a strategy for TRAC churches to become family-friendly by adopting a family-friendly church model.

I would certainly agree with other commentators that this book is a “must-read” for all those interested in ensuring that families and the church are equipped to face the challenges of this fast changing environment, while simultaneously ensuring that our faith is passed on to the succeeding generations.

Called Home To Eternal Rest

"Jesus said, I am the resurrection and I am life. Those who believe in me, even though they die yet shall they live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I hold the key of hell and death. Because I live, you shall live also." - **The Word of Grace - (UMH pg. 871)**

The following members of TMC PJ were called home to eternal rest. Our condolences to their family members.



ADELINE SHARMINI
LINGAM

Called home in
August, 2016



RAMACHANDRAN
KANAPATHI **PILLAI**

Called home in
September, 2016

Trinity Methodist Church Petaling Jaya Welcomes New and Transferred Members

Members Who Transferred From Other Churches



Loh Mei Ying
(Grace Choong's mum)
(Wesley Methodist Church, KL)



Joan Ng Moi Ying
(Pantai Baptist Church)

Infant Baptism



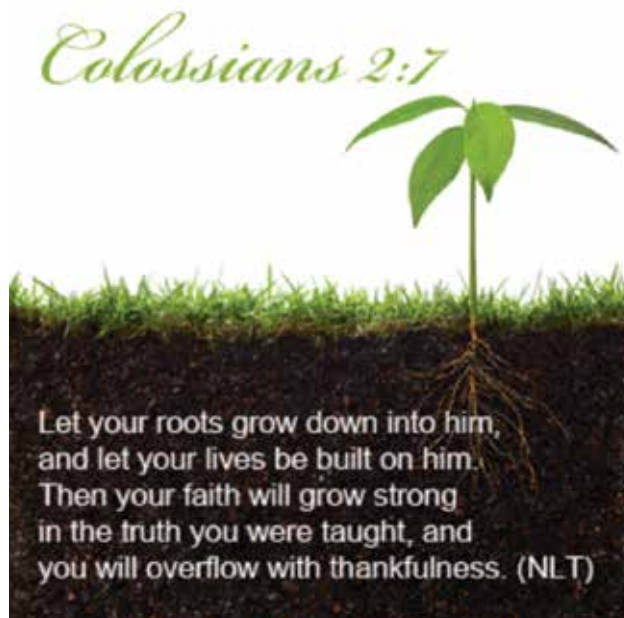
Alexander Choo En Kai
Son of Richard & Natasha Choo
(with their pet Kobe)

MEMBERS WHO TRANSFERRED TO OTHER CHURCHES

- Ian Loh Wing Hao (Wesley Uniting Church, Melbourne)
- Audrey Wong Teck Ying (Glad Tidings PJ)
- Beatrice Wong (Glad Tidings PJ)

Roots And Shoots

By Jessie Chiew



*Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
how does your garden grow?*

This was one of my favourite nursery rhymes in primary school. It brings to mind a simple request to my daughter Eline to bloom wherever God planted her, when she decided to settle down in the US.

Looking back at her growing years, I should not have worried. She had thanked us for giving her 'roots and wings', on starting college in US. She further reassured us with these lines from **Ps 139:9-10**:

*If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there Your hand will guide me,
Your right hand will hold me fast.*

Eline had started her walk with God long before her parents, and the Heavenly Father had seen her through many challenges in school and in college when she was both a student-athlete on a sports scholarship from the university as well as a full-time student majoring in accountancy.

Being on my own faith journey has drawn us closer. God's steadfast love and faithfulness have not only sustained Eline, but He has nourished and enabled her to be like a tree planted by streams of living water which yields its fruit in season.

A heartfelt desire that I had written in my journal early this year was 'to continue to seek to grow and be renewed by the living water'. Our loving Father never fails to hear us whenever and however we commune with Him. He takes note and prepares us for whatever we will face. Only God can give us the assurance before we need it. He is our Omniscient and Omnipotent God.

Having visited Eline in Seattle each time she had her three babies had filled me with the phobia of sitting in an enclosed place for hours on end to fly the 10,000 miles. It was literally like flying to the other side of the world, 15 hours behind our time zone!

Knowing that we were due to visit Eline and her growing family in June, the Ever-loving Father planted in my subconscious mind these words from **1Cor 2:9-10**:

*However, as it is written:
"What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and
what no human mind has conceived" –
the things God has prepared for those who love
him—*

The Almighty God came to tell me that when fear and trembling beset me, I can turn to Him to sustain me. My Sustainer and Benefactor faithfully arranged meaningful little happenings along my journey. For the long haul stage from Taipeh to Seattle, I was seated beside fellow Christians. They were a 3-generation Indonesian family headed by the grandpa and patriarch in his 80s. They were on their annual summer trip to spend time with family.

My phobia not only subsided but disappeared altogether to be joyfully greeted and hugged by 2 grand daughters who helped to usher us out into the cool, crisp air to meet up with mum in the waiting car at the airport.

We had last seen Elijah, the youngest, when he was barely a month old. What a blessing that we did not appear foreign to him after five years. (The frequent FaceTime and that the two older sisters know us helped). He even snuggled up to grandpa at home, looking at him from head to toe before coming out with his exclamation: "*Grandpa, you look very, very old!*" Out of the mouth of babes!

Our love sponsored-trip was to coincide with the kids' summer vacation and also to celebrate three birthdays - Eline (17/6), Elijah (10/7) and Bryan (13/7), our SIL (son-in-law). It was to make up for all the years we had missed.

Having to work three full days at the office at World Vision, Eline had arranged for a young nursing student (highly recommended by a friend) to spend time with the kids during the day and to drive them on outings and vacation bible school. It was also to give us time to move around on our own and to go to the YMCA gym across the road. The kids had a schedule drawn up for them and posted on the fridge for tv time, reading time and play time outdoors.

Our five week vacation blessed us with the opportunity to bask in the warmth and love of family closeness, celebrate birthdays, attend Sunday church services together and week-end outings. Topping it all was the gratifying experience of being called grandpa and grandma everyday and being snuggled up to now and then by the two younger kids. It was an experience to last the remotely-connected grandparents for the next couple of years to come.

To have the YMCA gym to regenerate the '*greying old engines*' was a God-sent. It enabled us to keep

pace with three rambunctious 5-7-9 year-old kids who revelled in the outdoors. It also gave us sufficient energy to hit tennis balls, shoot the hoop, swing badminton racquets, fly kites and keep an eye on them as they biked along the road and trail. While comparing my muscles with Elijah when he was flexing his, he turned to tell me, "Grandma, your muscles are squashy!" Kids sure are candid!

Attending Sunday church service with the family, I joyfully observed individual family huddles to give thanks each time they partake in the bread and wine communions. We were also privileged to attend Chapel at the World Vision headquarters to savour the casual but meaningful worship and to receive the wonderfully articulate messages of the speakers, one of whom was the daughter of the World Vision Founder, Robert Pierce.

Our bodies greedily absorbed the benefits of being in 'cool storage' even though it was the midst of summer (60s high, 40s low with regular brisk wind). It was a good respite from the heat and the haze. We were thankful and blessed, above all, to have the children and grandchildren open their home, their lifestyle and their hearts to us. The Lord had blessed us with life to the full while enabling us to know at the same time that grand kids fill a space in your heart you never knew was empty.

It matters not that we have little wealth in terms of money to leave our children. They have come through to show us that the legacy of God-fearing love lives on.

*Surely, Lord, You bless the righteous;
You surround them with your favour
as with a shield. (Ps 5:12).*



A Season For Everything

By Jessie Chiew



*There is a season for everything and a time for
every matter under the heavens . . . a time for
planting and a time for uprooting what was planted*
(Ecclesiastes 3:1-2)

Attending a full-day session with the Rev. Ting on the *Foundation of the Christian Faith* has been one of the best things I have done in my Christian walk. It was certainly a fruitful use of my time, what more on a public holiday, on Monday, 12th September 2016. My body was sluggish but the spirit was shaken awake!

Looking back, I realised that the building of my faith had started off with a rustic framework. God knows me better than I know myself. He knew that that was all I needed at that time. Even after giving up the old life to take on a new one, I had started off with a real slow crawl.

One good thing I did then was to start poking my nose into Christian book shops. Books always entice me. The Holy Spirit came through to lead me to look at a different range.

My inadequacy showed up while attending a one-day retreat at the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The Bible given to me at Baptism was a King James version. Not into the practice of thumbing through it, I was at a complete loss when it came to finding a text in the Bible. I was mortified with shame and

embarrassment.

Through the years, I have emptied my pockets to enrich my bookshelves. My slow crawl graduated to a walk, then a slow jog in my faith journey. I am reading and learning to keep pace.

Going through the Bible in the "fast lane" with Pastor Ting has been thought provoking. It nudges me to go back to read the Bible with all senses attuned to God Almighty our Ever-loving Creator and Heavenly Father who loves us with an eternal and overwhelming love.

As God is systematic and orderly in His creation (what I have learnt through the course), it is timely for me to shore up my foundation before taking up the Lord's invitation to '*come fish with me in deeper waters....*'

Thank you, Pastor, for sharing your time and your heart with us.

May God's light continue to shine in us and through us.

Break Off or Multiply?

By Hoi Hung Wah

Do we have to? We have asked this many times when we were approached to start a small group in Putra Heights early last year. We just did not feel ready and most of all, we did not want to break off from our 'mother SG' at USJ-11, shepherded by sister Cassandra Yap.

Then someone said, "you do not not break off but you multiply instead", so we took this 'leap' of faith..... PRAISE THE LORD!!

During our inaugural launching on 1st September 2016, we were very encouraged and blessed by the presence of Rev Ting, SG leaders from the other SG

zones and a full turn out of the USJ-11 SG members.

On 8th September, we commenced our first meeting - a group of 10 pioneer members (seven adults and three children) ranging from three years to 60 plus. We will be meeting every Thursday, 8.30pm at No. 16, Jalan Putra Bistari 2/3B, Putra Heights, Subang Jaya.

Do join us if you are a Putra Heights resident and not already a member of any SG.

Hung Wah (012 - 9457 231)

Pooi Lin (016 - 6298 191)



Celebrating Our Church's 57th Anniversary As A Family

By Daisy Naesarajoo



As part of the 57th anniversary celebration of Trinity Methodist Church, Petaling Jaya (TMC PJ) on 28th August 2016, a celebration and fundraising lunch was held at Restoran Oversea, Armada Hotel, Petaling Jaya. Funds raised were channelled to the church redevelopment project, scheduled for completion during the second half of 2017.

A total of 450 members, family and friends attended the event, which turned out to be an enjoyable time of fellowship, good fun, music and, of course, great food!

Also in attendance was our Central District 2 Superintendent, the Rev. Ashok Amarasingham, who had earlier delivered a sermon entitled "Communal Worship that Celebrates God's Salvation and Shines for God" during the morning worship services.

Based on **Exodus 15:1-21**, Rev. Ashok highlighted God's faithfulness and victory in saving the people of Israel by making it possible for them to cross the Red Sea, and the praises and thanksgiving offered by the people, including Miriam. He went on to make reference to **Matthew 5:14-16** where we are called to be the light of the world. In doing so, Rev. Ashok emphasised the importance of church unity, cohesion and cooperation.

As we celebrate our 57th anniversary, we are aware

that TMC PJ has come a long way. Like any family, we had our fair share of good and difficult times. As we reflect on those times, we are ever so grateful to our Almighty God for being with us, and for faithfully guiding and leading us through the years.

The fundraising lunch provided us with yet another golden opportunity of starting afresh. We came together as a church and as a family united for a cause – to give thanks and praise to God for His faithfulness and to help raise up the church redevelopment project. In no way is this project merely a project of bricks and mortar. Instead, it is OUR CHURCH PROJECT designed to cement our relationship with our faithful and loving God and with one another.

As I write this article, a stanza from the hymn 'The Church's One Foundation' resonates through my mind:

*"The Church's one foundation,
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is his new creation
By water and the word;
From heaven he came and sought her
To be his holy bride;
With his own blood he bought her,
And for her life he died.*

We are all aware of the mounting challenges posed



by the secular world on our church, families and children. As such, it is crucial for the church to be ready and equipped to confront these challenges as well as assist individuals and families to cope with them. The message to TMC PJ is clear - we are the body of Christ belonging to the family of God and entrusted with a specific mission to serve God and the wider community. In doing so, we need to remain united, steadfast, faithful and diligent in achieving our vision as a church, which is "Everyone a Disciple of Jesus Christ".

As a community of faith belonging to the family of God and in the spirit of forgiveness, leave the past behind and renew friendships and relationships with each other.

Believers in the early church "...devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts" (**Acts 2:42, 46**). Indeed, for the past 57 years, TMC PJ had and, undoubtedly, will continue to be a community of faith, worshipping together, celebrating God's salvation and shining for God. As we move forward, let us endeavour to stay united and focussed on our mission as exemplified by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

TMC PJ is grateful to the Methodist Senior Fellowship for putting together the wonderful anniversary lunch and to those who contributed an additional RM12,000 during the lunch itself!

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!



TMC PJ's 57th Anniversary Lunch



Snapshots To Treasure



God Uses Our Brokenness

By Lai Yen Choo

On 10th September, the Social Concern Ministry invited Theresa Blair to speak to the church members on how God transformed her, a former drug and sex worker to become a social ministry worker.

The introduction given to us:

- Theresa was abandoned at four years old;
- She went on to endure more than a decade in the sex industry and in drug trafficking; and
- She found the saving grace of God, and she is currently a social ministry worker in Cambodia, Vietnam and Malaysia.

Theresa shared how, as a baby, she was physically abused by her mother, who conceived her out of wedlock. I shed tears because the picture of the baby during the presentation reminded me of my grandson. The compassion that welled up in me caused me to become totally attentive to her testimony.

Theresa's life story was filled with unbearable pain and sufferings which would have caused many to either take their own lives or just go deeper and deeper into the world of darkness.

Being a drug addict since her teens and a drug trafficker, the law caught up with her when she was 29 years old. The power point picture of her at 29 showed a woman looking about 60 years of age. I was in prison that God allowed the seed of faith to be planted in her life. An unknown woman appeared to her in prison and challenged her to a bet to seek God in prayer and if she experienced answered prayer for her heart's desire, she would have to go to church.

Her prayer was answered when her jail term mysteriously ended prematurely so that she was able to celebrate her daughter's birthday in good time.

To keep her part of the bet, she walked into a church, still filled with anger and bitterness in her heart. She



Theresa Blair

cursed God at the altar and demanded that the pastor not approach her.

At this point she returned to her life of sex and drugs. While on her arduous journey, God began to reach out to her and eventually she gave her life to Christ.

Theresa quoted **Galatians 2: 20** to tell us that being crucified in Christ, she now has a new identity in Christ. *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

As in **Isaiah 43: 18-19**, she learnt to let go of her hurts and not dwell in her past, so, God began to do His deep work in her.

*"Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past."*

*See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.*

She began to lose her anger, bitterness and unforgiveness and allowed God's forgiveness to flow in her and through her. She elaborated that as a child of God, she held the key to forgive.

Theresa had every reason to be unforgiving. She had been physically and sexually abused. Her son, serving in the army stationed in Afghanistan, committed suicide in response to the news that his wife was pregnant with another man's child. Theresa shared how she took one whole year to forgive her daughter-in-law. It was truly God's redeeming and transforming grace that enabled her to forgive.

With conviction in her heart, she gladly declared that to be forgiven is to be healed and set free, no longer in bondage. Also, to forgive others is a reflection on how much God has forgiven her.

On hindsight, Theresa could clearly see that God had placed people in her life so that Christian values were planted in her. She realised that walking with Christ is much easier than without Christ.

In order to demonstrate the love of Christ in our lives, we are to unconditionally love the people we are reaching out to, in spite of their lives of disobedience to God, she added. Only then, can we see that little spark of hope in them that needs to be kindled and ignited.

Theresa and her husband are now reaching out to the motorbike gang in her community in the US. By sharing love and demonstrating acceptance, Theresa and her husband have the "authority" to walk with them and alongside them to point them to God's redeeming and unsurpassing love for them.

Brokenness is the condition of being completely subdued and humbled before the Lord and as a result, completely yielded to and be dependent upon Him also.

God breaks us in order to remake us into what He wants us to be. Prophet Jeremiah says in chapter 18, verse 6, "*O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?*" declares the LORD. "*Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.*"

Through the breaking/remaking process, God promises to give us a new heart. In **Psalms 51**, God is pleased to accept our broken, contrite and pure heart that hates sin.

Most of us may not have experienced brokenness like Theresa had, but through our close walk with the Lord, we are being humbled and yielded as our pride, self-will, stubbornness and sinful habits are slowly broken.

In **Matthew 25**, we are taught to reach out to the least, the last and the lost as the judgement that occurs after Christ's return to earth will be based on our outward works of love and kindness to these people.

To those of us who are inspired and touched by Theresa's life-story, may we ponder on God's mission to the least, the last and the lost and live out God's purpose for us.

MSF Activities

By Anne Wong and Patrick Chen

7th June 2016 – Worship And Birthday Celebrations

Attendance: 50

The worship leader led in the singing of hymns and prayer, followed by an invitation to the birthday boys and girls to cut the birthday cake. Members sang "Happy Birthday", followed by a sing-along session of songs of yesteryears.

14th June 2016 – Visitation

Our visiting team, Peggy Yeo, Doris Lee, Betty Lee, Patrick Chang and Loh Yoon Heng, visited Daniel Lee Hock Hai at his home in Jalan 17/42, Petaling Jaya and Sun Sau Lin at the White Dove Retirement Home, Petaling Jaya.

16th June 2016 - Parents' Day Lunch

Parents' Day Lunch was held at the Dragon Star Restaurant in Kampong Tunku, Petaling Jaya. A total of 16 tables @ RM400/table was sold.



21st June 2016 – Worship

Attendance: 43

Worship Leader: Sheila Vadiveloo

Speaker: Terence Phuah

Topic: New Tribes Mission

Paul Fleming, Bob Williams and Cecil Dye, the Founders of New Tribes Mission (NTM), made this pledge "We hereby pledge ourselves to... reaching the unevangelised tribes in our generation" on 1st August 1942. Since then, this non-denominational mission organisation has grown to include aviation mission. They are now working among the tribes in Indonesia and the Filipino migrants in Sabah. They also focus on church planting in Papua New Guinea. They seek local churches to partner them in this mission of reaching the unevangelised to fulfill God's Great Commission. Local churches who wish to partner can form teams to go on mission trips or support financially the work of NTM. At the end of the talk, we passed the hat around and collected a sum of RM700 for NTM.

5th July 2016 – Worship And Birthday Celebrations

Attendance: 59

Sheila Vadiveloo started with an opening prayer, followed by the singing of hymns. Herman Tan gave a testimony of God's grace and blessings on his family. Vera Chen reminded the members to be punctual on 30th July (1 Day Tour) as the bus would leave TMC PJ at 7.30 am sharp. Datin Ng Sook Ming told members that the LCEC had given MSF the task of organising the Church Anniversary lunch on 28th August 2016 at a cost of RM100/pax. Sheila Vadiveloo also informed members that the Sit-Down Exercise every Monday is an on-going activity and the regular attendance has been around 28 persons.

19th July 2016 – Worship

Attendance: 40

Worship Leader: Sheila Vadiveloo

Speaker: Pastor S. Selvaraj

Topic: The Power of Love Vs the Love of Power

1. People Focus

Self- Focus

2. Call to serve one another

Self-Alleviation



The Rev. Buell presented a token of appreciation to Pastor Selvaraj

30th July 2016 – 1 Day Tour

Forty-two members left TMC PJ at 7.30 am with a local tour guide. We went to Serendah, visited the Kanching nine waterfalls, the seven famous wells (legend has it that the wells were frequented by seven princesses from the invisible world but the fact is that they were built by the British to mitigate floods), the natural hot spring near Kuala Kubu Baru. We had a good lunch at Fu Man Restaurant in Tanjong Malim and a delicious dinner at Restaurant Triple Round in Bandar Bukit Beruntung.



Some members climbed the lowest waterfall.



Visited a natural hot spring near Kuala Kubu Baru

connect | CHURCH ACTIVITY

Visited the World of Phalaenopsis, the largest Orchid Garden in Malaysia



Lily Kam choosing an orchid plant



Members resting at the coffee corner



Shirley Yee taking photos



Doris Lee



Lizzie Ponnappalam



Lee Hong Lean at the seven Wells

2nd August 2016 - Worship & Birthday Celebrations

Attendance: 56

Worship Leader: Patrick Chen

Chew Paik Yeng led in the singing of oldies. Datin Ng Sook Ming informed members that TRAC has plans to publish a book on testimonies. She volunteered to help members write their testimonies if they related their stories to her.



Birthday boys and girls



Patrick Chen presenting a gift to a guest

16th August 2016 - Worship

Attendance: 50

Leader : Sheila Vadiveloo
Speaker : Mary Eashaw-John
Topic : Aging Gracefully with A Well Nourished Body

Mary Eashaw-John is the Senior Manager, Dietetics & Food Services, Institut Jantung Negara KL. She spoke about having a healthy diet of fresh fruits, vegetables of various colours and meat. She also advised us to make a conscious choice of not getting stressed up over things. While it is important to undergo physical check-ups for our physical health, a spiritual check-up is key to our spiritual health.



Datin Ng Sook Ming presented a MSF towel and 'Ang Pow' as token of appreciation

23rd August 2016 - Visitation

The MSF Social Concern's team consisting of Patrick Chang, Lee Hong Lean, Betty Lee, Doris Lee, Peggy Yeo, Yoon Heng and Alex visited Leong Yut Sim at the Elder Care Nursing Home and Wesley Home, located off Old Klang Road.

29th August 2016 - Sit Down Exercises

Led by Sheila Vadiveloo, a total of 28 members participated in this activity.



30th August 2016 - Health Talk

The first talk was on how poor air quality affects our health. Due to extensive industrialisation, the air that we breathe is heavily polluted with positive ions. These positive ions have affected our immunity to diseases and recovery from sicknesses. To address this, the negative ion therapy and ion-converter can change the positive ions in the air into negative ions, thus allowing us to breathe in better quality air.

The second talk was on stress and its related issues, such as the type of stress and its causes. Stress can be overcome through the natural way, such as exercise. Those who live a stressful life and cannot overcome it the natural way may obtain relief from a herbal supplement called Zembrin, a fast acting, non-drowsy formula which helps relieve stress.

All 63 participants were also given basic health screening. Each participant was also given a door gift. Tea and lunch were served, with compliments of the sponsors of the event.



Listening attentively

Full attention



Health check

Health check too?

Walk Through The New Testament

***Report of Seminar conducted by the Rev. Yong Wai Yin
on 22nd and 23rd July 2016***

On the heels of the 'Walk through the Old Testament' seminar conducted by the Rev. Dr Anthony Loke in February 2016, TMC PJ invited the Rev. Yong Wai Yin to conduct a seminar entitled 'Walk through the New Testament'. The seminar began with prayer and worship. The Christian Education Chairperson, Grace Choong, introduced the speaker and the seminar was on its way.

The Rev. Yong took the participants on a journey through the background of the Old Testament (O.T.). It was encouraging to note that almost all could recall what they had learnt in the previous seminar.

Historical and political background of the bible - God's story

The New Testament (N.T.) is a continuation and the fulfillment of the O.T. Adam and Eve fell in the garden and were put out. God's love and compassion, however, followed them. Despite this, their descendants continued to fail until God decided to start again with Abraham. While there were some good kings (like David), others mostly encountered failure. When the time was right, God sent Jesus.

Israel was a chosen nation, to be a holy nation to lead the world. While they persistently failed, the neighboring nations grew in power and influence. Israel fell to the Assyrians and this was followed by the fall of Judah. The elite were taken into exile whilst the remaining were left behind and had to intermingle with the outsiders who were brought in to occupy their land. This was to become a sore point later when the exiled were allowed to return. It was King Cyrus who issued a decree (Ezra 6:3) and the exiles returned to rebuild their Temple. Being economically weak and dependent on Persia politically, the Temple was also not as grand as the original. To add to their misery, they suffered an identity crisis seeing their land occupied.

This was followed by a period which saw the spread and influence of the Greek Empire and the Hellenistic period (330-66BC), Alexander (the Great) was the leader of the Greeks and his Empire extended from Egypt to India. When he died, his empire was divided into four parcels amongst his generals,

Intense persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 BC) took place. Circumcision, Sabbath and Jewish traditions were no longer practiced. His evil went so far as to sacrifice a pig on the Altar. This precipitated in the Maccabean Revolt. The revolt succeeded in getting back the Temple and after cleansing, the Hanukkah was celebrated.

History at this juncture would not be complete without the mention of Herod the Great (37-4BC). Although an able ruler, he was extremely insecure and a jealous person. He even went to the extent of killing his Jewish wife and two sons. No wonder he ordered the killing of the children in Jesus' childhood days.

Then came the Jewish wars against Rome and this resulted in the fall of Jerusalem (66-70AD) fulfilling Jesus' prophecy in Mark 18. The Temple was destroyed and this resulted in the rise of the Pharisee, Pharisaic practice and the importance of the Pharisees in temple worship (synagogue). Around 132-135AD Simon Barkochba led a Jewish rebellion and managed in capturing a number of towns but in the end Jerusalem was destroyed (only the 'wailing wall' was left).

The Romans rose in power around 63BC – 132AD. And it was at this time that the Lord Jesus walked on earth.

Hellenistic - Roman influence

Augusta Caesar (27BC-14AD) established a period of peace (Pax Romana). This was a period of stability and economic prosperity. Communication was improved and this helped the spread of Christianity and the Gospel. Greek culture and its society also flourished bringing with it its theatres, athletics, Roman circuses etc.

The local belief (and the Romans too) was centered on keeping their gods and idols appeased after which they would be free to do as they pleased. Their beliefs included idol-worship, mystery religions, fate, astrology and gnosticism. Greek philosophers of the day included Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

Judaism in the 1st century

What about Judaism in the 1st Century? Basically, Palestinian Judaism revolved around the Temple while the Diasporic Judaism centered on the Torah and the Law. The various strains of thought was on Apocalypticism and Messianism.

The Jews enjoyed a preferential position of being exempted from military service. They were not required to take the oath declaring that Caesar is god. The Jews' practice of praying for the Emperor saw to this privilege.

The main sects/parties in the N.T. included:

- a) The Pharisees (the Pious ones) - they were looked up to by the people especially after the destruction of their Temple. They emphasised the Torah and observed the Jewish traditions. Jesus had much in common with the Pharisees and this played an important part when He stood against them;
- b) The Sadducees - they were the wealthy priestly class and some probably paid for their appointment. They accepted only the Pentateuch and did not believe in the Resurrection;
- c) The Essenes - they were more of a sect with strict lifestyle practices. They practiced celibacy and moved to the deserts in search of peace and quiet. They also had to undergo extended periods of training;
- d) The zealots - they were a militant group and acted more like a political party;
- e) The Herodians - they were also more like a political party;
- f) Samaritans - There was traditional hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans; and
- g) The common folks.

The first belief is monotheism - In the post exilic period The SHEMA and the Holiness of God's name was such that it was not possible even to pronounce God's name.

God's Law and the Torah

These were meant for teaching and instruction with emphasis on hearing and to remember and respond to God's gracious act of redemption. The rescue from Egypt was an act of grace from God. When the Temple came to an end the synagogue became the centre of worship with festivals and daily devotions to remember God acting in their history.

The Gospel and Acts - God's Word

Scripture in the early church was the Hebrew Bible. This was arranged in three groups: the TORAH, PROPHETS and THE WRITINGS (like Psalms, Job etc.) and later came the letters of the Apostles.

The N.T. presents a record of the teachings of Jesus and also letters to deal with matters in the churches. Letter writing was necessary as the Apostles were not always present to handle affairs. This brought about the letters also known as "occasional writings". Written mostly on papyrus scrolls (codices), wooden tablets (waxed), and even on potsherds. Certain books were considered authoritative and despite the occasional variants, the basic message was not altered.

The presence of external forces caused the church to formally recognise certain texts as inspired authority or canon. In AD 367 the Church Council managed to put together the canons of the N.T. ("canon" actually means a measuring reed). The following texts were followed in recognition of their inspiration:

- a. Apostolic authority (except for Luke and Mark who were not in the original 12);
- b. Rule of faith - they follow the apostolic teachings and tradition; and
- c. Long periods of usage.

Good News for all

The Gospel is "good news and glad tidings". The four Gospels in the N.T. give a better view of Christ, each with its own genre and style of presentation. Of these, MARK was the earliest to be written, but MATTHEW was placed first as it forms the link and bridge between the Gospels. (Even the O.T. had use of the 'Gospel' in announcing God's coming: Is 40:9, 52:7, 61:1, Nahum 1:15).

To the Jews this good news was the coming of God to reign once more but to the Greeks, the "good news" was the reign of Augustus Caesar. He took on the title "Caesar" and thus when the Jews proclaimed that Jesus is Lord and King it was considered subversive.

Unique features of the N.T. Evangelists MATTHEW

Generally thought to be written to the Jews, it centers on "who is Jesus?" Matthew is very inclusive and in his Gospel were women (Ruth, Rahab, the Canaanite woman), and the Gentiles. This presented the universality of the Gospel and of the Royal Messiah. Matthew's key themes were the Kingdom of Heaven,

Discipleship, the Law and Righteousness. The Sermon on the Mount presented a unique feature of Jesus' teachings. Matthew also included the miracles and the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. He used a narrative form, both short and covering the bare facts. Another feature of Matthew was his presentation of the birth narrative from Joseph's view and also the Great Commission.

JOHN

The key themes in John's Gospel is salvation, the signs or "hours", and the coming of the Holy Spirit (Paraclete). That the Word has been made flesh was revealed through the Messiah. He emphasised Jesus' teaching of light and darkness and followers were encouraged to abide and remain in the light. Jesus' identity and work was also revealed by the "I AM" sayings. John was so intimate with Jesus that one is really unsure if the verses in JOHN 3:16-17 were the words of Jesus or John's. They seem to flow so seamlessly in the text.

The Gospel of JOHN is structured in five sections (prologue, book of signs, transition from "signs" to "hours", book of the "hour" JOHN 13:1-20:31 and the EPILOGUE JOHN 21:1-13). John's account is mostly based on his being an eye-witness.

LUKE

Written in Greco-Roman style and with good grammar, Luke's Gospel was grounded on historical events and culminated with Jesus' ascension. Although he was the only Gentile writer, his writings formed 20 per cent of the N.T. The key themes are the Holy Spirit, salvation for all, that God came also for the marginalised and God's plans for eternal life. It is inclusive and the only Gospel with the story of the Samaritan. Following the writing style of Mark, his orderly and accurate style was such that the truth was made known easily. The pivot point in Luke is the Transfiguration (Luke 9: 28-35).

MARK

Mark tells of Jesus being the suffering servant or servant king and his key themes being the Kingdom of God and the cost of discipleship. His style also gives a sense of rapid movement and the use of the "sandwich" technique to emphasise the point he wished to make. The pivot in Mark is in Peter's declaration that Jesus was the Messiah (Mark 8:29).

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES (by Luke)

The Holy Spirit began its public work in ACTS (Acts 1:8) and this sets the programme that "you will be my witnesses....". Luke was a physician (Col 4:14) and had joined the team from Chapter 16 onwards (the use of "we"). ACTS 1 & 2 forms the bridge between the Gospel of Luke and the rest of ACTS. The first 12 chapters centered on Peter and Jerusalem, while from Chapter 13 onwards, it was about Paul and the spread of Christianity to Turkey, Greece and Rome. Therefore ACTS is basically about the spread of Christianity.

Paul and his letters

Letter writing was used in all aspects of daily life. Delivery was a different matter as the "pony express" then was only for official and royal use. The use of scribes and secretaries was common then. A typical letter in the 1st century consists of three parts:

- a. The opening with the sender and recipient mentioned. This is usually coupled with greetings and thanksgiving;
- b. the body of the letter; and
- c. the closing.

Letters in the N.T. were written to foster belief and practice. It is only when belief enters the heart would life be changed. Amongst the letters found in the N.T. were individual letters (sender to recipient), circulars, apocalyptic and those written for specific purposes.

Paul, a Roman and a Pharisee, was well versed with the Scriptures and Jewish traditions. He knew that God will send a Messiah, that Jesus defeated and removed the curse and that God's kingdom was already in their midst. He took his commission wherever he went. More often than not when he was not on his mission trips, he was in prison. Taking every opportunity to evangelise Paul was also a prolific writer. He had been credited with having written a total of 13 letters although only seven have been confirmed i.e. Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. In his writings, he began with theology and beliefs and then proceeded to practical matters.

ROMANS

This is the longest letter and was written even before Paul met the Romans. His themes were on God's grace and that God had sent his Son to put things right. The climax of this letter is found in Romans 8:38-39.

A summary of Paul's other letters are as follows:

- 1 CORINTHIANS – a church beset with problems and disunity.
- 2 CORINTHIANS – the presence of “super apostles” (false teachers).
- GALATIANS – freedom in Christ but to remember not all things are beneficial.
- EPHESIANS – the body of Christ and that God has equipped us to deal with problems.
- PHILIPPIANS – written as a letter to friends, a happy and joyful letter.
- PHILEMON – a personal letter to ask Philemon to receive his runaway slave, Philemon, as a brother in Christ.
- 1 TIMOTHY – a pastoral letter to encourage pastors and on how to appoint leaders.
- 2 TIMOTHY – to encourage Timothy to keep the faith even in the midst of false teachers.
- TITUS – warning of false teachers and to ensure right teaching.

The general letters – how now shall we live?

HEBREWS

This was written in the form of a sermon with a lot of Scripture quoted from the Psalms. The main theme is that Jesus is superior (even to angels and Moses), that we need to listen to Jesus, to hold on to our faith and also to encourage the Christians not to go back to Judaism.

JAMES (not a brother of John but a brother of Jesus). This is a very practical book on how we do things based on faith and trust in the Lord. His teachings include perseverance in trials and to even consider these trials with joy. It is interesting to note that James did not believe in Jesus until after the resurrection.

1 PETER

This was written to the diaspora Jews who were living amongst people hostile to them. The main theme was holiness and that Christians are a chosen people, a royal priesthood and part of a holy nation and that they should hold on in the face of persecution,

2 PETER

The main theme here is the “Day of the Lord”. We are now living in the ‘in between times’ and whilst awaiting the “Day of the Lord” our lives should be growing more Christ-like.

1, 2 and 3 JOHN

The main theme is “God is Love” and that we love because he first loved us. We are not to love the ways of the world but to love one another as God's children, to keep the faith and not to be led astray.

JUDE (another brother of Jesus)

To remind us of the “Day of the Lord” and judgement and to persevere and not go after those who scoff us.

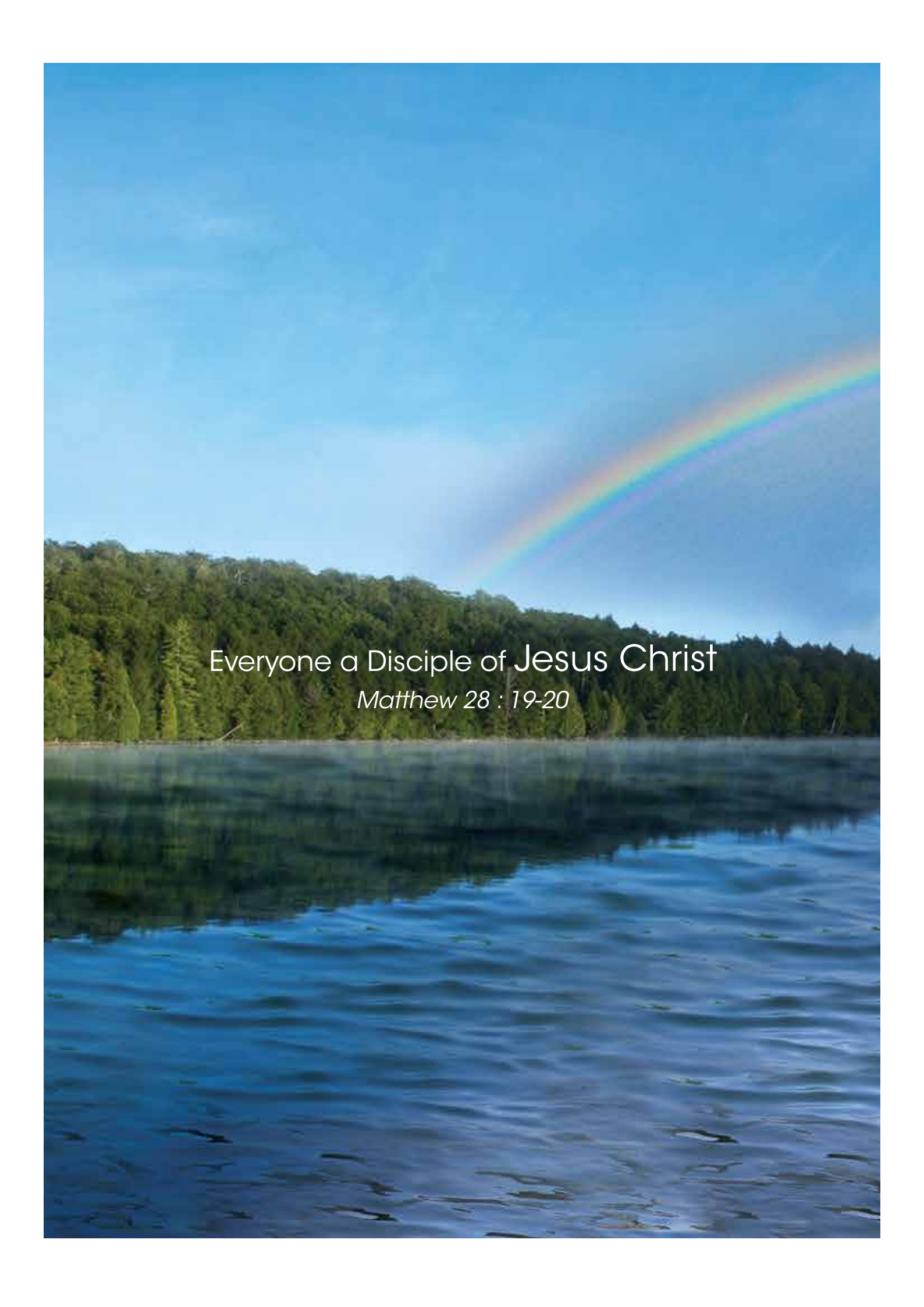
Revelation – take heart, God wins.

Revelation takes on the form of and is more like the O.T., DANIEL and EZEKIEL. Written during the time of persecution (probably by Nero) as an encouragement to the Christians. It contains a lot of imagery and symbolism and also views things from a cosmic view point. The apocalypse and the end-times are revealed. It was addressed to the seven churches.

To study REVELATION one must not take the book literally but to understand the background, context, the purpose and the intended audience. Various approaches have been used in the study of this book and these include:

- a. the idealists - believe that the books indicate timeless truths, but denying any future meaning.
- b. the historicist - tried to map out the events (not a good approach though).
- c. preterists - also historical but taken from the writer's perspective.
- d. futurists - that some prophecies have not been fulfilled.
- e. Some have mixed views.
(Understanding of “rapture” appeared only about 200 years ago and is popular in the USA)

It is important to approach the study of REVELATIONS with correct interpretations. This calls for a personal relationship with God. So what then does REVELATION mean to the first readers? That it was written to the persecuted Christians, the complacent and the spiritually anemic. The call is to remember that what really matters in life and ultimately is that God is sovereignly majestic as well as sovereign in our troubles.



Everyone a Disciple of Jesus Christ
Matthew 28 : 19-20