

# The Vine

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Praise be to God who loved us and gave His Son to die for us on the cross. The front page of the Straits Times on June 9<sup>th</sup> 2001, has the chilling report and photos of how a Japanese man intruded into a Primary school in Osaka, and in a frenzy slashed 8 children to death and wounded several other people. When I read this report I was stunned and grief stricken for the children. Can you imagine the horror they went through?



Put me to death, says school slashe

**OSAKA** A Japanese man who slashed eight children to death and wounded several other people at a primary school in Osaka on Monday, said he wanted to die.

The man, who was identified as a 40-year-old teacher, was arrested after the attack. He was charged with multiple counts of murder and attempted murder.

The incident occurred at a primary school in Osaka. The man, who was a teacher at the school, entered the school grounds and began slashing children with a knife. The attack resulted in the deaths of eight children and injuries to several others.

The man was taken to a hospital where he was treated for his wounds. He later made a statement in which he said he wanted to die. He said he was suffering from mental health issues and that he had been struggling for some time.

The incident has shocked the community and raised questions about mental health care and school safety. The school has been closed for several days, and the man's identity has been kept confidential.

## AUG 4

Not the National Day but on this day we will witness Singapore and Indonesia unite and become one when our Pastor Michael Christian and Ms. Sintha Simbolon tie the knot in our church.

After 40 over years of freedom, our dear pastor has finally decided to live in the bond of love.

We all wish you God's blessings upon your lives together.

On sobering, I began - I believe as many other people did - to wonder why such a tragic event took place. Why did this man become so cruel? Has he no more feelings? What made him do this?. On the surface to preserve our own sanity we offer an immediate response to say that this man is mentally unsound. Okay, it is a reasonable reply. But why did he become mentally unsound? Is it just circumstances, problems in life, poor health or genetic factors. Besides all these, can I suggest this: he lacked something. He probably lacked something called love. He probably felt unloved, and thought that no one cared whether he die or

live, and in turn he became depressed and wanted to end his own life. He was too afraid to kill himself and wanted others to kill him. But his mean towards this end resulted in this stupendous horror story.

There are others such stories that I remembered. In USA there was a depressed young mother Susan Smith 23, who strapped her two lovely young children Michael 3, and Alexander 14 months, in the back seat of her car and drove it intentionally into a lake drowning them while she swam to safety. Can you imagine the terrified screams and horror etched on the faces of her children when they were drowning and seeing their mother deserting them when they needed her most? I saw on an Internet website photos of the children and a memorial in their memory built by the lake's side. Some people still visit this memorial by the lake to ponder and reflect on this almost insane incident trying to reconcile what happened there.

Coming from atheist Bertrand Russell, for once, is a comment that Christians can say an amen to. Noting the complexities of this world and its most urgent need, Russell said "The root of the matter is a very simple and old-fashioned thing, a thing so simple that I am almost shamed to mention it, for the fear of the derisive smile with which the cynics will greet my words. The thing I mean – please forgive me for mentioning it – is love, Christian love, or compassion." Interesting indeed. Even an atheist believe love is important.

However the apostle John comforted us by reminding us that love was the basis why God sent Jesus Christ to save the world with this words, "For God so **loved** the world that He sent His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but has eternal life." John 3:16. In another occasion, the Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians that the key ingredient in building spiritual health in their church and in their individual lives is love. 1 Corinthians 13 is the famous passage on Christian love composed with great literary and rhythmic beauty. It is perhaps among the greatest, strongest and deepest thing Paul ever wrote.

1. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.
2. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.
3. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.
4. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.
5. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.
6. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Essentially Paul in this great passage of scripture is trying to convince Christians of the following

- **Love is essential – for all people and for all purposes and for all situations** vv 1-3
  1. Gifts/talents/capability/endowments are valuable but must be exercised in love for without love they are nothing
  2. Sacrifices that do not flow out of love is empty
    - Try to impress others
    - Done out of convenience
    - Done to earn points with God
- **Love can be lived out – not just a feeling or notion.** He described the characteristics of love that should be manifested in the Corinthians' church life vv 4-8. Divisions have plagued the church in Corinth. Paul admonished the Christians to be:
  1. Be patient and kind toward those who are on the other side.
  2. Those who lack certain charismatic gifts should not envy those who have them
  3. Those who have gifts should not be boastful and proud
  4. Paul describes a person who loves – he is not rude, not self-seeking and is not easily angered. He keeps no record of wrongs. He gives them the benefit of doubt. If they do things that upsets him rather than getting angry, he try to figure out why they did what they did. Yes, there will always be people who say or do things that really do hurt. Paul says that if he really love those people, he will not keep track of them. He does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. True love does not find pleasure in the misfortune of a friend or others he supposedly love. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. A loving person is not blind to the fault of others, but he never forgets that by God's grace people can change. When we love people we do not easily give up on them.
- **Love is valuable - it is enduring and the most excellent way** vv 8,13

A Peanut cartoon shows Lucy standing with her arms folded and a stern expression on her face. Charlie brown pleads, " Lucy, you must be more loving.

This world really needs love. You have to let yourself love to make this world a better place." Lucy angrily turned around and knocked Charlie Brown to the ground. She screams at him saying, "Look, Blockhead, the world I love. It is the people I cannot stand." How often we felt the same as Lucy. But is it right is another matter. According to Bible's analysis it is not right. As Christians we know by heart 1 John 4:11, "since God loved us, we ought to love one another." Easier said than done? But how:

1. We need to love those who are close to us – our spouse, our children, our parents, relatives and friend. If we cannot demonstrate love to those close to us, how can we do so in other relationships.
2. We need to love those who are different from us – different races, different income and status, different gifts and abilities, different age and backgrounds.
3. We need to love those who disagree with us – politically, theologically – NIV vs KJV, ideologically. Francis Shaefter once said, "If division must come, if we must for whatever reason separate from a Christian brother or sister, there should better be tears in our eyes." Christians with whom we disagree are never our enemies. They are still family members.
4. We need to love those who irritates us - make us mad, those whom we have personality conflicts with, those who we think are stupid etc. Do not allow the sins and imperfections of others to try to excuse our own lousy attitude towards them. Let us remember the words of Jesus, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." John 8: 7.

What can we do about our unloving attitude towards other people:

- We need to confess that sin to the Lord.
- Stop making excuses for not being loving
- Focus on the love of God for you in Christ, which is unconditional.
- Identify specific people that you find hard to love and pray for them
- Even when you had a bad attitude toward someone, treat them in a loving way. That may seem not really love, but our feelings often follow our actions.
- Pray and ask God to help you change your attitude.

Of course we recognize that loving others is never an easy thing to do. Many times we can get burned if we try to love. But may the Bible and the Holy Spirit persuade, exhort and convince us that

3. Love is essential – in all situations and for all purposes and for all purpose

4. Love can be lived out – not just a feeling or notion
5. Love is valuable – it is enduring and the most excellent

*Pastor Martin Yee*

## ANCESTRAL VENERATION - A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Ancestral veneration - is it respect or worshipping our ancestors? Veneration is defined as "to revere" - i.e. to care or respect. It embodies the concept of regarding as sacred. Thus there is a thin line separating respect and that of worship.

Christians are often faced with this dilemma of discerning which aspects in ancestral veneration is that of showing respect and which involves worship. Christians in times of bereavement in one's family or even when attending a funeral or wake of a non-Christian Chinese often wonder what they may or may not do or participate in without compromising their faith.

Many of the Chinese beliefs and practices have their roots and influence in Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and Shernism.

### Confucian Influence

One of the principal teachings of Confucius is that of filial piety. Key

thoughts include physical and spiritual obligations which one has to fulfil in catering to the physical needs of our parents, care for our bodies which is a legacy from our ancestors, and bearing of children to provide for the continuity of our family.

Our spiritual obligations include obedience to our parents (even after their death), remembrance of our deceased parents through offerings of sacrifices, and winning of success and honour to bring glory to the family name.

The fifth of the Ten Commandments teaches us to honour our father and mother (Ex 20:12). Christians have no difficulty in accepting the physical obligations and of being filial. However the spiritual obligation of offering sacrifices must not be practised due to its connotation with worship. As Christians we worship only our Lord Jesus Christ. The winning of success and honour for the family is acceptable, so long as we do not compromise our faith through



JCC Calendar of Activities for next half of 2001.	Jul-01	Aug-01	Sep-01	Oct-01	Nov-01	Dec-01
	Mission Month	Community Penetration	Seminar 1 Sep		Kids' Church Camp 17-19 Nov	Youth Camp 4-7 Dec
	KJV vs NIV Talk 29 Jul	Pastor Michael's Wedding 4 Aug				Nias Mission Trip

cheating, theft or other unethical means.

Obedience to the deceased may involve communicating with the dead to seek instructions and obedience to the teachings and lessons before the deceased passed away. The former is forbidden by Scripture (Deut 18: 10 - 12) but the latter is acceptable provided it does not contravene God's word.

### Buddhist Influence

The introduction of Buddhism to China from India in 1 AD has resulted in some of its concepts and beliefs being accepted as part of the practice in ancestral veneration. These include reincarnation - that through one's accumulation of good deeds, these merits can be transferred to our next life, enabling us to be born into the world as a better being. These concepts are based on the Buddhist beliefs that salvation is attained by self-effort and self-conquest.

Reincarnation is incompatible with the Christian belief of resurrection and salvation by grace through faith and not of works. The concepts of reincarnation are to be totally rejected. Christ has secured salvation for us through His death on the Cross. The price is paid and we are redeemed. We do not need to use works to attain salvation. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. None may come to the Father except through Him (Jn 14:6)

### Taoist Influence

Taoism, which has its origin in China, began as a philosophical school of thought by Lao Tze and Chuang Tze. One of the central beliefs in Taoism is that the entire cosmos is one organic whole (the Tao) revolving around the principle of bi-polarity (Ying & Yang). Ying and Yang refer to the 2 opposing forces which are positive (for maleness) or negative (for femaleness). Harmony based on balancing these two factors must be maintained at all times - at the individual level, in all aspects of our social life and in the entire cosmos. This is to ensure that all

creation may continue to live and function properly. Death is a disruption to this balance in the cosmos. This balance can only be restored by the performance of certain death rituals by the Taoist priests.

Christians believe that all things are created by God who is sovereign over all creation. Belief in the Tao is contrary to Scripture. To believe in the Tao is to deny the individual responsibility for sin as we are a part of an entity which holds things in harmony. It is against Scripture to say that the harmony can be restored by human rituals.

### Shennism

According to Shennism, the involvement of a person does not end with death. Death is only a transition. Ancestors are believed to provide economic, emotional and social security to the family with continued relationship and interdependence between the living and the dead.

Shennism holds that both 'shen' and 'kui' are spirits of the dead controlling all human activity and fortune. "Kui" are the spirits of the dead who have not been properly taken care of - i.e. proper rites not performed. They roam the world causing trouble and destruction to satisfy their needs.

Scripture does not teach of the interference of the departed in the lives

of the living. The spirits of the dead are not left to roam the earth but are taken into Paradise awaiting Christ's return.

Though Scripture teaches of the existence of spirit and of evil spirits, it advocates that we need not fear them or fear that they have control over us. All authority in Heaven and on earth belongs to our Lord God Almighty (Phil 21:10). Scripture declares Christ's authority over evil spirits (Matt 10:1).

### The 'Ying' World

One common Chinese belief is in the 'Ying' World where the dead resides. The dead are anthropomorphic i.e. human-like in nature and continue to have human needs of food, clothes, money, housing, entertainment and transport.

Biblical description of the new heaven and the new earth is completely contrary to that purported in the 'Ying' world. Though no full description is given of the lifestyle of the resurrected believers, they shall be worshipping and serving God (Rev 18: 1 - 7)

Christians need not fear attacks of any spirits (Lk 10: 18 - 20), and can trust in the Lord's providence.

Many forms of religions are practised by the Chinese. Notably, these beliefs are syncretic (unifying of various schools of thought or belief systems). These religious beliefs manifest

## Befrienders' Welcome Party 2001

The welcome party held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June was an enjoyable time of getting to know those who are rather new to our church.

During this time of fellowship, Pastor Yee welcomed everyone with a short message. Bro. Wong Mui (English Council Vice-Chairman) also extended his warm welcome to all and talked about the various ministries in our church in which the newcomers to JCC can be involved to help edify one another and to give glory to God.

After the messages, we had a time of worship and games. One of the games included questions which helped us to get to know one another a little better. The dinner fellowship provided another opportunity for us to talk and share, and get to know one another even more. I sincerely hope that the fellowship between the newcomers and the 'old-timers' in JCC will continue beyond the welcome party.

Personally for me, after church service, I find myself busy with the responsibilities of the ministries and miss out on the more important aspect of welcoming those whom God has brought to our midst. Jesus himself saw the needs of those who were strangers or even "outcasts" in the community and he took the time to love and minister to their needs. Let us always make the effort to extend our love and care to those who are new in the JCC community.

I believe that God has entrusted the Befrienders' ministry to every one of us, to care and love His people. Let us each individually pray to be involved in this ministry as well.

*Sav Pei'en*

### THE ATTENDANCE

Expected turnout: about 60

Actual turnout: 53 including 6 children

Age range: From Sunday School age to Senior Citizen.

Races & Nationalities: Diverse

Scheduled Duration: From 5.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.

Though scheduled to end at 7.30pm, many stayed on until 8.00pm as the atmosphere was warm and conducive for fellowship and interaction.

Thank the Lord for blessing our work in this area!

themselves in various religious practices including ancestor veneration. Having a grasp of the basis of such beliefs and knowing the Word of God would help us discern and take an appropriate stance. In all, we seek to glorify God and edify others; our witness, sensitivity and tactfulness in living out our Christian faith enable us to form common bases of communication with family members and friends. As we seek to honour God, the Lord will enable us to be faithful and non-compromising and yet not cause offence to others.

*Tan Swee Leong*

*Note: This is the first of a two-part series. The second part will deal with the practices associated with ancestral veneration.*

was a time of reflection, sharing, farewell speeches and even passing of the baton.

Bro Ronnie shared some of his experiences and visions about JCC. He also shared how he first visited Shanghai during a business trip a few years ago. In the wintry evening, he ventured into The Bund and was overwhelmed by the sight and raised his hands to praise God. He even said something like if it was God's will, he



will return to Shanghai some day. To his shock, he was posted there for the next 3 years or so. In his indomitable style, he told us the moral of the story: Don't Pray, Pray!

In Shanghai, he will be living near the factory and when Nancy goes over in November, after the children's examinations, they will stay in the city. During a recce trip, they have visited a church and they feel comfortable with it.

May the Lord watch over their comings and goings even as they go forth in faith and great expectations.

### FAREWELL RONNIE



The English Council held a farewell dinner for Bro Ronnie Lim and family at Yunnan Garden restaurant in IMM. It



I have banned  
HARRY POTTER  
from my house



Are you a fan of  
Maybe you are not, but how  
children? Are they mere fans  
find good interest in books by  
tales by Aesop and  
thought-inspiring science-  
are they so bewitched by the fictional kid with magic powers, created by British  
author J. K. Rowling, just as they are hooked to computer games like Dungeons  
& Dragons, keeping their eyes fixated and leaving their minds hungry for more  
of the same with little space left for other competing literary, educational or  
leisurely pursuits?

Harry Potter?  
about your young  
of Harry just as they  
Enid Bryton, fairy  
companies or other  
fiction stories? Or

In September 2000, the Vine published a cautionary email that was  
making its rounds on "The Truth About Harry Potter". It ended with this  
sentence, "We suggest you act to protect your child."

Ten months have gone by. What has been happening on the issue?  
Well, the books on Harry are still very popular. You don't have to look for  
them; they will come looking for you – your children will have no problem  
finding them in bookshops and school libraries or borrowing from friends or  
relatives; and before you realise it, you find copies of the book lying around the  
house. The books are simply everywhere. The literary prowess of author  
Rowling in producing a 'classic' with such immense attraction to young readers  
must be the envy of other commercial storywriters. If the books get youngsters  
keen about reading, and hence help in their learning of English, then it is a good  
thing. However, if all that captivate the young readers are Harry's lessons in  
practical witchcraft and what is cool about the fun and excitement of wicked  
wizardry portrayed in the books, you can be sure that the readers are not  
picking up language learning but fantasies that drive them along on a single-

track road to a land of dreams where realities no longer make sense. Harry as a non-conformist kid praised for his exploits is, after all, a very poor role model for impressionable youngsters.

Don't think much about what I have said just as I had not been very much bothered by the article in the Sept 2000 Vine advising caution about the boy called Harry? I was quite aware of my sons reading the books in the past six months to a year. I was casual about it until recently when I discovered by accident that something was not quite OK as two of them were engrossed in a conversation on an MRT train journey. It was just a brief conversation that one would simply overlook and not be bothered with, but somehow I just felt something amiss about their reading of Harry Potter although I did not really catch the precise words of their conversation. In fact, I myself have not been an avid fan of Harry. I do not understand how I actually managed to catch a whiff of something vague that stirred a warning in my mind about the need to address the Harry Potter issue. I spoke to my sons and advised them about the controversy surrounding the books. I told them that I would not encourage them reading Harry Potter. It was days later that I spoke to them again telling them my decision to ban the books in the house.

Some might think that I am overdoing things, but I am just acting according to my best understanding in the supervision of my children in their choice of reading material. If it turns out that I have erred on the side of caution, the decision is revocable; better this than an alternative liberal stance with the prospect of regrets for any harm that may be difficult or impossible to undo. My children have nothing much to lose by the ban because alternatives for learning and pleasure reading are available.



I have nothing against J. K. Rowling. I simply do not feel right about Harry's vision, his supernatural thrills and the books' persuasive and pervasive portrayal of fantasies as realism. You don't have to agree with what I have done about banning the books in my house. However, before you form your own judgement, do read what my teenage sons Benedict (15 years old) and Ian (13 years old) have to say about their personal experience of obsession with the books. → *next page*

*John Lee*

*Jan Lee writes:*

*I love to read books that are interesting. I would like to spend more of my time reading books and at the same time gaining knowledge.*

*The book I like to read most is Harry Potter. It is interesting and fascinating. It has surprising parts that could almost make me not to put my eyes away from the book, as though my eyes were glued to it. In fact, this storybook is one of the most popular storybooks I ever had.*

*People are gripped by the fascinating stories and sudden surprises. This book is liked by people, young and old alike. Whenever I had some free time, I would take out the Harry Potter book to read. I seldom read other books. It was when I found out the wrong in reading this book that I felt unhappy. Reports and the pastor have said that reading the book would have a bad influence on us. I am now not allowed to read my favourite book and have to return it to whom I borrowed it from.*

*Even without reading the Harry Potter book now, whenever I see or think of the name, I would get distracted from what I am doing and hope that I could read it. I just cannot stop thinking of how nice the story is.*

*I pray to God every night before I sleep, hoping to get rid of my liking to the Harry Potter stories. While doing that, I hope I can find other nice story books to keep me from thinking about Harry Potter*

*I think the book should not be sold as it has a bad influence on people.*

Q

Additional References: (1) Potter fans turning to witchcraft  
[http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/dynamic/news/story.html?in\\_review\\_id=306029&in\\_review\\_text\\_id=250010](http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/dynamic/news/story.html?in_review_id=306029&in_review_text_id=250010)  
(2) The Perils of Harry Potter [http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/012/34\\_113.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/012/34_113.html)  
(3) Email article in September 2000 Vine (You may check with JCC library on availability.)

## *Benedict Lee writes:*

*I just finished the set of books on Harry Potter a month ago. My initial feeling about the books was that they were quite interesting and fascinating. They really captured my attention. The plot was simple but the story truly kept me in suspense from the beginning to the end. As the story was wonderful, I soon found myself reading the books all over again. This continued until recently when I suddenly realised that I was becoming more and more interested in wizards, spells and magic. I would make believe that I was one of the characters in the story reciting a spell. Then I felt that there was some sort of pull that was drawing me closer and closer to the world of magic and wizards. I seemed to be more engrossed in the books than in spending quiet time with God. I was sort of being pulled away from God and from placing Christ as Lord of my heart. It seemed that these Harry Potter books were trying to take over the throne of my heart.*

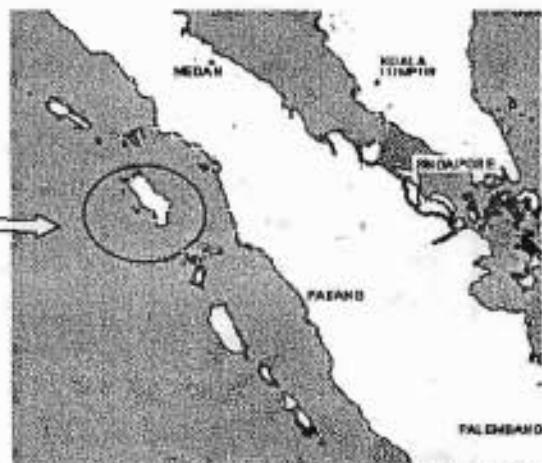
*I thought about the attractive force being an evil force trying to draw me away from the goodness of God. At this thought, I felt very frightened and other fears started flooding my mind. The first solution that came into my mind was to get rid of the books. At first, it was quite difficult to break off the habit of reading Harry. It was just like trying to get out of an addiction to smoking. However, I was quite determined to succeed.*

*Firstly, I returned the books to my friends. In addition, I constantly prayed to God asking Him to give me the energy to resist the temptation of reading Harry. After days of isolation from the books, I began to realise that I had less and less interest in the books and more time to spend on other things. I really want to thank God for His grace and mercy. Despite my straying from Him, He is forgiving and brings me back to the correct path, just like a shepherd seeking out his lost sheep. Who knows what my life would be like if I continued to be involved in dreamy thoughts of magic and wizards and God had not led me out of it? It is true that God is Almighty who triumphs over evil and is also loving and gracious.*

# Faith, Hope and Charity

## Faith, Hope and Charity

Nias Mission is all about Hopes.... It is about sharing the love of our Lord Jesus. It is about caring and sharing for the least among His people. Nias Mission is love expressed in action; giving hopes to children orphaned by the premature death of their parents, children who have lost one of their poverty-stricken parent and children from very poor families.



Nias Mission gives them hope of a brighter tomorrow by providing them with shelter, food & care and education and life-skills training. All these made possible by the grace of God through His people who care enough to adopt the children, contribute in money and in kinds.

To experience and share the joys of these poor but unspoiled children, their laughter, their songs and warm friendship, is a blessing indeed. Before the break of dawn, at 5 a.m. sharp each morning, young beautiful voices drift out in songs of praises and worship unto the Lord. Song after songs were sang from memories, each child so engaged in communion with the Lord in songs and prayers in the regular morning devotion worship. Discipline among them was conspicuous. Absent were the fidgeting, playing and talking very commonly found in most Sunday schools in our churches.

Nias island lies West of Sumatra peninsular facing the Indian Ocean. It is very hot and humid. It is about ten times the size of Singapore but with only a fraction of our population; 600,000 and of which approx. 80 + % are Christians.

The adult social workers who take care and provide mentorship to the young in their charge also participate in each morning devotion. However, they leave the children to conduct the services which include reading the Bible aloud. The enthusiasm and joy among them is contagious enough for me to want to awake each morning to see and hear them.

Immediately after the devotion service, each child automatically began his/her assigned task; fetching water for cooking and washing from down the hill, sweeping and mopping floors, keeping bedrooms tidy etc, before dressing up for school. Each child seemed happy in his/her task. I must testify that no one ever grumbled about his/her work. Breakfast is at about 7 a.m. and then it's off to school. Some of the older children have to walk 6 kilometres in the sweltering heat and dust each day to and from school.

To know and to interact with each child personally is a joy difficult to describe. It must be an empirical experience to feel that joy. Up to this day the memory of the beautiful children and their songs, high spirit and their hopes remains fresh in my mind and I pray I shall be with the next Nias Mission team again. If God so willing, my family must go with me too.



Our Lord Jesus walked the earth with His people. He was not only concerned with their spiritual salvation; He was also concerned particularly with the sick, widows, the despised and poor everywhere He went. He touched them with the love of God our Heavenly Father.

The Gospel of Salvation must go hand in glove with social gospel and cannot be divorced one from the other. Our Lord Jesus equates our treatment for the sick, distressed, destitute and the needy with our treatment of Himself. What we do for them, we do unto Him. (John 13:34,35; Rom 12:3-5) We must have the same passion and compassion of our Lord and be the Bible others can read in us. Nias Mission is a good Bible in which Christ love is seen.



May our Lord touch each one of us to support His little ones in Nias. Amen

In His love,  
Philip Fong

# Community Penetration

A presentation was made by Living Sanctuary Brethren Church on 14th July 2001 at JCC on Community Penetration. The difference between Community Penetration and other evangelistic programs were listed out as follows:



- small area
- personal contacts - door to door
- position first - preach later
- targeted praying
- wider range of community work
- total church mobilisation
- ministries created primarily for community penetration, eg tuition

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## Finding more about our Chinese heritage

I remember that as a young kid, my paternal grandmother used to bring me to church for the Hokkien service regularly while I was still staying with her. Though I belonged to that dialect group, I hardly understood what the pastor said. Even then, I knew that Jesus Christ was my Saviour and accepted His teachings.

When my maternal grandmother was still living in the 1970s, a huge altar stood in her house. I had no inkling what the idol represented, but I believed it had something to do with Buddhism. Often there were food offered to this idol on special occasions and I would abstain from the joss sticks and the food on the table. Sometimes I feared that the meals that I ate at the dining table were those that were sacrificed. But out of filial piety for my parents, uncles and aunts, I followed suit.

In 1974, my parents and I shifted to Taman Jurong. I was looked after by my neighbours while my parents worked during the day. They too had a Buddhist altar in their living room. It was a good thing they did not tell me more about their religion. However, there were times when I helped them to fold and burn paper money because I thought nothing of their significance.

Non-Christian Chinese often think that Christianity is a 'Western' religion, which is untrue. Like many others, we are sometimes ignorant and find ourselves in a dilemma when asked about our roots. In fact, many of us want to retain our Chinese heritage and continue to enjoy festivities during Lunar New Year and goodies such as rice dumplings and mooncakes.

The English library currently has four books in its collection to help church members understand the Chinese culture and heritage. *Origins of Chinese Festivals* is a fascinating illustrated guide to Chinese festivals which originated more than 5,000 years ago. In *Freedom & Consideration*, a thesis originally for a Masters degree in Singapore Bible College, looks at how Chinese Christians ought to view thorny practices concerning food offered to idols. *God's promise to the Chinese* unearths how Christianity has an influence in the creation of Chinese characters. In *True son of heaven: how Jesus fulfills the Chinese culture*, the author believes that "God's fingerprints are all over Chinese culture".

**IRWIN KAO**