

The Vine

2002

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Greetings to all the saints in Christ Jesus. Pastor Yee, together with the rest of the LCS pastors, will be in Germany for about 3 weeks in July starting from 7th. Meanwhile, I am back after last months harrowing experience with my wife's eye problem. Thank God everything is almost back to normal.

I did mention previously that I wanted to introduce you to The Vine's latest editor/writer but praise God, there are now 3 new members and I will introduce them over a period of 3 issues, starting with this issue.

Pastor Terry Kee, transiting from Thailand to Germany, visited JCC on 7th July and preached a sermon touching on the topic of worshipping God in the place He has chosen. He mentioned that having good musicians and a good speaker is a bonus but not the main reason a person comes to a church. The main reason being to worship God (praise), reconcile with Him (confession) and show Him your gratitude (offering). Later I asked him why he chose this topic and he mentioned that he felt it was a topic he wanted to talk about. On that Sunday, in our midst, we had two or more families that had not been to JCC for some time. Is the Lord speaking to them and also to us?

Indeed the Lord is working in our midst. We just have to be more sensitive to His calling. Have you lost your job? Is someone in your family sick? Are you troubled by doubts? I pray that the Lord will give us all the patience of Job and prepare us to trust Him for the eventual blessings to come. *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1:2-4)*

The Editor

Tomorrow's HOPE

27th June 2002 - The LCS Executive Council has decided to release Nias Missions from the LCS. The rationale being the different styles of leadership and management, which may cramp Pastor Michael's style.

5th July 2002 - Tomorrow's Hope was registered with the Registrar of Societies. It's president, Michael Christian.

What this means is that Nias Missions as we know it is now a separate entity from the LCS and operates under its own rules set down by Tomorrow's Hope.

Together with Bishop John Tan, we wish Tomorrow's Hope God's leading and guiding hand upon it.

Charlotte in her own words

"Rushing more speeches and press releases (I do that for a living). Cartoons and clean jokes/anecdotes - no problem, I try my best to translate some of these for use in my speakers' speeches sometimes. I work for the civil service - so there's a lot of writing and minute-taking. I don't always enjoy this part of my work. I'm definitely ok with corresponding through emails and SMS or on mobile phone. These modes work best for me. The ability to write is a gift, and helps make my PR job more palatable."

That was Charlotte in her own words. Charlotte, her husband and two sons live in one of the blocks just behind the church. She loves to write and you can find out more about her from the article inside. Do try to get to know the person behind the words.

UPDATE

The church received an e-mail from Bro. Chan Yock Meng mentioning that



his stint in China will be extended another 2 months due to project delays.

Continue to pray for God's protection and providence for our dear brother in China.



11th July 2002 - A ship carrying 24 South Koreans, 22 of whom are Campus Crusade staff and disciples, capsized en route to Mindore Beach, Philippines. Three, including staff Jeon Sang-liwa, 34, and her seven year-old daughter, O Eun-su, died in the tragedy. Two others are still missing, including staff worker Kim Jung-eon, 23. The 19 survivors are now receiving medical attention at a hospital.

Pray for God's comfort and peace upon the family members of the dead and missing. Pray too for Korea and Philippines Campus Crusade Crisis Management teams and the Korea Foreign Ministry officials, that God would grant them wisdom to know what to do during this time.



The purpose of this article is twofold - to give thanks to God for His mercy and grace as well as to share with you important lessons, which I believe He has taught me along the way.

My mother was admitted to NUH on 16 July and discharged on 19 July, 02. (We did not inform the church and relatives partly due to the suddenness of the event and partly to allow her more time to rest).

On 16 July evening, it was a typical day when I returned home from office and checked my emails on the PC. As my mother was cooking in the kitchen, and dinner was not ready, I decided to take a short nap.

To make myself more comfortable, I turned on the bedroom air-con and began to lie down on the bed. However, the moment I lay my head on the comfortable pillow, a thought came to my mind asking me in English "Why don't you ask your mother whether she need help? You are resting and she is cooking!"

The thought about asking my mother whether she needed help was unusual because she normally does not need our help in the kitchen and I seldom asked. And what's more, I did not feel like getting up from the bed at that moment.

However, I decided to ask her anyway. And that's when I discovered that she was very sick and pale-looking. She had kept the fact that she had vomited, not eaten and felt very tired since morning, from me. And she could not even stand for a few minutes or walked from one room to another, but had to lie down most of the time. Yet she forced herself to cook dinner for her loved ones. (I am grateful to her for her love for us).

After dinner, I brought her to a neighborhood doctor. (The clinic was only two HDB blocks away within the same car park, yet I needed to drive, as she was too weak to walk). The doctor immediately recommended admission to NUH for blood transfusion. He suspected internal bleeding.

Another unusual thing was that my mother, like any typical old folk, is against staying in hospital. Yet on 16 July, she has numerous thoughts to herself that day that it may be better to be admitted to a hospital for a thorough medical check-up!

Hence, when the neighborhood doctor recommended that she be admitted to NUH, she did not resist the suggestion. (Can you see how God was so gracious to prepare her mentally for admission and alerted me to the fact that she needed urgent medical attention? Praise and thank Him!)

NUH doctors gave her 3 packets of blood (3 pints) through blood transfusion and diagnosed her internal bleeding as due to two gastric ulcers.

Her condition before and after treatment in NUH were:

	<u>On Admission</u>	<u>After Treatment</u>	<u>Normal Range</u>
Haemoglobin	5.5	9+	above 11

She has not fully recovered and still requires further observation and treatment. But the root problem of internal bleeding has been arrested, thanks be to God.

Lessons that I learned

1. Be alert to God's prompting and guidance. It may save lives, our own or someone else's. Be alert to God's desire planted in us to do certain things
2. I normally mentally run through a short checklist to ascertain that it is probably from Him. Example, whether the action may glorify Him, is it Scriptural, can I tell a matured Christian without embarrassment, does he support my action, pray about it and do I have peace if I do, etc.
3. If my desire passes the above test, then it is probably from Him. The key then is to obey. Admittedly this is also a struggle for me oftentimes. But imagine the consequences if I had not obeyed this time and my mother collapsed while cooking in the kitchen!

Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land
the LORD your God is giving you.

Exodus 20:12

My Week-long Journal

by Charlotte Sam

Introduction

I have offered to write for the Vine. I owe our readers a big apology for this delay. I take a lot of pleasure in writing. Although I write for a living (well, nearly!) most of the time, I need to maintain the "political correctness" (i.e. adopting a positive but neutral stand in order not to offend others) of anything I write that would ultimately find its way into public eyes and ears. So, writing on the job is just a job (that you do to glorify God), but writing for my brothers and sisters here is for admonishment sake.

This is the week ending 28 June 2002. I have been reading about lifestyle evangelism. My sister-in-Christ, cell group buddy and a fellow colleague, Hwee Ping, has experienced lifestyle evangelism through examples set by co-workers on her recent Cambodia mission trip. This is not Hwee Ping's first mission trip, but it is one that has intensified her struggles with the Lord lately.

At this same time, I am witnessing the growth of my children in the Lord.

I will be sharing with you journal-style seemingly unrelated incidents which all point to one fact: God hears (our prayers), acts and is glorified (Daniel 3). God is always at work, but when you pray, you *allow* him to work in you for the better (even when it may seem worse for a start!).

Day 1

In the gospels, it is not uncommon to find Jesus asking men and women in need of healing whether they would believe in His healing powers. They *have* an option! Of course you may say, since they have been sick and in some cases chronically ill, there would be little risk in asking for someone to heal them, right? Not quite, if they had already been taken ill and I am sure they would have been exposed to many different "godly powers" prior to meeting Jesus, they can also opt to be sceptical with Jesus and just blame their fate.

Day 2

When he was fleeing from his son, Absalom, David says in Psalm 3:5, 6 (NIV),

"If I lie down and sleep; I awake again, because the Lord sustains me.

I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side."

Likewise in Psalm 127:1,2 (NIV):

"Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain.

Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.

In vain you rise early and stay up late,

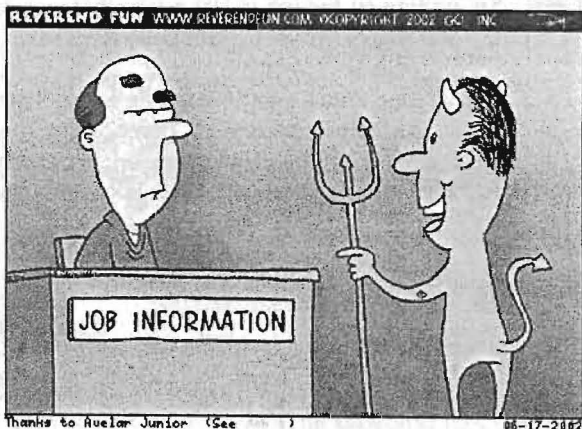
Toiling for food to eat -

For he grants sleep to those he loves."

But as for me, I know I work hard and sometimes harder than the rest, but I always stop to ask myself: How I would like to be remembered when I pass on. Abraham Lincoln once said,

"No man is poor who has a godly mother".

Well, I would like to be that and more to my 2 children.



(Source: www.reverendfun.com, this cartoon makes special reference to the OT, Job, Chapter 1)

Day 3

We were riding in the car one morning when Ryan asked, "What is a virgin? Why is Jesus' mother called virgin Mary? What is the parable of the ten virgins?" He is turning seven and I earnestly think he is not preparing to take part in "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" show. On one

hand, it was a good opportunity to provide early sex and moral education. On the other, I realised Ryan wanted to know the morale behind the parable and it did not take long for him to realise that his unbelieving father could potentially be one of the unprepared virgins. More importantly, this became a standard item in our nightly prayers.

I am glad how things have turned out for Ryan when he moved from full-day childcare to Primary One this year. The fact that his Before-After-School-Care Services Centre was just a stone's throw from his school made it easy to convince my husband to place Ryan in their daily custody. For me, it was a deliberate choice (even if the Centre had been somewhat further). Ryan has been a more avid Bible-reader ever since, and he gets his daily dosage of Bible stories and activities from the Centre. Ryan even supplements his nightly routine with his own version of Quiet Time – thanks to a stack of Bible Quiz cards that are designed to bring related topics and Bible references to reinforce God's Word to the little ones. I am glad he sees the Old Testament beyond a load of stories, but a powerful chronicle and chronology of God's strength and justice.

Day 4

I read "None of These Diseases – the Bible's Health Secrets for the 21st Century" by 2 physicians, Drs S I McMillen and D E Stern. It highlighted the fact that even in the late 1700s, the Norwegians thought that leprosy was hereditary and did not know that it could spread from one person to another through mere contact. It was not until some people got so desperate that they finally heeded their preachers before the leprosy epidemic came under control in the early 1800s.

"As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp."

Leviticus 13:46

Likewise, the strict practice of hand-washing for medical professionals was also a testimony of how modern science has rediscovered the biblical method, through Numbers 19: (the following is extracted from the book by these 2 physicians)

<u>Action</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Biblical Reference</u>
Running water:	to rinse off germs.	from the hyssop branch
Time:	to wash thoroughly.	washings repeated over 7 days and germs were killed by the sun and by drying
Antiseptic soap:	to kill germs.	hyssop contains antiseptic thymol
Vigorous scrubbing:	to dislodge germs from skin fissures.	soap contained cedar oil and wool fibres that irritate skin to encourage scrubbing

Day 5

Hwee Ping has been troubled. She has been asking God to show her a ministry where she can contribute to the needs of His flock. Nearly 6 months on and after a few Church community outreach efforts (here and in underprivileged countries), many signs pointed to a stronger calling. Problem is, she never thought this could point to full-time ministry in the potential area of mission work. What this could mean is to give up her paid job, get her Church elders' blessings and enrol in Bible College full time. We all know "Man shall not live by bread alone ..." but it is just so hard when 'man' refers to one's very own self.

Of course we know God does not call anyone and everyone to full-time ministry. Of course we know God also uses corporate citizens to fulfil His cause.

So in 1 Kings 17, how did the woman trust the prophet Elijah when he asked for the little bread and oil she had? Hwee Ping and I concluded that in those days most people lived in poverty, and what little the woman had was much relative what others had. Hence she could trust God and willingly offered what she had as a gesture of offering to God's gracious provision.

Corporate life is not always family-friendly and putting your family first requires one to take a very tough stand. As part of the career chase, more colleagues are putting off marriage or starting a family.

After nearly 3 months of late or sleepless nights, some colleagues of mine were all set to take off to China over one weekend last August. 2 days prior to the team's departure, Soma suffered a heart attack and was warded. Soma also tried to do what Nicholas Tse (son of famous Hong Kong actor, Patrick Tse Yin) recently did – left the ICU ward and headed straight to the airport. Well, except Soma did not make it to the airport (and praise God he is still alive). The rationale to these 2 men were simple: the stakes are too high – for one, the business trip is to bring 3 months' worth of hard work to fruition; for the other, a missed assignment is a breach of contract and would require hefty monetary compensation.

To me, however, they all point to misplaced priorities. Be it long hours at work, frequent business trips, and I have also seen a few who have been too busy with church activities, I would like to remind ourselves (including me) that rest is as much a part of God's creation plan as work is. Ecclesiastes 3 reinforces this too.

To many of us who are corporate citizens, the difference between them and us as Christians is being conscious of the perspective we have of our life and whether we allow ourselves to be consumed by what we have been empowered (through trust in God) to control and what we can surrender to God for control. Problem is, we are impatient and for many people, being workaholic equates greater control to shape their lives with more imminent and visible results. Little wonder so many of my colleagues identify their worth in what they are employed to do.

One evening, a colleague in his mid-twenties met me and complained of chest pains that had aggravated in the course of the day. My first question was, "Then why are you still here?!" He said he had to conduct briefings and industry sessions and his role was a "one-man show" (whose is not, anyway?), and he would go at the end of the day. I take it that even 11:59pm would still have meant "the end of the day", but the question is would he have survived then. The interesting thing to note was how his face contorted (at my usual frankness!) when I told him that the moment he is hospitalised (hypothetically speaking), his work would be redistributed among his colleagues!

*"Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take,
but by the moments that take our breath away."*

- Anon.

Hwee Ping and I are still praying that God will speak more clearly to her and where necessary, remove the barriers in her mind ... Well, at least we are consciously on the lookout for economical lunches these days, to save up for rainy days, or should I say, for her Bible College education. We have seen many examples of God's timely (Exodus 14:5-31), just (Joshua 19:9) and ample (Matthew 15:37) provisions in the Bible.

Epilogue

Tonight my 4-year old Winston prayed that God will teach him to understand the difference between what he needs and what he desires. He thanked God for the lesson on God's protection on Noah's family and the rainbow promise that God will not wipe out the earth with another flood.

Just when we think they are mere kids and always seem to be restless. No wonder Jesus equates unadulterated faith to that of the little ones.

To the dedicated team of Little Lambs' teachers at JCC – we thank God for you!

PC Technician

Two issues ago, I put up a request for members to join the worship ministry as **PC Technicians**. At that time there were just two of us and we were hoping for more hands to make light work.

However the Music Ministry has managed to get the **Projectionist** to cover the job of the PC Technician. Thanks for all your submissions, but application is now closed.



The clerk in the unemployment office was surprised by the lady next in line to apply for benefits, especially since she was wearing designer clothes and a huge diamond ring. But he had a job to do. "Occupation?" he asked.

"I toil not," the woman answered. "Neither do I spin."

Grunting in reply, the clerk wrote, "Lily of the field."

If God seems so far away - who moved?

- Sam Levenson

The Fullness of the Spirit

by Tan Swee Leong

There is a command for Christians to be filled with the Spirit. (Eph 5:18).

In the New Testament, people who were filled or full of the Holy Spirit fall into three categories:

1. Firstly it is the characteristic of every dedicated Christian.
2. Secondly there are those who are endowed for a particular ministry or office, as is the case of John the Baptist and of Saul who were set apart for ministry (Acts 9:17).
3. Finally, relates to filling for an immediate task, e.g. Zechariah before he prophesied and Stephen before he was martyred.

The gift of the Spirit received at baptism needs to be continuously and increasingly appropriated. The filling of the Spirit needs to be repeated and maintained as the Holy Spirit ceases to fill us when we grieve Him. This is exemplified by the Corinthian Christians who were baptized in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13) and enriched with spiritual gifts (1 Cor 1:4-7), yet Paul rebuked them as being unspiritual.

How do we know we are filled with the Spirit?

Some say it is evidenced by speaking in tongues. In Scripture, of all the groups that received the Holy Spirit, only three spoke in tongues at:

1. Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4);
2. Cornelius house (Acts 11:14-15) and
3. Ephesus (Acts 19:1-6)

It would be arbitrary to conclude that tongue-speaking is a normative sign of the fullness of the Spirit. After all, it is but one of the many gifts Christians are given.

John 7:37-39 recorded that Jesus cried out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive later. "Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified."

How do we experience this fullness?

Jesus said, "Let him come to me and drink." We need to come to Jesus, we need to keep on coming and to keep drinking, for we keep thirsting. This water we drink becomes "streams of living water" which flows out from within us. An examination of

the structure of the command to be filled with the Spirit in Eph 5:18 reveals that it is in the imperative and thus is obligatory and plural in form i.e., it is universal in application. The command is passive, let the Spirit fill you, yield without reserve and is a present imperative denoting continuous action. This fullness is to be continuously appropriated

As we grow in our knowledge, our faith should also grow and we should continuously appropriate more of the greatness of God's purpose and power. Two main spheres in which the fullness is manifested are worship, and in fellowship with man and God.

Though the command is given, there is a sub-normality in much of Christian living. This could be attributed to disobedience and unbelief, which robs us of our full inheritance in Christ. We have failed to enter into the fullness and do not remain filled with the Holy Spirit.

What about special experiences of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, such as the 'Pentecostal' type? There are number of possible explanations, such experiences could be demonic i.e. counterfeit, they could be psychological or they could be a genuine conversion experience.

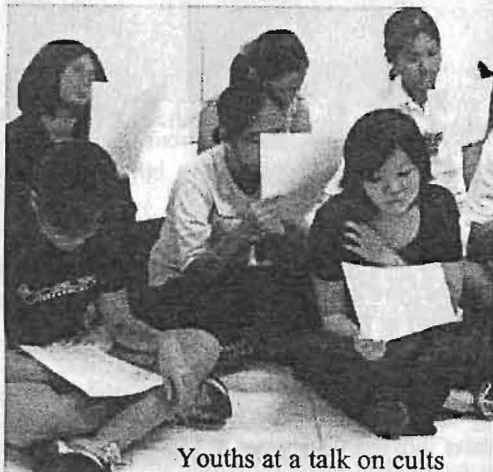
During the course of our Christian life, there could be deeper experiences of the fullness as the Holy Spirit acts in response to particular situations and needs. Whatever the experience, they are of secondary importance when compared to God's first work of grace when He reconciles us to Himself, bringing us new life, justification and adoption into God's family. However rich the experience, it is incomplete, we can never reach a point where we have arrived spiritually but should continue to hunger and seek for more of His fullness. It is noteworthy that we should not stereotype these experiences, insisting that others have similar experiences and become judgmental of those who do not. Our attitude should be joyful but not proud leading to praise and worship. The Bible exhorts that we test everything and in particular 'test the spirits'(1 Thess 5:21,) making sure that they are in accord with the Scriptures and that the fruit of the experience is beneficial to believers and edifying to the church.

Whatever our experiences, all Christian are to

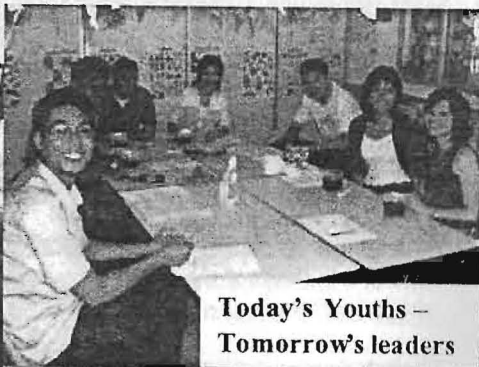
- Seek to be filled with the Spirit,
- Led by the Spirit and
- Walk in the Spirit.

The main condition to being filled is to be hungry and thirsty. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.

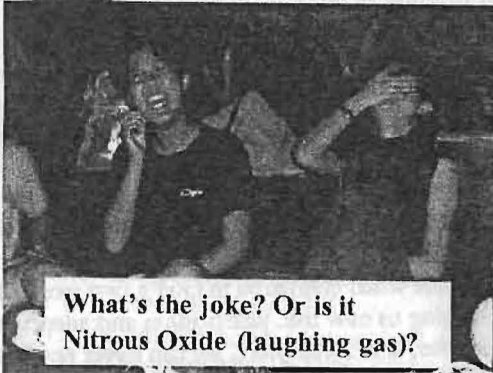
Our Youths



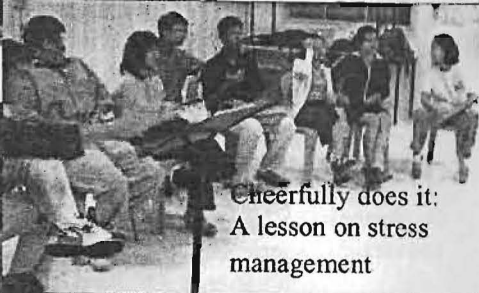
Youths at a talk on cults



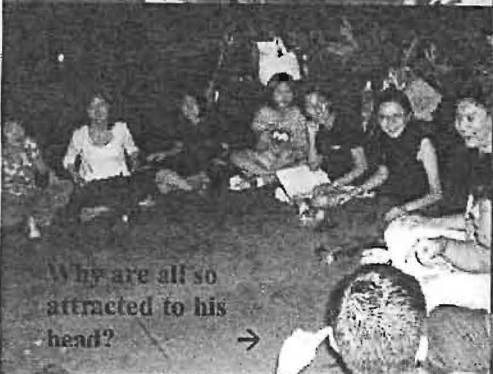
Today's Youths – Tomorrow's leaders



What's the joke? Or is it Nitrous Oxide (laughing gas)?



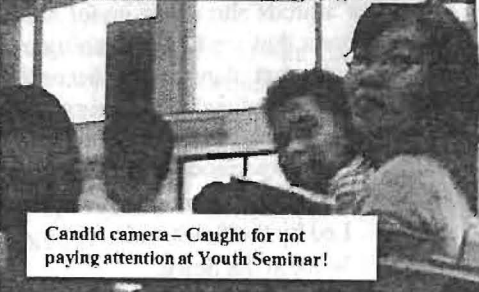
Cheerfully does it: A lesson on stress management



Why are all so attracted to his head? →



Where are the stars in the firmament?



Candid camera – Caught for not paying attention at Youth Seminar!



PRAYER BEFORE CHURCH GROWTH

an extract of a speech by David Yonggi Cho

The number one requirement to have church growth is to have massive prayer. Without prayer, you cannot even dream of having church growth.

Church growth comes by the power of the Holy Spirit, and church growth is only available to you through much prayer. Ministry (praise and worship) unto the Lord is the first requirement of the Lord. We think that we must pray for our ministry, our families, and all other things and then finally we will pray unto the Lord. That is a great mistake. Ministry unto the Lord should come ahead of anything else in your life. It is why you are called into this world. Regardless of your many excuses, God wants you to come to Him.

God has limitless love for you, and He desires your fellowship. He created you to have deep fellowship with you. *"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."* Rev 4:11.

The number one responsibility in your life is to bring praise, worship and prayer fellowship unto the Lord. I have over 700,000 people, but I still have enough time to pray before the Lord. I have so much work piling up on me daily but I will never, never tend to these works until I spend enough time with the Lord Jesus Christ. I come out of God's Presence: then His presence follows me, and I can minister with great effectiveness and power. So in order to become a genuine minister of God, you need to at least spend more than one hour in prayer a day.

As a minister, it is a shame to spend only one hour a day in prayer. I tell my ministers to spend more than 3 hours a day in prayer. I say, "even though you can't carry out visitation, it is fine with me." If you spend more than 3 hours in prayer, then with the power of God when you go out to minister to the people, you can accomplish more in one hour than you can in 10 hours without the power of God.

The more time you spend in the spiritual realm, the more of the Holy Spirit you will experience in your ministry. You will not work in the power of the flesh, but in the power of the Holy Spirit. More people will be saved and healed when you spend time with the Lord, and you minister in the mighty power of the Holy Spirit.



WHAT IS THE VALUE OF A PERSON?

In many cultures men are honored more than women. Rich people are respected more than poor people. The current market value of a person is determined like the price of a car. Model, year, and condition all play a part.

The disturbing truth is that human worth, like beauty, is often in the eye of the beholder. Yet something interesting shows up in the eyes of a mother or father.

A QUESTION OF THE HEART

After the birth of our son Ben in 1973 and our daughter Jen in 1979, I was overwhelmed by how much I loved both of them. At some point I remember thinking: I'm not sure I understood the value of a person before becoming a parent. And then another thought: What if the devil approached me with a bid for their souls?

ANSWERS THAT DON'T COME CLOSE

Here's one way the proposition plays out. The devil offers to rig the world's largest lottery in exchange for the life of Ben. Then he suggests the lifetime earnings of the world's wealthiest family for Jen. When he sees that he hasn't gotten my attention, he says, "Name your price. What about all the oil in the Mideast? All the real estate in the world? All the industry on the planet? I'll throw in personal happiness, good health, and a long life for you and your wife."

You see where this is going. Your answer would be the same as mine. No amount of money or material possessions could tempt us to sell for any price one of our own children. But then there is another question. What if the devil offered me all the money, real estate, and industry of the world for the soul of someone else's child?

Since I've just admitted that I couldn't put a price tag of any amount on one of my own children, I'm in a frame of mind to remember that everyone is somebody's baby. And by a parent's standard, there isn't another child in the world worth less than my own. Yet here my own character gives out on me. While my love for Ben and Jen tells me something about the priceless value of a person, my own conscience tells me how inconsistently I've given attention and consideration even to my own children let alone the sons and daughters of others.

THE NEED FOR BETTER EYES

There is only one Person who never lost sight of the value of a person. Day after day Jesus treated women and men, old and young, poor and rich, sick and healthy as if they all were important. Even when offered the kingdoms of the world for a moment of blind self-interest He didn't cave in (Matthew 4:1-11). He consistently saw something in others worth dying for.

Sometimes Jesus used little things to show the value He saw in others. Once, after asking His followers to risk their lives for Him, He asked, "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29-31).

His point was clear. If the Father in heaven takes note of a sparrow falling to the ground, then who can imagine how much more He loves and cares for His own children.

On another occasion, Jesus used big things to show the value He sees in a person. To people inclined even to forget the value of their own life Jesus asked, "What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

THE ELOQUENCE OF ACTION

Jesus' words were powerful, but His actions were even more telling. While some of the most religious people of His day looked down on or ignored women, ethnic minorities, poor people, and prisoners, Christ noticed and befriended them.

Christ's value of the person is a revolutionary principle of life. If we all shared His value of a person, our families and churches would be healthier and safer places to be. Business and industry would be transformed by owners and managers who saw workers through Christ's eyes. Nothing would give more honor and value to either our friends or our enemies than to be treated as someone "for whom Christ died" (Romans 14:15; 1Corinthians 8:11).

The apostle John was one of Jesus' closest friends during our Lord's 3 years of public life, and John was deeply moved by the way Christ valued him. This love spilled over into the apostle's concern for others. In the fourth chapter of his first New Testament letter he wrote, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [sacrifice] for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:10-11).

Does this article challenge you to change the way you view people? Why do you think it's important, or not so important, to see people the way God does? What difference would it make in your life if you began to see people through God's eyes?

How do you see yourself in the Church?

Prior to becoming Archbishop of the Catholic Church in Singapore, Father Nicholas Chia commented to a reporter that there are six types of Catholics. (Straits Times 17.8.01) As I read and re-read his comment, I attempt replacing the word "Catholic" by the word "Christian" and ponder whether the comment still holds some truth. Here is how it goes with the word "Christian" in italics inserted by me to replace the word that is crossed out:

"There is the 'Hatched, matched and dispatched ~~Catholic~~ Christian' who comes to church only for baptism, marriage and funeral.

Next, there is the 'Cafeteria ~~Catholic~~ Christian' who picks and chooses what he wants to believe.

Then, there is the 'Anchor ~~Catholic~~ Christian' who turns to God to anchor his soul only when he is in trouble.

There is also the 'Private ~~Catholic~~ Christian' who says I, Me, Myself and God only, who excludes others completely.

Of course, there is the 'Worldly ~~Catholic~~ Christian' who is attached to the kingdom of this world.

Finally, there is the '~~Catholic~~ ~~Catholic~~ Christian Christian' who is informed and active in the faith."

Perhaps individuals differ in their opinions about how Christians should be categorized, if there should be any categorization at all. For example, you may want to classify Christians into the *Practical*, the *Theoretical* and the *Spiritual*. Even our Lord, Jesus Christ alluded to the existence of different types in the Parable of the Sower. (Mk 4:3-20)

First of all, before talking about Christians of different types, we must first talk about people who definitely fail to qualify as Christians simply because of their unbelief. They do catch sight of the Word that the farmer sows along their path; but instead of grabbing the opportunity to pick it up with speed, they tarry until Satan comes along to take it away. (Mk 4:15) Who are these people? They include the defiant sinners who may be our friends or relatives, individuals who frequently have the opportunity to hear the Word of God but pay no heed to it, or persons who give themselves the "Christian" title with an utterly laid-back attitude to match. These people fall under the group "*Unbelievers or Pretenders*".

Next, we have the people who hear the Word, rejoice and then forget it all when trouble and persecution strike. (Mk 4:16) Instead of putting the Word to the test in their lives, they fall away at first test of their faith. Maybe we can consider these Christians as *The Tentative Ones*. They can of course be helped with encouragement to put the Word they hear into practice so as to be like the wise man who built his house on the rock. (Matt. 7:24)

Still, there is another group that reflects a stunted growth – They are saved by the Word, but never grow. Our Lord Jesus gave this reason for their state: “... **the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the Word, making it unfruitful.**” (Mk 4:19)

In the aftermath of Sept 11, in the wake of an avalanche of accounting scandals from corporate America, in the shadows of the hovering economic clouds, and wobbling our knees with every rumble from the political/military flashpoints stretching from East to West, do we need more reason to worry ourselves sick over our children's future, over the security of our jobs and CPF balances for retirements, etc.? An article in TIME magazine (8 July 02) probing the science of anxiety gives the answer that we worry ourselves sick because the brain is hardwired for fear and sometimes it short-circuits. At the same time, it poses a few questions:

“How is it that two people facing the same circumstances can react so differently?”

“Why are some folks buffeted by the vicissitudes of life while others glide through them with grace and calm?”

“Are some of us born more nervous than others?”

“And if you're one of them, is there anything you can do about it?”

The magazine article goes further to state that the key to the above questions is our emotional response. I agree with this statement, and in it I recognize the individuality of and the choice we have for our response. The right choice is well within our grasp. We have the advice in the Bible – Luke 12:22-34. If one person can lay bare an emotional response to troubles but yield no gainful outcome, it is a perfect testimony of the superior position of the other person who counter-attack turbulence with the weapon of serenity. Herein is also the hidden wisdom wrapped in the Word of God. **Ignoring the Word is just the right catalyst for Christians to fall away instead of growing.**

Insofar as the Church is made up of people, it is not immune to the vicissitudes of human struggles. The key to unlock the secret weapon for a winning response is in our hands. We see a great need in the Church, or do we not see? Yes, the

SERVICE IS NOT SPELLED
SERVE-US

Prepare my heart for serving,
Let my spirit heed Your call;
In obedience to the Father,
Our Lord and King of all.

Fill my thoughts with You,
Lord,
Renew my mind today...
I give you full control,
In the things I do and say.

Take these hands You gave me,
And use them for Your good...
To glorify Your Kingdom,
In the ways I know I should.

Remove all doubt within me,
Lord, I trust You'll find a way,
To mold me in Your image...
As I walk with You today.

~Author unknown~

interconnected declining finances of individual Christians and the Church is one issue that has to be grappled with. Yes, we also see a declining number of servants because more and more of them are being called overseas for their jobs, thus resulting in a rising percentage of bystanders at home watching the limited harvest of souls. Yes, we see more Christians spiritually swaying unsteadily with the wind than those who are "like seed sown on good soil, hear the Word, accept it, and produce a crop – thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown." (Mk 4:20) Yes, the duty on our Christian hands is heavy indeed, and it is truly beyond the means of a few individuals. What we need is a collective effort to support the yoke on our shoulders.

Admittedly, none of us, especially myself, is an exemplar of the excellent Christian alluded to by our Lord Jesus in the conclusion of His parable, given our individual shortcomings. However, whatever differing shades of grey or white we see ourselves in according to the various categorizations talked about above, surely we do not want to put ourselves into yet another category called the *Apathetic Christian* who

sees the need but is indifferent towards it. Do you see your brothers and sisters toiling under the yoke, yet you feel unmoved by it because you feel that you are not your brother's (or sister's) keeper and so his/her situation is none of your business? Writing about "My Brother's Keeper" in ONWARD SOLDIERS (Military Christian Fellowship magazine, 1995), Rev. Alfred Yeo, Senior Pastor of Moriah AOG, had this to say to the *Apathetic Christian*, "God grieves over your self-centredness and indifference. You forget that you are in a relationship, a family in Jesus, no matter where you are."

Finally, I must say that whatever challenges the Church faces, they can be overcome. In cash or kind or both (figuratively speaking), we ought to encourage one another instead of pointing fingers at perceived failures. "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or ... sit in the seat of mockers." (Ps 1:1) Jesus said, "My Father will honor the one who serves me." (Jn 12: 26b) Therefore, let us all stand up and be counted!

John Lee

A Beautiful Mind

by David Smith

You've met the sort of people I have in mind.

They are rays of sunshine in a dark world. They light up every room they enter. They can find good in almost every situation. They're a glowing fire in a cold room. They're a souls for which life is a gift, a wonder never to cease rejoicing over. They have "a beautiful mind."

You've also met another sort.

They are black clouds that obscure the noonday sun. They light up every room they enter -- just by leaving it. They can see the bad in almost every good thing and rejoice to point it out to you. They're a wet blanket on every fire. They're a cranky cuss for which life is a pain, something never to cease grumbling about. They may have had "a beautiful mind" somewhere along the way, but they've long since lost it.

Now how did these two minds become what they are? You may be surprised -- they both became what they are the exact same way.

They thought about it.

Now the crotchety old goats never planned on becoming goats. They didn't sit down one day and say to themselves: "I'd like to be a pain in the neck someday, so I'm going to work at it the next thirty years." No, they became what they are simply because for years they filled their minds with dark thoughts aplenty and, no small wonder, they became what they thought.

Similarly, the grateful soul became what they are because they filled their mind with things worthy of thought -- the things of God. They became a treasure to others because they treasured the right things.

"The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him." (Matthew 12:34 NIV)

We've all heard the proverb: "You are what you eat." How much more ought we to hear another proverb: "You are what you think." For if anything is true it is this -- a Christian is what a Christian thinks.

So, what are you thinking about? What are you feeding your mind? What are you in the process of becoming?

Think about it.

Think about it with me over the course of the next couple of weeks as we meditate on the meaning of a single verse of Scripture and strive to work up an appetite for a beautiful mind. Oh, and here's the verse:

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about such things." (Philippians 4:8 NIV)

Now that's something to think about, isn't it?

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Comments, questions & requests to be added to the e-mailing list for the Online Devotional may be sent to <david@yourchurchcangrow.com>.

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WORLD

Cup 2002

A time of Bonding.

I have enjoyed watching one game with Sanjay (JE cell member) at one of the kopitiam at Jurong East. Though among family members we are divided in our support for the teams in the FINAL, with our faces and arms painted differently with the icons of competing teams, we enjoyed the bonding as we watched together the gigantic battle of two great teams on a big screen at the school field of my daughter's school. Although we missed the gathering at JCC, we trust that good bonding and fellowship have also been achieved among members in the Church as they



cheered for their favourite team while watching the FINAL game together as a family, as a form of healthy recreation

Tony Koh & Family

This WC2002 is certainly unpredictable with many unexpected results. Who could guess that France, Italy & Argentina would be out so soon and Korea, Turkey, Senegal & Japan could go so far? Despite the referee being 'kayu' sometimes, I could see the determination & spirit to fight to the end from the teams that have gone far. Finally, Brazil achieved what they had come for: the World Cup. Wish we can do the same for our daily & spiritual life and achieve our goal: Eternal life with Jesus Christ.

Soong Beng Chin

I am not a football fan and have watched only one match in the QF, 1.5 matches in the SF, and the full match in the Final. However, I was touched after Brazil won the game, not because of their skill, but because of the open display of their faith in God by some of the Brazilian footballers. Through this group of people, the Gospel, in its most basic form, was spread throughout the world.

Edmund Ng

Many of us who watched the World Cup Finals between Brazil and Germany would notice at least 2 Brazilian footballers showing their T shirts - "I belong to Jesus" and "Jesus loves me." They clearly positioned themselves to face the cameras and knew what they wanted to do - to tell the world of Jesus. The World Cup statistics showed about 1 billion people watched the 1998 finals. Estimates of 2002 TV audience for the 2002 final is 1.3 billion. If we saw the news, the World Cup was shown in Afghanistan for the first time in many years. When Jesus comes again, it is no longer impossible that He can be seen by ALL around the world. That day will come!

Sam Ng

(A member of the Methodist Church)