

The 2000 VINE



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Warm greetings to you in Jesus' name. Last month the news report of the unspeakable atrocities committed by a group of teenagers (both boys and girls) on a

fellow peer while holding her captive at a flat in Ang Mo Kio, shook many Singaporeans to their core. As parents the question naturally arise "What has become of today's teenagers?" Was it a clear case of parenting failure and blatant lack of respect for authority. As Christian parents we wonder whether are we effective in parenting as well.

Question mark: Will your children live by the standards you live by?

In the past, among Christians, there is a clear pattern of belief in the God of the Bible and of diligent effort to improve one's lot in life. Those are among the many virtues that have been passed on from generation to generation. But today, many are questioning whether the natural process through which this transfer of values has always occurred may now be threatened by new, powerful influences in our culture; children may no longer adopt the standards of their parents as a matter of course. As responsible parents, our job is to see to it that the values we believe in *are* transferred to our children. Achieving that goal may require special effort.

1. What are the characteristics of our culture that are badly in need of change?

In most urban societies divorce, crime, drug and alcohol abuse, materialism, lack of civility in behavior abound. Lack of integrity and intolerance are serious and growing problems. People fight over queuing for Hello Kitty toys and staring at each other. We seem to be living in a world that a New Testament writer described nearly two thousand years ago:



Japanese Wedding Fashions
27 Jan - 2 Feb 2000

... There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God-- having a form of godliness but denying its power. (2 Tim. 3:1-5. NIV)

2. What do we see as the principal causes of these cultural deficiencies?

There are many causes that can be cited, but three seem to stand out. Firstly, is that what we know as "the media" is, profit-driven and extremely influential, we are reaping the social consequences of their activities. Secondly, technological progress has opened the way for a two-working parents economy, reducing the influence of parents on the family. And thirdly, in an increasingly urban and sophisticated society, accountability to the community or to a higher authority is no longer a significant influence on behavior.

3. How are we going to combat these forces in our family?

The tools available to parents for countering the destructive forces that are at work to destroy families are probably **discipline, instruction and example**. By establishing respect for your authority, teaching the principles we believe in, and demonstrating that we actually live by those principles, we will have done all we can to prepare our child for life. Of course, this is a rather simplistic statement that addresses an enormously important and complex set of issues. But the fact is that in the early years of our child's life, we passively (by example) and actively (by instruction) establish in him or her an attitude toward such things as religion, drugs, divorce, etc., which determines how he will respond to them many years later.

We should instill an awareness of "*being different*" and not to be like the rest of world. Teach him that we march to a different tune, in steps with the God of the Bible. Be an active, regular member of our church. Make devotion to God a vital and visible part of our family life. Some families establish regular times to be together for Bible reading and prayer as a means of building a consciousness of their proper relationship with God.



One of the most important policy decisions parents are faced with relates to television; should we simply pull the plug, or should we develop a plan that will protect our child from the bad and yet let him enjoy and learn from the good? Some parents are taking the first approach and completely eliminating TV from their home environments. Maybe we should give serious consideration to doing just that. Try it out for a few months to test the results. The positive effects, such as developing closer family relationships and stimulating creativity in the child, are obvious. We may find that it opens a brand new world.

But there is another, more subtle effect of prolonged TV watching that is starting to concern educators. We've all observed a steady decrease in the length of time an image remains on the television screen, especially in movies, cartoons and commercials. Constant exposure to these fleeting pictures may be producing a generation of children whose attention span is severely limited, with serious consequences for classroom learning ability.

Whatever we decide to do about the TV issue, we can be certain that our own watching habits will have more impact on our child's attitude than

any policy we may establish. If we live on a steady diet of TV episodes we shouldn't expect to be successful trying to teach our children that TV is harmful to moral health.

4. What must we teach now to avoid the factors listed above being exhibited by our children?

In the area of **Divorce** – We should try to model the “ideal” family relationships in our family (Eph. 5:22-6:4) so that our children see marriage in a positive light. Teach them the nature and permanence of the marriage commitment by our example and our instruction.

Crime - Show that we respect the authority of the law in Singapore. Instill in our child a sensitivity for the feelings and rights of others. Point out to them the human consequences of criminal acts -- the pain, the loss and the suffering that they cause.

Drugs/alcohol/tobacco - As early as possible, instill ardent fear of these agents; teach our children how they can destroy life. Explain the meaning of “addiction” and show how easily these substances can take control of a person.

Materialism - Avoid the excessive use of “things” as rewards, goals and objectives. Teach our children that happiness is derived from relationships, worth and service, not from possessions. Encourage and display

concern for those less fortunate and let them see that we are willing to share.

Carefully consider our family's approach to gift giving. We live in an affluent society where most parents find themselves financially able and willing to indulge their children with toys and games. It seems that they do this knowing all the while that it's wrong and that it doesn't produce the joy and gratitude that they intend. Grandparents recognize the problem, too, but usually fall right in step with the parents. If we want to break the cycle - - and we should - - start now with a plan to make Christmas or birthdays mean something besides materialistic grasping!

Civility - Display and require respect, politeness and courtesy in all dealings within the family. This means that Mom and Dad are careful to say *please*, *thank you and may I?* to each other and that they require the same from their children. Place *proper* emphasis on manners, speech and dress; they offer opportunities to bring honor or dishonor to God, to the family and to the child. Don't feel that our child has a *right* to dress or style their hair any way they please; teach them that there are standards that apply to our family that may not be those of their peers. What is "cool" for a girl may not be modest and may send dangerous messages about her



character that she neither intends nor appreciates.

Integrity - We are the example of integrity for your child; never deceive him and never let him see us twisting the truth in our dealings with others. Practice what we teach. Keep our word.

Intolerance - Display respect for all people, regardless of race or status in life. Instill a sensitivity for the feelings and rights of others.

CONCLUSION

The values you hold to be important will not be transferred to our children without conscious effort on our part. To be successful, we must not only display those values in ourselves, but we must also work diligently to make our training more effective than the media and the cultural influences which are in direct competition with ours. An active, visible resolve to live according to the standards provided by God is essential. In closing, let us consider carefully the admonition in Proverbs 22:6 "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." Amen.

Pastor Martin Yee

Youth Camp in December 1999

Last December holidays, I attended the church youth camp together with 60 other energetic and fun-loving youths. It was a life-changing experience because we had four awesome messages preached to us during our four-day-three-night stay at the BB & GB campsite in Sembawang.



The camp theme was "Living life to the fullest". It was such a simple theme that challenged many of us who had yet to live that kind of life. From the point of view of a teenager, there were times when I thought that in order to live my life to the fullest, I must first enjoy the things that I am doing. However, after attending the camp, my perspective changed. At times, we need not be enjoying the work given to us. Conversely, the very act of being willing to do that work might be a "stepping stone" for us so that we might lead a fulfilling life. For example, when the Lord calls a person to serve, He might call us out of our "comfort zone" to serve Him and His people. To many of us it may not be enjoyable when we begin to measure the rewards in a material and practical sense. On



the other hand, the blessings of the Lord will be in such abundance that by obeying the Lord we might lead a more fruitful life. This is because the Lord knows the plans He has for us. He plans for welfare and not for calamity so that we might have a future and a hope.



(Jeremiah 29:11) That verse speaks so clearly to me that I know by obeying the Lord, I would have made the right move. This is because He is a God who holds our yesterday, today and tomorrow.

"Eagles' Wings" was our camp's theme song. This song ministers to my heart as well. The song brings out the profound meaning in Isaiah 40:29-31. At times we might grow weary and tired when we serve the Lord. However, His promise in Isaiah has given us a new hope and new strength to continue serving Him. We know that He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Wow, What a promise! Who has never grown weary? I did! However, knowing that I serve a God who keeps His promise, I learnt to draw strength from His Word and place my hope in Him so that I may be able to soar on wings like eagles and that I would run and not grow weary, walk and not faint.



During the camp, four dynamic messages were shared with us - The first night, we learnt about "Values in life"; on the second night, another speaker shared with us "God's purpose for creating Man"; and the third night, "Experiencing God's love".

The last message of the camp about "Walking with God" left the greatest impact on me. The speaker talked about three kinds of man who are found on this earth. Firstly, the "non-Christians" who are also known as the natural man (1 Corinthians 2:14). These people place Christ outside their lives and rule their own lives. The second type of people whom the speaker mentioned is the spiritual man who is also known as people who live a "Christ-directed" life (1

Corinthians 2:15). These people enjoy the fellowship with God and they allow Jesus to sit on the throne of their life. Lastly, he talked about the Carnal man, also known as people who lead a "self-directed" life (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). These people, even though they have Christ in their lives, do not allow God to have full control over them. They go their own willful ways and choose not to follow the will of God.



To me, it is a thin line between a self-directed life and a Christ-directed life. It is very easy for someone who first leads a Christ-directed life to fall into the category of one leading a self-directed life. This is especially so when he or she neglects the importance of fellowshiping with God and begins to lose focus of the cross. The message reminds me to be cautious and keep track of my walk with God. That is, not to be easily swayed by the temptations of this world.

Let us walk through the new millennium with the strength and promises of God. Let us also learn from Daniel, that we may not easily give in to the temptations of this world but maintain a faithful walk with Christ Jesus - our King and Savior.



论「福」

Talking about " Blessing "

全寿富贵之谓福

(Reckon it a blessing to have a lifetime of prosperity)

The above statement was attributed to 韩非 (Han Fei ≈ 280BC — 233BC), the greatest Legalist philosopher of China. Think about how long ago it was when he made the statement!

Note also: It is a fact that " the Chinese system of writing made its appearance as a fully developed phonetic system about the middle of the 2nd millennium BC." (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Evidently, the idea of 福 (happiness, blessing) had its origin long ago beyond what the human mind can easily fathom. In that time immemorial, the Chinese already had the understanding of the divine origin of happiness or blessing. This understanding was reflected in the ideograph, which went through an evolutionary process over time and became what we know today. It is definitely useful for us to trace the origin of the character 福 and thereby understand better the true significance of what it represents.

Start with three horizontal strokes 三 representing the three elements of sun, moon and stars. Rewrite them vertically as 川 and then simplify to 小. Top it with 上 to signify an origin from above (from heaven). From the symbolic pictograph 上, remove a vertical stroke (for redundancy) and, behold, the character obtained is 示 (show, sign, omen).

Over time, the radical 礻 gradually evolved from 示 to give a " divine origin" connotation; thus, attaching it to the ideograph for abundance 畺 (farmlands divided into plots by irrigation channels and piled high, the character 高 for high being simplified to 高) provided a divine association for

wealth. Whether 韩非 was conscious of it or not when he made the statement 全寿富贵之谓福, he could not have been any more accurate to link prosperity to a blessing (not luck), and blessing in itself must have a source which was and is indisputably the heaven. The early Chinese knew that 富 was a divine dispensation. The Chinese today still demonstrate this truth to a fault when, during Chinese New Year, they hang the word 福 upside down to suggest that prosperity descends from above!

The Chinese certainly like the symbolism of the word 福 very much, as evident not only in their festive banners but also their ample greetings:

- 福寿安康 (Blessing for longevity and health)
- 福星高照 (Lucky star shines bright)
- 金币围绕庆五福 (Surrounded by gold coins celebrating five prosperity)
- 等等 etc. etc.

Sadly, there is a lot of distortion of truths and generations of people have been led astray by vain thoughts of luck and instant wealth. Ecclesiastes 5:10 admonishes very well, " whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income." Not only does the Bible tell us the truth that " lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth, " (Prov. 10:4), this truth is also embodied in the character 福 which shows that divine blessing is to be found in the abundance in the fields. The character 富 (riches, wealth) itself conveys the message of a home (symbolised by the roof 宀) sustained by harvests in the farm. Again, when 韩非 talked about 全寿富贵 (lifetime of prosperity), there could be no



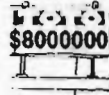
doubt what occupied his mind as, during his time, farming was the only productive occupation. His theory about a lifetime of prosperity could not be faulted as it was to be a derivative of honest hard work, not the kind of derivatives familiar to present day investment consultants or the kind of hard work our able-bodied men and women put up at Toto outlets and Kitty Toy Stores - so willingly sacrificing their meals, sleep and sanity.

Regardless of whether we travel by time machine back to two millenniums BC, contemplate our "good fortune" in this modern age or gaze into the skies to see what greater fortunes hold for us in the future, the eternal truths cannot be detached from the wisdom of God's Word. Although the Bible advises "Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil" (Proverbs 15:16)

and that "wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.," (Proverbs 11:4) there is no denial that we can have wealth if we want to. However, if we are so desirous of wealth, let us at least be diligent in learning how to acquire it without trouble. Here are a few pointers:

- Seek wealth as a blessing of the Lord, not a result of luck. Reason: The blessing of the LORD brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it. (Proverbs 10:22)
- Pursue righteousness and love. Reason: He who pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor. (Proverbs 21:21)

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- Be humble. Reason: Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life. (Proverbs 22:4)
- Do not oppress the poor and do not seek favours of the rich. Reason: He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and he who gives gifts to the rich--both come to poverty. (Proverbs 22:16)
- Seek righteousness. Reason: Misfortune pursues the sinner, but prosperity is the reward of the righteous. (Proverbs 13:21)

By following the above pointers instead of the stories of friends or relatives about their lucky strikes, we would be taking the path of wisdom rather than going the way of fools. The wealth of the wise is their crown, but the folly of fools yields folly. (Proverbs 14:24)

In conclusion: To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. (Ecclesiastes 2:26)

John Lee

Michael Lee

WE WELCOME YOU

Fong Ying Loong



Kee Hong Guan, Jonathan

Have you ever encountered a situation where a person of another faith, question you about your belief in the Holy Bible as the Word of God? Were you able to defend your position? Here is some help from the Internet.....

Why I Believe the Bible.

Why I Believe.

Why do I believe the Bible? Why do I believe in a book that was written by 40 independent authors, living in ten countries during a period covering in excess of 1500 years? Why do I believe in a book that has a cast of over three thousand characters living in over 1500 places?

Why do I believe in an ancient book that some say is a book of legends, myths, fables, and ancient history? Of what benefit or gain is it to me to say that I believe the Bible?

This same book has shaped the destiny of many people to a large degree, over many centuries of time, and it continues to do so today. And yet to many, it remains a book on the shelf, gathering dust. A book that is seldom opened, and a book without any relevance to today's living.

But to me, that same book is vital, completely relevant to today: exposing the weaknesses of our present times, setting out the remedies for the world's many ailments, and accurately forecasting the path of the future world

to be established in the foreseeable future.

Why do I believe the Bible? For several reasons.

Because I believe that it is a book uniquely written by the inspiration of God. I have many reasons for believing this to be so, and I shall elaborate a little later on this aspect.

Because the Bible has a message that is an important one to us today, in establishing an honest, decent, caring, and pleasing lifestyle from which each one of us can benefit in real terms. A life style unaffected by the concerns around us of environmental catastrophe, global mismanagement, or threat of nuclear warfare.

Because the Bible has a message of the future: an assurance of a far, far better environment of the future, when all aspects of war, of violence, of fear, of moral decline will cease, and the world will be a perfect place to spend what would be an eternity of time.

On the first aspect, what is it that makes me believe that the Bible is a book with a true and vital message? Perhaps in common with many other people, I find that there is not just a single reason, but a number of reasons. Each reason in itself is able to provide sufficient evidence in itself in order to support the proposition that the Bible is truly believable, but the ability to gain these evidences from



completely different starting points, considering completely different aspects, fuse together to reinforce one's confidence in the Bible. We need this confidence, for when we possess it, then the key to the Bible's message is available to us, and we can benefit directly now, and infinitely more so in the future age to come. You see, if the Bible is just another book written by a variety of people, then it is limited by the knowledge and skills of those who wrote it. But if it can be demonstrated that the writers of the Bible had a higher source of information, then the relevance of their message becomes altogether vastly more important.

The Word of God.

It is true that the Bible claims to be the Word of God. It makes this claim in several ways:

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." 2 Timothy 3:16 [All quotations are from NIV unless otherwise stated.]

"For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1:21

But neither of these quotations prove that the Bible is the Word of God, as they are merely claims made in the Bible that the Bible is the Word of God.

Similarly, the Old Testament writers made the claim that God spoke to them, and they wrote what was demanded of them. On hundreds, perhaps thousands of occasions, the writers made exactly this claim. Take, for instance, the prophet Ezekiel at the beginning of chapter 29:

"In the tenth year, in the tenth month on the twelfth day, the word of the Lord came to me: 'Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt and prophecy against him and against all Egypt. Speak to him and say: "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: " ' "
Ezekiel 29:1-3a

This again does not, in itself, contribute towards making the Bible believable: anyone would have been free to make a similar claim, and who would be able to refute it, especially a long time later?



MOSES

So how can I demonstrate to you why I believe the Bible? One way would be to examine some of the portions of the Bible, with a particular question in mind. Did the writers have a source of information that was above their normal human ability and knowledge? If we can show that they did, then what was the source of that information?

Let's look firstly at the one of the aspects of the Bible that stands out as quite extraordinary: the uniformity of theme. It is very generally accepted by a weight of evidence that Moses was the author of the first five books of the Bible, and there is little dissent that the apostle John wrote the Book of Revelation, which is the last book of the Bible. So between these

authors lies about 1500 years. Thirty-nine books written before the time of Jesus Christ, and twenty-seven after the time of Jesus Christ. They were sixty-six books written by men of very diverse backgrounds and experiences. Few had any contact with each other. And yet what they wrote showed a remarkable degree of unity.

Who Is God?

Consider for example, the attributes ascribed to the Supreme Being, God. All the books agree to the characteristics of God being a single God, a supreme authority who has no equal, the Creator, His unlimited power, His sovereignty over mankind, His judgements against sin, His mercy, his love, His ability to be in all places at all times. Every writer is in agreement as to the origin of sin, its inescapable presence in human nature, and the need for mankind everywhere, and in every generation, to turn in direction and return to God's way. Every writer foresees that salvation is possible for mankind, through a mediator, who was anticipated in the books written before Jesus Christ, and fully described in the books following Jesus Christ. There is no other example in the varied fields of knowledge that has been able to pursue such a concept of unity over such a long period of time. Such is



foreign to every field of knowledge, whether history, science, arts, sociology, psychology, or education. For example, I studied psychology at university level in the early 1960's, and again at the end of the 1970's. In that time interval of fifteen years, theories had changed quite remarkably. And some recent involvements in that same sphere in recent months have revealed still further modifications and changes in thought. To me, as a Bible believer, the writing of a person who lived some 2500 years ago was aptly summarising the information of today, when he wrote:

"I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself; Nor is it in man to direct his steps."

Jeremiah 10:23 NASB

What gave the authors the remarkable unity of thought? There can be only two explanations.

The first is, that each author thoroughly researched all that had been written, before putting pen to paper. To do this, he would have had to start with the writings of Moses (and particularly the first book, Genesis), and then from that point to progressively develop the themes established in a particular way that would enable subsequent writers to continue on with the task. And not only that, but he would need to take great pains not to disagree with any point that a previous writer had made. For this explanation to be valid, Moses, for

some reason, would have started the ball rolling, and for some unknown reasons, others have leapt on the bandwagon, researched all previous writers, and have gone on to write only matters that endorse the previous writers! Such an explanation is clearly unrealistic, if not impossible. Why would they risk their lives in such an action (as some did), if it was merely for novelty?

But the argument is fatally flawed. For evidence is convincing that the first collection of the books of the Bible into a unified edition occurred in the time of Ezra in the 5th century BC, and by this time all the Old Testament books, with the exception of three, had already been written. So those authors prior to the 5th Century BC would not have had prior access to the earlier writings! And again, in the New Testament, the writers of the twenty-seven books did not have access to the writings of their fellow authors, since they were almost always writing personal letters or memoirs, unaware that at a subsequent date they were to be incorporated under the binding of a single book. They were all dead before their books were regarded as part of the Bible.

Bible has unity of thought.

So how did all these people achieve an amazing unity of thought, even though each was being obviously compelled to write by a very strong inner motivation, and to write what they each felt was so important that their own safety could be jeopardised?

The second explanation for the amazing unity of the Bible is that all sixty-six books had a common origin. If God has chosen the Bible as the means of conveying his message to mankind, then in a very real sense the Bible has one author rather than a multitude of authors.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." 2 Timothy 3:16

"For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1:21

This does not mean that the writers were robots in the hands of a supreme God, but that each wrote the message of God in the words of their own vocabulary. Each writer preserved their own human style, but each wrote in accord with the Divine plan and principle.



To be continued in the next issue of The Vine coming out in March 2000

Testimonies from Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting.

GOOD WEATHER FOR GOLF

This testimony is from Bro Ronnie Lim, who shared about the time he organised a golf tournament for his company's clients. As his clients come from all over the region, he had to



ensure that everything was fine. He went into great lengths to ensure that nothing was left out. However as the day drew near, the weather looked threatening and his boss asked him if he had an alternative plan should it rain.

There can be no substitute for a game of golf, so there was no Plan B. So Bro Ronnie and his family prayed for fine weather. Trusting in the Lord, they went ahead with the golf game that afternoon in Sentosa. Yes, the clouds were there but only as a shade from the sun. That evening, after the great afternoon of golfing, Bro Ronnie had the opportunity to give God the glory when he told his audience how God had provided the good weather. To his surprise, the audience gave a resounding applause.

When he reached home that night, his family asked him about the day's

events and especially about the weather. Then they all gave thanks to God for his blessings.

MOTHER ACCEPTS CHRIST

After about a year of reaching out to his mother, Bro Leong Kok Wah's mother has finally accepted the Lord on Chinese New Year's Eve.

Bro Leong recounted some of the events leading up to his mother's conversion and about some of the disturbance, which he suspect could be the work of the evil one, to prevent his mother from accepting Christ.



To some extent, Bro Leong's mother's conversion can be attributed to the work of Yishun Christian Church's outreach work in organising the lunch or dinner for senior citizens. In fact, it was the assistant pastor and a parish worker from YCC, who led her in the sinner's prayer.

AN ANGEL IN SENGOI

Pastor Michael shared his experience of a miraculous coincidence in his last trip up to Cameron Highlands. This will be published in the coming issue of The Mission & Evangelism Committee's newsletter **LINKS**.

Miracles do happen. Why not come and share with us your testimony of the goodness of God in your life? **To God be the glory!!!**