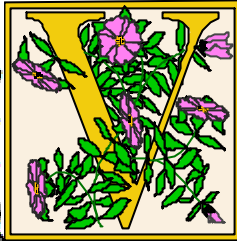
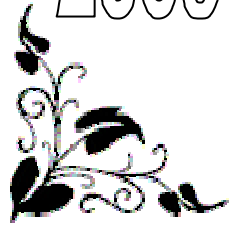


Feb

2003



THE  
Vine



for internal circulation only

Vol 2/2003

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus. The Chinese New Year is just over. Now let us look forward to the Easter Evangelistic event on 18th and 19th April. From now till then, preparations are on the way to make sure that JCC is well prepared for the inflow of preChristians who will be invited to this event.

What are the activities going on at this moment? Well, the singers are practising every Sunday morning and the actors are practicing every Sunday afternoon. Also for the remaining Saturdays, Rev John Tan will be conducting courses on evangelism. Meanwhile, what can you do? If you are not singing, acting or studying, you can be praying for the friend, neighbour, colleague or relative that God has impressed on you to bring. This is actually the most important part. If no one invites anyone to this event, then we are just performing for our own benefit. Therefore let us not neglect such an important role.

Did you notice that the Multi-purpose Hall project has already started on 10<sup>th</sup> February? It is expected to complete by end-March 2003. God willing, the timing is just perfect for when the Lord will grow JCC. *Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing,*

*but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.* (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Even as the Treasurer highlights the weak money situation of JCC for 2003, his wife faces an uncertain future with PSA announcing its retrenchment plans. The results will only be known sometime next month.

Then there is also the Iraq and North Korean situation, which may lead the world into chaos. Which will come first, nobody knows. Although the Treasurer cannot see any silver lining with all the dark clouds, *we wait in hope for the LORD; He is our help and our shield.* (Psalm 33:20)

David sinned against the Lord when he took a census of his kingdom. (see 2Samuel 24) He put his trust in men. May we put our trust in God to provide JCC with a surplus for 2003.

The Editor

To  
Glorify **GOD** through a life of True Discipleship  
and Disciplemaking

# TOP 10 WAYS TO TURN YOUR KIDS OFF TO CHURCH

By Jonathan R. Mutchler

1. Schedule personal or family events to clash with church services and activities.
2. Don't get too close to anyone in church. Refrain from developing relationships with Christians lest your teen learn about the joy and benefits of fellowship.
3. Look often at your watch during worship services and complain bitterly, look annoyed when church lasts longer than you think it should.
4. Do the best you can to make sure your teen arrives on time for games, scouts, lessons and school events, but don't worry if she skips or is late to church.
5. Bring your family to church only when:
  - a. You have nothing better to do.
  - b. You have a personal need.
  - c. You feel really guilty.
6. Don't volunteer for anything or make any kind of long-term commitment at church. Remember you have to make yourself free for more important things.
7. Remind your teen how imperfect your church leaders are and regularly point out their mistakes. Make sure he understands that you know more about leading the church than its current leadership.
8. Tithe and financially support your local church and its missions with the same enthusiasm as when you pay your taxes.
9. Change churches every few years.
10. And whatever you do, don't let church influence the way you live your life.

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*A local newspaper printed an article in which the following statement appeared: "Mr. Sean O'Reilly is a new defective on the police force."*

*In the following issue, to correct the error, the paper announced: "Mr. Sean O'Reilly is a new detective on the police farce."*

Please pardon us if we do make such errors, the editors are too stretched to do a thorough checking of the text.

# Pastor's Word

Grace to you and peace from God our loving Father.



The time is near. The Easter Musical is coming soon. Praise God, He has been at work in our midst. We can be assured of His love and faithfulness unto us. I urge your prayer support for the Musical. I also encourage you to set aside time to fast and pray with me for it.

Let us be united in intercession...

*"Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land. I will listen to every prayer made in this place..."* 2 Chronicles 7:14-15 NLT.

## 7 Prayer Points for the Easter Musical Evangelism

**18<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> April 2003:**

1. Preparation of Spiritual Counsellors  
Thanks be to God for the training on two Saturdays - 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb. More than 20 came for training and equipping by Rev John Tan, to lead those with prepared hearts to receive Christ and also how to pray for various needs. Pray for those who will complete the training, for opportunity and faithfulness to practice what they have learned for the Easter Evangelistic Musical nights and beyond.
2. Training of Nurture Leaders for follow up work on March 22 & 29, April 5 & 12 from 3-5 pm Saturdays. Pray that many will respond and be equipped by these training sessions. Pray for good respond.
3. Preparation of Intercessors.  
Training had been conducted by Rev John Tan on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb (3-5 pm) and Sis Siew Kuan (Mrs John Tan) will train us in our prayer meetings on March 5<sup>th</sup> and April 2<sup>nd</sup> (Wednesday night at 8 pm). Intercessors will be praying and

interceding throughout, and during the rehearsal and Easter Musical event nights on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> April.

4. Preparation of Musical Team/Practices

Thanks be to God for the many JCC brothers and sisters who are practicing hard for the musical. Pray for the choir, cast and technical support crew for protection, wisdom, commitment and joy in their service. Pray for this musical that it will run smoothly and the message will be clear.

5. Pray for lost souls to be saved.

On March 9 Sunday Rev John Tan will be preaching in JCC to challenge our members to reach out. Members will be encouraged to write down at least two names of persons they want to bring for Easter Musical and commit for prayer intercession. Pray for the Holy Spirit's working to open their hearts to hear the Gospel and respond in faith..

6. Pray for those giving Testimony

Two persons will be selected and trained by Rev John Tan to give their testimony as part of the Easter Outreach.

7. Pray for the Preacher

Pray for God's anointing on Rev John Tan as he proclaims the Gospel and issue the altar call.

Serving the Living Christ together,  
Pastor Yee

**LIVE!**

the  
**POWER**  
of  
His  
Love

changing lives for eternity

**Come and see it at**

Jurong Christian Church  
2 Tah Ching Rd

18 Apr (Fri) & 19 Apr (Sat)  
7.30 pm to 9.15pm

**Free Admission**

a dramatic resurrection musical  
created by steve moore, steve wilkinson and david t. clydestale. arranged by david t. clydestale

# What did you say? Born Again?

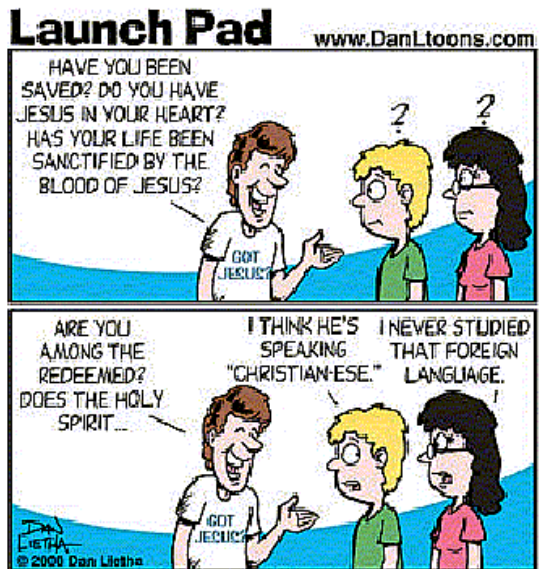
By John Lee

Ushering in the New Year 2003, Rev. Martin Yee on the night of 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 02 reminded all to be watchful of the unfolding events in the world today. Since that reminder, the unfolding events have become less pleasant. Before Iraq is settled, North Korea has jumped into the fray to stir a jittery world further. About watchfulness a few verses in the Bible come to my mind:

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.” (Lk 12:34-36)

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” (Col. 4:2)

In all seasons, while we keep watch because we do not know the day or the hour (Matt. 25:13), we do know that the day and the hour will come. It is not for us just to prepare ourselves for that time, but also preparing others who have yet to know Christ. As we embark on our evangelistic efforts, a simple question we might ask of anybody we reach out to is “Are You a Christian?” and the simple message that we need to deliver is the meaning of being a Christian – i.e., one who believes and accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and hence follows his teachings as contained in the Bible. It is not very complicated, is it? Yet, it can be as complicated as some people like to make it to confuse,



Reaching the world for Christ using a foreign language is good, unless the language is foreign to the people you're reaching

even if out of good intention, as you may observe from the “CHRISTIAN-ESE” in the cartoon above.

From time to time ever since I was a young Christian, I have come across Christian “interrogators” with their penchant for doubting the validity of others’ Christian identity. A probing interrogation may go like this:

*Interrogator:* Hi, Joe, have you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour.

*Joe:* Oh yes, I am a Christian. I am attending XYZ Church.

*Interrogator:* Good. Are you a born-again Christian?

*Joe:* I am a Christian. I have accepted Christ. I believe in Him as my Saviour. What do you mean by born-again?

*Interrogator:* You know, the Bible says that one must be born again in order to see the kingdom of God.

*Joe: (Puzzled)* You mean it is not good enough just to be a Christian.

*Interrogator: (Referring to the Bible for authority)* No, it is not good enough. Look at John 3:3. Jesus says that no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

*Joe: ???*

The Christian faith is a simple one. The Bible tells us that anyone who believes in Christ and is baptized will be saved. (Jn 3:16) We do not have to make it appear so complicated that instead of encouraging people to grow in faith and obedience to the Lord’s teachings, they become so put off by the seeming complexity of belief.

I have my doubts as to whether there are different categories of Christians. For example, do we need to group people under “Ordinary Christians”, “True Christians”, “False Christians”, “Born-again Christians”, “Christians who have no pass to the Kingdom because they have not been born again”, etc.? To me, a Christian is a Christian, which means one who has accepted Christ into his life as his Lord and Saviour, which means that he believes in Christ and as evidence of that he obeys the Lord’s teachings, with the help of God, and is not ashamed to stand firm for Christ. So if one is genuinely a Christian, he will have all the character traits of a person who is spiritually re-born, or born again into a new life, expressing Christ in his words and deeds. It is enough for him to call himself simply a Christian, qualified by his living testimony for Christ in his regenerated

life and not necessarily with extraneous adjectives like “ True”, “Born-again”, “Sincere”, “Really True”, etc. Observers can see him for what he really is.

Of course, a person who calls himself a Christian may not actually be one. Likewise, a person who calls himself a born-again Christian may not be truly so-called born again. Well, a person may espouse not just being a Christian, but being a True Christian. Nevertheless, can we also not ask whether he/she is indeed really, actually, without guile, ... truly a “true Christian” as he/she claims to be? Will there be any end to such verbosity in an attempt to cover every single adjective to “ verify” a person’s Christian status? I believe you get my point. When we reach out to non-believers or encourage young believers to grow in their faith, we should cut out all the confounding labels and speak in simple language the plain facts of belief and holiness. A fellow brother or sister who falls short in some ways reflects the truth of Scriptural teaching that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Certainly, he/she can and ought to make progress, with help from those who consider themselves to be more faithful in their Christian walk with the born-again badge rather than being put down as a second-class or unsaved Christian simply because he/she does not wear the same loud badge proclaiming himself/herself as a BORN-AGAIN. I would indeed be stumped by any claim that there can be any Christian who is unsaved. According to my simple understanding, one who is unsaved is simply a non-Christian. A Christian, by definition and as a derivative of the Greek word *Christianos* used by Peter in 1 Pet 4:16, is one who stands firm for Christ and is not ashamed. The same meaning is attached to the word in Acts:

The disciples were called Christians [*Christianos*] first at Antioch. (Ac 11:26)

Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian [*Christianos*]?” (Ac 26:28)

Could the disciples have been unsaved even though they were Christians but did not proclaim themselves as “born-again”? Can one who suffers as a Christian (1 Pet 4:16) be unsaved? You have the answer.

Nobody can deny the truth as Jesus told Nicodemus: “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’” (Jn 3:5-7)

If Nicodemus did not understand these things, we have the added benefit of Peter’s elucidation: “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from

the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.” (1 Pet 1:22-23)

When we share the Good News to a non-believer or the meaning of holiness to a growing Christian, the fundamental and vital issues of faith, salvation and a full life in and for Christ can be put across with the appropriate language that the person we speak to can grasp. Being born again means that one has become a new person with the corrupted old self crucified. (Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9) Or, as the apostle Peter put it, being “not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.” It does not matter if the person does not make use of the title “born again” in words so long as he lives out the essence of being born again, renewed in spirit by the Holy Spirit indwelling him, in his life as a faithful Christian. Names do not make a Christian. It is living testimonies that count!

## THE WAY UP

When he was 7 years old, his family was forced out of their home on a legal technicality, and he had to work to help support them. At age 9, his mother died. At 22, he lost his job as a store clerk. He wanted to go to law school, but his education wasn't good enough. At 23, he went into debt to become a partner in a small store. At 26, his business partner died, leaving him a huge debt that took years to repay. At 28, after courting a girl for four years, he asked her to marry him. She said no. At 37, on his third try he was elected to Congress, but two years later, he failed to be reelected. At 41, his four-year-old son died. At 45, he ran for the Senate and lost. At 47, he failed as the vice-presidential candidate. At 49, he ran for the Senate again, and lost. At 51, he was elected president of the United States. His name was Abraham Lincoln, a man many consider the greatest leader the country ever had.

**Some people get all the breaks.**

**SCRIPTURE:** Proverbs 3:11-12; Heb 12:4-6; James 1:2-4,12

<http://graceland.gentle.org/divine/breaks.html>

## Launch Pad [www.DanLtoons.com](http://www.DanLtoons.com)



“ Says here, in the end God will look at each of our lives to see what we did. And in this case there will not be any recounts.



# TGNC Update



In the January issue of the Vine, you were updated on the work of the International Lutheran Seafarers' Mission in Singapore (ILSM). Do you know that the Lutheran Church is not just Jurong Christian Church? I suppose that you know, but some may not know that as members of the Lutheran Family, we are also concerned for and support the works of the Thai Good News Centre (TGNC) and the Gospel Mission to the Blind (GMB). This is indicative of the fact that in the realm

of Christian outreach "to all nations" according to Christ's Great Commission, we ought not to fix our eyes on narrow perspectives of our own capabilities or limitations. In the finally reckoning, it is the sum of all works among brethren that counts. In JCC, obviously we are limited in our resources to copy the works of the ILSM, the TGNC and GMB; the dialect ministries of our sister churches, the community outreach ministry such as the Elder-Care of Yishun Christian Church, etc. However, we should not see ourselves as just members of a small congregation in Jurong, but of a larger body called the Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS); and within this body, a lot of good works can be done for God's glory. Members of LCS are always welcome to lend their support in cash or kind, hands-on engagement or prayers, to the different ministry branches of the Lutheran Church. As a Lutheran body, we can contribute meaningfully to the overall spiritual harvest of souls despite the little we see ourselves capable of individually. It always warms our heart to see souls transformed, despairs and worries converted to peace and joy as pre-Christians embrace Christ as their Lord and Saviour – regardless of where this takes place. If we have eyes but choose not to see the works of the Lutheran Church, we are as good as blind. On the next page is just one of many testimonies of lives changed for Christ because of the works of our Lutheran brethren and, of course, the grace and mercy of God.

Here in the western part of Singapore, it also behooves us to open our eyes to see the works that we are engaged in locally in JCC. In everything that I do in service, I am glad to say that I have derived some inspiration from our pastors and councilors. The CG endeavours, the Easter Musical production, the Fellowship Hall project and many other things that our leaders have set the ball rolling are for all to see. Just as in LCS, there is no lack of effort in JCC. I really

don't understand why there are still some who have a lot to say to the contrary about JCC and LCS when even little things we do that are not too big for them to lend a hand in support seem to be too heavy a task. It becomes not just a case of having eyes that do not see but having minds and brawns that are at risk of going into atrophy. I know that our pastors are working very hard to improve the situation. Their hard work for the church and for personal uplifting in service is itself an inspiration for us to lend our support. We are one in the Kingdom!

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**“Rob, kill if need be and then flee.”**

John Lee

*I came from a remote village up in the mountain range in Northern Thailand. The people here are used to agriculture and many are poor. There are not many job opportunities. The young people in our village choose to move out to the city to find work and have a better life. Most of my friends left too.*

*Then, someone advised me to find work in Singapore. I borrowed enough money from my relatives and friends for a job placement through an agency. They got me a job and I came to Singapore in April 2001. Here, life is really tough. Everyday work and lot of temptations. When I think of my family and also about my poverty, I harboured thoughts of striking rich by quick means like robbing and killing if need be. Then I will flee. I will go home and have a good life.*

*One day, I was at Golden Mile Complex. I was sitting there at the alley with my friends drinking and having fun when someone came by and invited us to Thai Good News Centre. I decided to drop in for a visit. There I was greeted by friendly people and was invited for lunch like a family. There, eventually I came to know Jesus and accepted Him as my Lord and Saviour. Thank God, He saved me and kept me away from wrong. Today, I am serving as Usher and bass guitarist with the Music Band at the Centre. I learned to play the Bass guitar here.*

**Samran, a Thai worker in Singapore**  
(extracted from TGNC newsletter)

### What it means to be poor

One day a father of a very wealthy family took his son on a trip to the country with the firm purpose of showing his son how poor people can be.

They spent a couple of days and nights on the farm of what would be considered a very poor family.

On their return from their trip, the father asked his son, “How was the trip?” “It was great, Dad.” “Did you see how poor people can be?” the father asked. “Oh Yeah” said the son. “So what did you learn from the trip?” asked the father.

The son answered, “I saw that we have one dog and they had four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden and they have a creek that has no end. We have imported lanterns in our garden and they have the stars at night. Our patio reaches to the front yard and they have the whole horizon.

We have a small piece of land to live on and they have fields that go beyond our sight. We have servants who serve us, but they serve others. We buy our food, but they grow theirs. We have walls around our property to protect us, they have friends to protect them.”

With this the boy's father was speechless. Then his son added, “Thanks dad for showing me how poor we are.”

Too many times we forget what we have and concentrate on what we don't have. What is one person's worthless object is another's prize possession. It is all based on one's perspective. Makes you wonder what would happen if we all gave thanks for all the bounty we have, instead of worrying about wanting more. Take joy in all you have, especially your friends.

# ... Into the 2<sup>nd</sup> Month of the Year

I will write about:

by Charlotte Sam

1. Reflections
2. Seeding
3. Content
4. Youths
5. Cleaning clams
6. Testimony

The down side is I do not have a theme.

The up side is I have outlined the topics. You know you can start anywhere to read this!

## (1) Reflections

This is normally not the time of the year to be in a reflective mood. But I am. Matthew 11 says:

*<sup>25</sup>At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. <sup>26</sup>Yes, Father, for this was Your good pleasure.*

*<sup>27</sup>All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.*

Got a phone call from Ken just a few days before the Chinese New Year. I expected him to extort an Ang Pow from me, but he told me to pray for his mother who was diagnosed with T4 stomach cancer. By the time I write this after Valentine's Day, her cancer has fast spread and chemo is nothing but just an option to prolong her earthly stay. On a recent evening, as the family gathered round his mother's bed for prayers, she had a vision of a winged angel. That was very comforting to us all.

My half-brother died from a long-drawn battle with kidney failure more than 20 years ago. He spent his last years on a bed next to my study table. He kept me company in his semi-conscious state while I burnt midnight oil for my exams. He introduced me to Noah's Ark. He listened to me well and never lost his temper. He knew his days were numbered but he rallied me on. After his passing away, I was missing him as a brother, friend and companion. Suddenly one night in my sleep, my mum had a vision of him waving his hand at us and telling us that he was safe with the Lord. It was serenity my mother and I had felt.

Truly, the Lord reveals Himself to whom He chooses, and whom He is pleased with.

## (2) **Seeding**

I think we are all familiar with the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13.

It made me think of Peggy and Thiam Seng, with whom I have lost touch since I was 8, 2 years after my debut attendance in Sunday School. My little memory of them tells me that they were then in their mid-twenties and had full-time jobs. I must say they were very committed to the cause of seeding. I cannot even remember which Church they took us to, but I recall their faithfulness to ensure we non-Christian kids attend Sunday School regularly – rain AND shine. They would travel with us on public transport to fetch us to Sunday School. They did not stay near us, but they traveled to our neighbourhood to pick us up to go to Sunday School that is no so near our neighbourhood. Peggy and Thiam Seng are not even Sunday School teachers! They would come down after their worship service to make sure we go home safely with other worshippers who are assigned to see us home. More than 3 decades later, and as a Sunday School helper, I am in complete awe at their faithfulness.

I do not think Peggy and Thiam Seng expected every kid to turn out as “good seeds”. They sow out of charity, allowing God to be God and man to be man. Although God still elects His chosen ones, that doesn’t stop them from reaching out to as many as possible. They will just leave God to decide who will have a place in His kingdom; as well as leave the kids to decide whether they want to be part of that kingdom.

May God be with you, Peggy and Thiam Seng, wherever you are.

## (3) **Content**

1 Timothy 6 says:

*<sup>7</sup>For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.*

*<sup>8</sup>But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. <sup>9</sup>People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

A few of you probably know what I do for a living. A good part of it requires us to churn out enticing promotion campaigns and advertisements. The underlying objective is to keep the economy going, i.e. spend and we help you justify why you are spending wisely. The term call-for-action is not without its merit. It literally translates into the *advertiser's* desired outcome from the campaign or ad blitz. A clever excuse would be if more people spend, more jobs will also be created – to supply the demand.

What I find unsettling is how in the present gloom and doom, advertisers' pitches scream of the need for wanting more. Bluntly put, a successful ad copy means clever exploitation of the battered esteem and egos in the current economic climate.

Well, may I admonish you to remember 1 Timothy 6:7-9 each time you are making that purchase decision. For many women I know ☺, the impulse to buy comes with hormonal fluctuations (ha ha ha)! But seriously, it is ok to be different, and that could mean being a minimalist. We do not have to look far for continuous supply of resources – God provides what we need in the correct dose at the time needed most.

#### (4) Youths

The first 3 chapters of 1 Samuel wrote about how Hannah dedicated and prepared Samuel for God's service. Some commentators estimated that Samuel probably just turned 12 when God first called him in Chapter 3. This led me to think of our teenagers in JCC.

- ✦ When do we and can we reasonably expect responsible behaviour from such youngsters? When do we and can we expect them to accept meaningful responsibility?
- ✦ How do we manage our expectations so that these youngsters will feel significant yet remain teachable.

Beside Samuel, the Bible also recorded God calling those while they were very young, namely, Joseph, David, and even Mary who was probably no older than 14 when chosen to bear Jesus.

I am no expert at tapping human potential. I observe we have a handful (i.e. we need more on the roster!) of teenagers helping out at Sunday School but I am not sure how they view this aspect of the Lord's service. I view them as my peers in reaching out to the little children. I hope they will take their role as seriously as the Sunday School teachers have taken theirs and ours combined.

With this, and on behalf of the Sunday School ministry, I plead for more youngsters to come forward, and I thank you for your help! You must have the frequent doubts about handling other people's kids – so do I! ☺ ☺

#### (5) Cleaning Clams

I think many of you know that one of the ways to clean sand and grit from clams is to immerse them in brine, perhaps with some cornmeal added to it. This mixture should irritate the clams into expelling most of the trapped sand and grit. Running cold water over the cooked clams is the added step to rid them entirely of the sand and grit.

If I may draw the analogy of:

clams = us / brine with cornmeal = God's Word

God's Word, acting as brine, will shake us, the clams, out of our comfort zones of undesired sin. As Christians, the Bible continues to prune us (John 15:1-17) – just like how cooked clams get the finishing rinse. The finishing touches, as they would say.

## **(6) Testimony**

The homegrown singing pastor was on air one Sunday night. She was asked why her album was named Sunday, a day in the week (of 7 days, why this day?). She said it was named to coincide with her own name and hence she declared Sunday for herself! A few of us were waiting for her to declare it the Lord's day. But you know, it is not always easy. She was still a newcomer on TV and there are media and broadcast regulations. Let us (especially me!) try and withhold our criticisms of how other Christians conduct their lives in the public eye. Let us spare a prayerful thought for them too.



This morning I took a cab and we spoke of bread-and-butter issues in the half-hour journey. I took the opportunity to tell him I shared my perspective as a Christian who believes in life after bodily death. To my surprise, he was receptive to my sharing. I wished I had JCC's name card so he could come join us. I was alighting and could only wish that the Lord would continue to work on his openness. At a spur-of-the-moment, I felt necessary to tell him the basis of my views. That basis was Christ.

I told God silently that I must do better each time, next time.

Yesterday I was also sharing with Pauline about my life as a Christian. I have known her for as long as I have lived in Taman Jurong. However, yesterday was the first time I spoke at length about God's glory. What Pauline and I have in common is emotional baggage, but Christ was that difference (or edge!) I had. I wanted her to know that my relationship with a loving God is not exclusive and I am inviting her to share that with me.

Naturally, Pauline and her 2 sons, Jasper and Jerome, have been high on my list for any Church outreach activities – and hence my blatant hint for your prayers!

## **In Closing**

I am glad this article is going to make it for your reading pleasure. Most of all, I thank God that I am allowed to do this. God will bless you with what I write.

Amen.

# Reflection on Gospel of John

by Tan Swee Leong

**W**hat is the purpose of John in writing the Gospel? The answer is given in Jn 20:31 which reads *“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”* John seeks to bring us to the fullness of life by believing in Jesus the Son of God. The word “believe” is found 98 times in John’s gospel. God’s gift of the abundant life through daily experience is in the one John reveals as God himself, Jesus Christ. John emphasizes the deity of Christ – he is pre-eminent with God, equal with God, became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn1:14). John confirms the deity of Christ (Jn 5:38, 9:35-37, 10:36, 17:5) and affirms his identity as the I AM of the OT, through the great I AM statements found in John’s gospel (Jn 6:35, 8:25, 10:7).

John is distinctive from Matthew, Mark and Luke, referred to as the Synoptics, in that John gives us not just Jesus formal teaching but his private discussions, seven discourses which reveals the heart of Christ, his understanding of himself and how we can come to believe Him and receive eternal life.. The Synoptics focus on Jesus public ministry whereas John gives a more intimate account of the inner personality of Jesus. John uses seven signs (miracles) to support the seven discourses and point us to God himself. The signs go beyond being acts of supernatural power, they point beyond themselves to Jesus. The signs reveal his glory to those who believe and confront those who do not with the need to decide about Jesus. If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus.

The seven discourses provides teaching on new birth (Jn3:1-34), belief (Jn4:1-42), life (Jn5:10-47), Bread of Life (Jn 6:22-65), life giving Spirit (Jn 7:1-52), the light of the world (Jn 8:12-59) and the good Shepherd (Jn 10:1-42). As I reflect on these discourses, there are many lessons which can be applied to my Christian living and relationship with God.

In the first discourse we meet Nicodemus, a teacher of the law and a member of the Jewish ruling council. Though Nicodemus was convinced that Jesus was a teacher from God based on the miracles Jesus performed, Jesus points him to the most important quest for mankind – “to be born again.” Nicodemus though steeped in his learning and religiosity was unable to understand the meaning behind this. Jesus leads him to the spiritual truth that the Spirit of God can bring inner transformation so that we can be “born again”. Jesus words to Nicodemus were, *“You must be born again”* he did not say “You may be born again.” It is a spiritual necessity. Unless this happens we cannot find the answer to the inner

restlessness that draws us in search of a fuller life. How the Spirit does His work is a mystery, it is like the wind which blow wherever it pleases. This points to God's sovereignty over humankind. We sometimes see only the physical dimension, the level of human possibility but Jesus points to the realm of divine possibility.

Jesus' famous words of Jn 3:16 speaks of His offer of salvation. Salvation which can be received by faith and belief in the Son of God. We do not need to fully understand and resolve all our intellectual and theological doubts and problems. What Jesus ask of us it to respond in faith and accept his offer of salvation Just as the Israelites were healed when they looked upon the bronze snake in the wilderness, without fully understanding what it all meant. We need to respond in a similar act of faith taking God at His Word. As Christian believers, we need also to seek beyond our religiosity and seek Christ.

In the next discourse we meet Jesus and his encounter with the Samaritan woman. John records that Jesus had to go to Samaria, it was a divine appointment. It was around noon when Jesus stopped at the well at Sychar. Jesus initiated a conversation with the Samaritan woman, which was taboo during those days, as Jews do not have any dealings with the Samaritan let alone a Jewish man with a woman and in a public place. Jesus broke the barriers of discrimination both sexist and racist. The conversations initially was small talk, Jesus the master teacher was able to turn this to spiritual matters - about living water instead of plain well water the woman was drawing. The living water stirred the interest of the woman, it is a source which is the inner fountain if bubbling vitality that satisfies a person's spiritual thirst. This is living water for the emptiness of the soul. The Samaritan desired the living water but still missed the spiritual meaning behind it. This speaks to me as we often overlook the spiritual message God want to give us even in the physical events and doily encounters of our lives. Is is also a lesson in evangelism of how to relate to the things around us and direct a person to spiritual truths.

Jesus related his truth by touching on the woman moral life, pointing out her moral failure, having five husbands. Though we may think we are not on the same level as the woman as a moral failure, nevertheless we have to admit that we are moral failures and spiritually bankrupt sinners. He offers to the Samaritan living water, His spirit and the ability to worship him in spirit, that is with our whole being and in truth i.e. Jesus himself, the truth. The same is available to us to day even as we commit and accept Him.

As the Gospel develops we continue to see who Jesus is. In his discourse with the Pharisees after the healing of the paralytic, Jesus makes the bold claim that



he and the Father are one. He calls God my Father making himself equal with God. The Jews were obviously offended by these claims.

Jesus further claims:

- his deeds were divine –“Whatever the Father does the Son also does” (Jn 5:19),
- he had divine knowledge - For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. (Jn 5:20)
- he had divine prerogative over life and death - For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. (Jn 5:21)
- he had divine authority - Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son (Jn 5:22)
- divine worship - that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. (Jn 5: 23).

Obviously Jesus is claiming that He is equal to God – the incarnation of God, true God and perfect man in the image of God. The choice is for us to accept Him for who he says he is or to reject Him as a liar of a mad man.

Jesus did not only make these claim but he defended his deity, not based on the claims themselves (Jn 5:34) or even the testimony of John the Baptist (Jn 5:35). Jesus cites the evidence of his life and works “*which testifies that the Father has sent me*” (Jn 5:36). Jesus performed miracles not to amaze us, they are signs, God given pointers which directs us to God. Peter in Acts 2:22 did attest “*Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.*” Just as Jesus is challenging the Jews of the day, the challenge lies before us to examine the deed and works of Christ and to consider his deity.

Jesus cites evidence of Scriptures itself, “*You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.*” ( Jn 5:39.)

We can study Scripture but miss the intention that God wants to bring to us – to know Christ Himself not to know about Him. We may fail to see his divinity because of lack of personal knowledge of God himself. The Pharisees were more

concerned of their scholarly reputation than God's truth. Scripture is directing us to the source of eternal life, Jesus Christ himself the divine source of life. Scripture is a signpost pointing us to Christ, we should not miss out like the Jews when Jesus remarked in Jn 5:40, "yet you refuse to come to me to have life.", what a sad commentary.

We have to make a critical decision as the promise is in Jn 5:24, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." What a promise what an offer, eternal life is here and now available to us, through Jesus we cross over from death to life.

After the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus reminded the people who had ate their fill, the discourse of life, the source of life. *"I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."* (Jn 6:26–27).

Jesus is teaching on two kind of food – food that nourishes the physical body, which is doomed to perish, and food that nourishes the spiritual soul to eternity. The Galilean who ate their fill only saw the economic benefit of the meal, but failed to see the spiritual significance of what happened. The miracle of the feeding was a sign, pointing to Jesus willingness and provision to meet our spiritual needs. Jesus reiterates His divinity, declaring, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. (Jn 6:35). Jesus is saying that we find eternal life in Him, the divine person that he is. It is in the relationship with the living God.

Many of his hearers were skeptical, they could not see beyond Jesus as the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know.

We can relate to the same experience, many hear the message but reject the claims and teachings of Jesus. John records, "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him." (Jn 6:66).

The question remains after 2,000 years, "will you come?", will you respond to the call of God, We need an open heart for Jesus says "Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to me." (Jn 6:45). It is precious gift given by God. It is to be received by listening to the voice of God. In the process there are many things about Jesus we find hard to understand or accept. However the question is not "Do we understand everything he says" but "Are we ready to commit ourselves to everything he is?"

Studying the Gospel of John strengthens my faith in the Son of God and reinforces the need to know him more intimately. The message is so evangelistic, it speaks directly to the soul of man, it draws us to God himself and ask of us to respond to Him, to pre-believers to decide about Jesus, who he is and his offer and way of salvation, to the believers to place their faith in Him, know Him and live to glorify Him with our life and walk.

# Photo Report: JCKK Celebration



## TJCG CNY GATHERING

Taman Jurong Cell Group organized a Chinese New Year Pot Bless Fellowship at Willie and Florence house. It was a good time of fellowship and meeting old friends like Penny, Irene and Jimmy Shin and even Willie and Florence. The gathering did not solely comprise of TJCG members but included a number of representatives from the other CGs.



The weather was just great, breezy and not too sunny. It was ideal for gathering around and chat while the children made use of the pool.



In the cool of the night, we celebrated an early Valentine's Day. Some of the loving couples posed for pictures with a heart shaped cake. It was a good time indeed.



It is pretty strange or odd how it worked out this way. Even if you are not religious you should read this:

What is the shortest chapter in the Bible?

**Psalms 117**

What is the longest chapter in the Bible?

**Psalms 119**

Which chapter is in the centre of the Bible?

**Psalms 118**

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Fact: There are 594 chapters before Psalms 118.

Fact: There are 594 chapters after Psalms 118.

Add these numbers up and you get 1188.

What is the centre verse in the Bible?

**Psalms 118:8**

Does this verse say something significant about God's perfect will for our lives?

The next time someone says they would like to find

God's perfect will for their lives and that they want to be in the centre of His will, just send them to the centre of His Word!



**Psalms 118:8**  
(NKJV) "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man."

Now isn't that odd how this worked out (or was God in the centre of it)?

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You got a minute? 60 seconds for God? All you do is simply say a small prayer for the person you love.

"Father God bless \_\_\_\_\_ in whatever it is that You know he/she may be needing this day! And may \_\_\_\_\_ life be full of your peace, prosperity and power as he/she seeks to have a closer relationship with You. Amen."