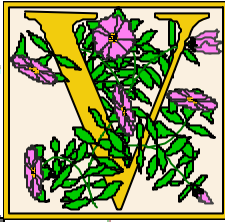


Mar

2003



THE
ine

for internal circulation only

Vol 3/2003

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus. Last issue I mentioned that the Treasurer's wife may be facing retrenchment from PSA. However, just before that fateful Monday when the announcement was made, two speakers, Rev John Tan on Saturday and Dr Gary Choong on Sunday, spoke about the PSA situation and nothing being impossible with God and God is in control of all things. Thanks be to God, my wife was rescued from retrenchment in a miraculous way.

Another intervention from God happened on that Monday when after months of searching, the structural drawings of JCC were found. The combined council was at a deadlock and work on the MPH could not proceed because we could not find the drawings. Then suddenly, the drawings were discovered and now the work can proceed and should complete soon.

Indeed God will make a way when there seems to be no way.

We will attempt to introduce some colour to The Vine. Mark this issue as another milestone for The Vine as we start printing portions of it in colour.

Next month, we will be holding our AGM. Please remember to pray for your leaders.

The Editor

Pastor Michael is going to Nias.

Pastor Michael plans to spend more time in the mission field. Each trip, he will stay in Nias two months, after which he returns to Singapore to update the situation at the field and do presentations of the work.

He will head the Orphanage and will continue to build a network of Indonesian churches to reap the harvest. He leaves on the 4th March 2003 and his family will join him one month later.

This has been a long wait and we thank the Lord that He has now made it possible.

While in Nias, Pastor Michael can be contacted at:

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

entwined.

In the vine. In due respect for John 15:5, our in-house newsletter is aptly named. I often feel less of a twig, but more of tendrils and creepers in search of support. What about you?

There is something in our culture that bears little tolerance to failures, let alone ignorance. In the truly corporate scene, too many people jostle to offer their know-how's. Many internal vehicles for communication are screaming "Look no further, *I* know this and that." What are they people trying to communicate?

An insatiable desire for power. The old adage 'knowledge is power' also means that latent knowledge is not as powerful as conspicuous knowledge.

In the presently touted knowledge-based economy, we take pride in being the know-all. Our credibility lies in being dependable and putting on the self-sufficient façade.

All these are contrary to Biblical teachings. Christ had lived the life of man and died the way of thieves. He came for the needy and weary ones. In my context, He came for me – clueless and incomplete.

Oswald Chambers said in *My Utmost for His Highest*, "The first thing we must surrender is all of our pretense or deceit. What our Lord wants us to present to Him is not our goodness, honesty, or our efforts to do better, but real solid sin.

"When people really see themselves as the Lord sees them, it is not the terribly offensive sins of the flesh that shock

By Charlotte Sam

them, but the awful nature of the pride of their own hearts opposing Jesus Christ."

Jeremiah Ch. 9 records:

²³ Thus saith the LORD, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: ²⁴ But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight," saith the LORD.

The following is the same passage in NIV:

²³ This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

Clearly, even as Proverbs 3:5-7 has instructed us as believers,

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

⁷ Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

Evidently in our society, few are truly inspired by the quest for knowledge, but the psychology built upon self-gratification, instant fame and charisma.

The bright spark stages a presence (make thyself seen and heard), charms instantly (“ I know something that you don’t” and winks ;-)) and is instantly transformed into the shining star of tomorrow. Character breadth (vs. depth) implies a more well-rounded and likeable persona. Needless to say, the reward for the talented is glittering visibility.

Talented - knowledgeable, powerful. What follows for this charismatic persona is unprecedented bargaining power, only to further attest to his [gender-neutral] prowess and virtuoso. This is a success story of self-promotion and self-affirmation. In the context of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, this could perhaps correspond to self-actualisation.

In the present-day work appraisal system, many of us relentlessly record our achievements. Extra points are accorded to activities that help our superiors or internal customers ring in their brownie points.

In his article *What are My Talents* in the March/April 2003 issue of *Physician* magazine, Scott Hall, M.D., has made apt reference to the Parable of Talents in Matthew 25. Here are noteworthy excerpts of his article:

“A common mistake among men is to replace our God-decreed leadership

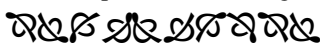
position with the pursuit of other ‘more important’ powers. Often, we lust for power in our practice, financial situation and even in our spiritual lives. We want power to heal, buy and lead. *When we get the slightest indication that we may possess this power we sink every ounce of time, energy and resources into whatever endeavor we have on our do-good list.* While a compulsive drive can derive some spiritual benefits, *the problem lies not in what we gain but in what we ignore.*” [Charlotte highlights italics]

When God is not at the helm of our lives, it is likely that other ‘ more important’ things will take over the rudder. Self-obsession does not equate self-control; one could actually be voluntarily controlled by what one possesses.

1 Corinthians 6:

¹² All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

This verse is just as appropriate for the many ‘grey’ and ‘sticky’ situations we are confronted with, voluntarily or otherwise. What is the bottom line? Many things can be done, but those things that will detract from your walk with God rather than help it along should not be done.



Thank-you for being a wonderful audience! Read on for light-hearted snippets.

ABOUT THE GOOD SAMARITAN

For you with teenage and grown-up children, my 7-year-old may remind you of your kids’ early childhood.

Ryan’s idea of a good Samaritan was demonstrated in a recent Math test: “ I let ZhiYong copy my answers!”

NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

Hands up those who know the answer to the universal No. 1 for a New Year resolution!

Weight loss!

Little do we have in common with the rest of the world except for this resolution. I can confess to you that I eat compulsively in response to stress, and I am easily stressed. When I am standing in line just to see my oppressive boss, I eat. When I end my Quiet Time with more unanswered questions, I eat. And so on.

An old English proverb says, "Gluttony kills more than the sword." Another maintains, "There are more gluttons than alcoholics in the grave."

King Solomon, a man familiar with feasting and abundance, has this advice in Ecclesiastes 10:17 - "Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!"

Eating for the wrong reasons is a sin. More importantly, giving in to uncontrolled eating binges goes contrary to what was instructed by the apostle Paul to the Galatia churches in Galatians 5:

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and **self-control**. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Once again, 1 Corinthians 6:

¹² All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

ABOUT DRINK-DRIVING

The 7am rush-hour traffic to Ryan's school can raise his parents' adrenalin levels.

One way to normalize claustrophobia in our small Hyundai Elantra is to engage the kids in 'intelligible' conversation.

One 7am-morning, we discussed drink-driving. I used the example of the Merc that crashed into the MRT train. The errant driver was given the Breathalyser test before he was taken to the hospital.

Winston drew and an instant analogy to why food and drinks were banned on the MRT train. Alas, nice try! But he sure distracted his parents from the heavy traffic condition.



Breakthrough

On 5th March, Rev John Tan challenged the congregation to invite friends, neighbours, relatives and colleagues to the Easter evangelistic celebration and 300 names were entered into the prayer box. The intercessors are busy praying for these names and we encourage all of us to also pray for all the people whose names have been submitted. We are expecting a great harvest. Even if only half of the people invited accepted the message of salvation, it would mean 150 people added to our fellowship. Therefore, we request that more of us would step up to prepare ourselves to help nurture these babes in Christ by attending the nurture courses conducted by Rev John Tan.

Expect that God will bless JCC – therefore be prepared.

From the Internet:

10 KEY ELEMENTS OF DISCIPLE-MAKING

1. **Purpose:** The overall task of the Church is to make disciples.
2. **Definition:** A disciple is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who has a visible, growing, life-long commitment to follow, obey, love, and serve Jesus Christ, and following His example, to serve and disciple others.
3. **Small Groups:** Jesus made disciples primarily through small groups. Small Groups are a key tool in the process of making disciples. We follow this model in our disciple-making process.
4. **Disciple-making Growth Phases** Jesus brought His disciples through four identifiable stages of growth. Each required greater commitment, training, and maturity. Jesus called them into each phase: "Come and See"; "Follow Me"; "Be with Me"; and "Remain in Me." The Church must provide opportunity for growth at various levels of commitment while challenging her people to pursue increasing spiritual maturity and development. The process of transforming lives involves changing: 1) Beliefs, 2) Values, 3) Priorities, 4) Behavior, and Character. This is Spiritual Formation.
5. **Ministry Structure:** The Church must plan, organize, and structure activities so that every aspect of ministry supports and contributes to the disciple-making process. All ministry initiatives must support the disciple-making function.
6. **Group Dynamics:** Different sizes and types of groups have distinct dynamics, each used effectively to encourage disciple-making. For example, open groups most effectively welcome and assimilates new members. Closed groups encourage growth in maturity. Small groups encourage intimacy. Larger groups encourage fellowship and celebration.
7. **Intentional Marketplace Evangelism:** The Church must have an intentional strategy for and practice of evangelism. People have different gifts that support the evangelizing process. The Church must enable its members to use those gifts in appropriate ways to facilitate the overall ministry of evangelism.
8. **Effective Ministry Deployment:** The Pastor's priorities should be: 1) Prayer, 2) Preaching, 3) Vision, 4) Training Disciple-makers, 5) Leadership development, and 6) Modeling the disciple-making process. All believers should serve in their area of gifts and passions for service/ministry.
9. **Train and Deploy Disciple-makers** Jesus trained His disciples to make other disciples and gave them opportunities and responsibilities for ministry. The Church grows as it trains, equips, and places qualified and zealous leaders in ministry.
10. **Fervent Prayer:** The effectiveness of the Church's disciple-making ministry is directly related to prayer, as individuals, families, and as a body. The Church must employ an intentional prayer strategy as an integral component of disciple-making.

You are What you Eat and What you Read

I am reflecting on the common people's diet of mental food to keep their life going.

First thing in the morning, to ensure that we are No. 1 to be updated about happenings, there is the regular early rush for the FOC dailies. Since it is free, why not go for it – grab one, or two, or ... – before the stock goes “kosong” and we have to declare our “humiliating” loss in the kiasu race to be No. 1 to be informed about anything in the world? Of course, the insalubrious ingredients are all mixed into the food that we consume unthinkingly since the whole platter comes to us without cost to our pocket.

If you are looking for free food, don't restrict yourself to the dailies. There are the monthlies such as the Free Health Digest that I often get a copy over the pharmacy counter. I enjoy reading such for useful information related to health matters. If the dailies that appear every morning are people's free breakfast, then I shall consider the FHD as free lunch that is enough to feed me for a month before the next delivery.

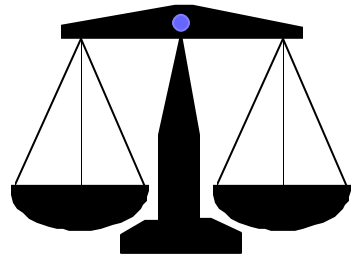
Then there are those readable materials that many people read by virtue of their needs to be informed in matters related to their vocation or simply because they feel that such a diet does add economic value to their brains. Included in this diet list would be: Computer WORLD, Productivity Digests, Newsweek, FEER, etc.

Recently I attempted digesting a highly recommended computer novel after attending a gathering of computer enthusiasts and professionals, although I just happen to belong to the category of computer users who only know how to sign on and off with a valid password. The title of the book – The ART OF DECEPTON (The Modern Hackers) – really captivated me. In this book, the greatest and most apt warning is to detect and know the hand/identity behind the keyboard. Surely we are not only living in an age of terrorism, but one full of deception too! (So we need the INSPIRED WORD as a regular part of our diet for healthful enlightenment.)

Certainly, we know well that the Bible is the No. 1 daily bread for the regenerated Christian and is accepted as the No. 1 (most well read) written material on Earth. The God-inspired Book holds nothing but the Truth and all other voluminous reading materials on Earth are nothing in comparison in terms of good value and popularity.

I was also reminded by the editor of IMPACT Magazine some time back that we should go light on what we read for a balance with the serious stuff in our diet. Of course, I try to maintain a balanced reading diet that includes the JCC's monthly Vine too. I enjoy reading the Vine and support it definitely. I reckon that the Vine provides me with a meal that is both light and healthful.

In conclusion, what is your take on the idea that we are what we eat and what we read? I hope I can convince one of my fellow co-labourers to do a good book review on parenting woes to provide a good read that inspires and encourages us in these days of many D's (Downs, Depression, Distress... Doooms?!)



Tony Koh

THE WILL OF GOD

By Neil Anderson

If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself (John 7:17).

Knowing the will of God is not just a twentieth-century problem. People were struggling at the time of Christ. Some people were saying of Him, "He's a good man." Others were saying, "He leads the multitude astray" (see John 7:12). How could these people know whether He was leading them into truth?

Seizing the opportunity, Jesus set forth standards of divine guidance. His first admonition was, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself" (John 7:16, 17). **The essential prerequisite to know the will of God, according to Jesus, is a willingness to do it.**

What is the will of God? God's will for those who believe in Him is to be alive in Christ for the purpose of establishing His kingdom by overcoming the evil one and becoming fully the people He has called us to be. Notice the opening words of the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9, 10). When praying this prayer, we are asking for God's will to be accomplished on earth as it presently is in heaven. Apparently God's will is being perfectly executed in heaven but not on earth.

Are you totally committed to do God's will without knowing for sure what it is? Do you hold any reservations about turning your will over to God? Do you really believe that God's will for you is good, acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2)? If God is God and you call Him Lord, doesn't He have the right to exercise His will in your life?

GOD IS OUR SAVIOUR

God is our Saviour
Let us give Him our cheers

He forgives our sins
Let us be on His team

He loves us and
wants us to love Him too

To know what He wants us to do
we have to read the Bible everyday

So, let us start to worship Him
even if your hair needs a trim

Let us dance and sing
for He is the real true King!

Samantha Soong Xinyi (P4)

A BEAUTIFUL PRAYER

I asked God to take away my habit. *God said, No.*
It is not for me to take away, but for you to give it up.

I asked God to make my handicapped child whole. *God said, No.*

His spirit is whole, his body is only temporary.
I asked God to grant me patience. *God said, No.*
Patience is a byproduct of tribulations; it isn't granted, it is learned.

I asked God to give me happiness. *God said, No.*
I give you blessings; Happiness is up to you.

I asked God to spare me pain. *God said, No.*
Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares and brings you closer to me.

I asked God to make my spirit grow. *God said, No.*

You must grow on your own! , but I will prune you to make you fruitful.

I asked God for all things that I might enjoy life. *God said, No.*

I will give you life, so that you may enjoy all things.

I ask God to help me LOVE others, as much as He loves me.

God said...Ahhhh, finally you have the idea.

The Gospel Kaleidoscope



Although people throughout the world may be very different, there is one thing that they have in common. People all around the world know the importance of colors. Using colors helps a person to identify which tribe or nation they are from. Colors can be used to express feeling and emotions in artwork or in decorating special festival clothing. Colors can also be used to illustrate the truths of God... This simple gospel presentation is easy to understand and remember because it is based upon 5 common colors.

BLACK represents sin



In the beginning God created everything perfect and He had wonderful fellowship with Adam and Eve. But man decided to disobey God. This resulted in sin and death.

Red represents the blood of Jesus Christ

God didn't want us to die and live without Him forever. He said, "I will die in your place." So God (Jesus) came to this earth and died on the cross and shed His blood for us. If we believe this and accept Him into our heart as our Savior, He forgives us for disobedience and we are born into God's family.



White represents purity

Now when God looks at us, He doesn't see our "black" sin, but a clean heart that is forgiven. Forgiveness makes us clean and white as newly fallen snow.

Green represents growth

As we yield ourselves to Him, we grow as a Christian. Just as green plants and trees grow and produce fruit, so we grow in our Christian life and produce the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.



Gold represents a special promise



As we go through life, we have a precious promise that is as "good as gold." God has promised that as His child we will live with Him forever in His wonderful home called heaven, where the streets are paved with gold.

Do you want to be a part of His wonderful family and accept Jesus today?

If you do, He will forgive your sin and make you one of His children. All you have to do is talk to Him and ask Him. He will hear you because God sees and hears us right now.

You can pray a prayer like this, if you would like:

Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. Please forgive me for all my sins and come into my heart right now. Thank you, Jesus, for forgiving me of my sins and coming into my heart right now. Amen.

<http://christiananswers.net/kids/gs-end.html>

~~I am a Goat~~ Sheep

The Chinese New Year is over, meaning that the Year of the Goat is now well settled down, no longer “new”. According to believers of Chinese Astrology, I am a goat. Should I be bothered? I think this is an issue that calls me to share my thoughts.



Firstly, about the “fact” that babies born in the Year of the Goat are destined for a hard life - according to a Straits Times report on such a superstitious belief among Chinese. If I am truly a goat according to the understanding of horoscope believers, I don’t fit their description. My life is simply neither hard nor easy; it is just somewhere in-between that is good enough for me, much better than some people I know but nothing when measured against some others I know too!

If the horoscope is right, then it must be in the context that I possess no such riches that people in the country enjoy - such as the fields they have that go beyond sight with friends to protect them while I try to make myself cosy behind four bland walls with just a small area of concrete floor to rest my feet and strangers to meet in the lifts everyday. How tough it is to live such a life!

Surely, the horoscope cannot regard my life as hard simply because I have nothing in comparison with the material wealth of people who live in big houses and drive stretch Mercedes with Clear Credit Cards in their pockets. Many of those people out there with such wealth may actually be the ones living hard lives as they worry without end about servicing their debts and keeping at bay the tax collectors who are after them for their income tax defaults because they have a lot of income and hence a lot to pay up. (I cannot explain the contradiction that a big income means more debts to service or run away from.)

Evidently, it is a matter of perception and personal sense of sufficiency - so any horoscope’s definition of privation is simply subjective. This statement I make is being generous to the horoscope. If, on the contrary, it is accepted that the horoscope’s prediction has an objective basis, then by the common understanding of the factors that define hardship (not enough to eat, no roof over the head, creditors at the door every now and then, and so forth), I dare say that the horoscope is simply untruthful (measuring its prediction against the reality of my “goat” life) or that the believers of it are misplaced in their belief. Either way, the Chinese ought to jettison the superstition.

Even considering for a moment that there are “goats” living hard lives, you do not need me to go the extra mile to convince you that hard lives exist for the Dogs, Pigs and Oxen as commonly as for Tigers and Dragons, not just the abject poor among the Rats that scavenge in garbage dumps. (The real fact is that hard lives exist for all the 12 creatures in the Chinese zodiac.) Our government concerned with falling birth rates must be satisfied that most parents in Singapore are more realistic than superstitious when making their decisions to bring into the world their bouncing babies instead of believing that if they give birth this year, then they will have, in their arms, bleating kids (infant goats) destined for lifelong suffering.

Secondly, those who know me know that I am not as timid as a goat is supposed to be. So, in this respect, the superstitious might want to explain that I was an out-of-the-ordinary creature that the stork wrongly brought into the goat year because it lost its way. ☺

Horoscope predictions often fly in the face of reality, such as the forecast that we “can expect a time of harmony, tranquility and understanding” with “the gentle sign of the Goat guiding most of our 2003” and encouraging us “to be more easygoing and relaxed”. It is very easy for me to list out all the prescriptions and knock it out one by one, but you will surely be bored by it all. Nevertheless, thinking about the way horoscope worshippers understand me as both a Goat and a Scorpio, I become a little curious (if not confused) about how I can be two different personalities according to the contradictory directions in which my existence is directed by the different horoscopes. I wonder whether the opposing horoscopes are trying to tell me that I have a split personality. ☹

I recommend that readers keep their distance from horoscopes that typically offer interpretations that are themselves subject to possibilities of different explanations (to suit actual outcomes) if not downright inconceivable. The only occasion when a horoscope can be believed is when geomancers tell you the obvious as, for example, when they predict that “the stock market will flip-flop in this Year of the Goat” and they “also foresee unemployment rates staying high and that individual investors may lose big.” On the reliability of horoscopes and soothsayers’ predictions, I am prepared to let some geomancers have the lastword. Here is what they were reported to have said (ST Feb 3, 2003):

Geomancer Mr Ong, 46, cautions: “Don’t follow predictions blindly. I can only advise by throwing some light on which direction you should go in. In the end, you are the decision maker.”

Geomancer Ms Yap, 44, says: “I’d rather err on the side of painting a rosy picture than say outright that things are bad. People take my words literally, so I’ve a moral responsibility not to be negative.”

The ST reporter adds this apt advice, “So, a good dash of salt to go with your *yu sheng* may well be in order here.”

If you are still not satisfied, then read the newspaper cutting on the right from a year ago. “Who else, except the Creator, can say with certainty what will definitely happen?”

I am not bothered about my status as a goat as any horoscope worshipper may like me to know. Whatever they wrongly believe in is not going to make any difference to me. However, it is definitely right for me to recognize myself as a sheep that will go to the right of the Son of Man when He comes in His glory, according to the parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt. 25:31-46). Baa ... baa ... Are you also a sheep that is under the capable guidance of the Great Shepherd?

**Who knows the future?
(TODAY, 7 Feb 02)**

The masthead of one well-established astrological monthly says: “Those who know Astrology can only indicate in a way what will take place in future. Who else, except the Creator, can say with certainty what will definitely happen?”

Nanyana Narayana

John Lee

A SHEEP UNDER THE CARE OF A SHEPHERD



盲人福音事工
Gospel Mission To The Blind Ltd
8 Lorong 27A Geylang #02-06 Guilin Building Singapore 1438 Tel: 7414490

Jurong Christian Church
2 Tah Ching Road
Singapore 618744

Dear Bro & Sis

Thank you for your gifts of \$167/- to GMB. Enclosed please find our official receipt.

Our staff, Lenny, has fully recovered from his eye surgery, and has just returned to work. We praise and thank the Lord for answering prayers, and for preserving his eyesight.

We also want to thank the Lord for making it possible for us to organize a reunion dinner for the blind destitutes on Chinese New Year eve this year. In spite of the fact that it is always very difficult to get sighted helpers to serve on the eve of Chinese New Year, we want to thank the Lord for those who had availed themselves on that evening to make it possible for 16 blind persons to experience some love and fellowship of the Family of Christ, instead of sitting alone at home, feeling rejected and without food.

Please pray for Quah Chai Yoke, a partially blind student who will be sitting for her GCE O Level this year. She is feeling extremely depressed and suicidal because she is unable to read the maps and diagrams, and she has not yet learnt braille, and therefore is unable to use braille for her exams this year.

Please also pray for Rosalind, who has lost her sight during adulthood. She and her daughter are also very depressed and suicidal. Pray that she will be able to handle her anger and frustration, and will not use suicide or violence to solve her problem.

We thank you for your prayer and financial support which enable GMB to continue to be a channel of God's blessings to the blind people.

Yours in the Lord's service,

George Lee
On behalf of GMB.

祈求聖靈開啓心靈的眼睛，承受耶穌基督的恩典
Pray that the Holy Spirit will open their spiritual eyes to behold Jesus as Lord.

GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIAN GIVING

The absence of a command for tithing does not relieve Christians of the responsibility to give. Rather, Christians are held to the higher law of stewardship -- acknowledging that everything we have is a gift from God and being willing to give it all up at any moment that Christ commands (Matthew 19:21). The Bible specifies two main reasons for Christian giving.

First, Christians should provide for the needs of fellow Christians who are experiencing financial hardships. For example, while Barnabas and Saul were ministering in Antioch, "...some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, each according to his own ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul." (Acts 11:27-30) Later in Paul's ministry, he gave instruction to other churches that they also should give to the poor Christians in Jerusalem. To the Christians in Corinth he wrote: "Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made." (1 Corinthians 16:1-2) Later, he explained to the Christians in Rome, "...Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem." (Romans 15:26) Today's Christians should follow these examples and provide for the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ who are in financial distress.

A second reason for Christian giving is to support Christian leaders. Paul wrote to the

Corinthians that "...those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:14) To the Galatians, he wrote: "Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor." (Galatians 6:6) Note that Christians are not restricted to giving only to one's local fellowship. Instead, Christians should give to those who disciple them, whether within their local fellowship or not.

The final question remains -- how much should Christians give? Each Christian "...should give what he has decided in his own heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7) No set amount or percentage of income is dictated, rather, "...if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have." (2 Corinthians 8:12)

In summary, Christians should not subject themselves to the Old Testament law of the tithe. Instead, they should give according to the following four New Testament guidelines.

Christian giving should be:

- Proportional to one's income (1 Corinthians 16:2, 2 Corinthians 8:12)
- Consistent (1 Corinthians 16:2)
- Sacrificial (Mark 12:43-44, 2 Corinthians 8:2-3)
- Cheerful (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Christians should live their lives open-handed -- acknowledging that they are merely stewards of God's possessions. They should always be willing to give 100% of that which they steward at any time required by the Lord (Matthew 19:21). Indeed, they should even be willing to offer their very "...bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God...." (Romans 12:1)

By Kevin Whitehead.

Isn't It Strange?

Isn't it strange how a 20-dollar bill seems like such a large amount when you donate it to church, but such a small amount when you go shopping?

Isn't it strange how 2 hours seem so long when you're at church, and how short they seem when you're watching a good movie?

Isn't it strange that you can't find a word to say when you're praying, but you have no trouble thinking what to talk about with a friend?

Isn't it strange how difficult and boring it is to read one chapter of the Bible, but how easy it is to read 100 pages of a popular novel?

Isn't it strange how everyone wants front-row tickets to concerts or games, but they do whatever is possible to sit at the last row in Church?

Isn't it strange how we need to know about an event for Church 2 to 3 weeks before the day so we can include it in our agenda, but we can adjust it for other events in the last minute?

Isn't it strange how difficult it is to learn a fact about God to share it with others, but how easy it is to learn, understand, extend and repeat gossip?

Isn't it strange how we believe everything that magazines and newspapers say, but we question the words in the Bible?

Isn't it strange how everyone wants a place in heaven, but they don't want to believe, do, or say anything to get there?

Isn't it strange how we send jokes in e-mails and they are forwarded right away, but when we are going to send messages about God, we think about it twice before we share it with others?

IT'S STRANGE, ISN'T IT?

HOW TO BE FREE OF WORRY

Cultivate a deepening assurance of God's love.

God loves you. Nothing else can put worries to rest more quickly than knowing that God loves you.

Cultivate a growing awareness of your worth.

Jesus says, "Are you not of more value than the birds?" As a parent, I value my children. There's nothing I won't do to make sure they are provided for.

Cultivate a conscious appreciation of God's provision.

Be confident in God. Nothing is impossible. Our confidence in God's provision is impoverished because we take so much of granted. We forget about God's care in the past.

Cultivate a single focus on God's kingdom.

Many of us create our own worries because we are too eagerly pursuing our own agenda. Jesus says, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you." (Matt 6:33) If you seek God first, many of the things you worry about won't even be concerns anymore. Things like having the best, the newest, public acclaim and popularity.

HOW TO PRAY ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL

By Rev John Tan

CONFIDENCE

This is the **confidence** we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him. (1John 14-15)

OBEDIENCE

... and receive from him anything we ask, because **we obey** his commands and do what pleases him. (1John 3:22)

GOD'S NAME, GOD'S WILL & GOD'S KINGDOM

"This, then, is how you should pray:

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be **your name, your kingdom** come, **your will** be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

(Matthew 6:9-13)

FAITH IN JESUS BRINGS GLORY TO THE FATHER

I tell you the truth, anyone who has **faith in me** will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may **bring glory to the Father**. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. (John 14:12-14)



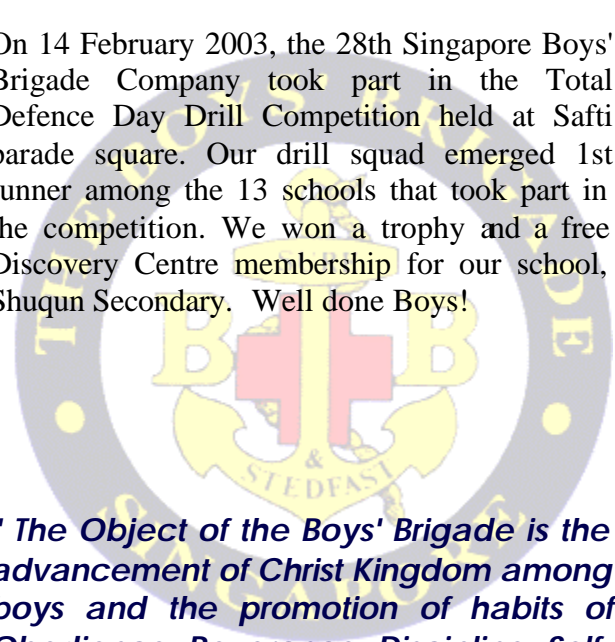
A SURPRISE VISIT FROM PASTOR MICHAEL CHRISTIAN

Pastor Michael Christian visited JCC on 2nd March before he left for Nias. There was much warmth and joy as old friends greeted one another again after such a long time.

May God grant him the strength to fulfill the Great Commission.



On 14 February 2003, the 28th Singapore Boys' Brigade Company took part in the Total Defence Day Drill Competition held at Safti parade square. Our drill squad emerged 1st runner among the 13 schools that took part in the competition. We won a trophy and a free Discovery Centre membership for our school, Shuqun Secondary. Well done Boys!



" The Object of the Boys' Brigade is the advancement of Christ Kingdom among boys and the promotion of habits of Obedience, Reverance, Discipline, Self-respect and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness. "



OUR YOUTH IN ACTION

