

The Vine

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- ❖ Rev Terry Kee's testimony
- ❖ Articles and testimonies from our Youths



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus. This month over 70 persons will be joining the church retreat at the YWCA on the last weekend of the school holidays. I think it is another first for JCC – a retreat held in Singapore itself. We look forward for the retreat report in the next issue of The Vine.

Next month JCC will be celebrating its 36th Anniversary. It will be a combined service where the English Adult and Youth members will worship God together with the Chinese section's members. It will be a time to recall God's blessings to JCC over the years.

Meanwhile, the church has refocused its energies to outreach. The shepherds have been tasked to plan more outreach programs and activities for their cell groups. For a church which has put outreach activities on the lowest priority, it is indeed a daunting task for the shepherds to refocus the people to make outreach the prime motivation of the people of God. However this is in accordance with our church vision to glorify God through disciple making. May we therefore be on fire for the Lord.

Bro Nick Wong just returned from a visit to Nias and Sis Chui Yin just returned from a mission trip to Africa. I hope The Vine will be able to get

exclusive rights to publish their stories in one of the upcoming issues. Meanwhile if any of our readers have a story to share or a testimony to glorify God, please do not hesitate to let the editors know. We would definitely be interested to read your story, anecdote or article.

On a more somber note, the financial status of JCC is in a sad state. The treasurer has placed a chart in the weekly bulletin to reflect the state of our collections. While the expenses are keeping close to budget, the collection is below the budget by \$14k. Indeed, may God grant us the grace to survive this financial crisis.

The Editor

On fire for the Lord

Do Not Fear

By John Lee

There was the war against the Taleban in Afghanistan. Then, there was the follow-up terrorism-preemptive war against Iraq. Fortunately, for now, we see no breakout of war in the Korean Peninsula. Yet, not so fortunately, the carnage wrought by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict still continues unabated despite a newly launched road map towards peace. Countries not directly faced with fighting and warfare have never been spared from feeling tremulous with the global reach of terrorism today. Besides, if it has been since time immemorial that people prattle about seeing the coming of The Third and Final World War, the current season of skirmishes and clashes between ideologies and between combatants must be heady stuffs to go into the mill of predictions and fortune-telling for the Globe that is man's home.

I am never bothered about a Third World War, not that I do not have a fervent wish for continuing peace in my homeland and harmony in international relations. My point is that if it has to come, it comes and whether I expect or dread it, it is beyond my influence. However, even if the 1st Iraq War and the 2nd Iraq War in recent years have not made the 3rd World War (in the conventional sense of warfare) happen, much to the dismay of gloom-and-doom forecasters, we are facing two Global Wars that are nonetheless scary for their unpredictability in reach and doggedness. I am talking about the lasting war against terrorism and the more fear-inspiring attacks of the bugs.

As far as terrorists are concerned, if we are alert enough, we can spot them, arrest them and put them behind bars before they can do us any harm. It is not incomprehensible why the attacks of the bugs are more fear inspiring. How are we to rope in enemies that are invisible and unfathomable in their attack plans and methods? Add to this the fact that the invisible enemies are often experts in camouflage and are able to stay low for any length of time according to their fancy until we lose our vigilance.

You recall the Avian Flu (AF) that threw Hong Kong in a frenzy to slaughter millions of chickens. Pity the healthy members of the chicken population that lost their lives in the rage. Then, there was the Mad Cow Disease that put cows in the same fate of being in the path of man's murderous fury. You see, both the AF virus and the BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy) virus did not actually have to carry out all their killing acts themselves. They just made a start somewhere and let the smart humans seized by fear help them finish off the job of annihilating the targeted animals. How clever! The SARS virus is imitating its villainous cousins in targeting man's Achilles' heel; i.e., his susceptibility to FEAR. Fortunately, other than panic actions of ostracizing individuals with the slightest hint of a risk or quarantining large groups of people just to feel safe, we are not ensnared by the virus to help it kill off the human victims at the first level of infection. Unfortunately, though, many homeless cats have to become the 'proxy' targets.

If you think that the AF in Hong Kong and the Nipah Virus in Malaysia have had their fun and are now gone for good, you are mistaken. Nobody can gainsay that these bugs will not make a comeback according to their own timetable. See how the hand-foot-and-mouth disease had returned to strike 20 children in two NTUC childcare centres that are far apart from each other (one in Jurong West and the other in Sembawang) in a matter of two weeks. In the same period, the BSE made its appearance again to hit Canada's cattle and beef from the country is banned in Singapore. What next?

At the height of the Bird Flu outbreak, advice to avoid eating chickens fluttered within the *kiasi* fraternity. When people did not want to join the cows going mad ... you guessed it, they avoided eating beef. You would think that it would be safe to eat pork for animal proteins; but no ... pigs came to be condemned too for spreading its own Nipah-variety encephalitis! There are people who avoid eating mutton for fear of getting heart disease due to high cholesterol. I do not know whether there are people avoiding seafood giving the reason of higher mercury levels due to pollution and avoiding rice due to fear of genetic engineering of rice crops. I wonder: What if all the viruses decide to gang up one day and attack together and the human-caused health-endangering factors rear their heads all at once? Will man have anything left to eat? Yes, it may happen that due to farmers' negligence, vegetables may become inedible too because of excessive pesticides.

Let the truth be told: Man from time immemorial has been fighting wars after wars of all kinds, against fellow beings and against causes of diseases. Early man with their limited skills for inventions made do with simple weapons; with their ignorance, they fell prey to dangerous folk remedies that we now know exacerbated illnesses rather than cured. Today, man continues to advance in skills and knowledge. Man is proud of his ever-progressive brainpower, never mind a correspondingly decreasing brawn power. A lot of things can be accomplished with just lots of brains but just a light finger-flick of the correct button. Parents and grandparents just need to look at their children's/grandchildren's Primary Level Math's problems and English comprehension passages today to note how far man's brains (at least the young ones') are supposed to have grown compared to ten years ago. Microchips is no longer chic; it is time for adults to start planning for our promising 12-year-olds to move on with their expanding intellect to explore a world a million times smaller – the province of nanotechnology – where, instead of knocking marbles against one another to learn about momentum and impulse, the precocious youngsters can perhaps think about the bombardment of atoms for more exciting lessons about electron fireworks. The advance in skills and knowledge is like a rocket with fuel that is never diminished, going on and on towards outer space. Where is the limit? Whatever distance gained, the remaining realm of space or knowledge to conquer is still limitless. You can speak to the top scientist in the world and ask point-blank in the face: “ How much knowledge have you acquired? How much ignorance are you still struggling with?” (Without disrespect to scientists through the ages who have made significant contributions to improving man's living standards.)

Who says that it is no good for man to progress? I did not say it. However, **I do often ponder the contrasts of two realms:**

- ❑ **The realm of knowledge and the realm of ignorance – which realm is deeper and wider?**
- ❑ **The realm of our capabilities and the realm of our helplessness – Putting all our abilities and inabilities on opposite pans of a beam balance, how will the balance tilt?**
- ❑ **The realm of present life and the realm of future life – If a person lives on earth to 99 years, what fraction of infinity (eternity) will it be?**

No matter how clever man is and no matter what great conquests he has accomplished, there is one Everest that man by his own might will never conquer – the Mount of Fear. Fear has been known to be so debilitating that great men in positions and super men in powers have been brought to their knees by it. When Acts of God strike, they find no succor in their positions and powers as their feet tremble and their tears fall like any ordinary defenceless mortals. It has always been in the news that it is no longer news.

To conquer fear, we may do well to bear in mind this: **“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit” , says the Lord (Zech. 4:6)**

Before we can be assured of positively and permanently eradicating the Avian flu from birds, the BSE from cows, the Ebola from chimpanzees, the Nipah from pigs, or SARS from civet cats, America is now dealing with an outbreak of monkeypox (a smallpox-related virus) from pet prairie dogs. And we have heard warnings not to be complacent towards SARS because the arrival of winter may spell bad news. Add to this, the WHO's caution about a flu pandemic that is overdue! What are we to do? Certainly, the warnings are to be heeded by us being more thorough with hygiene, taking more precautions and keeping a heightened vigilance to fend off any attack. Certainly NOT for us to be paralysed by fear, even though there is so little we know and so much we don't, so little we can do and so much we can't.

As God's children and His servants, the following message from Scripture should speak to us in our tribulations:

“I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, 'You are my servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”
(Isa. 41:9-10) †

Book Review

The Pilgrim's Progress

(by John Bunyan)

by Soong Beng Ching



A Pilgrim's Progress depicts a man's dream of a pilgrim going on a journey to the City of Gold which is a place of Eternal Life. In his journey, he encountered both people and places which some of us may be able to identify with.

The journey began with a man named Christian standing at his garden gate, bent under the weight of a great knapsack, and in his hand was a guidebook (the Bible). As he read it, all colour drained from his face and he wept and, turning his face up towards the sky, he cried, "What am I going to do? What must I do to be saved?" It was written in the guidebook that he was condemned to die. A man named Preacher advised him to run for his life to the City of Gold where there would be Eternal Life. Hence, Christian started on his journey to the City of Gold via Pilgrim's Way. Along this Way, he encountered the following places:

1. Great Bog of Misery

This was a quicksand pit which was filled with doubts, fears, misgivings and worries of the world. It was able to trap, suck and drown pilgrims passing

through it. The King (God) had tried time and again to fill it up with solid materials (wisdom, advice, prophets, etc.) but, unfortunately, the bog remained.

"The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the Word but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful."
(Matt 13:22)

2. Museum of Wonders

In this museum, there were numerous interesting and meaningful exhibits. One exhibit portrayed two mechanical children sitting on a table. One of the children was crying and banging his spoon on the table, demanding to be fed. When food was served, he wolfed it down and soon the food was gone. The other child waited patiently and when food was served, ate it. However much he ate, his plate was filled up again. The children's names were Passion and Patience. Passion wanted happiness immediately. Even though he got his wish, it did not last. Patience waited for true happiness – the lasting kind which would never be used up.

Another exhibit showed many puppet firemen pouring buckets of water onto a fire but to no

avail. The fire kept burning. This was due to the fact that oil was constantly flowing out of an oil can through a nozzle. The fire represented all the good things a pilgrim would achieve when he set his mind to follow the Gospel. The Enemy (the water) would, however, try to stop him. Little did the Enemy realize whom he was against. The oil can represented God.

In the museum was a dark and dusty room which Christian was to sweep up. However, the more he swept, the dustier it became. The dust only swirled around into clouds of dust. Along came a lady with a bowl of water. She sprinkled the water on the dust and it finally settled down. This enabled Christian to sweep clean the room. This room represented the heart of a man who had never heard the Gospel. When he was finally awakened to his sins, he tried all ways to get rid of them. However, the more he tried, the worse he felt. The lady represented Gospel who came to prove to him that God can and will always prevail over Evil.

3. Vanity Fair

Vanity Fair sold every worldly thing a man's heart has ever desired: fame, fortune, lust of the eyes, properties, fortune,

etc. Many pilgrims who passed by here would get sidetracked and be blinded by these worldly things.

“Men, why are you doing this? We (Paul & Barnabas) too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you Good News, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.” (Acts 14: 15)

4. Doubting Castle

In this castle, lived a giant called Giant Despair. He created havoc for the pilgrims by putting such thoughts in their minds:

- a) There is no such thing as Eternal Life.
- b) Life is a cycle.
- c) Killing oneself is the only way to get out of suffering.

Christian discovered that in order to escape from the castle, he needed the following key:

“And lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world.” (Matt. 28: 20)

5. Valley of the shadow

This was a place filled with dark clouds, flares of raging fires and crying of humans (old, sick, diseased, insane, casualties of wars, starving,

etc). Christian tried to help but realized that the only thing he could do was to pray.

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;

Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23: 4)

“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.” (Romans 12: 12)

6. City of Gold

This depicted the final destination of a pilgrim: The Land of Glory and Eternal Life.

The man woke up and realised that it was just a dream. The dream served as a timely reminder to him as he continued in his personal pilgrimage. Let's also remind ourselves that we are all pilgrims too. †

7 STEPS OF INNER HEALING PRAYER

Dr Siang-Yang Tan



1st Explain that we're going to take some time to go back into the past, to face the painful situation and ask the Lord to minister. Pray for the release of the Holy Spirit's healing power on the person and pray for protection against evil forces.

2nd A time of relaxation. Help the person to relax as deeply as possible, to calm down and really relax before the Lord.

3rd Once relaxed, take the person back into the past and help the person relive the traumatic event. This is not the same as hypnosis. Instead say, "Can you try to put yourself back to when you were a child? Can you imagine this particular painful thing happening to you again?" So the person relives the painful scenario without denying the reality of what actually happened. Wait and pray for them.

4th After enough time has gone by, pray, "Spirit of God, in the name of Jesus, I pray that you would really minister to this person. He is in great pain at this moment and I pray that you will graciously minister to this person right now.

5th Wait and let the person experience God's grace in whatever way the Lord wants to touch the person. Ask them what is happening, what they are experiencing.

6th After enough time has passed, end the session with a prayer of thanksgiving together with the person.

7th Debriefing. Let them share their experience. Ask them if they have anything to clarify. Eventually inner healing will lead to forgiveness.

A brief account of the life and ministry of Rev. Terry Kee

I was 2 years old when my father passed away. At my grandfather's suggestion, my mother sent me to an English School to



ensure that I have a good future. Afraid that I could become a Christian, my mother began to influence me against Christianity.

In 1972, attracted by the medals and colourful badges of the Boys' Brigade, I pleaded with my mother to let me join the Boys' Brigade in Queenstown Lutheran Church. It was there that I had my first real contact with the Christian faith. We had weekly Bible devotion by Pastor Colberg and I had to attend Sunday School in order to gain the Annual Service award. These regular exposure to Jesus' teaching began to change my perception of Christ. Finally in 1973, I prayed to receive Jesus as my Saviour and was baptized in 1974.

From a very early age I was always inspired by missionary

stories. I read the biography of many missionaries, attended many missionary conferences and responded to many altar calls. My prayer had always been, "Lord, if you can use me ...

I am willing".

I participated actively in the ministries of the Church, the Boys' Brigade and Youth for Christ. I had served as Liturgist, editor of the Church's magazine, Sunday School teacher, Youth Advisor and an officer of the Boys'

Brigade.

Encouraged by many church leaders, in particular the late Rev. Myron Danford, I enrolled in Singapore Bible College and was trained there for three years – from 1979 to 1982.

From institutional training in Singapore Bible College to congregational training from 1982 to 1996. I had the opportunity to learn from Rev. Nelson as his assistant in Bedok Lutheran Church from 1982 to 1986, from brother Swee Leong in Jurong Christian Church from 1986 to 1989, from Rev. Schaeffer and Dr. Leong in Lutheran Church of our Redeemer from 1989 to 1993 (of which 1989 to 1990 was on attachment while on study leave) and from a conflict situation in Queenstown Lutheran Church from 1993 to 1996. During the 14 years of congregational

ministry, I had the opportunities to experience a congregation in its infancy (Bedok); a congregation in transition -- re-thinking its missions and restructuring (Jurong), a congregation in renewal (Redeemer) and a congregation in reconciliation (Queenstown). During these years, we had the opportunity to serve among Singaporeans, Indians, Malaysians, Indonesians, Filipinos, Thais, Americans, Australians, Germans and people of various other cultures

It was in 1985 that the Lord led me to Sally. We were married in 1986 in Bedok Lutheran Church and she has been my faithful companion and helpmate ever since.

It was when we were happily serving in the Lutheran Church of our Redeemer in 1990 that the Lord began to remind us of our missionary commitment. We began to pray, seeking a confirmation from the Lord. Sally went to Singapore Bible College to further equip herself. In 1991, the Lord led us to consider Thailand. After much prayer and consideration, we applied to the Missions Committee in 1992. During the interview in October 1992, we were told that while LCMS was seeking for a missionary to Thailand, LCMS was not ready to send us for at least another three years as

there was still a shortage of pastors.

We prayed to the Lord that when it's time for us to go, doors be opened and blessings given by all in authority over us. We prayed that God prepare capable people to shepherd the sheep we leave behind. Finally in June 1996, both Sally and myself landed in the land where we serve to this day.

In our weakness the Lord has been our strength. In our struggles He has been our comfort. He has been with us as He has promised in Matthews 28:20 " Lo, I am with you even to the ends of the world."

Bukit Panjang, Jurong East and West Cell Groups met at Peter's house to enjoy a time of fellowship and learning from Bro Wong Mui. Here are some pictures of the night, 30th May.



DOES JESUS CARE WHEN WE ARE TROUBLED?

(from an email in circulation)

The global outbreak of SARS has inflicted many with despair of “the Sting of Death”. This mysterious disease is forcing many people to take every safety measure to avoid getting infected. This dreadful disease has brought distrust and fear, as seen in the numerous demands for surgical masks, vitamin pills, green beans and disinfectant, leading to these items flying off the supermarket shelves. The fear of SARS infection leading to death is a serious concern. I am no exception. I find comfort in this text. I hope you share this too:

Then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.” “But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?” (John 11: 8)

When Jesus perceived that Lazarus had finally died, he determined to return to Judea to raise up Lazarus. The disciples opposed his decision, fearing possible assault by the Jews. Jesus countered the disciples' objection with the following enigmatic statement: *“Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by the world's light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light”* (vv.9-10). The Lord assured them that he was walking in the perfect will of the Father. There was no danger of His being killed before the appointed time. To him, death could not be an accident. He would be preserved until his work was completed. This is also true with any believer. If we walk in fellowship with the Lord and do His will, there is no evil, disease, accident or person on earth that can kill us before God's appointed time. Nothing else but God determines our life span. As long as our earthly ministry is unfinished, we are immortal. In another text, Jesus shows that God cares: *“Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows”* (Luke 12:4-7).

The thought of the gracious care of God for us ought to cure our spirits of all distrustful fears. He does not guarantee protection from death but affirms that God alone controls our final destiny. Being a Christian does not shield us from death or accident. The comfort is that no death or accident can prevail over the purpose of God in our life. If the hairs of our head cannot fall to the ground without God's knowledge, neither can our head! If the dropping of hairs and the falling sparrows concern God, how much more our redeemed souls which are under God's exclusive care?

Isaac Watt (1674-1748)

Someone said, “If Christ is the centre of your life, you will not be fearful of the circumstances surrounding your life!” Do not focus on SARS, but focus on our Saviour instead. God's peace and solace will come to you when you focus on the gracious care and the presence of God. When David was besieged by the Philistines at Gath, he said, *“When I am afraid, I will trust in You.”* (Ps 56:3) Yes, Jesus cares about our troubles. (Heb 4:15) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. (Heb 4:16) Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. God bless and keep you always!

Rev. David Lim

O believers... can you say with Paul *“O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law.”* (1Cor.15:55,56) Do you really believe that our Lord Jesus Christ came to suffer and died for your sins? Then you do not need to fear SARS. *“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men”* (Acts 24:16) because *“he that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of GOD”* (John 3:18) Amen.

Jesus Saves All Repentant Sinner

The “Other” Mentality

The Principle of Service

By David Jeremiah

Batteries work better when they're regularly exhausted, then completely recharged. The battery life is extended through consistent, exhaustive use, followed by regular recharging. In fact, a sure way to allow a battery to deteriorate is never to use it.

Many Christians are like batteries that stay fully charged in church and Bible studies several times a week, listen to Christian music, read the latest Christian bestsellers. But, their batteries never get drained through service. They never dispense all that power they're storing up.

Instead of focusing on self, we're to focus on serving others. Let me say emphatically: That doesn't mean we don't set aside resources and time for our own needs. Just as Jesus withdrew from serving the crowds periodically to rest and recuperate, so we need our own times of R&R. Just as a battery that never serves will soon wear out, so will one that is never recharged.

Jesus defined His purpose in coming to earth in terms of service: The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28).

Jesus' focus in the “one another” passages is on how we are to spend ourselves in service to each other. If all Christians are “serving one another,” then every Christian's needs are met. Servants in the body of Christ are never left “unserved.”

Two things happen to us when we demonstrate the “other” mentality:

Our Focus Changes

Let's face it we have to make a conscious choice to focus on serving others. Our sinful human nature, self-centered in its orientation, naturally thinks of self first. To the degree that we, as Christians, focus on ourselves, we cooperate more with the culture than with Christ, denying the Holy Spirit the opportunity to manifest Christ in the world.

A change of our natural focus requires choice. How do you think Jesus Himself arrived on planet earth? Philippians 2 tells us Jesus considered, made, took, came, humbled, and obeyed. Now if those aren't verbs reflecting conscious choice, I don't know what would be. Jesus chose to change His focus from heaven to earth in order to serve us.

For us, the most important part of this passage is the verse in which Paul says, Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5). That is, we are to change our focus just as Christ did. We are to consider, make, take, go,

Determination

humble, and obey. We're to change our focus from self to others.

Changing Our Focus Changes Us

The strength, attitude, desire, or skills we may lack in order to be able to serve, are often only acquired in the act of serving! In God's kingdom, we get what we need by giving away what we think we lack. Just as one kernel of corn can produce a corn stalk with hundreds of new kernels on multiple ears, so a tiny act of service in the life of another can pay back bountiful blessings in the life of the one who serves.

The way to acquire skills, lift spirits, get renewed energy, and be ultimately built up by others...is to serve. When we do things we're not naturally inclined to do, we come away changed. And that's never more true than when we serve. The "other" mentality will create an "other" attitude in you. Changing your focus will change you.

"Finally,...be...full of sympathy.. loving one another...Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate when people say unkind things about you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God wants you to do, and he will bless you for it." (I Peter 3:8-9, New Living Translation, italics added)

David Jeremiah is the senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in San Diego, California.

by Selia Chong



Those brothers and sisters in Christ who are in my cell group know that I have unofficially graduated (waiting for my final year results) and am now searching for a job. I spent the whole of last month preparing for exams. There were times when I almost wanted to give up and give myself another year to complete my degree. After all, I had spent 17 years in school. So what is another year compared to those 17 years? I am glad that I persevered on and now I realize the importance of determination.

I was pondering one afternoon (actually daydreaming while I tried to study) and I came to this conclusion:

Determination and good habits lead to success.

Upon reading this, I believe some of our brothers and sisters in Christ must be shaking their heads in disagreement, crying that there are more than these 2 habits to success.

Well, sister Selia agrees but do let us focus on these 2 first before we learn

and reveal more of the factors to success.

Someone once said,

“ Watch your thoughts, they become your words.

Watch your words, they become your actions.

*Watch your actions, they become your **habits**.*

*Watch your **habits**, they become your character.”*

However, in order to make sure that we watch our thoughts, words and actions, we need constant effort, isn't it? This conscious and constant effort will in turn become a habit if we do enough of it till it is natural to our sinful nature.

I have to confess that during my exam period, I did not read as much of God's Word as I would like to. I kept telling myself that I will compensate by having a full 3-hour meditation and quiet time with God after my exams. Sad to say, it has been 2 days since my exams ended and I keep telling myself, “I can always do it tomorrow. Tomorrow never comes.”

So, I spent my free time doing unconstructive things, like opening myself to the paths of gossip clubsso on and so forth.👹 I decided that in order to make myself engage in unwholesome talks, I shall occupy myself with reading.📖

I went to the library and found this good book - “Words Lincoln lived by” . Abraham Lincoln is someone I

admire. I feel it is a good idea for JCC members to have a glimpse of it. Here is the abstract of the book. Enjoy and remember to apply it biblically.

On determination

Lincoln believed failure, like success, comes from within. In his opinion, the ability to succeed depends on the strength of one's own determination. Ironically enough, if anyone had excuses for failure, it was Lincoln. He could have blamed his failures on his unsympathetic and illiterate father, on his lack of schooling, or his ungainly appearance. But Lincoln was not an excuse-maker.

Lincoln's thoughts on determination have a metaphysical flavour. He lived by the principles long taught by great religious teachers and mystics: **if you truly want something, you should act as if the object of your desire is already on its way to you.** For example, if your goal is to become a lawyer, visualize yourself as a lawyer and you will be well on your way to be achieving that dream. Seeing it happen, Lincoln believed, is the way to make it happen. “‘Must’ is the word,” he wrote to a young man who was struggling with schooling. “I know not how to aid you, save in the assurance of one of mature age, and much severe experience, that you cannot fail, if you resolutely determine, that you will.”

Lessons from Philemon

By Tan Swee Leong

Philemon is one of the shortest books in the New Testament with only 25 verses. It is one of Paul's prison epistles, the others being Colossians and Philippians. This short letter is actually a private letter from Paul to Philemon, a slave owner. Paul writes a letter of appeal to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus, a slave who has run away from his master, Philemon. Onesimus had come in contact with Paul and is converted. He has been a great help to Paul while he is in prison. There are tension in the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus and wrongful acts that need to be addressed.

Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon and implores him stating Onesimus running away was so that Paul could have him back not as a slave but a brother. Paul therefore writes a letter to Philemon appealing to him in Christian love to accept Onesimus and be reconciled. Paul ends the letter on a confident note that he would be released and plans to visit Philemon.

Paul addresses Philemon as a dear friend and fellow worker. Paul recalls the love and encouragement he has received from Philemon and commends him on his service for the Lord. The letter suggests that Paul and Philemon had a close relationship as co-workers

Paul calls Onesimus “my son”(v 10 – “I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains.”); one who “is very dear to me” (v 16 – “¹⁶no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.”).

Paul at the time of writing was an old man. Onesimus was probably a younger person. Philemon is probably more of a contemporary with Paul in terms of age. Thus Paul relationship with Onesimus is paternalistic and the tone is more endearing. Paul appeals to Philemon as an elder, to the extent of mentioning his right to order him and reminding him of the debt he owed him for his salvation. The relationship is more of an elder addressing a fellow worker; close enough to be open and even confront.

Onesimus is a runaway slave and has stolen from his master. This is a wrongful act and could be even criminal. The relationship is strained even broken. Onesimus felt he could not appeal to Philemon directly, and even through Paul it has to be based on Christian love (v 5, 9 – “...⁵because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. ⁹yet I appeal to you on the basis of love.”) and reconciliation.

There is a strained, even broken, relationship between Onesimus and Philemon. Onesimus had done

wrong and Philemon could understandably be aggrieved and angry. Paul has meanwhile developed an intimate paternalistic relationship with Onesimus. Paul as an elder is respected by Philemon. In appealing to Philemon and seeking reconciliation with Onesimus, love is the overriding consideration, for the saints and for the Christian brother.

Paul in his letter stated that he expected Philemon to do more than what he asked. Was his expectation misplaced? Was Onesimus truly repentant? The letter does not provide any insight into Onesimus attitude other than stating that he has become a believer.

For Paul – loss of a close friend and helper, probably much needed while he was in prison.

For Philemon – need to struggle with doing what is right under the law and what is of Christian love and grace. Would his acceptance of Onesimus create any practical problem in the household?

For Onesimus – As a runaway slave and one who has committed a crime, even if he is forgiven, he would need to face up to those in Philemon's household who may not be as gracious and forgiving.

Slavery was probably widespread during Paul's time. Philemon was apparently a convert himself. How Christian masters should treat slaves was probably an issue that converts grapple with. The issue becomes even more complicated when a Christian slave does wrong. What is the primary consideration in such a situation? The message of Philemon points to love as the primary overriding consideration, exercised in the context of repentance, reconciliation and acceptance.

Christian love, forgiveness and reconciliation in the context of Christian relationships. In showing love and acceptance how do we handle wrongs done against the aggrieved party?

What is the primary consideration in reconciliation and acceptance?

The brief letter of Philemon is an apt reminder to us when we suffer wrong and how we handle the situation. What is our primary motivator? Our right or our need to show Christ-like behaviour? What about the material loss that we might have suffered? The need to seek recompense or should grace and mercy out of Christian love be the overriding attitude? Do we turn a blind eye to wrong and forgive and love frivolously? Christian love needs also to be discerning, tough if needed, and responsible. †

Lesson for us today from the book of Philemon

God Heals & Protects

By Xavier



It happened during the first week of my mid-year examinations last year. I caught a fever that week and vomited while sitting for a paper. I went to see a doctor who prescribed some tablets. I had to take my medication daily every 6 hours. My mother took good care of me. She even stayed up late to cool my body temperature (sponging with wet towels and a bag filled with water and cold ice). It was an awful experience to be sick.

Things got worse on one of the nights after dinner with my family. I went straight to my room to rest and was alone there. Then, I felt 'strange' because for some reason my eyes kept looking upwards. I didn't know why this was happening. I was frightened and confused. But I thought maybe it was simply because I was too tired. I tried to gain control over my eyes but could not, so I made a silly choice of taking some cough medication to make me sleepy. Though it did make me sleepy, I still could not sleep. At this point of time, I had the fear of dying, so I turned to God in prayer asking Him to let me rest my eyes.

As I waited, things got even worse. My eyes kept on moving up even when my head was tilting backwards. Then I was having the thought of committing suicide. The pains were simply too much that I just did not want to suffer any more. But something told me deep inside that I should not. I was very confused. I went back to bed trying hard to rest. I was inside my room alone for nearly two hours.

Later, my mother came in to check on me and ask me if I was feeling all right. My mum noticed that my eyes would always look up during our talk, so she took a close look at me only to surmise that it was due to a medication allergy. Then she went to get my dad to call the ambulance immediately. My younger brother soon came to see me, but when he saw the condition I was in, he broke down in tears. He had no idea what was happening to me. My parents took turns to hold me in their arms. Fifteen minutes later, the ambulance arrived and took me to the hospital.

My father followed the ambulance in his car. Not knowing how bad the situation was, he was also panicky and wept. Soon I found out about the arrival of my uncles and aunts in a yellow taxi. The doctor gave me an injection and I was allowed to leave the hospital after an hour.

After all this testing of my faith in God, my eyes were opened to the love that my dad, mum, brother and relatives had stored in their hearts for me. Besides that, I believe that God too wanted to see me crying out to Him for help in times like this. I have sensed that my God is a very present help in times of need.

I tell my friend that I still love Jesus and I will always do because if I had not got to know the Lord, I would have given up hope and would have killed myself. Jesus is faithful to us. He is always there for us and is forever with us. Amen.