

# The Vine

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## Editor's Views

I was reading Exodus 21 – 29 for my morning readings when I came across this comment by Ernest Lucas, a writer for the Encounter with God series.

*“So what are we to do with these chapters? One wrong approach is simply to write them off as irrelevant – we cannot, since ‘all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.’ (2Timothy 3:16) Another is to attempt to apply the laws as they stand – since many do not apply to modern situations, this simply leads to misuse or to their being side-lined as irrelevant again. Another wrong, but popular, approach is to allegorise the instructions for the tabernacle by looking for hidden ‘spiritual’ meanings behind each of the details. The problem is that this approach leaves the way open for ingenious interpreters to read what meaning they like into the text. The best approach is to seek for the principles which underlie the laws and the construction and use of the tabernacle, and then to see where and how these principles might apply today, both to our personal lives and in our society. When we adopt these approaches, these chapters do become relevant and challenging.”*

I must admit that oftentimes I skip all those chapters in the Bible which list genealogies and instructions on building temples and other items. What good are they? To my mind, they are only good for historians and archeologist who are out to

prove that

the Bible is an accurate piece of historical document. However, with the help of the guide, I was able to understand why God wanted to have the tabernacle. He wanted to be with His people, sinful though they are, and wants to journey with them.

Then I came across Exodus 25:1-2, “*The LORD said to Moses, ‘Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give.’*” After seeing 3 months of deficit, I was quite demoralized but one day Poh Kiat called to inform me that she received a cheque for \$6,000 from one of our members. I cannot imagine what could have prompted this particular person to make such a big offering. However, when I came across the above verse, it became clear. Indeed our help comes from the Lord who works through willing people. Praise the Lord!

Remember the Total Defense slogan, “You and I have a part to play!” We are all part of the body and we all need each other. We all can’t be heads, hearts or hands. Some of us have to be the feet, the less glamorous parts but nonetheless needed. Thank the Lord for your service.

Martin Cheah

## INFIDELITY HAS ITS CONSEQUENCES

The title of this article was the title of a sermon delivered by Dr Gary Choong not so long ago. The issue is about marital infidelity. I am led to think of this subject again because of recent news such as these:

- Beckham (who needs no introduction) has at last admitted the unmentionable, that he had betrayed his wife; and now the couple is mulling a trial separation. (Streets, Apr 19 Mon)
- A Singapore man is being sued by his Vietnamese mistress for child maintenance, according to a New Paper report on the same day as the Streets' report on Beckham.

According to a later Straits Times report (May 7, 2004), the Singapore man is now unemployed. He was sacked as a financial controller because of the affair and his mistress has won a court order for child maintenance. Now his wife is paying the maintenance on his behalf. It looks like the battle between adults is not over yet as the man (surprisingly with the backing of his wife) is planning to adopt the child and the claim for access may go up to a Vietnamese court. How the matter will drag on is anybody's guess, but it sure is going to be sticky if an action in one country is going to be followed by another for child access (or whatever else) in another with a seesawing effect. Just noting that the state of affairs ever since the husband confessed the

adulterous affair more than 24 months ago has not reached any closure to this day, I shudder at the smell of the whole pungent mess with an innocent child wedged in. And this mess is certainly going to last for a long time at inestimable cost both financially and emotionally.

The consequences of infidelity are familiar to all, from empirical evidence or from Scriptural warnings, as Dr Gary had expounded. Whether man or woman it is who goes astray, there is a heavy price to pay for one moment's weakness and the price of pain is shared by both husband and wife regardless of who is more wrong. Taking Beckham & Victoria as example, some people may empathize with the man for being left lonely and blame the wife for not wanting to sacrifice her own needs so as to be with her husband in a faraway land to soothe the latter's misery; on the other hand, there are others who may level a tirade on the man for being insouciant in upholding his marital commitment:

“Blame thyself for your current predicament, for isn't it mentioned in Scripture (I Cor 10:13) that 'No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.' So blame yourself for being seized by the temptation. Blame your loneliness on the chasing of a ball to an alien place with an alien culture and a strange language ...  
*Blah, Blah, Blah ...*

What good can come out of the blaming game? Blame does not work as superglue that can stick back together a shattered relationship. More blame won't lessen the pain that a knife has inflicted on the heart. Some more blame will accentuate the couple's mutual sense of guilt and/or anger. Whether we are talking of people famous and rich like the Beckhams, or someone as ordinary as the Francis so-and-so who enjoys a fling in Vietnam and thinks of the consequence only after the fun, it is all the same. It only takes a moment of indiscretion to sink yourself and the feelings of your loved ones (spouse, children, parents) into wretchedness, never mind who is to be blamed. Whichever party responsible, whichever innocent, both share in the same sad consequence of a crushed spirit.

It is still common for people to think that, by tradition, men are the ones who are more prone to engage in casual extra-marital affairs and women are often the suffering lot. It is time for an awakening to the modern reality. Men are being challenged by women in all spheres – in career, in leisure pursuit, in social positions, etc. What is right or wrong with this, assessed against Scriptural imperatives? Never mind the answer, but it is easy to see that in the challenge for superiority or for liberties, women who win can no longer claim with a straight face that they are the weaker sex always getting the short end of the stick. In fact, many women are not contented with being called the weaker vessel in need of man's protection. They do not take

happily to the Scriptural exhortation for husbands to treat their wives with respect as the weaker partner and heirs of the gracious gift of life. (1 Pet. 3:7) They prefer, according to their modern instincts, to be man's equal in all things, and even be men's superior if given the chance.

By some opinion, it may be good for women to achieve emancipation; but it does strike me with incredulity that more and more women want to be like men for the wrong reasons. As once-foolish mature men become wise to repent of smoking their lungs and hearts out and run from the scourge of cigarettes, an increasing number of young nubile ladies now find it cool and sexy to spout tobacco smoke, supposedly making themselves more attractive. As a result, I tend to see more young girls than grown men with cigarettes between their lips. Has the world's fashion sense changed such that instead of being manly to be caught with a smoking stick in the mouth, it is now more trendily feminine to spew nicotine fragrance with one's breath? Similarly, on the infidelity front, married women wanted to and have succeeded in playing "catch up" with men. You may have heard of statistics showing more and more women cheating on their husbands. Even if this is not so, it is not uncommon that for a man who cheats on his wife, there is a woman (not the wife) who is a willing participant in the affair of marital betrayal. A woman (who should know better a wife's feeling) cheating on another woman? What a sad joke!

There are enough women who are no worse than men in their ability (or lack of) to curb their immoral impulses, with plenty of their alluring assets to flaunt (very willingly) in both public domain and private province, very often for the benefit of male attention and with the women's or their sponsors' own ulterior motives. As the New Paper (Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April) feature news article "MODEL LIFESTYLE" evinced, it is so common for female models to seek out parties ostensibly because they enjoy socializing and welcome being the party animal that adds glamour to the occasion, but in actuality because they covet opportunities to hook up to *some men with the right stature* (read: mostly married men of wealth) for some quick bucks. It takes two to tango and there is no point arguing until the cows come home about who the predator is; and who, the prey; in the final consummation of debauchery.

As we shake our heads at the immorality of others, men and women, do we learn anything to safeguard ourselves from 'inadvertently' running into the same pitfalls? If there are those who can guard against temptations, why shouldn't we follow them instead of joining league with those others who cannot? The sin of adultery or marital infidelity can never be accomplished with one sex alone. It invariably involves both a worldly-wise man and a perceptive woman in cahoots to serve each other's selfish ends, quite frequently with both man and mistress being separately married with their

own spouses in the dark. Neither such man nor such woman in an extra-marital relationship can claim to be an innocent victim. This kind of sin is subject to mutual liability, as it was so in the OT times. Read the following verses:

*"If a man commits adultery with another man's wife ... both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death." – Lev. 20:10*

*"If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die." – Dt 22:22*

In the NT, we also have a serious warning about God's judgment against the adulterer and the sexually immoral:

*"Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." – Heb. 13:4*

Obviously, if the initiation of adultery is wrong, the abetment by being a party to the defilement of the marriage bed is itself sexually immoral; so both the man and woman in the illicit relationship must bear the judgment of God, even if one of the two is unmarried.

All of us face temptations at one time or another. We may not always be able to avert the tingly effect of Satan's darts, but we can toughen ourselves to resist capitulation. I recall my national service days when,

despite strong peer influence, I was able to resist the temptation to touch a cigarette.

Reason 1: I had read and heard enough about the dangers of smoking

Reason 2: I loved myself enough not to want to destroy my own body, which I have by now come to know is the temple of the Holy Ghost. This is also the reason why I am a teetotaler, although I accept others drinking in moderation.

Have you not also on many occasions resisted temptations to some sins? If we can resist the temptation to one sin, then we have the capability to muster our resolve to resist the temptation to another after having heard and read enough about its destruction of lives. For God does provide us a way out. Love for oneself and the fear of the Lord will provide the strong underpinning against acts (such as infidelity) that are self-destructive and offensive to God. It is almost certain that deep regrets accompany marital unfaithfulness, whether the one into it is man or woman. There will be no winners, only losers. Smart husbands and smart wives won't want to claim ownership of this lamentation:

*“If only I knew and controlled myself to accept the less-than-perfect relationship, live with it and try to improve it, instead of flying the coop for an enticing alternative that would turn out to be a short-lived respite (from the company of an ‘unattractive’ conjugal partner) but a lifetime of*

*remorse after the matrimonial tie is broken and the heart grows fonder.”*

If you love yourself, you know how to guard yourself against the wolves (both the male and female varieties, either cunning tempter or wily seductress sent by the Devil to destroy you). Use your brain to evaluate the following examples. Maybe you don't need brains, because they are no-brainers:

1. You are a woman and a married man is interested in you. Why would you be attracted to a man who has proven himself not to be able to be faithful to a woman to whom he had professed his love until death? If you have a reason that you cannot spit out with a straight face to anybody, **may God bless you with the wisdom to flee from the temptation before it consumes you.**
2. You are a married man advancing in age and you see yourself on cloud nine for being still loved by a gorgeous lady who is not your wife. You tell yourself that you are not cheating her because she knows your marital status. If you were so honourable to be open with her, would you be equally honourable to be open with your wife about this extra-marital relationship and gain her acceptance? If not, search your conscience before God. In the depth of your heart, you know very well that no wife and no woman worthy of respect would tolerate this shifting of your heart.

If the mistress you love is worthy of respect as a woman, she won't take you to begin if. If she accepts your love, with your swearing of your commitment to her until heaven and earth come to an end, will the heaven and earth come to an end as quickly as is happening in your marriage? If she still loves despite knowing your marital status, and not worry a hoot about being given the same treatment later as you are giving to your wife now, do you think this love is directed purely at your loveliness or lovability as a person? **BEWARE! You may not be taking her for a ride, but she is taking you for one with her own destination on a journey of no return!**

Isaiah 12:2 says, "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation."

Marital infidelity is a sin. It is incompatible with God's prescription

of moral purity. Surely, it will stick in our conscience as a sore mark and stand in the way of a guiltless profession of our trust in the Lord and our claim on the salvation promise of Christ. Instead of the Lord being their strength and their song and their salvation, Christian men and women who stray from the straight path against their holy matrimonial vow will find to their great distress the extreme consequences they never bargain for in exchange for some short-term pleasure! If you are the infidel sort, count yourself fortunate if your marital unfaithfulness is forgiven by your spouse, but remember that the human mind rarely forgets a sin that cuts a relationship so deep, and therefore the one-moment indiscretion may just be a dark dishonorable patch that lingers in the weakened trust and intimacy within your marriage permanently; if the marriage, and hence the hope of a lifelong steadfast loving partnership, does not disintegrate for good.

*John Lee*

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### UPCOMING EVENTS

**June 12-15**

Spiritual Delight – JCC Church  
Retreat @ Port Dickson

**July 4**

JCC Anniversary Celebration

**July 10**

LCS Family Day

### [The Purpose Driven Life](#) - lesson and insights

I have been reading "The Purpose Driven Life" over the past months. This best selling title by Rick Warren articulates Christian living in the 21st century with a lifestyle based on eternal purposes, not cultural values. Warren explains God's 5 purposes for each of us:

*We were planned for God's pleasure, so your first purpose is to offer real worship.*

*We were formed for God's family, so your second purpose is to enjoy real fellowship.*

*We were created to become like Christ, so your third purpose is to learn real discipleship.*

*We were shaped for serving God, so your fourth purpose is to practice real ministry.*

*We were made for a mission, so your fifth purpose is to live out real evangelism.*

The book has received worldwide attention even making it into the best-seller list in Singapore. I found the book intensely practical, addressing issues confronting Christian living and the Church. One of the chapters I found highly relevant to me personally and I believe to JCC is the one on "Protecting Your Church" in fulfilling the purpose of being formed for God's family.

In this chapter, Rick Warren speaks of unity in the church which he calls the "soul of fellowship" – destroy it and you rip the heart out of Christ's body. Is unity in the body really that important? Unity is the essence, the core of how God intends for us to experience life in the church. Unity of the body was uppermost in Christ's prayer before His crucifixion – "protect them by the power of your name--the name you gave me--so that they may be one as we are one" (John 17:11). Jesus sought the Father's protection for his disciples. We can destroy unity by division, conflict and disharmony. We too need to protect the unity of the body, as Paul urges us,

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3).

How can we protect the unity of the Spirit? Rick Warren gives 6 suggestions.

### **1. Focus on what we have in common, not our differences.**

Paul exhorts us, "*Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification*" (Rom 14:19). As believers we have much in common – one faith, one hope, one Spirit, one baptism and one love. We share the same salvation and the same future. We share far more in common than our personal differences. Yes, God created each one of us uniquely. We value and cherish the differences but we must never allow these differences to divide us. Let us focus on what matters most which is to love each other as Christ has loved us. Conflict is usually a sign that the focus has shifted to a less important issue. This is what the Bible calls "disputable matters" – "*One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him* (Rom 14:1-3). When we focus on preferences, interpretations, styles and personalities, divisions often happen. When we concentrate on fulfilling God purposes, harmony results. Paul

implores, *“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. (Rom 1:10)*

In JCC are we focused on what we have in common as children of God, or do we sometimes pass judgment on those who are in some ways different from us in personality, age, capabilities, or even allow harbored ill-feeling or resentment to fester so that fellowship is broken?

## **2. Be realistic in your expectations**

Often the Church falls short of our expectations. Even with all its flaws and shortcomings, we are to passionately love the Church because *“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Eph 5:25)*. We heartily desire the ideal Church and often criticize what we see in our eyes as less than ideal. This kind of behavior is immature just as settling for the less than ideal without doing anything constructive is a sign of complacency. We need to live with the fact that believers will disappoint us, fail us, and disillusion us with their hypocrisy, neglect, pettiness and legalism; or through conflicts, unfulfilled expectation and other sins. However, this is no excuse to stop fellowshiping with them or to leave the Church. Rick Warren states, *“They are your family even when they don’t act like it, you can’t walk out on them.”* God tells us, *“Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s fault because of your love” (Eph 4:2 NLT)*. We need to remember that the Church is made up of sinners;

sinners hurt each other intentionally and sometimes unintentionally. Instead of leaving the Church or ceasing fellowship we need to work out our differences or difficulties. Reconciliation, not running away is the road to stronger character and deeper fellowship. God has many lessons to teach us. There is no perfect Church; each has its own set of weaknesses and problems. If we do not change our mindset, we will inevitably be disappointed yet again.

## **3. Encourage rather than criticize**

It is always easier to stand on the sideline and take pot shots at those who are serving rather than get involved and make a contribution. The Bible warns us:

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way (Rom 14:13)

*Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it (James 4:11)*

*Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! (James 5:9)*

Whenever we judge another believer, 4 things happen:



1. We lose our fellowship with God
2. We expose our own pride and insecurity
3. We set ourselves up to be judged by God
4. We harm the fellowship of the Church

Rick Warren calls a critical Spirit a costly vice. Satan's job is to blame, complain and criticize members of God's family; he is called the "*accuser of our brothers* (Rev 10:12). When we do the same, we are deceived and are doing Satan's work for him. Remember, no matter how much we disagree with fellow Christians, they are not our enemy. The time we spend on criticizing other believers should be better spent building the unity of the body. The insidious critical spirit can become part of our mindset and culture just like the Israelites during their exodus from Egypt. Their incessant complaining only leads to undermining of their faith in God and conflict with God's appointed leaders and plan for them. The result was dire consequences and many years of unfruitful and aimless wandering.

#### 4 Refuse to listen to gossip

What is gossip? Rick Warren defines gossip as "passing on information when you are neither part of the problem nor part of the solution." We know that spreading gossip is wrong and we should not listen to it. Listening to gossip is like accepting stolen property; it makes us just as faulty. If someone begins to gossip, we should have the courage to say, "STOP, I don't need to know this. Have you talked directly to the person concerned?" People who gossip to you

will also gossip **about** you. God calls gossipers trouble makers:

A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends (Prov 16:28)

*Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down. (Prov 26:20)*

It is said that in God's church, the greatest wounds are from other sheep not from wolves. Paul warns us of "cannibal Christians" – those who bite and devour each other and destroy each other (Gal 5:15). The Bible instructs us, "A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much" (Prov 20:9). The fastest way to end Church or small group gossip is to lovingly confront those who are gossiping and insist that they stop. We have our fair share of gossips, it is time we do something to put them to a stop.

#### 5. Practise God's way of resolving conflicts

Jesus gives us a 3-step process for conflict resolution and church discipline, in Matthew 18:15-17:

- *If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.*
- *16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'*

- *17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*

During a conflict it is tempting to complain to a third party rather than courageously speaking in love to the person concerned. Private confrontation is always the first step and should be taken ASAP. If you are unable to work out the problem between the two of you, the next step is to take two or three witnesses to help resolve the problem and reconcile the relationship. What happens if the person refuses to listen? You should take it to the Church; if he still refuses to listen you should treat him as an unbeliever.

## **6. Support your Pastor and leaders**

There is no perfect leader; God has given leaders the responsibility and authority to maintain the unity of the Church. The Bible instructs us on how we are to relate to those who serve as leaders, *“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb 13:17).* Pastors and leaders have to give an account of how well they have watched over those entrusted to them. We too will also have to give an account to God on how we have followed the leaders God has emplaced over us. We protect the fellowship when we honour those who serve us by leading. We are commanded to, *“Honour those leaders*

*who work hard for you, who have been given the responsibility of urging and guiding you along in your obedience. Overwhelm them with appreciation and love. (1 Thess 5:12-13a, The Message).* By no means are leaders perfect or always above reproach; the basis of our judgment and interaction must always be the Word of God not our subjective views and personal perspectives.

We are all called to protect and promote the unity of the Church. We are to give it our full effort and in so doing glorify God. It will not always be easy. Sometimes, we have to do what is best for the body not for ourselves. Some time we may be misunderstood and subject to wrongful criticism and gossips. God blesses the Church that is united. Beyond the superficiality of being one and token expressions of caring for each other, we need to live out the reality of being in right standing with God and expressing the life in Christ. Let us rid ourselves of the sin that hinders us from running the race marked out for us, which hinders the work of God to bless and enrich us. We really need to be awakened and taking positive steps and heeding God’s Word so that the vision we have to glorify God and living out a life of true discipleship can be a living reality, in each one of us.

The question each of us needs to consider is “What am I personally doing to protect the unity of my Church family?”

*Tan Swee Leong*

Study notes (Part 2) for Bethel Care Group

based on

## Seven Seasons of a Person

— Patrick Morley (author of *Man in the Mirror*)

*For effective application, it would be useful if a small group can gather and share each other response to the questions at the end of each season.*

### Season of Rebuilding

#### Introduction

*Most of us in JCC are either first generation Christian or at most second generation, and would have been a Christian for at least a few years or even longer. We can even pat ourselves on the back for staying the course and fighting the fight as Paul had stated. We completed our academic studies, had worked for many years, married and are likely to have children. Suddenly, we realize that we have “lost” our youthful drive and settled into a contented family life. We have mellowed and are living the “good life”. We go to work in the morning, attend church service on Sundays and may even attend some bible studies/seminars. Sure, there are bills to pay, our children may “torture” us with their homework ... but Life is good (as DBS tells us). Still, many adult Christians discover that after living for 10, 15 or 20 years as a Christians and what they considered as a “good life”, things still do not turn out the way they planned. There seem to be something missing. We have a nagging feeling that there must be something more to life. Is*

*this describing your situation? Am I a cultural Christian or a Biblical Christian? This is a time for rebuilding and God uses this time to rebuild the foundation of our lives.*

#### 4 Crucial Conversions

As adult Christian, we can kid ourselves about how much we have it altogether. Dangerously, we drifted away from dependency on God. The irony is that the more we have of this world, the more “hollow” is our heart and soul. Most of us would remember the day we were born again when we surrendered our life to Jesus. Then, what happened?

- a. Your Heart. Our greatest risk is to lose our “first love” (see Rev 2:4). It is not enough to give your life; your heart must be given as well. As Dr. Schroeder stated in Mar 04 during his talk in JCC, when Jesus is our Lord, we are his slaves. And, a Lord owns everything of his slave, including his life and heart. Our wonderful love relationship is reduced to rendering all our activities to pleasing Him. Become lover of Jesus. We don’t love God because we serve Him; we serve Him because we love Him.
- b. Your Head. We make choices based on what we know. Therefore, it is crucial to know the truth and think rightly. Developing a Christian worldview helps us see the world as God sees it. Otherwise, we will become cultural Christian.
- c. Your Calendar. How we spend our time shows how we answer the question, “Who’s in charge?” Do you live as if your time is your own and you can do what you want? Or you can say, “I will go anywhere You want me to go, do anything You

want me to do, and be anything You want me to be”.

- d. Your Wallet. You earn the money, so you own it and decide by yourself how to spend it. Okay, maybe just give some of it to God and the rest is mine. What did the Bible teach? Very clearly, God owns everything and allows us to be stewards of 90% of what He first gives us. Wow, that means He owns my wallet. Have you handed your wallet to Christ? If we give control of our money to Jesus, He will release us from the bondage to money. We will be free to be generous and glad. “Where your wallet is, there will be your heart be also”.

### Rebuilding Your View of Work

Is your work an end itself? An obsession that becomes your idol? Sadly, unconsciously, we allow work to be an idol. This is an extreme in which our pyramid shaped world (as Dr. Schroeder described it) are conforming us. The other extreme is to see work as merely secular tasks to finance the really spiritual things e.g. providing for family, giving to church and personal ministry. Paul stated that we are in the World but not of the World. Our Lutheran teaching also taught us to be Christ-like in the World. God wants us to do our work, “for the Lord, not for men” (Col 3:23). Every job/vocation is important. There is nothing more spiritual about being a pastor, a bible teacher than being a waiter, salesman, manager or cleaner. Treat your work as part of your calling from God. Do it as an offering to Him.

### Rebuilding Your Life with God

Spiritual disciplines are the means by which we nurture our relationship with God. Rather than to show how good we are, they help us to appreciate His grace, truth, and transforming power.

- a. Bible Study. The Word is our spiritual food and provides a solid foundation upon which you are building.
- b. Prayer. Martin Luther gave us instructions to pray in the morning, evening and at the table daily. (See the small catechism.) Pray individually and as a group, starting with your family and then as a corporate body as a church.
- c. Active Church Involvement. Jesus started the church so we would have mutual encouragement, worship, growth, fellowship, ministry and accountability. The church is God’s instrument for transforming lives. He knows that you need to be involved with others to grow.

### Questions to Ponder

1. What areas in your life are unconverted? What is troubling you from converting that aspect of your life?
2. Is your work a spiritual calling? What is preventing it from being spiritual?
3. Do you study the bible consistently? How do you do it? Or what is preventing it?
4. How can you have family prayer time?
5. What do I contribute to the church and how am I involved in the church? What is preventing me?

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## **Season of Suffering**

### Introduction.

Why me or why must it happen? This is the common lamentation whenever there

is suffering especially when there seem to be no apparent reason or logic for the suffering; e.g., death from fatal accidents. From a human perspective, the existence of evil and suffering implies that either:

1. God doesn't know about it, or
2. He can't do anything about it, or
3. He doesn't care.

But we know that He is omniscient (He knows), He is omnipotent (He can) and He is good (He cares). How, then, can we explain suffering?

God became a man and experienced the sufferings that we undergo (and even more). Because Jesus Christ rose from the dead we can have hope in the midst of our sufferings. Eventually, He will right every wrong and wipe away every tear. He promises that "all things work together for good" for his children.

Where suffering comes from?

1. For doing wrong either through our insensitivity or sin. In anger, we bruise or break a relationship. By our selfishness, we hurt our spouse and through overwork, we neglect our children. Sometimes, God disciplines us through sufferings for our rebellion.
2. For doing right when we stand up for our principles and/or our Christian belief. A deal is lost because we refuse to shade the truth and we are persecuted because we cling to our belief.
3. For no reason and we don't have a clue why we suffer. There is no logic/reason to explain about victims of seemingly random acts of pain or evil. An accident, natural disaster and a surprise health problem – all these seem like meaningless, random suffering.

But the bible tells us that whatever suffering that comes into our life has been sifted through the hands of God. Nothing happens without God's will and nothing happens without God being in control. Paul has shown us what a privilege to suffer for Christ. We can trust God that good will come from suffering. Through suffering God corrects our faulty thinking, spares us from greater evils, and bring greater good.

We must ask God to teach us every lesson He intends for us when we suffer, lest we have to travel that road again.

***Suffering will make us bitter or better.  
The choice is ours.***

#### Questions to ponder

1. Are you in a season of suffering? Are you handling it well?
2. Looking into your past, has the season of suffering been for your good? What bad news has turned into good news? Was it meaningless?
3. Is there anything still not right or doesn't seem to work out?
4. The Bible teaches that we are called to suffer as Jesus suffered. Has this changed your view on suffering?

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## **Season of Success**

### Introduction

Who is the successful man? A footballer who led his country to win the 1986 World Cup earns unbelievable monies, has beautiful wives and millions of adoring fans even today. Maradona, a footballer, achieved everything possible in football, but at a young age of 43 years is in intensive care because of heart problem through decades of drug abuse

and hard living. Or Howard Huges, one of the richest man in the world, died a very lonely man in his self-imposed “prison”.

Man has a natural instinct to achieve something in life. Some accumulate monies, some trophies and other high positions. What is yours? The single-minded pursuit of career (business, sport, position and etc) has been advocated as the hallmark of a successful man. Unfortunately, the number of these “successful” men is very small, long after the fame and fortune has lost its glitter. To succeed at career but to fail at home is to fail completely.

The World places emphasis on externals – how you look, what you have, who you know. The Bible says that “*Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart*” (1 Samuel 16:7)

### True Success

True success means to satisfy your calling, not your ambition. A season of success is the by-product of living as a called man.

### Four Attitudes of Successful Man

What attitudes do I need to achieve a balanced successful life?

1. Dependency on God. Many men think that they become Christian by faith, but the rest is up to them. Our greatest temptation is to depend on our own strength. Conversely, the second greatest temptation is to decline a calling/ministry because we look at ourselves and assess that we are inadequate and not calling on the power of God to help us. True success only comes from total dependency on God.
2. Takes Responsibility for Life. Working hard does not guarantee success, but not working hard almost always guarantees failure. God calls for willing heart that

works hard. Paul said, “I work hard, but I always knew it depended on God, not me” (1 Cor 15:10)

3. Takes Risks. Take divinely inspired risks. Never be paralyzed by the fear of failure. Many people do not attempt anything significant because they might fail or “run out of steam”. Courage is not the absence of fear, but a willingness to trust God anyway. When we are totally dependent on God, we can take calculated risks.
4. Expect Opposition. In life, there is always opposition. Even the best thought-out plan that takes care of everyone’s interest will still have opposition. The culture, our flesh, and the devil all conspire to tempt us and turn us from the path of success. When we expect opposition, we can be prepared and not be overwhelmed.

### Questions to Ponder

1. What is your view of a successful man?
2. What keeps men from depending on God for success?
3. Are you taking responsibility for your life, or are you spiritualizing lazy habits?
4. Have you taken risks in your life? How much have you depended on God during these times?

**A man went to a church in the East where he had heard many miracles had occurred, visions of Heaven. "I have come all the way from the West to find God," he told one of the believers.**

**"Aah. God has gone all the way to the West to find you."**

## 10 LESSONS TO IMPART TO CHILDREN BY A FATHER (part 3)

### Teach your children to watch their words

Proverbs 4:24 instructs us to watch our words. May there be no perverse words or corrupt talk in our mouths. In Proverbs 6:16 to 19, God states six things He hated. Two of which is “lying tongue” and “a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.” Teach your children to guard their lips. Speak words that edify others. Impart knowledge and truth with their mouths instead of lies, gossips and slanders. Teach them these truths recorded in Proverbs:

- The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked (10:11)
- Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks judgement (10:13)
- He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool (10:18)
- When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise (10:19)
- The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value (10:20)
- The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of judgement (10:21)
- The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly (15:2)
- The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit (15:4)
- Arrogant lips are unsuited to a fool – how much worse lying lips to a ruler (17:7)
- A wise man’s heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction. Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones (16:23-24)

The list goes on and instructions can also be found in other books of the Bible. Judging from the numerous scripture passages

concerning the use of our lips, God wants us to guard our speech seriously.

### 7. Teach your children to pursue their works

One of the first command God gave to mankind is to work (Genesis 2:15). God instructed Adam to take care of the Garden of Eden. This command to work is still valid today. Father, teach your children to pursue their works diligently. Proverbs 6:6 to 8 uses an ant to warn us from being lazy. The ant, having no commander or ruler, stores up provisions in summer and gathers food during harvest. If your children are lethargic, tell them these:

- “A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest – and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man” (Proverbs 6:10-11).
- Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth. He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son (Proverbs 10:4-5)
- The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied. (Proverbs 13:4)
- One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys (Proverbs 18:9)
- As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is a sluggard to those who send him (Proverbs 10:26)

Teach your children to make full use of their resources and abilities into their work. Make a significant contribution to the welfare of the society. God will reward them richly.

by Chong YewMoi  
March 2004

(Much of the text has been adapted from John MacArthur’s message entitled “Crucial Lessons for a Wise Father” and my interpretation from the Book of Proverbs)

# May Events in Photos

## JCC Family Day @ West Coast Park on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2004



Joining us were a number of friends of JCC members. The weather was fine, then it poured but finally the sun shone again and we came out from under the tarpaulins to play again. Overall, there were more than 200 photos taken. If you would like to get a set of all these photos taken by 3 photographers, please place your order with Martin Cheah or Beng Lay. You will need to pay \$2.00 for a CD which will be playable on a DVD or PC. Please rest assured that the money will not go to any individual but to the church funds.



### May 19 –

A group of 10 ladies gathered together for a Bible study conducted by sister Ewe Ewe. This is a 20 lesson course and maybe we are seeing the making of another historical milestone for JCC. God could be working through the ladies like in the time of Deborah.

## Baptisms



## Confirmations



Sunday, May 16 – Karen, Elijah and Elisha, the children of Anthony and Meiling were baptized into the family of JCC.

Four youths, Nathanael, Li Lin, Rachel and Amanda were confirmed on the same day.

