

JURONG  
CHRISTIAN  
CHURCH

15 YEARS  
OF NEWS

# The Vine

For Internal Circulation Only

VOLUME 1/2005



## We Are Back Again....

This is the 15th year of existence for The Vine, so we thought we give it one more shot before we call it a day.

We have tried going online with The Vine but from the various feedback we received, it was not successful.

Many of you were not even aware that The Vine went online and if you were, you did not know where to find it.

So the team, that is

John and I, sort of agreed to come back on paper again. This time around, we have



**Caption describing picture or**

the assistance of Nick Wong and also a new Canon photocopier, so I hope The

Vine will really make an impact and go out in glorious black and white.

In this issue, we will try to cover all the happenings during the last four months and I hope you will continue to feed us with more stories and testimonies for us to fill up The Vine for the coming months ahead.

Martin Cheah

## Giving to God in 2005

2005 is just beginning. The world has seen wars and earthquakes (underwater ones included) in 2004. Yet we have also seen some great charitable works as people raise millions in response to the tsunami in Asia. Were you challenged to give? Do you need something like a tsunami to shake money out of your pockets?

I believe that God has given us some guidelines on giving and I will try to share what I think is the correct attitude to giving. The verse most quoted and is found on your

pledge envelope is a good place to start. "...for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7b) Taken out of context like this, it seems to mean that we should give any amount we feel like giving as long as we feel cheerful about it.

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# My Bangkok Holiday



Enjoying the waves at Pattaya



Shopping at MBK with Wilfred and family



Mervyn Lee and friend



Treasure Hunt at Singapore River

Originally, Joo See's brother proposed that we go to Phuket on Christmas Day. However, we could not get tickets so that plan was shelved. On hind sight, we must truly thank God for His kind protection. Instead, we joined the Chinese section

for a holiday to Bangkok and Pattaya. We had a good time of fellowship with our Chinese Section brothers and sisters. Now when we meet in church, we do not act like strangers anymore. I must try to learn Chinese or I will miss out on all the

jokes that we shared during the journey. We met Wilfred and family on the last day. I had a good time shopping with them. After many days of Chinese, I now had a chance to speak English.

Martin Cheah

## Camp Light—Kids' Camp 2004

Camp Light '04 indeed has been a most blessed outreach program. The greatest victory was being able to connect with the kids and being a friend to them, just as Jesus took the initiative to be our friend. He softened my heart to be sensitive to others' needs. Another reward was to influence these young lives the way Jesus has influenced mine.

It has been most fulfilling to serve the children, just as Jesus served us. What does it take to serve? No

prerequisites. Just a willing heart; this He did not reject. In fact, our lives are laid out to serve His purpose. God never fails to plant new experiences in our lives as we boldly stand up for Him. He'll lead us to break barriers and connect with the lives of many others yearning to hear the Gospel.

A big THANK YOU to the committee who organized and painstakingly took time off to prepare the activities and cater to the needs of the children as well as all the

campers. The camp may be over for now, but not the harvest. Let's continue to seek God for opportunities to follow up with the little bundles of joy and bring light to this dark world.

*"How can I repay the Lord for all His goodness to me? I will lift up*



Lydia and one of her kids

*the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will fulfill*

# GB Camp 2004

Following about one week after the Kids' Camp was the GB Camp. JCC was again packed with kids but this time it was all girls. Here are some of the pictures I took of this camp.

MC



Girls,  
Girls



Girls,  
Girls

# Shepherd Leaders Fellowship (SLF)

The first SLF meeting was held at Jim Lee's house on 21st Jan 2005. Pastor Samuel gave a message followed by the shepherds sharing the ups and downs in the ministry.

At the end of the meeting, we broke up into small groups to pray for all the shepherds who had shared their problems.



# Camp Light *contd.*

*my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people."* – Psalm 116:12-14

Testifying to His love, an ambassador of Christ,

Mervyn Lee

Iris with a group of kids.



Thomas preparing a kid for the plunge.

# Honesty is not a virtue, or is it?

Because of the famous footballer's David Beckham's honesty (or lack of?), the famous words "Bend it like Beckham" almost looked set to take a back seat to "Don't 'brain' it like Beckham" as a popular jingle when our humorous Dr Balaji, Senior Minister of State for Health, dished out his tongue-in-cheek advice to doctors at his inaugural SingHealth lecture on 17<sup>th</sup> Oct 2004. Fortunately for Beckham, the jokey advice did not sink root and so is as good as forgotten, until now, perhaps, that I recall it – not for the sake of having fun at the expense of the footballer, but as a convenient starting point to launch my thoughts on the topic.

The humour all started with Beckham boasting about intentionally committing a foul in a match to acquire a second yellow card in order to wipe his suspension slate clean. As I contemplated what Beckham did and said, I hoped it would end with him in a wiser way to be distinguishing between virtuous honesty and vile dishonesty. In a way, I find that the soccer star was being honest by his confession. How many of us are game enough to honestly and publicly admit our calculatedly dishonest actions in our daily life for all to see how

clever we are after the example of the star who wanted to set the record straight that he did have brains against some public perceptions that he didn't have any?

"I am sure some people think that I have not got the brains to be that clever, but I do have the brains," Beckham was reported to have said. But then, he was being dishonest in his commission of the soccer foul; and so I am ambivalent whether I should sing his praise for honesty or disparage him for the dishonesty. Maybe I should do neither, since the refreshingly forthright admission (plus point for honesty?) and the deceitfulness of a scheming foul act (minus point for dishonesty) neutralizes each other.

Now, switch to Dr Balaji's wit that had his audience of doctors in stitches, "According to today's Sunday Times, Beckham's mouth does not keep pace with his brain and that apparently is the source of his problems. I'm confident our profession can do better and our communication skills can match our technical competence." (Straits Times report, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct)

Anything that is right is usually easier said than done; and I have endless times been reminded about the importance of

communication in all spheres of life. Nobody, unless he lives as a recluse detached from humanity and civilization, can avoid communication. And woe betide the poor soul who cannot communicate just right when our communication becomes the source of all problems in dealings with spouse, colleagues, friends, children, parents, etc.

I assure you that I know the importance of communication because years ago (probably when I was still newly married), I put down COMMUNICATION as the topmost important factor of successful marriages (above in importance to love, sexual satisfaction, commitment to relationship and realistic expectations, in that order) in a newspaper contest and won a prize of a big *papasan* chair. Ha ... ha ... I know excellently the importance of communication, but perhaps manage only to score a borderline pass mark in real life with uncountable instances of offending people close or not-so-close with my blunt words that spew faster out of my mouth than their processing in the brain. Thankfully, I have only one simple but reasonably good brain (not

more as to complicate processing of thoughts) that can do a bit to smooth over offence and that I can mitigate for my own consolation, “Aiyah, so what, others have been offending me time and again too. If I can at least try to smooth over their offence, surely it won’t be a big deal for them to smooth over mine.” (Whether the self-consolation is of any value is of course not up to me to be the final arbiter.)

On further thought, should I blame God for making communication between people such a complicated issue with so many races, cultures, languages (including body and sign languages), nuances and sensitivities? Why can’t people just be uncomplicated, able to communicate simply without embellishment or guile such that listeners can also simply listen and agree or disagree without taking offence? For example, if a school teacher talks to a parent about a child who simply has no aptitude for academics, why can’t she simply say, “In my opinion, your child has little aptitude for academic work, but I think he is great in art and sports” without fearing a backlash; instead of saying, ever so diplomatically, “Your child is capable of better performance in the exams ...” and raising misplaced hopes and added pressure on the poor child who is blamed for laziness when his problem is really a lack of the right academic genes and when he can actually be developed excellently for a profitable soccer career like Fandi Ahmad with just an ‘N’ level qualification?

Or why can’t a doctor report it straight, “My diagnosis is ... and there is no known cure” without hedging the human opinion with ‘probably’, ‘subject to review of development’ and all kinds of disclaimers? If anybody is to be blamed for the complexity of human communication, I think it is not God but everyone of us whether as communicator or recipient of the communication. We cannot accept others’ mistakes and others return our ‘favours’. What we expect of others to communicate “right” bounces back as what others expect of us. We just cannot

talk straight, but have to navigate a meandering path with detours here and there before getting our point across without hurting egos or worrying about hostile response. Communication, the most important factor of good relations, becomes overwrought by caution and concealment. Do we humans then become gainers from the gift of communication abilities that lower animals do not possess?

As I ponder, I wish that people can just talk and listen without tension. If I meet a person of religion X, I prefer that I can talk to him straight and convince him about how misguided he is in his belief and why he should embrace the same faith as mine without him feeling affronted. I would be pleased if he would simply accept my contention as an honest expression according to my conviction. Of course, he is entitled to disagree with me and counter my contention and, in reciprocal acceptance of his honest disputation according to his faith, I would politely, without offence, listen to a piece of his mind. Finally, he would have heard me out; and I, him; and both of us would become better informed of each other’s position and make our own decision in agreement or opposition with a friendly handshake of thanks for the mutual exchange of views. Certainly, it is also acceptable if either of us opt to courteously decline each other’s offer of opinion – again without umbrage. Ultimately, everyone has the freedom to attempt, accept or reject communication without guile. Shouldn’t straight communication create a better atmosphere for people to understand one another truly, sans the stress of having to interpret nuances and messages between lines?

Yes, you can converse with me honestly and tell me straight in the face that I am being idealistic, unrealistic or what (by any adjective you can muster). Indeed, I may agree with you and you won’t be taken to account for your strong words. Without doubt, man’s condition is not an ideal state, and



therefore it is unreasonable to expect him to be able to desist from making or, avoid having to make, twists and turns in communication, with his brain working hard at all times to raise the level of communication as an art or a science so much so that the higher the level it is, the less comprehensible or more superficial it becomes. For example, instead of calling an official statement of agreement or disagreement plainly as such without ‘smart’ dressing, so that it can be readily understood by all and sundry (the public that the statement is intended), we have available the more classy term “*communiqué*” that gives the announcement a glitzy appearance with little of its substance easily comprehensible by ordinary folks who do not possess the specialist scalpel for dissection.

God understands why we simply cannot communicate straight. Hence, the sound counsel of Job 15:5, “Your sin prompts your mouth; you adopt the tongue of the crafty.” If not for sin, then we won’t find communication so complicated, would we?

What I gather is that it is easier for one to be dishonest than honest. Basing on ease or difficulty of being honest *vs.* being dishonest, honesty is not a virtue (at least in a practical world), or is it? While, admittedly, painting a wall black (and avoiding the trouble of dealing with dirt) is easier than keeping it white, would we really feel comfortable living in a darkened enclosure of four black walls? Beckham’s act of deceit was wrong and he deserved the blessing of correction and discipline (Job 5:17). If only he availed himself to the blessing, he would then have got himself “protected from the lash of the tongue” (Job 5:21) for a subsequently honest confession. Unfortunately, although his lips did not speak lies (Ps 34:13) his purpose for the confession was questionable; and consequently, even a truthful statement became tainted and lost its honesty value. It was simply too difficult for him to be honest in an honest way. Don’t crucify him; other-

wise we have only to look at ourselves in the mirror to find reasons to crucify ourselves too.

We are all very practical, in a world that is too practical; and woe betide us that because of our ‘fear’ of honesty, we often deny ourselves of people’s understanding, acceptance and of God’s blessings. So going with the tide of ‘practicality’ is not necessarily the best option. We ought to say as David in Ps 39:1 said, “I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin” (Dishonesty is sin, too.)

*“Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment. A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare.”* (Prov. 12:19; 21:6)

*John Lee*

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Think about it. Does it sound logical? If a millionaire happily gave only \$10 as his monthly offering,, that would fulfill the requirements of this verse. If he were to give \$11 or more, it would make him unhappy because he is a very stingy man. Therefore God only expects \$10 from him because it makes him happy.

If we were to move up a few verses to verse 6, the apostle Paul asked us to “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” Think in terms of a savings account. If each month you save \$10, after many years, your bank account will have a tidy sum of money (with interest). However, if you put in a bigger amount (say 10% of your gross salary), can you imagine how much more money you would have saved?

A colleague gave me a book for Christmas entitled “Money for Life”. (People think I like to read about money—don’t know why. Do I have a money face?) Anyway the secret the author is trying to share is this: Pay Yourself First! In other words, before you spend your salary, take out a percentage, maybe 10% and save it. This way you will prevent yourself from spending unnecessarily because if you do the opposite, ie to save what you have left of your salary at the end of the month, most likely, you would have spend most of it. The author understands human nature well. I have always taken the latter approach and my bank account is empty.

If I did not tell you this secret, then when we meet in the Bank of Heaven to draw out our money, you will certainly be disappointed with me for not telling you that “whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” How do we reconcile sowing generously with cheerful giving? Initially, when you first start to save money as recommended by the author of the book, “Money for Life”, I am sure you will feel the

pinch. But once you have adjusted your lifestyle to the money you have left and seeing your bank account grow, you will feel cheerful and probably challenged to even give more.

How Much To Give? I don’t want to be dogmatic about this because I don’t really know the answer. Ten percent seems to be a figure that is mentioned quite commonly and maybe you can start with that. Don’t ask me base on gross or net. The objective is that you learn to give cheerfully. Some writers have argued that the 10% of the Old Testament was given to the Levites as a tax and therefore when we pay taxes, we have paid our tithes.

In Matthew 22:21, Jesus said, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” If giving to Caesar is the taxes, then what is giving to God? Wouldn’t giving to the temple represent giving to God? Furthermore, do you think Jesus is saying give to Caesar more and give to God less? I don’t think so. Seems to me He is saying that if you give so much to Caesar, then you should give an equivalent amount, if not more, to God.

I hope I have not confused you but if I have, come and see me personally and I will try to clarify your doubts, if possible.

Before I end, let me say that for 2005, the pledges received is more than for last year. I don’t think companies have given more increments so I may conclude that you have learned the secret of giving cheerfully and also sowing generously.

May God “throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”

Martin Cheah

# Christmas Carolling

There were three groups of carolers which visited about 7 homes and community parties.

This was the first time that I have actually joined the carolers as a singer, spoilt the

whole video taping of their singing because my voice was the most prominent being the camera man.

It was also the first time that we actually visited people who were not members (some even not Christians) who had invited us to their homes. A promising



start to breaking down the barriers with our neighborhood.

MC

# Christmas Carnival on 18 Dec 2004

The CGs were sent out door to door to invite the neighborhood, the tents and games stalls were set up. Then on that very day, there was a heavy downpour just before the start of the event.

The rain may have hin-

dered some people from coming but nevertheless, there were many others who did come and the earlier rains gave us the cool weather to enjoy the games and fun.

I met Ah Pek's son,

to my surprise, he was an ex-colleague, a sales person from Tiger Beer.



# Baptisms on Christmas Day.

Welcome to the family of God at JCC.

