

# The Vine

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## ***EDITOR'S WORD***

Last month, I mentioned that Maradona scored a highly disputed goal against England in the World Cup. Only a few weeks ago, Liverpool scored a goal against Chelsea. This time computers were enlisted to determine if the shadow of the ball had crossed the line. Again it was "proven" by the experts that the ball did not cross the line and so the goal should not have been allowed.

Sunday, May 8 – Dr Gary Choong gave us his farewell message before going off to the US for further studies. There were many thoughts presented in his sermon but I like to talk about two points.

### **1) The Fist**

In his illustration of the five fingers clenching to form a fist, he alluded to a church environment like ours where there is a mixture of kids, youths, young adults, mature adults and senior citizens united together for a greater punch. If we each go our separate ways, we will be less effective and maybe even counter-productive. Actually, I thought he was going to look at a wider context and consider all the different denominations and the practice of Biblical separation.

Was Jesus just talking in the context of a church environment in John 17:21 when he prayed that "all of them may be one"? Of course in JCC, we should all be one, there should not be such a thing as a Chinese section or English section. We are one church with different language preferences. However, sometimes I sense that we think we are two different churches.

What about the wider context? Are all denominations to be united as one or should we dwell in our differences? In a family of say five children, how many will like to eat cauliflower? Should the cauliflower group separate from their brothers because they prefer broccoli? (*Actually broccoli is a type of cauliflower*).

What will the neighbours say if they keep seeing the children fighting? Maybe they will say that their parents did not teach them well. Certainly when pagans see Christians fighting no glory will be given to God.

Since Dr Gary did not address this issue, I don't feel adequate to address it. I just leave you with the

thought - can God's name be glorified if all the different fingers of Christians come together to form a mighty fist?

## 2) The Big Land

I am sure that Dr Gary has mentioned it more than once that our church sits on a prime piece of real estate. In his last words to us, Dr Gary made mention of a desire to see us develop JCC in the next 10 years. Personally, I feel 10 years from now would be a little late because the church is already 37 years old and if you rebuild it when it is 47 years old, you will only be left with a short term of lease, maybe less than 20 years.

I believe Dr Gary is not just talking about a physical building to be developed over the next 10 years but rather a united JCC working together for growth, where English and Chinese members, youths and adults pull their resources together to form a powerful fist against the enemy of our souls.

## The Road Ahead

I noticed that Tah Ching Road has been partially resurfaced. The government with its almost unlimited resources did not see fit to resurface the entire Tah Ching Road just because of some pot-holes.

Let me end with this joke: *There is the story of a pastor who got up one Sunday and announced to his congregation: "I have good news and bad news. The good news is, we have enough money to pay for our new building program. The bad news is, it's still out there in your pockets."*

*Martin Cheah*

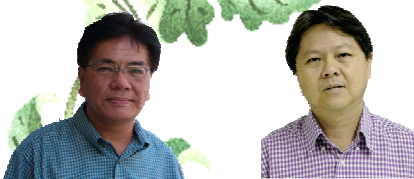
# English Council 2005



Chong Yew Moi  
Treasurer

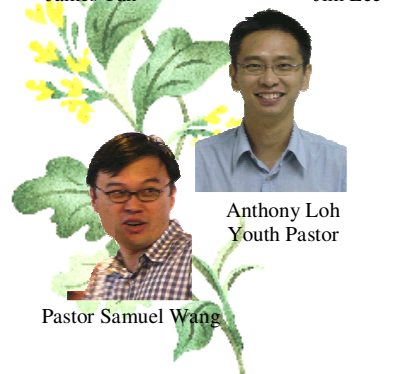
Goh Young Kwang  
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James Tan

Jim Lee



Anthony Loh  
Youth Pastor

Pastor Samuel Wang

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

**1Peter 5:2-4**

# THE BIBLICAL CASE AGAINST GAMBLING

"Gambling can't be morally wrong, since even the Good Book doesn't condemn it." That is what overzealous defenders of the dancing dice claim. As Sasuly put it, "Nowhere does the Holy Bible, bedrock of Judeo-Christian morality, in either its Old or New Testaments, take a stand against gaming." (Richard Sasuly, Bookies

and Bettors, Rinehart and Winston, New York: Holt, 1982, p.36.)

It is true that the word gambling is found nowhere in

the Holy Bible. Surely, if gambling is as bad as we are saying it is, one would expect to find it mentioned in the Ten Commandments, but it isn't. Furthermore, it's not in the Sermon on the Mount. In fact, no condemnation of gambling ever fell from the lips of Jesus. The Bible seems strangely silent on the topic.

The truth is, the Bible is filled with condemnations of gambling, but gamblers would have to read it to find them. Let's take a look for ourselves.

## Gambling and the Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments form one of the oldest and most respected moral codes of mankind. Three of the great world religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all claim divine authority for this moral code. Other great religions, like Confucianism and Buddhism, while not affirming belief in one God, nevertheless accept the basic moral duties stated in the Ten Commandments.

There are at least two commandments that bear directly on the question of gambling: "Thou shalt not steal," and "Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:15, 17). When Moses told the Israelites, "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour" (Leviticus 19:13), he set forth a principle that covers all types of financial shenanigans.

First, the Ten Commandments declare, "Thou shalt not covet." Desiring what belongs to another is wrong. Gambling is an example of coveting what does not rightfully belong to us, a strike-it-rich scheme. The signs of covetousness are written all over the gambling enterprise. Consider the exorbitant amount of money changing hands annually--



nearly \$300 billion. Also, the hungry knife of organized crime, slicing off its oversized piece of the gambling pie, is nothing less than grandiose greed. Or, to bring it down to the individual, the desire to win money that we did not work for is covetousness pure and simple. Judging by the estimated 100 million Americans who gamble legally in forty-seven states with thirty state lotteries, covetousness is a major problem in this country. What could be more relevant to this seemingly unquenchable thirst for drinking out of the golden goblet of gambling than the injunction, "Thou shalt not covet"?

Further, gambling is a form of stealing. As we have already seen, gambling is a form of stealing from the poor. State lotteries, for example, take a disproportionately high amount of their revenue from the poor. Many lottery outlets are strategically placed in poor and minority communities. This is state-sponsored stealing from the poor, a form of economic immorality. In short, it is a violation of the command, "Thou shalt not steal."

### **Do Not Oppress the Poor**

Some attempt to justify gambling by insisting that playing a lottery is strictly voluntary. It can't be stealing, they insist, because the players are gambling of their own free will. The

fact that the poor gamble of their own free will does not justify taking advantage of them. Exploiting their weakness toward gambling doesn't justify stealing from them, certainly not by the government that should be looking out for their welfare.

It is the responsibility of the government to educate, not exploit, the poor. The Constitution charges government to look after the "general welfare" of its citizens. Government-sponsored gambling, which clearly exploits the poor, is immoral, and the Bible is far from silent on that.

The Old Testament is filled with exhortations against the oppression of the poor and needy. Consider the words of the prophet Isaiah: "The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses" (Isaiah 3:14). Or hear the sharp words of Amos, who denounced the exploiter, saying, "Hear this word, ye . . . which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink. The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks" (Amos 4:1, 2). Zechariah added, "Oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil

against his brother in your heart" (Zechariah 7:10). Here again, the Bible is far from silent about oppressing the poor, of which state-sponsored gambling is a prominent example.

## **A Word to the Wise**

Solomon is considered the wisest man who ever lived. His proverbs, or wise sayings, contain many exhortations against gambling. For example, "Wealth from gambling quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows" (Proverbs 13:11 TLB). What could be more to the point? Gambling is a form of monetary magic. By a wave of the bookie's wand, the rabbit of financial success is supposed to appear in the gambler's pot.

In starker terms, gambling is a form of slothfulness. Solomon exhorted, "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour. He coveteth greedily all the day long. . ." (Proverbs 21:25, 26). A little folding of the hands and a little rolling of the dice, and poverty will come on like a tiger.

Hear another word from the wise: ". . . the man who wants to get rich quick will quickly fail" (Proverbs 28:20 TLB). If there was ever a get-rich-quick scheme, it is gambling. There are now hundreds of people who have become instant millionaires--many not for long. Millions of others are

waiting in line to buy lottery tickets. Even putting aside the fact that many people regamble--and lose--what they have won, and others squander it away, lotteries teach the bad lesson that working is not necessary. Little wonder that Solomon commended work in the same verse in which he condemned gambling, adding by contrast, ". . . wealth from hard work grows" (Proverbs 13:11 TLB). Wealth from gambling vanishes; wealth from working increases. A word to the wise is sufficient.

## **You Can't Serve God and Mammon**

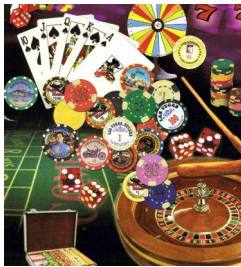
Other than the fact that the Roman soldiers gambled for Jesus' garment at the crucifixion, there is no record of gambling in the New Testament. However, Jesus spoke to the heart of the issue many times. He addressed the basic problem behind gambling when He said, ". . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Those who covet money have made it their god. They have made the ultimate commitment to get gold at all cost, and one cannot have two ultimates in his life. If gold is supreme, God isn't. If God is supreme, gold isn't. One man cannot have two masters.

Another famous word of Jesus, this one to the tempter, speaks directly to gambling: ". . . Man shall not live by bread alone . . ." (Matthew 4:4).

Interest in gambling indicates a failure to trust God for our needs. In this connection, He said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God . . . and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). What could speak more clearly to the money-loving gambling industry than words like these? God, not gambling, is the answer to greed.

### **Gambling Is Bad Stewardship**

Throughout the Bible, believers are urged to be good stewards of the treasure God has given them. Paul said, "It is required



in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). All that we have and are comes from Him. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof . . ." (Psalm 24:1). The recognition of divine ownership is the beginning of good stewardship. Yet, at the heart of the gambler's fancy is the belief that, "I have the right to do what I want to with my possessions." Wrong! According to the Bible, ultimately they aren't our possessions, and I certainly have no right to gamble away God's goods.

For the faithful, financial resources are part of a divine stewardship. We are responsible to God for how we use them. Those who squander these

gifts violate a divine trust. For that they will be held responsible. Jesus made this clear in His parable of the stewards. Those who did not fruitfully use their treasure were chastised. Only those who wisely invested their treasure were commended by the words ". . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return . . ." (Job 1:21). We didn't bring anything with us, and we won't take anything when we leave. What we have while we are here is a gift of God. It should be used for Him and for helping others. Robbing the poor is certainly not a way of helping them, yet state-sponsored lotteries do just that.

Church-sponsored gambling is no better. Here again, it is usually the poor who play and, therefore, the poor who pay. Of all institutions on earth, the church should be giving to the poor, not taking from them. Benevolence, not bingo, is the church's duty to the needy.

### **The Root of All Evil**

First Timothy 6:10 is often misquoted. Look it up. It does not say, as many wrongly believe, that money is the root of all evil. Rather it says, "the love of money is the root of all evil. . . ." There is nothing wrong with gold; it's greed that the Bible condemns. Having loot is not an

intrinsic evil, but lusting after it is wrong. Possessing wealth is not wrong in itself, but being possessed by it is. Jesus said, ". . . a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Our duty is to love others and use things, not to love things and use others.

If there was ever a perfect example of the lust for money, it's gambling. Those who are content with what they have do not crave more, but the vast majority of those who gamble have a problem with greed. Gambling is a classical example of the love of money the Bible says is the root of all kinds of evil.

### **Those Who Don't Work Shouldn't Eat**

The divine imperative rings clear: ". . . this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). According to the Bible, for the able-bodied, work is a duty, not an option. The Scriptures add, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Ephesians 4:28). But, as was just seen, gambling is a form of stealing. What's more, each person is obligated to work so he can provide for himself, to say nothing of having some to help the needy.

Gambling runs contrary to the moral injunction to work. It short-circuits the duty to labor for a living. Gambling is, in fact, the opposite of work. According to the Bible, gaining a living without working is harmful. It teaches the wrong lesson. It destroys the character of the gambler and sets a bad example for the nongambler.

### **Nothing Comes From Nothing**

"Nothing comes from nothing. Nothing ever could." Julie Andrews sang it, but gamblers have not listened. Gambling is an attempt to get something for nothing. The gambler is an economic hitchhiker, a financial freeloader who wants pleasure without work. However, human beings need to work. According to the Bible, working is a divinely appointed function of life, one that gambling vainly attempts to bypass.

Only God can make something from nothing; we mortals can only make something from something. According to the Bible, gambling is contrary to our creaturehood. Of course, some gamblers do acquire what they didn't earn, but they still didn't get something for nothing. Someone worked for that money. The gambler just took what someone else earned.

## **Your Heavenly Father Knows**

"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them" (Matthew 6:31, 32 NIV). If God clothes the lily and feeds the raven, then surely we can trust Him for our basic needs. Such were the words of Jesus to His disciples. The psalmist said of God, "Thou openest thine hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing" (Psalm 145:16). According to the Bible, God is not only the Creator and Sustainer of all things, He is also the Provider. Gambling is a failure to trust the providential hand of God. It is distrust in God's goodness. "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:8). Gambling is discontent with the divine provisions. It is a greedy desire to have more than God wants us to have.

## **A Little Knowledge Is a Dangerous Thing**

Some people have just enough knowledge of the Bible to make them dangerous. They point to the fact that lots (dice) were cast to apportion the Promised Land among the Jews and to make important decisions. However, even a cursory glance at the context of these passages reveals that

they do not involve gambling but trust in the providence of God.

First of all, Solomon made it clear that it was a divine decision they sought, not monetary gain. He said of the lot, ". . . but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Proverbs 16:33). Only God knows for sure how the dice will fall. No human can repeatedly and accurately know the result. The use of throwing lots in the Bible took the decision out of man's hands and put it in God's. That was precisely why the lot was recommended in disputed cases: it was a means of letting God decide the issue.

Furthermore, in the biblical casting of lots there was no money wagered. Biblical lot casting was entirely different from gambling. Casting a lot for the purpose of submitting to divine determination is the exact antithesis of gambling out of distrust of God's provision for us. Letting God decide His will for us is the very opposite of taking things into our own hands. Those who trust God don't gamble, and those who gamble do not trust God to provide for them. So, as stark as it seems, we must choose between God and gambling.

*Norman L. Geisler,  
Gambling: A Bad Bet, Fleming H.  
Revell Publishing, Grand Rapids,  
1993, pp. 111-119*



## **Political Correctness For Kids**

- ❖ Your bedroom isn't cluttered; it's "passage-restrictive."
- ❖ You're not having a bad hair day; you're suffering from "rebellious follicle syndrome."
- ❖ No one's tall anymore. They're "vertically enhanced."
- ❖ You're not shy. You're "conversationally selective."
- ❖ You don't talk a lot. You're just "abundantly verbal."
- ❖ It's not called gossip anymore. It is "transmission of near-factual information."
- ❖ The food at the school cafeteria isn't awful. It's "digestively challenged."
- ❖ Your homework isn't missing; it's just having an "out-of-notebook experience."
- ❖ You're not sleeping in class; you're "rationing consciousness."
- ❖ You don't have smelly gym socks; you have "odor-retentive athletic footwear."
- ❖ You weren't passing notes in class. You were "participating in the discreet exchange of penned meditations."
- ❖ You're not being sent to the principal's office. You're "going on a mandatory field trip to the administrative building."

### **THE 23RD CHANNEL**

The TV set is my shepherd. My spiritual growth shall want. It madeth me to sit down and to do nothing for His name sake. It keepeth me from doing my duty as a Christian, because it presenteth so many good shows I must see. It restoreth my knowledge of the things of the world, and keepeth me from the study of God's Word. It leadeth me in the paths of failing to attend the evening worship and doing nothing for the Kingdom of God.

Yea, though I live to be a hundred I shall keep on viewing my TV as long as it shall work, for it is my oldest companion, its sound and its picture they will comfort me. It presenteth entertainment before me and keepeth me from doing important things with my family, it fills my head with ideas which differ from those set forth in the Word of God.

Surely no good thing will come of my life because my TV offereth me no good time to do the will of God. Thus I will dwell in utter darkness with the servant who buried his talent.

## Lamentations over the CASIYE\$ Decision

THE PRIDE OF ALL SINGAPOREANS: Singapore, a resource-starved island, progressing from 3<sup>rd</sup> World to 1<sup>st</sup> World all in one generation, many thanks to our visionary forefathers and farsighted leaders who clung on to their unwavering faith in hard work, more hard work, and still more hard work – no short-cuts!

THE PRIDE OF ALL SINGAPOREANS: A brand-new world-class Integrated Resort with a casino that will take the breath out of older set-ups in the region?

Time does not stand still, and with changing times, minds undergo revisions. We are now in the ‘next decade’ referred to by PM Goh Chok Tong (now SM) in his National Day Rally Speech 2000:

*“In the next decade, we need to think and act like revolutionaries. We have to innovate, not merely imitate. We will succeed not by following the footsteps of the incumbent, but by introducing new dimensions into play...”*

What revolutionary idea and what manner of innovation did the SM have in mind for Singaporeans to look forward to in this new decade? It might not have occurred to him that a revolutionary idea would be in the shape of two casinos, and an innovation would take the form of ‘modernizing’ our mindset to embrace the promotion of gambling in a world-class way to more jobs and a good shot for the economy. It may be a first-class bet, but nobody can say that it is a sure bet. I share the apprehension of Mr Loh Meng See, MP for Jalan Besar, who said in Parliament:

*“When political leaders share stories of their ‘little’ gambling experiences, unwittingly and subtly, we are telling the young that it is all right to try and play 4D and jackpot machines and have some fun. That, to me, is the thin end of the wedge, the beginning of disaster. My real concern is that we will not know*

*whether we made the right or wrong decision until, perhaps, 10, 20 years later. By that time, the situation in Singapore would have deteriorated beyond recognition.” – TODAY, Apr22*

Sadly, the world is changing too fast for our comfort as we huff and puff to catch up, imbibing its warts and all. How fast? So fast that in less than 3 years after then DPM Lee Hsien Loong stated that he would not back any casino proposal, his thinking has undergone a full 180° swing. Albeit SM Goh kept to his words in 1991 that Singapore would have no casino as long as he was PM, his strong anti-casino stance has since dissolved. Even our venerable MM Lee Kuan Yew, known for his robust standards, has weighed in with his support of the present Government’s decision, changing his attitude to casinos in Singapore as part of an Integrated Resort, but not his basic mind or basic values, stressing:

*“If I were Prime Minister, and I were challenged, I would take on everyone and convince them that this is the right decision. The price may be high, but the price of not doing so is even higher.” – TODAY, Apr 20*

It is a conundrum – we risk being damned by all the social problems if we have it, and we risk paying a high price of some sort if we don’t. The fear among our leaders seems to be that the world will pass us by if we do not make this decision now, and then we will look with envy as casinos sprout around the region and look askance at ourselves for being stupid in not striking while the iron is hot to bring in the huge economic gains. MM Lee had used the term ‘stupid’ to describe the past government’s decision not to build a Formula 1 circuit on worry that it would teach our drivers to be reckless. (*weekend TODAY, Apr 16-17*) He also rued over his past mistake of foregoing pop culture in favour of high culture, because, as is now realized, pop is where the money is.

I can understand all the economic reasons and the job creation hopes of our government in allowing not one but two casinos in Singapore. If a casino brings with it fortune to Singaporeans, then having two must mean a doubling of the fortunes, right? If so, but on the contrary that the casino

decision turns out to be another ‘stupid’ mistake, then my dread is that the doom of our society (historically good, efficient, clean, safe ... as described by all noble adjectives) for us to regret on hindsight as we do for some of our past resolutions will also strike twofold. Chinese gamblers have a tendency to be superstitious; and, for this reason, they shun the presence of books when trying their luck because the Chinese character 书 for book sounds like “lose” in Mandarin or Cantonese. I therefore wonder whether, in their superstitious spirit, the Chinese saying “祸不单行，福无双至” comes to mind and give them any comfort, because it tells that misfortune does not come singly, and good fortune never come in pairs. So having two casinos all at once might just spell ruin doubly sure instead of a dual blessing of luck!

I am not superstitious, of course; and there is nothing superstitious about the potential misfortune honestly acknowledged by our labour chief, Mr Lim Boon Heng, “Casinos come with social costs. There will be some broken families. But (without casinos) there are social costs also - of high unemployment. There are 35,000 jobs to be had.” (NEW PAPER, Apr 21) However, the comparison of “some” broken families with “high” unemployment appears lopsided. Be this as it may, will the balance not swing the other way with the fearsome chain effect of families falling apart overshadowing the eventual gains that turn out not better than they look on paper?

While opposing views were also laid out in cabinet debates, members of the cabinet did the natural thing to close ranks and make the final collective decision to have two casinos. Understandably, the government, by its secular nature, did what it opined to be right. In the words of MM Lee’s advice to his cabinet colleagues, “We are not bound by ideology or religion... If anybody feels strongly enough, he may leave the Government.” (NEW PAPER, Apr 21) While economics has already won the argument in the cabinet, I doubt that the hearts of those opposed to the casino idea have been won over yet. Maybe, the government will spare a bit more time for it. Although it has been a difficult judgment call on the government, I feel that it is clear-cut to all the major religious bodies, and

all the faithfuls who uphold the moral imperatives against the prevalence of gambling opportunities. Why ... oh why ... should it be that society always has the propensity to let moral persuasion play second fiddle to so-called “practical realities”? Why can’t realities become practical in consort with the good old planks of hard work and “no short cuts” that Singapore as a young nation has grown up on? Why can’t economics, morality and the social dimensions of nation building be in harmony?

We are going to rise one level from the “traditional” lotteries and small games of chance to a brand new level of world-class adventure that will definitely seek continual growth against competitions in the region. Even though the casino in an Integrated Resort is said to be just a small part, the fact that it is going to be the main engine that drives the whole IR whereby it is indispensable, without which no one would want to build the IR, suggests that its influence will be grossly disproportionate to its size. It is a no-brainer which direction the nation is heading. If PM Lee Kuan Yew in 1970 was so adamant in saying “No, over my dead body” to a build-a-casino suggestion, and now as MM he says, “Ok, we can have it as part of an Integrated Resort,” it already indicates a significant rise in the threshold of tolerance for the gambling monster (casino), even if some cautionary conditions are worked into its operation to protect Singaporeans’ interests. Years down the road, the casino will no longer be a novel and hotly debated thing as a new generation becomes used to its presence just like people are now getting easy with lotteries that wear charming charity coats. Think: “Chance to win \$\$...\$\$ CASH, including a large freehold property instantly. All you have to do is *click click a few digits on your mobile in less than 4 seconds* to show your good heart to give a few small bucks to charity ABC.” Please note the small prints, however, that “your good heart, though you call it charitable, is not recognized purely as such by the relevant Authority but as a procurement of reward, and so is subject to tax.” So you see, many Christians, out of good heart, have unwittingly become gamblers in acquiescing to the ubiquitous tugs on their hearts all year round. Is it their fault? Yes and No; how so, you decide. Yet, there is one charity I admire much for its conscientious no-inducement approach to raise donations for the needy. It is 仁慈医院 (*Ren Ci Hospital*), to which all the donations given were really heartfelt and not for any chance of material rewards.

Pardon me for digressing, as my mind weighs heavy in lamenting the gradual but slippery slope that our society is sliding towards a more prominent gambling culture. Instead of efforts in the positive direction of lowering the temptations to gamble, we are going the opposite direction of increasing the temptation stakes with two casinos. In time, strict rules of access may be relaxed as the population's tolerance of such vices rise with the realities of the world that tend to change for the worse. A further upping of society's permissiveness to another level may become par for the course as the casino decision is cited as precedence. In short, the casino decision has been made, and a Pandora Box is slowly being opened! We have not drawn lessons from policy failures in the past that were made at the time when the policies looked very right all for the sake of the good of the country's future, although now we are ruing the policy faults that we struggle to undo. I feel that we can certainly do with good helicopter vision to see clearly what the fallouts from the casino decision will be, at least so that the right preventives can be adopted.

There is no argument at all that the casino is an evil, even if supporters dress the idea up in sweet packaging with the words "a NECESSARY evil", with the emphasis. The government embraces it, knowing the problems it would cause. To mitigate the negative effects, safeguards will be in place to shield Singaporeans, counselling and treatment facilities will be expanded to take care of those who allow themselves to be harmed by this monster whose presence we permit in the first place, national law and security provisions will be boosted, and education will be stepped up to equip Singaporeans with the wisdom to keep clear of the casinos' doors. As it seems, Singaporeans in most cases can feel safe from being drawn into the caverns of the monster; let our foreign guests be the fools who will rush in to part with their money. But do not be fooled into letting down your guard, thinking that it is the government's responsibility to keep you safe. Be very sure that it is not the government's responsibility to keep you safe from harm. Risk takers (a euphemism that you may like better if you belong) should well take heed of what Dr Balakrishnan, Minister for Community Development, Youth & Sports warned:

*“If you become an addict, you are at fault. And you should ... not duck responsibility. Every gambling addict has to own up to his own problems and be held accountable for it.” – TODAY, Apr 22*

In short, DON'T BLAME THE GOVERNMENT! I should add, DON'T BLAME GOD if you should fall into the gaming trap. “When tempted, no-one should say, God is tempting me. For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;” (James 1:13).

The decision has been made and the people have been called to close ranks, whether you believe it to be a good decision or not. The Bible exhorts, “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.” Rom 13:1-2 Submitting to the authorities, however, is not equivalent to submitting to temptations at the personal level. Since God is the one who puts the government there to make the decision, He is also the One who allows the temptations their proper place and time to test His children's mettle:

*“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.” (James 1:2-5)*

If God “did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah ... and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men ... if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly

men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.” (2 Pet 2:5-9)

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.” (James 1:12)

It all boils down to discipline at the personal level, and hence refuge from, or exposure to, God’s wrath will also be upon individuals at their levels. An assurance from God is this:

*“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.” 1 Cor 10:13*

While it is human to easily fall prey to temptations, especially those placed within easy reach, the \$100 entrance fee will be one of the measures in place to dampen temptations upon casual gamblers or poor people. Woe betide the genuine rich or the pretenders of wealth who will not be put off by whatever restrictions, who will always be enterprising in finding ways to jump the hurdles or gatecrash to follow the lure of gold and gamble to their delights until they blow the lights out of their lives.

“It is up to them, not me. Ultimately, Singaporeans as a whole stand to gain from the few who have the money to spare,” some people may be inclined to ruminate. However, it is actually not just the few, but many more innocents (family members) who are drawn into the whirl of distress confronting the gamblers, extending the chain of ramifications. The “bo chap” attitude of anyone with the refrain “Ok lah, casino never mind, no bother me” is an example of self-interest most pungent against what the Bible says, “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:4). The world likes to hear something else, which is: 我们各自扫门前雪，为何要管他人瓦上霜。天工开物四季自然。心无怪何来烦恼。 These words in



Chinese can actually be read as a parody of people who are selfish, regarding only their own interests and indifferent to the welfare of others, with their hearts deadened, ever ready to ascribe one's own unconscionable actions to nature's order for things to be the way they are. Welfare (Love), naturally reaching outwards rather than inwards, is alien to their vocabulary. To paraphrase the world's message, "Each of you should play smart to look to your own interests in all that you do and in all your decisions. Do you not know that the world does not owe you a living, and nobody does? So let us take care of our own interests in the utmost, and never be weighed down by the interests of others, which should be none of our business." To put it starkly for your contemplation, would you care if it were your foreign friends or relatives who come to visit and lose themselves in the glitzy labyrinths of the casino?

If we love our friends and relatives, we do not contemplate encouraging them to lose so that we can gain. If we love our neighbour as ourselves (Matt. 22:39), how cold can we chill our heart to be unsympathetic towards the sufferings of others that we would not condone in ourselves? (幸灾乐祸?) Would we be chasing fantasies to found our rejoicing upon our neighbours' miseries (for losing their shirts and pants to us), so that instead of putting abundant food on our table we end up having our fill of poverty because of the bounce-back effect of our selfishness or of a punishment deserved for a poor judgment? (See Prov. 12:11; 28:19-20) A golden rule for meditation is found in 2 Thess. 3:10. It embraces the Scriptural truth that gambling is not an easy way around hard work. This is what we wish to teach our sons and daughters. Alas! With a Pandora Box opening to increasing permissiveness, with the official endorsement of two casinos with a sense of urgency to build the economy (it is not even one by one gradually), all parents and teachers will have a harder time to come out with persuasive anti-gambling explanations to satisfy the children who tend to be 'smart' and inquisitive nowadays. If you meet a wily youngster with this challenge, "You see, we can make \$\$\$ from the casino and benefit the country as we sacrifice a 'small number' of families destroyed in the process. The huge monetary returns is more important than the moral case we put aside," how will you respond? I will probably have to scratch my head for a long time to invent a credible

explanation to convince the youngster that the government is right in her decision for the country but it would be wrong for us to follow the same line of reasoning (government's example) in our personal decisions.

What is sauce for the gander (economic sustenance from gambling revenue for the liberal society) is not sauce for the conservative goose (one who upholds the value of survival through hard work). So, as the government decides to set up the casinos, confident of a good revenue stream from gambling taxes, our PM calls on religious groups to "propagate good values, discourage their followers from gambling and ... help troubled families through intervention and counselling services." (TODAY, Apr 27) "Singapore society is the stronger, said Mr Lee, for containing a strand of strict, moralist thinking — an important component of the nation's 'social immune system'". Society is made up of people. It is my wish that the people can cling on to the moralist thinking and hence build the society with a strong moral fabric that will not fray easily with every wind of change blowing the world.

As I read the latest news that two companies which submitted a joint bid to build an IR have withdrawn their participation, my mind is set thinking about how the high-stakes gamble will turn out. A survey by the NEW PAPER showed that only a small number of people are interested in the casino while the majority are interested in shopping, theme parks and restaurants. Perhaps, in the end, we can really have our cake and eat it – i.e., have a world class Mega Resort to benefit us (in two ways: firstly, by the creation of jobs from the billions of dollars in investment; and secondly, by enabling us to enjoy Disneyland-type of entertainment without having to fly long distance) with the casinos fading out in importance, saving us from the mess of a gambling culture.

*John Lee*

The minister was preoccupied with thoughts of how he was going to ask the congregation to come up with more money than they were expecting for repairs to the church building. Therefore, he was annoyed to find that the regular organist was sick and a substitute had been brought in at the last minute. The substitute wanted to know what to play.

"Here's a copy of the service," he said impatiently. "But, you'll have to think of something to play after I make the announcement about the finances."

During the service, the minister paused and said, "Brothers and Sisters, we are in great difficulty; the roof repairs cost twice as much as we expected and we need \$4,000 more. Any of you who can pledge \$100 or more, please stand up."

At that moment, the substitute organist played "Majulah Singapura."

And that is how the substitute became the regular organist!

## *Happy Pastors' Day*

**The pastor of a church is in a precarious position; he can't please everyone!  
It has been said:**

*If he is young, he lacks experience; if his hair is grey, he's too old for the young people.*

*If he has several children, he has too many; if he has no children, he's setting a bad example.*

*If he preaches from his notes, he has canned sermons and is too dry; if he doesn't use notes, he has not studied and is not deep.*

*If he is attentive to the poor people in the church, they claim he is playing to the grandstand; if he pays attention to the wealthy, he is trying to be an aristocrat.*

*If he suggests changes for improvement of the church, he is a dictator; if he makes no suggestions, he is a figurehead.*

*If he uses too many illustrations, he neglects the Bible; if he doesn't use enough illustrations, he isn't clear.*

*If he condemns wrong, he is cranky; if he doesn't preach against sin, he's a compromiser.*

*If he fails to please somebody, he's hurting the church and ought to leave; if he tries to please everyone, he is a fool.*

*If he preaches about money, he's a money grabber; if he doesn't preach spiritual giving, he is failing to develop the people.*

*If he drives an old car, he shames his congregation; if he drives a new car, he is setting his affection on earthly things.*

*If he preaches all the time, the people get tired of hearing one man; if he invites guest speakers, he is shirking his responsibility.*

*If he receives a large salary, he's mercenary; if he receives only a small salary, well it proves he isn't worth much anyway.*

**LET YOUR PASTORS KNOW HOW MUCH YOU LOVE AND APPRECIATE THEM.**

# Happenings in May



The PULSE celebrated their 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary on May 1, 2005. A special service was held in room 4 & 5 to commemorate the humble beginnings of the youth ministry.

A special new PULSE t-shirt was designed to launch the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the youth ministry.



If you thought these flowers were from the Treetop Walk, you are wrong. Look no further than our own JCC garden to find these colorful plants.



## Jurong West CG recce the Treetop



Some members of the JWCG took the opportunity of the May 2<sup>nd</sup> holiday to recce the Treetop Walk for an opportunity for an outing for the whole group. We were surprised to find crowds of people having the same idea, including Willie and Christopher.

The walk is quite challenging for couch potatoes like me. Furthermore, the weather was very hot (due to global warming?). The worst part was that we could not enjoy the scenery from the bridge because the crowds kept surging forward forcing us to cross the bridge within minutes and there was no turning back.

