

The Vine

The Vine Committee

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EDITOR'S WORD

Have any of you tried flying with Tiger Airways or any of the budget “no frills” airlines? What are your expectations when you book a flight to Bangkok for only \$20? I think if you can get safely to your destination, then the airline has met your expectations.

When comparing this year’s retreat at Kota Tinggi to last year’s at Port Dickson, we forget that this year’s retreat is like the budget airlines. The price of this year’s retreat is \$100 lesser than last year’s. So actually, there should be no comparison in terms of amenities, food and lodging. This year’s committee heard the cries of those who complained that the previous year’s retreat was too expensive and so they worked out a package which was less expensive. I believe that many people overlooked the fact that you get what you pay for.

However understanding our Singapore culture of the necessity of electronic entertainment, like TV and handphone, the next committee should note that we should organize retreats in less remote resorts, where the handphone is still usable and the TV gives clear pictures.

Some of these creature comforts we simply can’t forego. Lack of communications due to lack of phone networks was one of the major setbacks for the team because the people were housed in a very wide area and could not be contacted by any means.

The remoteness of the Kota Tinggi Waterfall Resort although conducive for a retreat again proved to be a challenge for busy Singaporeans who cannot get used to its quietness.

Aside from all the physical aspects of the Retreat, it was a good spiritual experience as some of us can testify.

James Sum shared that when Lydia lost her spectacles in the murky waters of the waterfall, the family went to God in prayer that very night. The next morning when James was scanning the waterfall, a local asked him what he was looking for. James told him about the lost spectacles and the local passed him the spectacles which he had found.



Peter Cheong was quite challenged with the dialect ministry because he felt that there were some breakthroughs. That could be the seed which gave birth to the Senior Citizens ministry which was recently launched on 19 June 2005.

I myself experienced guidance from the Lord on two occasions. The first one relates to preparation for the trip. I had taken over the wheels from Soon Eong and was not too sure about how much pressure to put into it. Somehow on the eve of the retreat as I was heading towards my usual petrol station to fill the tyres, I felt the urge to go to another station instead. As I pull up to the air pump, lo and behold, Soon Eong's car was there ahead of me. He was also filling up his tyres. He told me the correct pressure to fill up. What were our chances of meeting? Almost nil because I have never met Soon Eong at a petrol station before and this is neither his nor my usual station. How did this happen? Well, I prayed to God to show me the correct pressure to fill my tyres and this is the way He answered.

The second experience was when we detoured to Carrefour on our way back to Singapore. When we came out of Carrefour, we got lost. I was the lead car and James Tan was following me. As far as James was concerned, he thought that Nick, my co-pilot, was very familiar with Johor as we turned and twisted our way around Johor.

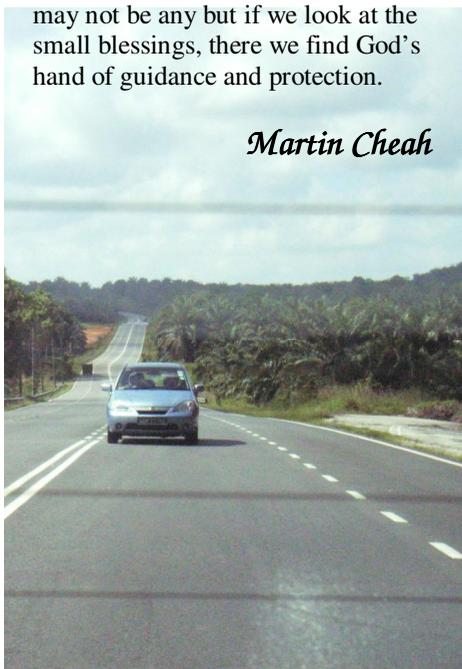
Actually, we were completely lost and I was silently praying that God will lead us back to Singapore because a wrong



turn could lead us all the way to KL. All the way, we drove on and on, not knowing where we were going but the Lord was in control and finally we reached the coastal road to our great relief. From there on, Nick could take over because he was back on familiar roads.

If we look for great miracles, there may not be any but if we look at the small blessings, there we find God's hand of guidance and protection.

Martin Cheah



A little experiment to show that THE BIBLE CODE is not what it is claimed to be

John Lee

Introduction

I have always considered my co-labourer Martin Cheah to be the right person to lead the Vine ministry. I would like to “prove” by an experiment that it is God’s will for him to be the Chairman of the Vine Team, but here is a reminder before you read on: Don’t take the proof that follows too seriously – just laugh it off if you wish, after absorbing the real message I wish to put across. Ok? Smile ☺

Step 1

The experiment involves playing a little code game. (Note: It is just a game; don’t be too serious about it.) To play the game, I randomly pick an extract from an article which Charlotte Sam wrote for the Vine last year:

“Rat race takes place when we are chased by deadlines. We become slaves to deadlines and demands. We set our expectations high on others and for ourselves. We judge others and ourselves by how well we meet those deadlines. We no longer contend with meeting targets, for we are expected to meet them. We judge and are judged by S T R E T C H targets.

Thanks to new buzz acronyms like BSC (Balanced Scorecards) and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and more. Every effort and its outcome are to be quantified. The nice guy finishes last if he doesn’t try and outshine his partner who views him as a fellow competitor anyway.

Don’t get me wrong. This isn’t a piece of gripe.

In our attempt to become more efficient, better and more polished, we create more problems to solve. Many of us at work do this to justify our mere existence, in the name of “value-add”. We aren’t coming up with innovative solutions. We break up a problem into smaller pieces only to magnify each piece and inflate its significance. To top it off, all pieces of a problem are magnificent, but some are more significant because they are more URGENT. When there is a pressing need, we focus on it. What happens when there are a few PRESSING NEEDS THAT ARE CONCURRENT?”

Step 2

Now, I take away all the vowels (i.e., letters a, e, i, o, u), punctuation marks and spaces from Charlotte’s article. (I hope she does not mind the way I make her precious writing unreadable.) Then I change the remaining alphabetical letters of the article into uppercase and pack them into a rectangular array.

RTRCTKSPLCWHNWRCHSDBYDDLNSWBC
 HGHNTHRSNDFRRSLVSTJGTHRSNDRSLVSBYHTWLLWTTTHSDOLNSWNLNRCN
 TNDWTHWITNGTRGTSFRWXPCTDTMTTHWJGNDRJGGBYSRTTCHTRGTSTHKN
 STNWBZZCRNYMSLKBCBLCNDCSCRCRDSNDKPSKYPRFRMNCNCTRSNDMVRVYF
 FRINDOTSTCMRTBQNTFDTHNCGYFNHSLSTFHDSNITTRYNDTSHHHSPRTNRWVW
 SHMIFLLWCMPTTRNYWYDNTGTMWNGTHEENTPCFRINRTTWPTTBGMWIFFCNT
 BTTRNDMPLSHDTCRTWRPRELMSLSLYMNYFSTWRKDTHTSTJSTFYRMRXSTNCNT
 HMFVLDOWRNTCANGPTTHINVTYSLTNSWBRKPPRELMNTSMLLRPCSNLYTWGNF
 YCHPCNDNFLTSSGNFCNCTTPFFLLPCSFPRELMWGNFCNTBTSWRMRSGNFCN
 TBCSTHYMRRGNTWHTHRSPPRSSNGNDWFCSNWHTHPPNSWHTHTRRFWPRSSNG
 NDSHTTRCNCRNT

Step 3

I can make as many arrays of different sizes as I would like to, using the same vowel-removed passage. In my experiment, I shall use an array with the first row as follows:

RTRCTKSPLCWHNWRCHSDBYDDLNSWBC

It reads as “Rat race takes place when we are chased by deadlines. We bec (ome) ...” if the vowels are put back.

Since the Hebrew alphabet contains no vowels, the above vowel-eliminated passage is a rough imitation of Hebrew writing

Step 4

I shall convert “MARTIN CHEAH, CHAIRMAN” to Hebrew-imitation the same way by removing the vowels, (Sorry, Martin Cheah, for “vandalizing” your name.) It now reads as:

MRTN CHH CHRMN

Martin Cheah, how do you like your new name and title?

Step 5

I use the array in Step 1 above to search for the three words **MRTN CHH CHR MN** occurring in proximity to one another, with the letters running in any direction along a straight line. In the result below, **MRTN** runs from top down while **CHH** and **CHR MN** run from bottom up in my array:

```
SNDKPSKYPRFRMNCNDCTRSNDMRVRYF
FRTNDTSTCMRTBQNTFDTHNCGYFNSSH
LSTFHDSNTTRYNDTSHNHSPRTNRWHVW
SHMSFLLWCMP TTRNYWYDNTGTMWRNGT
HSSNTPCFGRPNRTTTP TBCMMRFFCNT
BTTRNDMRPLSHDWCR TMRPRBLMSTSLV
MNYFSTWRK DTHSTJSTFYRMRXSTNCNT
HNMFLDDWRNTCMNGPWHNNVTVSLTN
SWBRKPPRBLMNTSMLLRPCSNLYTMGNF
YCHPCNDNFLT TSSGNFCNCTTPTFFLLP
CSFPRBLMRMGNFCNTB TSMRMRSGNFCN
TBCSTHYRMRRGNTWHNTHRSPRSSNGND
WFGSNTWH THPPNSWHNTHRRFWPRSSNG
NDSTHTRCNCRRNT
```

(While the lowest row of the array has missing letters, it does not affect the result. These missing letters are actually the continuation of the passage used. I have also left out the first few rows since they do not contain the result of search.)

Step 6 (if necessary)

If the array used does not produce the desired result, all I could have done would be to use another of the arrays formed in Step 3 above. The number of arrays that can be formed for a short passage like the one used is almost unlimited; so according to probability, it should not be too difficult for me to hit the jackpot and claim (tongue in cheek, of course) that Martin Cheah is destined to be the Chairman of the Vine team because it is in the words of Charlotte Sam. (Does this make Charlotte our modern-day prophethess?)



Step 7 (not necessary for the real purpose of this code experiment)

Unscrambling the letters in the name **MARTIN CHEAH**, the words **THE CHAIRMAN** are formed.

Some points to note about the Bible Code

1. The validity of the Bible code is claimed to be based on the Old Testament in Hebrew language.
2. Hebrew writings in the OT do not use vowels. From the experiment, you may sense that it is easier to discover words without vowels than words with vowels.
3. The passage used in the experiment is a very short one, unlike the length of the Hebrew Scripture. If the short passage enables me to discover what I want to discover (about Martin Cheah as Chairman), it would be easier to discover what we wish to discover in a very long Scriptural passage.
4. Furthermore, the number of possibilities for array sizes and the number of skip sequences (intervals between our desired letters forming our desired words in the search passage) are both infinite. With the help of high-speed computers and superior software, it is so easy to try countless permutations of rows and columns and skip sequences to hit a target hoped for.
5. The experiment is just my way to give you an inkling of why I do not buy the claims by the author of The Bible Code. It is not intended as a scientific, well-organized and controlled high-tech work to meet pro standards. If you wish for more serious work, I believe you will be able to search them out through the Internet.

In conclusion, events of coincidence are not necessarily events of special divine significance, and vice versa. So, don't read too much into the unscrambling game in Step 7 above. Just to whet your appetite a bit more on the unscrambling game and of coincidences, think of following:

- It does not mean that to every married man a MOTHER-IN-LAW is necessarily a WOMAN HITLER. (Mine certainly isn't. ☺)

- If you are a GOVERNMENT SCHOLAR, don't be surprised if people you meet greet you with an exclaim, "OH, CLEVER STRONGMAN." However, don't be proud, since there have been cases of government scholars like Humpty Dumpty having a great fall. (Not so strong, after all!)

For a change, here is a coincidence that is certainly truth divine:

ELEVEN PLUS TWO = TWELVE PLUS ONE

Happy unscrambling!

JE-ABUDANCE
CELL Group
have a NEW
ADDITION in the
family of JUN/
ELENA and
JAMES KOH.

We visited
Mr. James Koh
(who happens to
be my "A" Level
School mate),
his wife is from
Philippines and we greeted their NEW BORN 3rd BOY, recently.



Incidentally JUN and ELENA are also from Philippines, we will feature their family sometime later....we certainly WELCOME their FELLOWSHIP in our LORD.

Tony Koh

e-mails ARISING FROM THE RETREAT

Dear Peter and Jessie,

I can't thank you enough for your selfless efforts in reaching out to our loved ones. I am deeply appreciative of what you have done for my mum. This is about the only time I see her having some positive interest in Christianity. Most other times she have been very skeptical.



You and Jessie have been blessed with a gift for this outreach. You are able to bring the message to them in a way that they can relate to and appreciate. Thank you both once again and may the Lord continue to keep you in His eternal grace and love.

In Him,
Iris



Dear Iris,

This retreat has been a time of blessings for everyone. We are privileged to be called upon to serve God among the many Senior Citizens this time. I forgot to add that your mum actually took time to look for Jessie and I after finishing her dinner, on the eve of our departure home. She said with delight in Mandarin "Thank the Lord for providing such sumptuous dinner today." We felt a tremendous joy on hearing that and all three of us then continued chatting for about 15 minutes standing. I could sense both the excitement and calmness in her throughout that conversation. God had certainly touched her life and is gradually drawing her into His kingdom of glory and light.

If she wants to watch the VCD "The Starting Point" again, I can pass it to you anytime. I will lend you a recorded tape of Rev Oh Beng Kee's interesting and humorous gospel message with spontaneous Cantonese interpretation by his wife.

Serving together in His field
Peter Cheong

Dear Jie Jie,

Praise God for another day!

Though you were not with us in the retreat however you were in our thoughts.

I thank God that He is indeed an omnipotent God. It is not by coincidence that I received the message during the retreat about the "LIVING WATER" and now He speaks to me about the LIVING WATER again. During the retreat I could only relate the LIVING WATER to the sharing of Gospel, evangelism. However God knows my struggle and my weary heart.

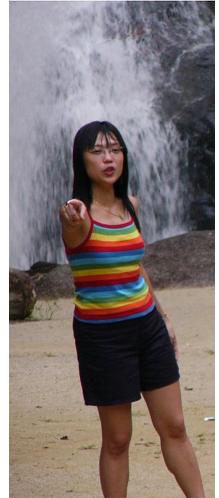
Frankly, before the children's exam, I was very stress with my eldest daughter who was not ready for her exam. I was so stressed up I told Cas but he kept reminding me to entrust it to God. I told myself, it is nothing to do with God, everything in her seems so bad in my mind. One day, He spoke to me.....

I know it is definitely not from me that my mind suddenly filled with all her good points, such a lovely and caring daughter. I came before God asking Him to forgive me, because I sin too and I do not wish that God get angry with me because of my sins.

Now I pray that God will keep us and our children continually asking for LIVING WATER from JESUS – that is **FAITH**. All other things (study, work....) are just like the water from the well that only result in us getting angry, weary, thirsty.....

In Christ

Esther



A PICTORIAL ACCOUNT OF RETREAT 2005

A picture paints a thousand words. A favourite excuse for not having any articles recalling the happenings at Kota Tinggi. Apart from the letters which I had obtained permission to publish, there were no testimonies or reports forthcoming.



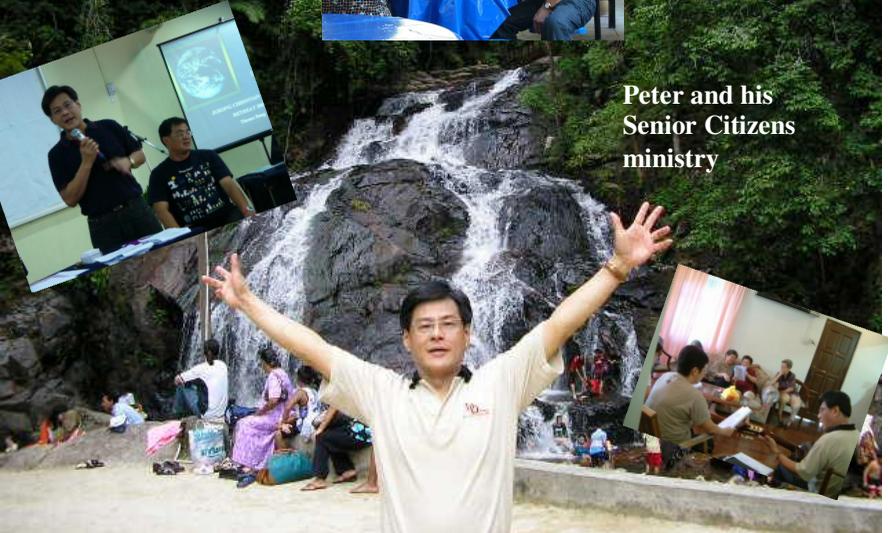
**This year
many youths
joined the
Retreat.....**



The Waterfall makes a powerful background....



**Wet and Wild
Fun in the pool
and waterfall**



**Peter and his
Senior Citizens
ministry**

INTO THE HANDS OF A LOVING FATHER

A miracle that happened to Alan Soh.

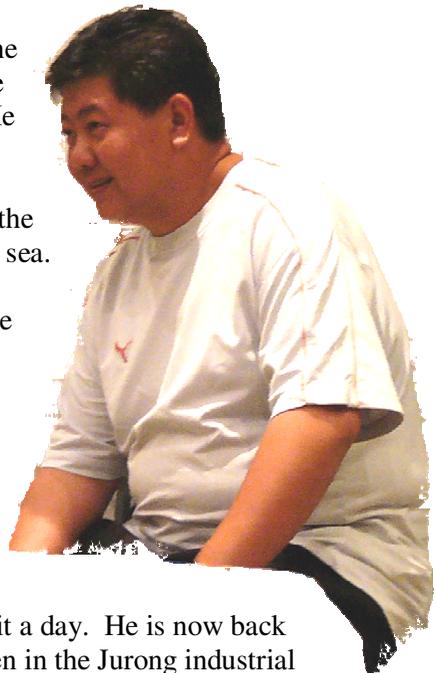
One day, in the course of his duty in the shipping industry, he was trying to board a vessel which was tied to the dock. It was low tide and so Alan had to climb down a rope ladder to get to the vessel. As he started his descend, one side of the rope ladder snapped. Alan was flung around and lost his grip on the rope.

As he started to fall, Alan recalled the whole event in slow motion, he realized that he could hit his head on the lower part of the dock and smashed it like a watermelon, or his legs could hit the side of the vessel and be broken. There was only a narrow passage between the vessel and the wall of the dock.

I don't know if Alan had time to pray but as he fell, he felt as if a pair of invisible hands were cradling him like a father cradles his baby. He felt his head and his legs were held up so that his body formed a "V" shape with his bum at the bottom. This prevented him from hitting the dock or the vessel and he fell straight into the sea.

As he looked up from the sea, he could see the amazement in the faces of his fellow workers who rushed to the scene. They had thought that he would surely have been seriously injured or dead because they have seen people die from such a fall. But praise be to God, Alan lives to tell the tale and to give glory to God.

Soon after this incident, Alan decided to call it a day. He is now back in the coffee shop business operating a canteen in the Jurong industrial area.



Martin Cheah

INTO THE HANDS OF A MERCIFUL GOD

Within this month, two of my CG members experienced the death of their beloved papas.

Bro Suan's papa went through a major operation which was supposed to prolong his life another 6 months to 1 yr. During his stay in hospital, he accepted our Lord into his heart. God called him to be with Him less than a week later. During the wake, the beautiful singing and lyrics of the Hokkien hymns stirred our hearts reminding us that he who believes, has everlasting life.

Then we received news of Sis Jennifer's papa's sudden death. Those who attended the recent retreat will remember him as the healthiest looking senior citizen among our parents there. He seemed to enjoy sitting at the canteen watching the beautiful waterfall that captured the beauty of God's creation, I wonder if he realized that nature itself reveals God's existence. From her father's feedback, he experienced JCC's warmth and enjoyed the retreat. God bless our dear Pastor Yee who had taken the initiative to share the Good News with him, and his last words to Pastor Yee was to think about receiving God's love for him into his life.



“It is not for us to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.” God never tells us when we will die but HE gave us a reason to live.

Poh Kiat

Letter from Missionary in Thailand

Hello Samuel,

Greetings in our beloved Lord, Jesus Christ' name!

Thank you and JCC for praying for me. Here are my prayer request:

Thanksgiving:

- *for the Lord's protection each day as I travel by the many modes of transport.*
- *opportunity to visit new preaching places and to get to know members of other Lutheran churches in the provinces.*
- *opportunity to teach catechism class to a young girl. She is not baptized yet.*

Prayer requests:

- *that God will revive Ladprao church. That God will touch our hearts to love Him and serve Him and not be complacent. Pray for the spiritual life of the congregation.*
- *unity amongst congregation council when decisions need to be made.*
- *pray for God's Holy Spirit to come upon us, to lead and guide our thoughts.*

Personal requests:

- *good health. Oftentimes I feel drained out especially preparing sermons as it takes up a lot of my time. I do it in English first, then translate it in Thai afterwards I sit with my teacher to check if the words/sentences are correct.*
- *for my mother's health back home. Lately she's not been feeling well.*

Thank you Samuel. May God bless your ministry!

Rosanna

Lessons learnt from Daily Delights

Here are some highlights of what Mr Gn Chiang Tat tried to impart to us during the retreat.

Obedience and effort belong to us but the results belong to God. If JCC were to mount a door-to-door campaign to the surrounding blocks and find that no one responded, would it be a success? Yes, because JCC was obedient to Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19, to go. Only God can change people's hearts – the results belong to Him alone.

The longer we live life as a Christian, the less non-Christian friends we will have. This is because as time goes by, the circle of friends we have are probably all from the church, eg from the cell groups, choir, mission committee or other ministries. Mr Gn pointed out that we should have at least 50 persons we could be a light to. Ten above, ten below, ten by the left and ten by the right of our HDB flat, with ten in the hawker centre or market. What do we say to them? Share our personal testimony.

