

# The Vine

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## EDITOR'S WORD

In the Sunday Times of September 11, there was a quote by a Mr Ong, who said, "The more I learn to give, the less greedy I become. My goal is to die with less than \$1million to my name." This quotation piqued my curiosity, so I read through the entire article which is in the Invest section of the newspaper. True enough, this is a story of a man who played the stock market, 4D and casinos. At one stage, he was practically wiped out at a casino in Jakarta. Then he accepted Jesus and became free of the gambling habit.

The rest of the article was about how he made his millions through smart investments in the stock market and of course about his belief that he can't take his money along when he dies, so the reason for the quotation above.

The interesting point about this story is that, here is a man who is obviously very rich but has learnt the secret of being less greedy. Unfortunately for all the other rich

people who are not satisfied because they want a little more.

Greed is one of the seven deadly sins. In Colossians 3:5, greed is idolatry. Jesus said in Luke 12:15, "Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Are you greedy? I believe we all are but only to what degree. So how do we overcome greed? Mr Ong's formula is to give. The Bible admonishes us not to love money or possessions but to love our neighbour. One way of showing this love is to share our blessings.

Take the opportunity on LCCS flag day to give as God enables you to. Also when the opportunity arises to support missionaries, do not withhold your blessings.

May the Lord bless you with wisdom in this simple lesson in godly living.

*Martin Cheah*

# The Spiritual Side of Money

Preaching about money is one of the most spiritual things I do.

by Wayne Pohl

I was sitting with a young couple interested in church membership. As I had planned, part of the conversation hinged on money. I explained our church's understanding of generosity and tithing, highlighting several Scriptures and sharing what a difference these principles had made in our church's life. I finished with, "I want you to know we're a tithing congregation. We welcome you to become a part of our church, but if tithing bothers you, you may be more comfortable elsewhere."

The husband replied, "Pastor, we attend church weekly, and we've always donated five dollars a week. My parents always gave five dollars a week. I really don't know how we could do what you're describing." He was in shock.

Nevertheless, they eventually joined our church, and by the time they moved away, they were contributing 13 percent of their income.

Preaching what Scripture says about money is volatile, revolutionary, risky business. "Money makes the world go round." It keeps dinner on the table and the wolf from the door. Money means comfort, power, security, status, opportunity, freedom, pleasure, choice. That is why Christ makes radical claims on our checkbooks. No other issue so clearly, objectively addresses the clash between this

world's values and Christian values: "You cannot serve God and Mammon."

Preaching about money is one of the most spiritual things I do. It is one of the most practical ways I can help people grow in their faith. It is also a subject full of danger if not presented well.

## Avoiding Misunderstandings

I enjoy preaching about money, though I admit, it is the tense joy a lion tamer feels in a cage full of growling man-eaters. Money makes people tense and talking about it can create a lot of misunderstandings, some of which can be hazardous for the health of a congregation.

To avoid such misperceptions, I follow these guidelines.

*Warn visitors.* A young couple attended a friend's church one Sunday. They liked the service so much they came back the next week. That week, my friend, a pastor, happened to be giving his annual sermon on tithing. When he visited them the next day, one of the first things they brought up was their concern about the church's emphasis on money.

If regular attenders are skittish about the subject of money, how much more are newcomers. I don't want them to think. All they want is my money.

So I warn visitors before I begin talking about money. In fact, they are the only people I ever apologize to when talking about money. I tell them, "You didn't come here today to hear about our budget. We hope that you'll understand that it needs to be talked about sometimes, and this is our time. I can assure you, we don't talk about it for the rest of the year."

*Base the sermon in Scripture.* I do this because I don't want to give anyone the impression that I'm self-serving when I preach about money. At all costs, I want to avoid the appearance that I'm seeking my own glory or the church's glory. I not only preach from Scripture, I periodically mention that I am preaching on the topic because Scripture calls me to. I have no choice.

*Preach tithing seldom.* Even generous givers may feel I'm coming on too strong or that we talk about it too much, making money too high a priority. Many people gladly receive preaching on finances but rightfully resist being nagged about it. Overdoing it is counterproductive: it turns people off and makes it more difficult in the future to talk about finances.

Consequently, we limit preaching on finances to two weeks out of the year. I believe that if we do our job well during this emphasis, people will respond positively and will generously

fulfill their financial responsibilities to God for the rest of the year.

*Don't promise anything God doesn't.* One woman in our church was in poverty. We helped her with food, clothing, and housing for quite some time. Eventually she left our church for another. A year later she phoned me and asked, "Can I borrow \$1,000 from you personally? My pastor said last week that if we bring \$1,000 to the church, within a month \$2,000 would be returned to us. I'll pay you back when that money comes."

I had a problem with that. I do believe what Malachi says, that God will return to tithers even more than they gave, that we can't out give God. But I don't teach what this other church did, and I'm careful not to even suggest it. I don't want anyone disillusioned with God, who returns to us in times and ways we can't predict, because I have overstated his promises.

*Don't whine.* Under financial pressure, we can fall into a negative attitude. We complain that people aren't doing enough. We tell how we are suffering because of the church's financial straits, trying to motivate giving from sympathy or guilt, directly or indirectly fixing blame.

Whining is counterproductive. Newer members don't feel enough ownership of the church or affection for the pastor to sacrifice. Often whining scares them away.

It doesn't motivate long-time members either, at least for the long term. It merely prods the old faithfuls to do more because they dislike seeing the pastor cry in public.

*Raise people first.* I lead our church by the philosophy that you don't grow dollars, you grow people. Because discipling Christians is our real objective, I never preach about money alone—what giving will do for this project or that—but always in terms of our relationship to God, in terms of our stewardship of time, talents, and treasures. The more I preach about how giving relates to a person's love relationship with God, the more their lifestyle and perspective will change.

Growing people is not an ulterior motive for extracting money. One of the kindest things I can do for people is to teach them God's financial principles. Their spiritual growth depends on it.

### **Helping People Become Generous**

Many who suppose they are generous really aren't because they haven't retooled their budget. Stellar ideals have to make their way into the checkbook. Here are some of the ways I encourage that.

Discuss giving only in the context of stewardship. The theme of stewardship keeps the subject of giving in the proper perspective. People see giving as it relates to God rather than merely to the church or me, as Paul says in, "They gave

themselves first to the Lord and then to us." When people know why God gave them their money and possessions, what God has called our church to do, and why God has placed them in our congregation, they are highly motivated givers rather than reluctant payers of dues. My goal is to develop a congregation with a lifestyle of sacrifice, dedication, and stewardship.

*Show the benefits.* When people give, they aren't losing, they're gaining in multiplied ways. I tell people, "Your giving makes the angels sing. Your giving is bringing others to Christ, and heaven is rejoicing."

- Emphasize percentages. People need concrete giving goals and objective ways of determining whether they've reached them. So I challenge people to donate specific amounts, and I word my challenge so that it makes an impact: I emphasize percentage giving.

For example, when one of our middle-class families pledged \$50,000 to the three-year building, we lauded not the amount but that this would be 23 1/2 percent of their income.

When discussing percentage giving, I highlight two principles for people.

1. Tithing is a guideline. I preach tithing through Scripture first. I turn to 2 Corinthians to show how the New Testament encourages percentage giving and regular giving; then we

observe in the Old Testament how the tenth was a significant percentage.

But I'm not legalistic. People aren't going to go to hell because they donate 8 percent instead of 10. Teaching on tithing draws flak, but I'm not willing to settle for the lowest common denominator. In fact, I say generosity really begins after the tithe.

2. Experiment and keep growing. I encourage people to start where their faith is and grow from there. Some new converts enter the church drowning in debt and obligations. For them, tithing is either impossible or unthinkable. So I challenge them to stretch to give whatever percentage they can. And as their lives get ordered by God and their faith in him increases, I encourage them to stretch their giving.

### **The Trust Factor**

The hidden ingredient in my preaching is the most important in helping people give generously: **trust**. If people trust me, if they trust our leaders and policies and process, if they trust our Lord, they will give year after year. Suggestions for giving and programs to raise money have their place, but they are meaningless without trust.

My most important concern, then, is building trust.

It's unrealistic to expect to gain complete trust in one year of ministry. We know our hearts, but others don't. It takes time for people to know us. It takes time for a pastor to prove himself. Someone has said, "A pastor must serve a congregation for three years before the people know him, another two years before they love him, and another two before they trust him."

A good track record speaks volumes. People need not only to know a pastor's heart but also to know he can deliver sound, skilled, and responsible leadership. A pastor has to prove himself equal to challenges. Again, that takes time.

Many people regard their wallets as no one else's business. When a pastor preaches on stewardship, they feel he's meddling. But I'm not intimidated. I march boldly and unapologetically into the lion's cage, knowing that I'm helping people be all that God wants: generous, unselfish, fully committed disciples of Jesus Christ.

# *Martin's Cup Bible Quiz 2005*

The 2 preliminary rounds took place on 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> September. Six teams made it to the Finals. The two hot favourites are the BB and the Young Adults teams. They won first placing in their respective groupings, the BB in the youth group and the young adults in the cell groups' playoffs.

This is the first time the adults are taking part and most of them have forgotten all the nitty-gritty details of the Bible. Adults probably could explain all the theological issues in the Bible but are lost at sea when faced with a question like, "Who is the judge who judged Israel 22 years?"

Be there at the finals to see who will lift the Martin's Cup.



## Treasuring a Marriage

This is not the first time I write on the topic of marriage. I am tempted once again to do so by a number of recent happenings. Firstly, it jolted me a little to learn that one of my former private-tuition pupils is in the throes of divorce proceedings. Nothing extraordinary, noting the current fads of many young couples making their marriage vows like this in their hearts even if their mouths declare differently: “I promise you, my beloved, to have and to hold, for better *but not for worse*, and until I am tired of you do us part.”

I invested much effort in this pupil. He did well in his examinations and helped recommend quite a number of other tuition businesses from among his relatives. He did well in his National Service and was sent overseas for training, making his parents proud. Alas! Academic and military successes are no guarantee of a successful life in all its important features. He was such a student that between us we had great mutual regards for each other; and therefore, it does make me feel a twinge for his current marital trouble. Sad as the situation is, I do not know the details. Also, it is pointless for me to ponder who is right and who is wrong, for apportioning responsibility to such a break-up tends to rub salt into wounded hearts.

My mind has also been ensnared to do much thinking by the recent readers’ debate in the newspaper TODAY. It was most likely the bait when a reader, Wilson Wong, proposed the idea of a cohabitation contract instead of marriage since, in his opinion, it is just in the nature of men to stray. (Aug 23) He claimed that “all men” are the same, without averring to any exception. Well, I do take exception to his feral statement because I do know many men who remain very faithful to their wives despite many tempting opportunities to sow wild oats when they have lots of social intercourse and business travels. There was also this female writer who gave advice that women should know when to let go of their men. With a man audaciously proposing cohabitation and a woman openly encouraging the acceptance of relationship impermanence or asking womenfolk to be prepared for it with a down-to-earth attitude, it appears to me that young

couples who mutually say “I loathe you” as easily as “I love you” are no longer a rare breed.

More and more women today are no longer as demure and ladylike as their sisters of yester-years. Could it be because subconsciously they are taking it out on men for the latter’s decline in gallantry and gentlemanly spirit? And what men gave up, such as smoking, young ‘ladies’ pick up as the modern in-thing to make themselves eye-catching and alluring, to prove to the men that they can do better. Women are challenging men in all spheres without discretion, including being wild. The sight of mothers with little kids in tow going gaga over some beefy male pole dancers gyrating wildly and sexily with their half-naked bodies and stripping off their pants in a public performance – what a discredit it is to the traditional womanly sense of decorum! The moral decline of society leaves in its wake a sense of complete freedom for men and women to be what they are or what they want to be instead of respecting the nature of creation that both sexes are never the same with their respective stations to complement each other in a mutually respectful relationship. In its place, we have endless contests between the sexes for one-upmanship or “one-upwomanship”. To keep on pushing the envelope of permissiveness, to continue exploring new frontiers that never seem to cease – it does not take a whiz to guess what the future will be like with the breakdown of constraints. Humans are gregarious creatures; hence, what goes with the individuals will impinge on the character of apposite relationships at all levels as the functional governing stricture on such relationships is constantly being undermined.

As society progresses in phenomenal ways with loads of excitements filling our hearts here and now as well as in anticipation of what is yet to be, the two great properties that we ought to hold dear and sacrosanct – the marriage union and the family – become neglected as we find insufficient time to tend to their regular maintenance; so they quickly depreciate in value against the backdrop of all other glittering properties that human covetousness rushes to embrace. **There will be no end to the increasing covetousness of human nature for the less important things that will appear more and more attractive (and more pressurizing than pleasuring) unless we learn to deny ourselves our own will and go after what God purposes for us.** What does Satan have to say about the



preference for all the splendour of the world? (Matt. 4:8-9) What does God have to say about marriage and family? (Matt. 19:6) **Read the Bible.**

Conventional wisdom is that the world has changed, the region has changed, everywhere has changed, and so if we fail to change in tandem, we will be left behind and lost. This means that regardless of the direction of change, for good or bad, we just have to follow along or else ... The truth is that peoples do change for better or worse, but smaller are the groups that change for the better. Of such smaller groups that dare to be different from the masses, even if deprived of the new gratuitous wonders of the world, they still survive and live well by good moral standards. These survivors know their priorities. They don't get themselves distracted by the cacophony of the world's voices drawing them in confusing directions. They recognize what the Bible consistently asserts on the strategic role of a strong family in God's kingdom, and so with a hard-wearing character they waste not their energy on the needless, but devote it to establish on solid ground the most significant relationships that God establishes in the family and thereby continue to build on their strong character. Our social mores and personal upbringing shape our views and conduct regarding the sanctity of marriage immensely.

Thankfully, something heartening, even if a bit, has come from my recent reading of the papers. It has to do with saving a marriage on the verge of destruction. Let me begin by introducing you to a little mental exercise with the questions that follow.

A woman (Mary, not her real name) caught her husband having a fling with a younger woman, Jane (not her real name). How did she react? Would your imagination tell you, "All hell broke lose. She thought of suicide as screams of 'I don't want to live anymore' woke all the neighbours up in the wee hours?"

Now, look at the other side of the infidelity equation – since it takes two to tango. The younger woman cheated on her own husband. Shockingly, she broke her marital vow only within one year. How did her husband react? Would your imagination tell you, "There arose a mighty bellow and the floor shook, and then something unimaginable happened?"

When a man and woman are in the thick of emotional turmoil, neither is expected to be able to think clearly. Self-destruction or divorce often comes in handy as an immediate option, but it is something that, when avoided, would make one think about the stupidity of it on hindsight when the storm has blown over and bright sunshine returns. In the case of such a drastic action not avoided ... well, pain usually does not die off with the ending of the life or marriage – the pain just passes on to whoever ‘inherit’ it.

No need for me to talk more about self-destruction, the stupidest act of all as it is obvious to any clear-headed person. However, divorce as a way out, as the first option, seems quite popular and as easy as changing clothes nowadays. So, perhaps, it is good for us to think about it more as a choice to avoid. The observer, not entangled with emotions, knows best. The courts, wisely, have always been reluctant to grant divorce immediately upon receipt of the application, but to pack the fighting couple off to counselling to see if the marriage can be salvaged. **Encouragingly, those fighting couples who would cherish even a mere iota of hope often come out of the counselling able to appreciate each other in the relationship better, that neither party is a saint and both need each other to have and to hold.**

The case of the two married couples above who got entangled the wrong way tells me that saving a marriage (in the this case, two marriages) just requires at least one involved person with a ‘creative’ idea. By being creative, I mean that it is not the run-of-the-mill idea that pops up in the mind ‘normally’ in any such situation; such as going to the lawyers, turning the house into a cold/hot war zone to prove one’s determined fighting prowess, and so forth. The cheated woman in this case abandoned the initial thought of suicide. In place of that stupid option, she did the wiser thing by taking her case to the other woman’s families. Finally, Mary managed to get an apology from Jane and got her husband back. Jane also returned to her own husband – Two marriages saved! It was not just that Mary got what she wanted by her clever idea of turning to the other woman’s families (mother and husband) instead of seeking legal counsel first, but that, notwithstanding her husband’s waywardness, she still loved him. As she said after the great marriage rescue: “I love my husband. I never held hands with another man, never kissed another man

... I want him to stay because he still loves me and not because he is afraid of losing the children or losing 'face'."

Albeit Mary did not do all things right in her initial fury at the discovery of her husband's straying in a moment of weakness, she ultimately did the most important thing right – finding a way to save the marriage while still maintaining her love for her husband. I would like to think that there are still many women today who have the same spirit of true love, no matter how undeserving the loved party is, to forgive and work a gradual, even if painful, recovery process rather than taking the fastest quitting way out. In Mary's case, the fastest way might not really do justice to her daughter too. The newspaper reported, "What her daughter said rings in her heart: 'Mum, is there a way that (you and Daddy) don't separate? It's difficult for me to choose and I don't want to choose.'"

1 Corinthians 13 is a good place to go to read about love. Here is a portion:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, **it keeps no record of wrongs.** Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, **always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.** (verses 4-8)

From the above poetry, what stands out for attention ought to be LOVE NEVER FAILS. If love is at the foundation of a marriage, then marriage should never fail too. When marriage does fail, it must be because love has taken flight. One who is cheated by his/her spouse is like being given a tight slap. It hurts terribly, and it bleeds the heart. I know that in reality, it is immensely difficult to turn the other cheek, and forgive. Given this, it speaks even more astoundingly of one man's love for his wife. As reported in the press, Mr Grice, an IT consultant in England, came home one day to find a 14-year-old boy with whom his teacher wife, Hannah, had sex up to 4 times a week. Wow! Hannah was charged in court for

indecent assault on the boy and jailed for 15 months. After the sentencing, Mr Grice remained supportive of his cheating wife. Said he, **“I stood at the altar with my wife and said, ‘In sickness and in health and for better or for worse.’ I will stand by those vows I took.”**

If we think of Mr Grice as an ‘extraordinary’ chap who keeps his vow; then we betray ourselves that we are all ‘ordinary’ who may not be expected to do the same significant act of sticking to our promise at the altar of God. Another man who is so ‘ordinary’ can be the Mr Christopher Turner in the US who is in the process of divorce with his cheating teacher wife who was charged and sentenced to prison for having sex with a 13-year-old. I wonder how a woman would react in the event of her teacher husband going havoc over a teenage girl’s crush. Would she be like Mr Grice or Mr Turner?

I am not advocating that a marriage partner should feel it easy to do anything unconscionable to his/her spouse in the hope that the marriage vow “for better or worse” would come to the rescue when taken to task. One cannot have his/her cake and eat it. To hold on to this kind of perverted hope and therefore become blasé about the relationship is like saying that since God’s grace increases all the more where sin increases, so for the pleasure of receiving more grace we shall feel good to sin more. Anyone reading Romans 5:20 ought to read on to verse 21 which says, “... just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness ...” Therefore, availability of forgiveness in marriage is not a licence for one to be irresponsible in the first place, but for one to recognize the value of that love that cherishes a partner unconditionally, and never forgetting that this value has to be jealously and resolutely protected – not taken for granted! God will dish out the right treatment for the reprobate as He deems fit.

Where there is a failure by one party, forgiveness may be hoped for, and is encouraged, but is never demanded. It is encouraged also partly on the basis that the aberrant spouse may be in need of help more than condemnation. For this, who could be the best person to help than one who is as close as a spouse? Examples of marriages broken and repaired give us

eternal hope that our own marriage, if it ever shows signs of cracks, can also see salvation. Every couple is unique, and so the method to work a relationship beautifully may differ from couple to couple. All the same, there is a creative way where there is the will. Divorce is never the first option; going to the lawyers should never be a rushed affair while emotions are on their uncontrollable highs; because, when the mind composes a little to think better, whatever incorrect action is usually difficult to undo. Let divorce be the last of all the final options – when it is established that nothing else works because of the hardness of man’s heart; only then may God’s permissibility of it be adopted for a decision after seeking competent moral counsel.

Before concluding, I would like to retell this joke that I heard at a church wedding:

*“In preparing to deliver a message to a new couple and guests, a young minister was somewhat nervous because of his inexperience. So he decided to seek the advice of his elder colleague. The colleague advised him to jot down the points he wished to speak on, and be calm. Then he added, ‘If you are ever unsure of what to say, just quote the Scripture. You can’t be wrong.*

*So on the day of the Holy Matrimony, the minister spoke from his prepared points with calmness. Unfortunately, halfway, he started to become tense as he forgot some of his memorized lines. He recalled his elder colleague’s advice, and therefore turned to the Bible for something to quote. The following verse popped out and the young minister, looking blankly at his audience and then to the new couple, spoke, ‘Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”’*

Many young Christian couples, in the flush of romance, fail to be familiar with the fact that the Holy Matrimony is just the beginning of a lifelong journey of living together and learning more of each other. Real-life matrimony is never like reel-life saccharine-saturated romance that one may chance upon to be mesmerized. There is never such a thing as perfect harmony in thoughts and lifestyles of a man and a woman raised up in different upbringing environments for over twenty years. The truth is that marriage requires mutual

conscientiousness, attentiveness, thoughtfulness, care, give-and-take ... It doesn't sound like it is a piece of cake, does it? This shouldn't put off young men and women of marriageable age, but put them in the right frame to face up to the challenge for the ultimate beauty of a strong and sturdy relationship of mutual dependency and trust forged by the trusty fire of love. If we open our eyes wide, we can see successful marriages around us, even if none is perfect, that attest to the possibility of a happy and satisfying lifelong partnership with each other sharing in the discipline and hard work to make it so. The success of a relationship is founded on the individuals that make up the relationship. The strength of the individuals' moral fibres has a strong bearing on the strength of the relationship, and this strength has to be protected by the absolute rules of God's Word, not the retrogressive human rules of permissiveness.

John Lee

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## TJCC's BBQ NITE

First and foremost, we thank God for His Favors and Blessings on our CG's scheduled event with our loved ones, friends and contacts from Blk 328. Thank God for fine weather, safety all round, fun, laughter, fellowship, and a good turnout of 55 people (inclusive of 31 guests) on 10 Sep (5pm to 8pm) at the church's compound.

Fun and excitement was the order of the day, when the 3 participating teams, formed mainly by the children with several adults, competed in a game of darts, mini-golf, and guessing the object though touching it.

The eventual winner of these much hotly contested games was the Water team, followed closely at their heels by the Land team, and last but not least, the Sky team.

After all the laughter, fun and excitement from the games, Pastor

Anthony, gave thanks for the food. After which we all tucked into the cooked food brought by our guests and the main attraction of various BBQ items supplied by the cell group.

The 'fei-lo-ship' with our guests was so good that most stayed behind well beyond the scheduled ending time of 8pm, right up to 10pm.

Indeed, the church members, inclusive of our children, had played their part and role in making this event a very memorable one for our guests, shining a light for Jesus.

Most importantly, thank God that some of the invited guests responded positively to attend our Sunday services on the next day.

Praise The Lord and All Glory Be Unto Him.

**Richard Lee**

# Moon Cake Hi-Tea



After months of planning and practicing, the Old Folks ministry under the guidance of Peter Cheong launched its first ever event – The Moon Cake Hi-Tea Fellowship on 17 Sep 2005. It was, by God’s grace, a success. I don’t have the statistics but I estimate that at least 30 to 40 guests turned up. At the altar call given by Rev James Lim, I saw quite a number of hands shot up. I hope Peter’s team were observing and can carry out the follow up actions.



Before the fire of excitement can die down, Peter has already planned for a second Old Folks Dialect event around Christmas time with Rev Oh Beng Kee as the guest speaker. So pray for your old folks, starting now.





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A pastor waited in line to have his car filled with gas just before a long holiday weekend. The attendant worked quickly, but there were many cars ahead of him. Finally, the attendant motioned him toward a vacant pump.

"Reverend," said the young man, "I'm so sorry about the delay. It seems as if everyone waits until the last minute to get ready for a long trip.

The pastor chuckled, "I know what you mean. It's the same in my business."



*Originally, I planned to have a booklet for my CG on all the testimonies of each member. After trying for some time, I could not get more than 2 who were willing to pen their personal testimonies. So instead of wasting his powerful testimony in my harddisk, here is CS Kong's personal testimony:*

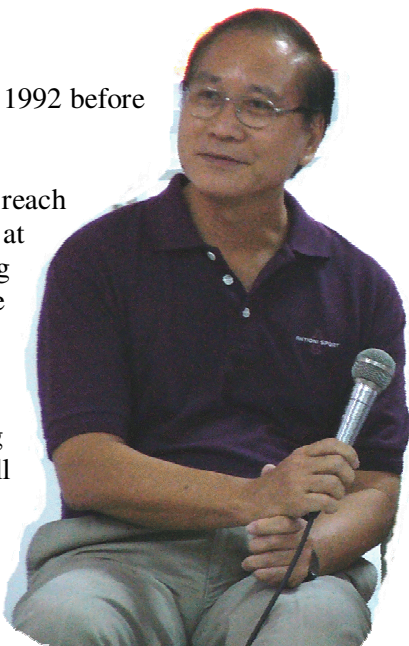
## MY ENCOUNTER WITH THE LORD

This happened 13 years ago on November 19, 1992 before I became a Christian.

It was a usual morning to leave home and reach office before 7.00 am. I took my breakfast at one of the hawker stalls along the way. Feeling normal without the slightest hint of headache or short of breath I reached the office and sank down into my chair. At that very moment, I suddenly felt uncomfortable as though something had got into me. Fighting for breath and streaming with cold sweat all over my body, I felt helpless and just slump down on my chair.

Fortunately, three of my colleagues had at the meantime just arrived in the office. Sensing something wrong with me they tried to revive me. One of them was previously from the medical unit during his NS time. It did not work as I was still sweating profusely and grasping for breath. One of them decided that I should be admitted to hospital immediately as they suspected I probably suffered a heart attack. So without further delay, they managed to carry me in one of their cars and drove straight away to the nearest hospital. The trip to the hospital was surprisingly smooth and there was no traffic jam on the way. As soon as we arrived at the entrance of the emergency unit my heart stopped and I can vividly remember hearing shouts for help and nurses running for stretcher and equipments before I passed out – I felt myself slowly flowing away - I found out later this was indeed a heart attack.

I do not know how long the nurses and doctor tried to revive me but I managed to come to my senses when an electric shock was applied on my chest. When they wheeled me out of the emergency ward to the ICU, I found myself connected to numerous tubes all over my body with blood



still flowing out of my mouth (as I had bit my tongue nearly into two during the attack). The doctor and nurses at this time were more concerned with my heart rather than my tongue and therefore stitching was done without any local anesthetic during the later part of the day.

I lost count of the time as I was still very tired and drowsy but was still able to know that I'm back on to this earth. Out from nowhere I suddenly saw someone in white clothing sitting at the end of my bedside with his back facing me. He just said this to me which I cannot forget for the rest of my life "C.S. Why are you still doubting and do not believe in Me. I'm here to prove to you that I'm still alive and here to save you". Immediately I replied without hesitation, "I will believe in you if you can get me out from here alive so that I can be with my family (as my children were still small, one was three and the other five years old). He replied, "OK, I will see to it" and He just walked out of the room.

As soon as He left, I became more alert and immediately I pressed the alarm bell seeking help. A nurse came in from outside my room and I wanted to confirm with her that I had a visitor who came to see me just a while ago. The nurse was rather surprised and told me, no one had come into the room as it was long past the visiting hours. "Do you know the time now?" she said, "3.30 am!"

The next few days in the hospital I was just like a guinea pig, they put me through all the various tests and examinations. In the end, the cardiologist found nothing wrong with me, no arteries blocked or heart muscle failure. Just imagine one minute I was dead and the next day I'm found to be fit and ready to be discharged from the hospital after about ten days stay.

I shared this unusual experience with my wife on the day I was discharged from hospital. She was happy that God had finally answered her prayer and opened my heart to accept the Lord Jesus as my Saviour. I was then baptized in JCC by Pastor Yee in 1993.

I give thanks to God who has given me a second chance to live on – a living testimony to God's grace.

C S Kong

# **NOT I, BUT CHRIST**

I was born into a Roman Catholic family, baptized while still a baby and grew up as a law abiding Roman Catholic attending Mass every Sunday and Holy Days. At one stage, we also abstained from meat on Fridays and forgo some meals during the Lent season. When the church relaxed the rules, I was very happy to indulge in eating meat because I am not much of a vegetarian. However, as I reflect back, these were all rules which I followed because I did not want to break any laws.

I knew about Christ and the Holy Bible and all the stories inside. Unfortunately they were only stories and I had to work out my salvation by living as good a life as I could in my own strength.

I don't remember meeting anyone who tried to share the Christian hope with me during this period of my life. Then one day, while working in PSA, my eyes beheld a lovely young lady who is now my wife. She is a Christian. Because I dated her, I had to attend some of her church functions. Her church friends started to "attack" me with their doctrine and beliefs. This made me very defensive. I became very apologetic, reading many books about Christian as well as Roman Catholic beliefs. One book in particular had a great impact on me. "Know Why You Believe" by Paul Little.

Somehow as I studied and even though I now had a better understanding of Roman Catholic beliefs, I felt drawn to the Christian view of salvation and grace. At first, we compromised by attending each other's church on alternate Sundays. We even got married in a Roman Catholic Church. However after marriage and living together in Jurong, we found that shuttling from one church to another was quite taxing. So I gave way and join my wife, Joo See in a Christian church – JCC.

I was still a Roman Catholic when I attended JCC. However God was working patiently with me. I remember that I was well accepted even then. I must admit that it was a very long process as I slowly learn that salvation cannot be earned but is a free gift of God through Christ Jesus.

If you ask me the date I was born again, I really don't know. However, I can say that on Christmas Day 1994, I finally transferred membership to JCC. I took a stand for Christ.

I realize now that we cannot earn our salvation. We are sinners and will always be but by God's grace we are forgiven.

*Martin Cheah*

# SHINING STARS

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