

The Vine

The Vine Committee

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Editor's Word

On Wednesday, 26 April, I was whining to God about my finger because the finger nail did not grow back properly. (Maybe I should call this

newsletter – **The Whine**) As I sat at my workstation thinking about it, one of the contractors in my office pointed out that there was someone lying in the middle of the road leading to my office.

As I am the safety representative (what a joke, I hurt my finger in a silly accident), I had to walk over to take a look. When I reached the spot, to my horror, it was my immediately colleague, the one who sits facing me all day, lying there on the ground. He was a very lively man who constantly hoped to strike it rich on 4D or TOTO. In fact, he was looking forward to collecting his CPF at the end of this year. It is ironic that now he would probably receive lots of money from insurance or workmen's compensation but won't be able to enjoy it.

I didn't know what to do. Apparently, he had an accident with a forklift and was now lying immobile on the ground. I bend down and held his left wrist and whispered a silent prayer for healing. Nothing happened.

Anxious minutes passed. After some time of waiting, the company's nurse came, then the ambulance arrived and he was taken to NUH. Later we received news that he was in a coma. He was in a coma for 2 weeks. During that time, I visited him twice at the ICU but could not get in to speak to him. I just prayed outside the glass door. Few days ago, I heard that he finally awoke but that he has 90% brain damaged. I will continue to pray for him that he will be fully recovered even though it seems impossible. But we have a God who works the impossible.

The lesson I learnt that day was that my problem is very light compared to my colleague's. That even though I thought that God did not protect me, He did, and so I must be thankful and not whine.

I hope you will all join me in praying for my colleague's full recovery.

Martin Cheah

Christian Marriage in a Chinese Cultural Context

Many couples come from traditional Chinese families, get acquainted in church fellowship and activities, relationship blossoms and soon they decide to “tie the knot.” In Jurong Christian Church, this is pretty obvious, as there are many such couples around including myself. At times some cultural elements and conflicts with parents may kick in, over wedding protocols, date selection, arrangements, procedures, rites, ceremonies and other nitty-gritty details. Reason is that there may be clashes in worldviews underlying the Judeo-Christian and the traditional Chinese concepts and rites of marriage.

In Chinese culture, the main purposes of marriage according to Mabel Wu are propagating the lineal succession of descendants, and maintaining and enhancing the social position of the family¹. Singapore’s Anglican Clergy, Rev Daniel Tong, added that the wedding rite is the passage into adulthood and maturity². For Christians, we understand the purposes of marriage to be:

- 1) The union of one man and one woman to become one flesh (Genesis 2:24), Ephesians 5:22-33
- 2) The procreation of children and their upbringing (Genesis 1:28) and
- 3) To protect the individual from indulging in sexual immorality (1 Cor 7:2-3).

Also the Christian couple will need to understand the significance and worldview underlying the tea ceremony, the dowry, the matching of horoscopes, the selection of date, the wedding dinner and other superstitions as explicated by Daniel Tong. The understanding is very important, so that any negotiations, compromise, drawing of boundaries and mutual agreements between the couple and their parents can be done in an understanding, tactful and win-win situation. It may help to defuse tensions and prevent being stereotyped as Westernised “bananas”

Therefore for Christian courting couples preparing for their wedding I suggest that you should read Daniel Tong’s writing on it in chapter 5 of his book “A

¹ Wu, Mabel. “Marriage Rites in the Chinese Cultural Context” in Baptism, Rites of Passage And Culture. S.Anita Stauffer, Editor. Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1998. p 217

² Tong, Daniel. A Biblical Approach to Chinese Traditions and Beliefs. Singapore: Genesis Books, 2003. p47.

Biblical Approach to Chinese Traditions and Beliefs". It provides some dos and don'ts guidelines. This book is can easily be purchased in many local Christian bookstores at about S\$15.

For some couples you may want to be more adventurous, and think of creative ways to adapt and contextualize some Chinese cultural elements into a new form that will not violate your Christian convictions. Mabel Wu of Hong Kong has made several bold suggestions in her paper published by LWF; example, to "wear the red dress for both the family wedding banquet as well as church wedding."³. White is in fact a color for mourning in Chinese culture, red is the color for festivity and joy. Presenting gifts or flowers to parents in the wedding ceremony can convey filial piety. Mabel also noted that wedding sermon should not be overtly evangelistic as it may turn people off, but the wedding liturgy itself if carefully thought out, can proclaim the Gospel of God's promise of salvation in a very powerful yet non-threatening manner to the non-Christians present.

Blessings for a happy courtship & wedding.
Rev Martin Yee

Advertisement



³ Wu, p 223

Draw me closer, LORD

by Low Poh Kiat

When I was diagnosed with cancer on 21st April 2006, I was in shock and the agony was indescribable. I was sad for my family and the pain in my heart intensified whenever I see my children. For a week, I was angry with God and felt betrayed by Him and by my healthy body; yet in such a helpless situation He is the only one I can cry my heart out and turn to for comfort. Each time my heart is in agony, he showed me in his word that he will strengthen my heart. He promises me strength and love to last each day and that is what I am still learning to cling on to.



Encouragements from Ewe Ewe, Nancy and Dorothy are uplifting. After all, they have gone ahead of me and made it. They are women of faith who have walked through the valley of the shadow of death and came out victorious, glorifying our God. I see Christ in each of them.

There are always things in life to be thankful for:

- 1) My cancer is in its early stage (stage 1) and can be treated with operation and subsequently treatments.
- 2) Strong prayer support from JCC, cell, office staff and family. It uplifts me each time and especially when I lose my focus to pray, someone is there standing in the gap for me. Even those people who do not know me in other churches are praying for me when my sister and sister-in-law shared with them.
- 3) Encouragements and cares came in every way from all who know me to constantly remind me I am not going through this battle alone and that I am loved.
- 4) My surgeon is a Christian and to me, this is a double bonus. God heals through the vocation of doctor and nurses too.
- 5) Together with my kids, we learnt to cry and pray to God together and talk about our fears in life. Both of them have since learnt to find security in God and to be more independent when I am not available for them.

A brother asked Kin Cheong why God allows such a thing to happen to me. In life, bad things do happen to good people. Recently my 2 kids have joined us to wear spectacles, that makes the 4 of us short-sighted in the family. Surely

God's perspective for us is longer term and larger in view! He who created heaven and earth cannot be short-sighted like us. At this point of time, I can only cling on to this to comfort myself. When the evangelist Billy Graham contracted Parkinson disease, his response to the reporter's question of why God allows it to happen to him was "God wants to draw me closer to Him." Please pray along with me that I will learn to draw nearer to Him too and be still to let Him fight the battle for me.

In my absence, please continue to support Pastor Samuel, Anthony, and Mervyn in whatever ways you can so as to minimize disruption to the Church administration. Thank you so much. God sees and God knows, your reward will be in heaven!

Easter Sunrise Service



16 April 2006

Some early birds from JCC congregated at the new Jurong Neighbourhood Park to welcome the Son Rise and also the sunrise.



It was 6.30 am – the crack of dawn (*that's what they call them*) when our early birds arrived.



~~666~~
888

MULLING OVER PROPHECIES

We have heard a lot about the destruction of the ozone layer and the warming of the atmosphere with its potential consequences. If I were a wannabe prophet, I might prophesy that in a few decades, the temperature on Earth will go as high as 50°C. (Humans will then be “half-boiled”, since this is ½ of 100 °C, the boiling point of water. ☺) Whether or not it will be fulfilled is not the issue. The problem is that if perchance it happens, dummies who come to know that I ‘prophesied’ it might just lift me up as a prophet. Just hope that in their misplaced fervour they don’t throw me up into the air and cause me to have a nasty landing. Essentially, the so-called ‘prophecy’ is nothing more than a human forecast similar to all human forecasts that are traditionally attached with caveats like “barring unforeseen circumstances,” “if not ... then ...,” etc. **Even a dummy ought to understand that, if a person makes a prediction and in the same breadth admits that there are events he cannot foresee that might invalidate the prediction, the prediction is of little value.**

The Wright Brothers were the inventors of the first airplane. That was in the early 20th Century when man had his first fascination with a flying machine. Nevertheless, it was just a primitive biplane with a short flight. Imagine the brothers (just plain and ordinary folks without any engineering training) prophesying that three decades later, man would be able to fly across the world in a jet plane. People, on hearing the ‘prophecy’, would most likely call them crackpots. Think also of how people would have reacted if anyone had prophesied that man would one day be flying to the moon. Nobody made such prophecies, because nobody was qualified to do so. (A prophecy is different from a prediction. You will know the difference soon.)

Making prophecies is not just for anybody to pick up as a hobby or cherish as an ambition. You are either a prophet or you are not, according to God’s providence. Study the prophecies in the Bible and you will observe that they are not of the facetious kind like predicting a summer temperature of 50 °C based on available information. They also dealt with serious matters and were delivered with no-nonsense firmness without any caveats that might save the face of the prophets in case events did not occur as prophesied. More significantly, the prophecies made were of the nature that is not ordinarily humanly foreseeable – the prophets risked being looked right through with their sanity called into question!

Events one might consider as products of a fertile mind in the past have become real in our time. How many of us today simply put aside hard-to-

fathom prophecies in the Bible as implausible or something for the distant future and not for present-day people to mull over? There are two broad groups of prophecies in the Bible – those prophecies already fulfilled and those that are yet to be fulfilled. The first have all been fulfilled exactly without a single error. Disbelieving people might have tried to argue the opposite, but they have never succeeded in toppling the truth; much like people in all times might attempt to force the Bible into oblivion, yet it (not *The Da Vinci Code*) remains and will remain the number-one selling publication in the world. Jesus himself fulfilled each and every prophecy about him in the OT perfectly. The OT was written over a millennium. Thus, it is supremely mind-boggling to contemplate how one man lived out 100% of everything as claimed about him in hundreds of references about him in the OT. Nothing prophesied in the Bible has been found to be false, but there is the other group of prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled. On the strength of the first group of prophecies having been fulfilled perfectly, what is the probability of non-fulfillment of any of the prophecies in the second group? The following is one of them:

“He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666” – Rev. 13:16-18

What has to be, will be. As Christians, we believe in God's providence and there is no way we can change it. Remember that when Jesus predicted his death, Peter took him aside and rebuked him? (Matt. 16:21-23) How bold of Peter to do so! What had to happen according to prophecy, would happen; and so any attempt to turn prophecy around would be futile. Can we therefore do anything about the coming of the Anti-Christ? If we cannot, how is fear going to be helpful? If awareness of Scriptural teachings draws us to Christ out of our love for God as He first loved us, then our faith will remain strong. If we are drawn by the wrong reason, our commitment will be fragile. This is equally true for our spiritual faith as it is regarding our secular endeavours that are not on correct foundation, such as a student being drawn to diligence in doing homework because of carrots dangling in front rather than of understanding the intrinsic worth of doing what is right. On the other hand, if we are blithe about the implication of the Scriptural prophecy about the rise of the Anti-Christ and fail to be watchful, we may find ourselves not dressed ready for service with our lamps kept burning. (Luke 12:35) Come what may, as prophecies are fulfilled one after another, we will be well in Christ. While

fear should not have its place in our heart, we ought to follow Scriptural advice to devote ourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. (Col. 4:2)

A common observation I have about prophecies is that when they are fulfilled, we will know; when they are not yet fulfilled, we can guess and anticipate about anything to do with it, but we will not know perfectly how it will be. People not gifted with the ability to interpret prophecy tend to go off-track when they try too hard to make their conclusions based on limited understanding. The Sadducees were like that. The resurrection of the Son of God was prophesied in the scriptures, yet they showed their ignorance in claiming that “there is no resurrection”. Their misplaced understanding was based on human assumptions, and upon these assumptions they posed all the “what if’s” questions. They didn’t know that the Kingdom of God does not always have to conform to man’s rationale. Jesus gave them the answer by way of a short and sharp counter-question, “Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God?” (Mk 12:18-24)

Prophecies that have been fulfilled prove the perfect accuracy of the Bible and attest to the omniscience of a powerful God. Upon the foundation of these fulfilled prophecies, we are optimistic that the prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled will be fulfilled, and so we have hope as we journey into the future. We are comforted that it is no longer a journey of bleakness into the unknown for us pilgrims on Earth, but the Light is shining bright in the horizon beckoning us to keep our head high as we keep marching forward.

Therefore, prophecies do serve useful purposes, but to use a prophecy as a basis for speculation is certainly not useful. I know that sometimes people use prophecies to poke fun and nothing more, such as in linking the Anti-Christ to any entity that happens to be marked with the number 666 in any event or circumstance. On the other hand, there are Christians who are really serious in belabouring the connections between prophecies and observed happenings. An example of this is the association some of them make between the advent of microchips (the size of a dot) that can be implanted under human skin and the arrival of the Anti-Christ. Are they right? Posing Jesus’ question in Mk 12:24 to myself, I would answer it thus, “Yes, Lord. I do not know enough of what the Scriptures say about the mark of the beast, and I do not wish to err.”

I do not know exactly when the Anti-Christ will come and when the end of days will be, but I know the prophecy will be fulfilled. I believe that this is enough for me. After all, **we do not live on prophecies; we live by our faith in Christ.** This is not to undermine the importance of prophecies according to their purposes as we give due attention to them, but to attach due weight and not in excess. Ultimately, it is still faith in Christ that lies at the root of our salvation even if we are ignorant of

things around us. Someone is more knowledgeable about Scriptures than me, but that does not confer upon him a richer eternal life, or does it? Ignorance is bliss (to a certain extent that it gives us none of the stress associated with knowing), but to indulge in excess ignorance (so much as causing us to lose guidance and neglect the importance of faith in Christ) is folly!

I thank God for blessing me with enough knowledge – neither too little nor too much at this point of time – for survivability in Christian life and mission. Thinking positively about prophecy and Christ (instead of Anti-Christ), I draw spiritual strength from the prophecy in Acts 1:11, that **the same Jesus who was taken from us into heaven “will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”** A prophecy is a divine promise (not merely a prediction). So this prophecy will come true, like other prophecies about the final destruction of evil. Believe what it says and keep faith in Christ. We can expect to see Jesus back again. Satan will be vanquished, and 666 will be no more. In its place will be the 888 of blessings in Christ Jesus:

<p><u>Add up the numeric values of the Greek letters.</u> (Every letter of the Greek alphabet has a numeric value.)</p> <p style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold; letter-spacing: 0.5em;">I E S O U S</p> <p>(JESUS in Greek, transliterated)</p>		
<div style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;"> 666 888 </div>	Greek Letter	Numeric Value
	<i>Iota</i>	10
	<i>Eta</i>	8
	<i>Sigma</i>	200
	<i>Omicron</i>	70
	<i>Upsilon</i>	400
	<i>Sigma</i>	200
Total	888	

There is a traditional Chinese belief that 888 (发发发) signifies prosperity. As Christians, let us be reminded thus: 耶稣赐福予人, 让我们的事奉上-- 发发发-- 发奋有为。

祝愿大家在属灵上发大财，主恩满满！Jesus bestows blessings upon us. Let us give our best in Christian service. Best wishes for prosperity to all, spiritually in the fullness of His grace!

John Lee

BOYS' BRIGADE ENROLMENT 2006



23rd April 2006 Boys from Shuqun Primary and Secondary Schools came together in JCC for their Enrolment Service. Thank God for the fine weather so that the boys were able to go through their paces in the open air carpark space.

Bro Jim Lee gave the message of the day – a summary of the events after Jesus' resurrection. He also spoke about the meaning of the BB logo and its history.

During the parade, the boys were given their well deserved badges.







JCKK

Reflection on 2006 AGM



The sermon shared by Bishop Tan that morning was: Jesus told the disciples to walk a little bit more. To apply this calling in the present context means as leaders of the Church Ministries we need to give a bit more of our time to attend more meetings or to serve others. As Christians, we need to sacrifice a bit more for the Lord. Our mighty God knew in advance what was going to take place during the AGM, including the sharing on the needs and challenges JCKK faces and what JCKK has become over these years.



As brothers and sisters in Christ listened attentively, sitting a little longer patiently in the pews, and proffered their thoughts on the important matters of JCKK, expressing their concerns and opinions, we could see the body at work. It became clear that the JCKK ministry is not one that belongs to a select few of workers. Instead, it belongs to each and every one of us. Very often, our spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Therefore, the more we stick together as one, long-sufferingly and good-naturedly holding one another up in service by mutual encouragement and support, the more we can find the strength of the body in overcoming the weaknesses of individuals.



JCKK is a challenging ministry, which involves collecting fees from the public to provide pre-school education for their children. It is not only under the charge of the church, but also under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and accountable to the parents of the JCKK children. The pre-school service is quite vulnerable to the changes of the big environment. For instance the decline in birth rate in 2005 led to a decline in enrolments, which was also a problem faced by all other children centres. Inflation and a poor economic outlook led to an increase in financial assistance cases. On the other hand, when the economy is good, and more job opportunities become available, more mothers join the work force. These

working mothers need to withdraw the children from JCKK and put their children in childcare.

Managing such a ministry not only requires much time and effort from full-time staff, it will also need much support in resources and prayers to see it through difficult times and to sustain its growth in good time. The management of JCKK is doggedly leaving no stones unturned in trying all means to overcome the challenges. Staff of JCKK is with the management. Likewise, members of JCC have also been very helpful in many ways in giving their backing. Let us all keep faith in Jesus, our Lord, and continue to lend our shoulders to bear the ministry together as we build one another up, with the help of God, to continue to seize opportunities to sow the seeds of the Gospel in the young hearts.



May God bless JCC and JCKK in their missions, for His Glory!

JCKK MC

UPDATES FROM GOSPEL MISSION TO THE BLIND

Dear Praying Friends,

1 Chron. 4:9-10 Jabez was more honourable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, "I gave birth to him in pain." Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request.



Most people know the fact that child bearing is painful. But only those who have given birth understand the pain because they have experienced it. I do not think Jabez's mother was referring to labour pain when she named him Jabez. Perhaps she had experienced a pain that was beyond labour pain.

The fact that we are called Christians (Acts 11:26) reminded me that God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Son have suffered great pain, a pain that is beyond human understanding, in order that we might be born into His family.

Although we might suffer different degrees of pain, be it physical or some pain due to loss of sight or loss of someone or something dear to us, let us not focus on the pain. Let us learn from Jabez, and cry out to the Lord, for He will surely answer us.

Below is an update of our activities. We will be grateful if you can uphold us before the Lord.

- We thank the Lord for the opportunity to participate in the outreach programme of the Chinese Congregation of Chapel of the Resurrection.
- Please pray that the Lord will use the songs and items presented by our blind people on 13th May to touch and challenge the hearts of the non-believers, and that we will see many people receive salvation that night.
- Our youth camp will be held on 28th through 31st of this month.
- Please pray for Douglas Sim as this will be his first time speaking to a group of blind people. Please also pray for me as I prepare some lessons for the campers.
- We are sponsoring a group of 12 blind persons with 4 GMB helpers to attend a spiritual renewal camp organized by Hinghwa Methodist Church.
- This camp will be held in Malacca on 2nd through 5th June. Please pray that all the participants will be refreshed spiritually, and that all will be mutually encouraged by each other.

Please pray for Kien Yin, whose hearing and sight have been deteriorating badly. Pray that the evil one will not succeed in robbing her of her hope and joy, and that the tormenting suicidal thoughts will be removed from her. (Her photo attached)

Lastly, thank you for your partnership in the ministry. May you receive honour from the Lord as you put your trust in Him.

Your sister in the Lord,

Cheong Cheng Choo
Gospel Mission to the Blind Ltd



The Da Vinci Code Movie Saga

– Separation of Church and State?

The National Council of Churches of Singapore (NCCS) in a “strong” letter to the Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) in April 2006, minced no words and protested loudly against the screening of the Movie “The Da Vinci Code” and called for it to be banned altogether. MICA replied and said that the show will still go on but slapped with a N16 rating – only viewers age 16 and above are allowed to watch this much hyped heretical fiction. I have seen both the letter and the reply, and must say I am happy that at last the Church in Singapore really has a strong voice on something that seeks to undermine its own foundation.

Andy Ho (who used to worship at JCC before), Senior Writer for the Straits Times in a substantial article, published on 11th May 2006, entitled “Church and State – Finding an acceptable balance” has taken note of this strong NCCS response. Christians since the days of the apostles have always been having this tension - how do the Church relate to the State? Complete separation? Partial separation? Or simply go along with the State? Dr. Andy Ho, being a Reformed Baptist from the Free Church tradition, would like to see a complete separation of the Church and the State. How about the Lutheran Church’s stand?

Germans whose State Church is the Lutheran Church, after two devastating World Wars, have done a lot of soul searching in this regard as well; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, being one of those who asked sharp questions about the Church’s stand with regard to the Nazis, paid for it with his life. Lutherans have a distinctive theology called the “**The Two Kingdoms**” which helps them to understand theologically how they should see and handle the relationship between the Church and the State. American Lutheran English professor and writer, Edward Gene Veith explains very well this Lutheran theological understanding:

“A Christian is thus a citizen of two kingdoms – the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of this world. These spheres have different demands and operate in different ways. But God is the King of both.

This doctrine has sometimes been misunderstood to mean that the secular government has absolute authority as an agent of God. This is the farthest from the truth. God is the king. His law judges the kingdoms of the earth. A governmental system, such as that of Nazi Germany, which is in stark violation of that law, is in a state of rebellion and can demand no allegiance. A nation, however, need not be ruled by a Christian to exercise legitimate authority. The ruler’s faith is a matter of the other kingdom and a function of the gospel; even an unbelieving ruler, however, can be held accountable to God’s law and to its corollaries in the secular requirements of effective government.

Both kingdoms are binding, but they are not to be confused with each other. The secular values of the culture are not to be imposed upon the church. Nor may the spiritual realm be imposed upon the secular culture. Saving faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit and cannot be a matter of coercion. Nor can the freedom created by the gospel be applied to unbelievers, who are stiff in their sins.

People today who oppose the death penalty, for example, because we should forgive, would be confusing the two kingdoms, as would pacifists who oppose all wars because we are told to love our enemies. I recently came across a book that addressed the problem of crime by advocating that all criminals be released from prison. Jesus said that he came to proclaim release to the captives, the author argued. Therefore, we should do as he said, trusting that the gesture would transform the criminals' hearts.

*Christians must certainly express the love and forgiveness of Christ in their relationship with others, both inside and outside of the church. But God's other kingdom operates in terms of power, coercion, punishment, and the sometimes harsh demands of Justice. The lawful magistrate is "God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer" and "does not bear the sword for nothing" (*Romans 13:4*). As a citizen in both kingdoms, a Christian may thus operate in different ways in the two spheres. No Christian should take private revenge, but a Christian soldier, judge, police officer, or juror may well have to "bear the sword."*

If the government bears the sword, the church bears only the Word. Though the local church is also an earthly institution and so must be concerned with committees, by-laws, and even politics, the church is not to be run like a business, a nation, or the surrounding culture. It should be a haven of love and mutual forgiveness in the midst of a fallen, sin-sick world.

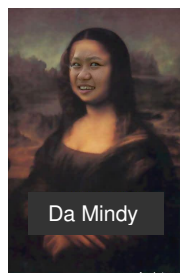
Christians exercising their vocations in the secular culture must assess their activity in secular terms, which are also under God's sovereignty. A Christian artist may well express his faith in his art, but the quality of the art lies primarily not in its theological message but in its aesthetic excellence, since the laws of aesthetics have been ordained by God in his creation. There is no need for a distinctly Christian approach to music, plumbing, computer science, physics, or wood-carving, because all of these things, no matter how secular or non-religious they appear, already fall under God's sovereignty.

Conversely, the church must never uncritically capitulate to the culture. Money-making, marketing techniques, entertainment ventures, power politics, and intellectual fashions must never set the church's agenda, which must be governed instead solely by the Word of God."

(Source: <http://www.mtio.com/articles/aissar26.htm>)

May God have mercy on us.

Rev. Martin Yee



Cambodia Mission Trip 2006

20th - 30th Mar

Reported by Lydia Sum

Day 6

Museum Visit & Shopping Frenzy!!!!

We visited the infamous genocide museum, commonly known as the former Khmer Rouge S-21 Prison. As we visited the crime scene of a cruel regime, we were also reminded of the frailty of life.



Looking into the empty cells and torture chambers, what is left is but a memory of a tortured past. When we came out of the museum, we were in rather gloomy moods, but thankfully, the notion of shopping managed to lift our moods aplenty!

The group went shopping at the central market and after lunch at a nearby mall... we continued our shopping frenzy at the Russian market. Surrounded by cheap buys and terrific bargains, we as true blue Singaporeans do what we do best—we shopped!



Dinner at Pastor Castro's house was something to look forward to. The food was superb and so was the fellowship. After dinner, the youths and the adults really bonded and gelled with one another through a game of "chop chilli chop". In this game, one person starts with a series of actions and the next person just follows suit but starts only after the second set of actions. Confused?

That's the point of the game. It was a hilarious experience and it was simply joyous to see everyone having so much fun!



Day 7

Sunday Church

The first church service we've been to in Cambodia! Exciting and promising! The service at New Life Center Church was a charismatic one.

Initially we thought that being conservative by nature, the worship will be of hymns and psalms, but they surprised us with a highly energized worship and it was as if they were having a mini festival of praise here in New Life! Their zest in praising and worshipping the Lord is one we could all learn from and as they jumped in joy of praising God, we know that He is with His people.

This was also the day the adults left us for Singapore. As we said our good bye, we were reluctant to let them go, for they have certainly become dear to us within the short span of 7 days.





Day 8-10 Kampong Chnang

On Monday and Tuesday, we traveled to two of the villages at Kampong Chnang. There we taught the children some action songs as well as the customary “whoop Hoo” dance. This day, we also introduced the Gospel beads, which enable us to share the gospel in a simplified version suited for young children.

Using colours to reach out to them is especially useful for it is easier for them to remember colours than words or pictures. For instance, Black represents the sins we have, and by the blood (red) of Christ, we are cleansed and have become pure (white) and Holy in His sight. Now, we have life (green) in Jesus and we have the assurance of Salvation which allows us to go Heaven (gold).

In simple language and with a sincere heart, we ask the children who wish to accept Jesus to recite the sinner’s prayer with us. The number of responses was remarkable. Almost all the children closed their eyes to pray that prayer of hope. In the two villages we went to, we reached a total of about 80 kids who have received Christ.



By faith, God worked wonders and by grace, these children can now know Him and His redeeming Love. Praise God!



Hygiene talks have always been one of our top priorities. In educating them the proper way to brushing their teeth and personal hygiene, we equip them with sufficient knowledge to keep themselves safe from harmful disease and sickness that derive from lack of proper hygiene. Catering to their most basic needs like giving out toothpaste and toothbrushes is part of the movement to raise their standards of living.

Delice

Another practical step we took is to delice for the children. In an organized manner, we took turns to shampoo, wash, comb, rinse and finally dry their hair.

The experience was enriching and it allowed us to care for them in the most practical manner. As we rid them of these irksome bugs, we are also given the opportunity to share and talk to them while “servicing” their hair.



Removing these nits and ticks certainly gave us a sense of achievement knowing that at least for this moment, the child is clean and bug free!



Wednesday is officially our last day in Cambodia. We arrived at Pastor Pek's church and spent a wonderful afternoon with the kids there. In the evening, we went to Pastor Pek's house for steamboat dinner.

It was a sumptuous meal and the fellowship meaningful. The orphans at Pastor Pek's place were well mannered and for the first time, the Cambodian children presented a song item for us instead. It was spectacular!

As they sang in English and recited Bible verses, we felt so blessed and loved by their efforts. There was one part where some of the children sang solo. Their singing was so lovely and sincere; it tugged at our heart strings. It was truly a heart warming moment.



Once again, it was time to say our goodbyes. No words could describe our longing for them and truly, only God knows how exactly we felt.

Our journey has finally come to an end, but our love and passion for His people will endure forever. In our hearts, there will always be a special place set aside, only for the people of Cambodia.



Reflections

fears and worries before I embarked on the trip, all fears and worries vanished when I rose up together with the rest of the team to do all we can to meet the needs of the people there.

God showed me that there is so much more love in me than I realized. I always thought I wasn't capable of loving enough. I always felt that I'm somewhat inadequate to give enough. There, I experienced the love of the children ever so freely. They just embraced us so readily and without reserve. That is one lesson I will hold dear to my heart.

These kids really taught me a lesson: To love with the love of Jesus and not be afraid to get hurt. Their love is so abundant and their friendship so sincere, you can't help it but love them the same.

I had great times with the team too! Love their companionship and am thankful for each other's presence.



SICK TO THE STOMACH

By Caroline Wang

Daily, the pain of illness
etch itself into her face.
Patiently suffering, wearing a
permanent
weakness.

Patience turned to despair
when a week had
turned and the pain is
still lingering.

The retching exploded from
bowel into mouth
each retch causes the bowels
to constrict in
pain,
the hot acid refuses to come
out all at once,
in trickles it traces its fiery path
up to the lungs and into the
throat
burning sulphurous
hot coals
like a dragon
spiting out its vomit
but sour pungent
smelly bile
not a purifying fire
but a putrifying rotting -
there is no health.

It lingers on, the smell in the
nose
a stench that brings up
retch upon retch
until the stomach squeezed in
spasms
constricting so hard it
expells all remaining

juices and sour bubbles
into the WC.

It is of no little comfort
when the retching stops
for air is still trapped in the
bowels,
deep within
a distended stomach
hurts
with every touch,
even the rustle of clothing
on skin
hurts.

Oh God, how long must this go
on?

Oh God, when are you taking
this away?

Do I go first or my pain and
suffering?

Lord, you've been this way
before,

for you walked ahead of me,
and now you are beside me,
my Paraclete,
comfort
of comforts.

How will it end?

Only you know
only you care...

I will follow you.

22nd April 2006



Toil Broil

- Charlotte Sam

It's been so tough going for the past few months. Things take a dip where it hurts most. Integrity was no longer in fashion, or may be a non-issue all along. In Hokkien, they say "pai miah", and indeed it has been. Just when I thought my political savvy index has improved within the new organisation I joined, I was proved wrong, and each with quite daunting consequences.

I also observe that in the modern context, flared tempers are not just common; they are evident in those who shout and want to be perceived for their significance, power, control and everything else that makes one look like a few levels above him OR her. Remember Gomez? In an article entitled "The politics of dancing" published by *The Boston Globe* on 1st May 2006, there is this interesting statement that "politics is the great despoiler of all things chaste and delicate and pure." This is how it is in the powerplay of politics in the office where powerful people run the organization and the show. By the way, even perceived significance would suffice in the context of many corporate citizens. "Ordinary" is not in their vocabulary, it's despicable. This reminds me of the Desperate Housewives who, in my opinion, have NO reasons to be desperate ...

Fear Factor, my way

Have you ever felt the days when even the most salt-seasoned and God-sanctified words that come from your mouth somehow don't achieve the desired impact, and occasionally cause backlash. Well, I bore the brunt of it, and have aptly graded each day at work against the Fear Factor scale. Hahaha ...

Some of us (or are there more?) have trouble waking up to go to work. I have trouble sleeping, and my reason for hating to go to work each day is Fear Factor at play. Everyday feels like Monday, and I'm only and truly relieved come Friday evening before the tension builds up

from Saturday night again. It's a horrible, horrible vicious cycle that I hope you don't have to share!

Roller coasting in 2005

Last year proved to be a very challenging year. I was on a job that saw measly single-digit pay raises. Ryan, my older house pet, just transferred to a new school and a totally new way of being educated. If history is repeating itself, I've got to be in Ryan's shoes during 2005. Teachers made complaints and they reached me through all possible means, face-to-face, emails, long phone chats (till the teacher's phone ran out of power, and I could hear her running up the stairs to get it charged), etc. etc.

Ryan was "super". By the end of 2005, he was placed well below the average pupil at school. I said he loved the piano, but his music school then could only offer a cookie-cutter curriculum, and I could see two contrasting attitudes he developed. Piano was the only thing that boosted his morale as it was better than school. Yet piano was becoming boring and would soon become like SCHOOL.

Everyday felt like Monday, and he was only and truly relieved come Friday evening before the tension builds up from Saturday night again. He would cry and spill all his fears about school, the matronly teachers, the ways and instructions of the teachers were summed up in one word: unfathomable. It's a horrible, horrible vicious cycle that I hope your child would not have to share! Even if it happens, you know he/she is not going to turn into a monster ...

It sure did not help that I was very depressed at work, and knew not any better how to help the poor child. Then I went through a brief period in between jobs, and before long, the year ended, but not before a daily pep-talk with Ryan throughout the entire November/December school vacation.

Courage of the little ones

Come 2006, school started, Ryan seemed to have recovered, went back to school a much happier person. I have not heard from or seen the teachers since.

On hindsight, I realized the little ones braved through bad school days or school years. Much as it is difficult to get them out of bed each

weekday, they make it to school without fail each day. This year is my turn, Ryan's history repeating on me – so I must follow the example set by my little ones. After all, I did say that responsibility is not doing what we like, but fulfilling what we have to do.

Trudging on

Life is surely going uphill. The children feel that, and I feel so more. What I am practicing these days is to consciously switch off and space out. I find myself with a book on hand or even an e-book more often than before.

Thanks to the good advice from our knowledgeable veteran, brother Swee Leong, I find muttering breath prayers a good way to reinforce one's faith and hope in the omnipresent God. If you want to know more about breath prayers, do approach brother Swee Leong. One caution though, the more you pray, the "Job's symptoms" seem to be more evident. This should be expected because the more you are drawn to God, Satan would want to be that opposing force.

But remember: even Satan needs God's permission to plant an attack on His child! The One in you is greater than everything else outside you. AMEN!

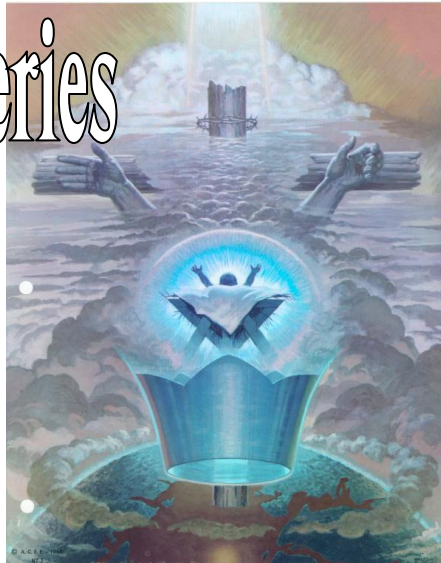
The Bethel Series

Starting on 1st July 2006

If you are interested in all the symbolism in the Da Vinci Code, then the pictures of the Bethel Series contain even more symbolism to whet your appetite.

Come study the 40 or more pictures with all its symbolism and learn the true Bible Code – the history of God's salvation plan for man.

Sign up with any of the Bethel Series teachers or with the church office now.



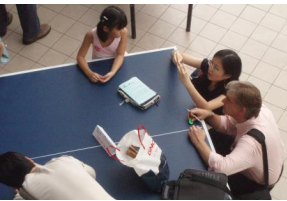
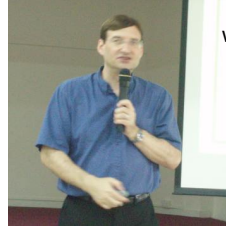
Happenings



April 27 Dr Rick Griffith presented a study on Debunking the Da Vinci Code. The gist of the lesson – Forget the untruths in the Da Vinci Code, Know the Truths in the Holy Bible.

May 20 Dr Dave Geisler started his 3 session study on Conversational Evangelism. Held on Saturdays from 2 to 5 pm at the MPH.

The sessions will end on 3rd June.



May 7 This day was designated as PASTOR'S DAY and JCC celebrated by making our pastor a gigantic card filled with tiny heart shaped messages from the members.



Congratulations

To the family of Florene Saw on her graduation from SBC. The joy she shares with her family is also a joy shared by her extended family - JCC

