

Jurong Christian Church

The Vine Committee

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EDITOR'S WORD

As I ponder what to share, my body is shutting down because I had just taken some flu medication. The weather outside is raining, which is very conducive to sleep but not so if you were living in a low lying area which is prone to floods. I know that Wilfred and Julie are at this moment in Taiwan for holiday and I hope that they are well because the news says that there is an earthquake in Taiwan. Many of our members came back from Malaysia with stories of how dry the weather was over there even though the newspapers reported many areas hit by floods. Could it be that God's protective hand was with them or was it just luck?

There was even some talk of a tsunami hitting the Philippines, where Sabrina Yee is at this moment. Do we worry or do we trust God to turn every event in our lives for our good?

Sometimes we forget to see the good when we see the evil, so much so that we forget to thank God for the good He has done for us. Pastor requested us to write our thanksgiving for The Vine but not many did, only one, and her testimony is inside for your uplifting. What about the thanksgiving stars, I didn't see many? The long and short of it is that whether we write a few lines on a star or a few paragraphs in The Vine, we are not a very thankful people. We can't think of anything to thank God for.

If I ask you right now to thank God for some blessing in your life, I can almost bet that you have nothing to be thankful for. You might start thanking Him for finding you a parking lot, or stopping the rain at the right moment. However, we overlook the Greatest Christmas Gift Ever and forget to thank Him for it.

Martin Cheah



Season's Greetings

*(What season is this, which angels proclaim
with anthems sweet?)*

Next time when you celebrate your birthday, you won't mind friends greeting you "Happy Anniversary!" – right?

Next time when a couple celebrates their wedding anniversary, you greet them, "Hi, Happy Time of Year!" – would you?

Every year, numerous festivals are celebrated in Singapore; such as, Deepavali, Hari Raya Puasa, Chinese New Year, etc. So many festivals, so often we have to labour our mouths to say the different words of greetings! Why not, for economy, simply reduce all greetings to the all-purpose "Selamat Hari Raya"? "Selamat" means "good" as in "Good Night" (Selamat Malam). "Hari Raya" means "a day of festivity". So the full all-purpose greeting literally means "Good Festive Day!" How neat! – We won't go wrong with anybody celebrating a festival even if we do not care to appreciate what the festival is all about. Right?

For the uninformed, the full and meaningful greeting for our Muslim friends celebrating Hari Raya Puasa is "Selamat Hari Raya Aidil Fitri". If we find this a mouthful, especially if we are utterly ignorant of the Malay language while our Malay friends can comprehend English, maybe we can extend the general "Season's Greetings" to our Muslim friends for what is a great season to them. It will be the same "Season's Greetings" to the Chinese during Chinese New Year, to the Indians during Deepavali, to the Christians during Christmas and so forth. Would you buy this suggestion?

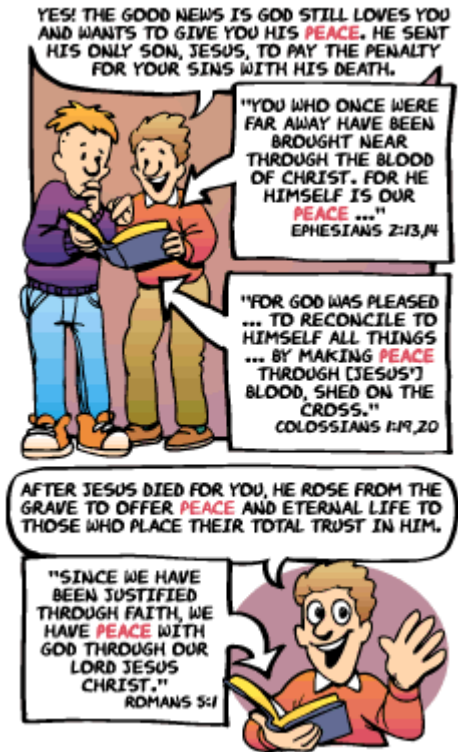
You know what I am driving at. My view is that "Season's Greetings" is not merely short and sweet, but it shows up the greeter's indifference towards appreciating what the season is all about. To some extent, it may speak of the greeter's lack of sincerity for not even bothering to be specific about the season for which he extends his good wishes. (Is it so troublesome to be specific?)

As the carol “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” reverberates merrily through the air this Christmas season (not just any season) and the good news of great joy (Luke 2:8-14) resonates in our joyful hearts, let us be aware of the real spirit of **Christmas**, the real foundation of our festive mood, the real significance of Emmanuel, God with us anywhere, anytime, any circumstance.

Indeed, I am glad that God does not abandon us, no matter how lowly we see ourselves compared to those whom we see sitting on higher and mightier pedestals. Significant is the fact that God chose the lowly shepherds rather than the high kings to break the good news. Recall that God also chose a lowly shepherd (Moses) while he was tending his flock to break the good news about delivering the Israelites from slavery, to a land flowing with milk and honey. (Exodus 3:1-10) There is a notable difference between God’s good news revelation to Moses and to the shepherds in Bethlehem. To Moses, an angel appeared in a burning bush. How awesome! Nevertheless, the good news Moses received (God saving the Israelites from the Egyptians) pales in comparison to the good news of a saviour born to the world (1 Jn 4:14). Hence, in Bethlehem, a burning bush would not be astounding enough to reflect the enormity of the good news. In fact, when the good news of Christ’s birth broke, the heavens burst forth with angels proclaiming the glory to God in the highest. A better reflection of the intensity of wonder of the moment seen in the heavens is in the original title “Hark How All The Welkin [heavens] Rings” of the carol “Hark the Herald Angels Sing”. The original title captures better the heavens in rapturous bliss as the shepherds below, with stupefaction, try to make sense of the breathtaking light of glory.

The whole lot of the Christmas scene (**The First Noël**) – Picture it in our minds! **Can we ignore it?** Unfortunately and sadly, people have been ignoring it, treating Christmas as a shopping festival, an arcane season they don’t care to understand but choose to keep unidentified in their minds, as a myth with Santa Claus descending from the sky on a sleigh, or in accordance with any of their creative imaginations that the real Christmas that is **the** season is banned. No wonder, the true spirit of Christmas (Peace and good will toward men) always seems so elusive. It is not because the spirit is evading us, but that men are evading the spirit by avoiding facing up to the truth and by denying Christ. Men do not possess the humility like

the shepherds do; rather, they exalt their own understanding and standing among people, and show off by their worldly actions that they know better than the “uninspiring” story of **The First Noël**. How then do they expect to gain the favour of whom (the Christ) they deny? On that first Christmas night, the angels did proclaim, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” (Luke 2:14 NIV) Yes, peace to men on whom his favour rests. It is not peace for everybody. Let us all be mindful of our good will towards God; i.e., by obeying His will, by acknowledging the Christ in Christmas, the Holy Child born to be our saviour. May all men heed this! May peace on earth and good will toward men come alive!



Seasons Gr ... OOPS! I mean to wish all a blessed **Christmas** with Christ in **the** season.

John Lee

What does the word "Noel" mean?

There are two schools of thought on this. Some believe that the word comes from the Latin natalis (birthday) and refers to Jesus' birthday. Others believe that it derives from the French nouvelles (news), and so refers to the good news of Christ's birth, which the angels announced on the first Christmas when Christ was born. The second meaning seems to be the way the word is used in most carols, such as the "First Noel," that is, the first proclamation of the good news.

WHAT WE BELIEVE -- MATTERS!

What we believe--matters! What we believe matters because it shapes our understanding of the world as well as influences our life and actions in the world. If the 9/11 hijackers who flew the airplanes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, for example, had not believed what they believed, would they have done what they did? Even if we think their actions were depraved, were they not the result of their faith--a distorted faith, to be sure--but faith nevertheless? And simply because their actions were the result of a misguided or falsely conceived faith does not mean we should dismiss it as an aberration. It needs to be taken seriously--and it needs to be responded to. By the same token, the faith of the 9/11 attackers is not the only example of an ill-conceived use of religious faith.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the 20th century Lutheran theologian, was convinced that "what we believe matters," not only in terms of our church faith and practice but also in relation to our lives in the world. But he was not alone. Luther, too, whose *theologia crucis* [=theology of the cross] was the greatest influence on Bonhoeffer's thinking, found proper belief of such importance that he spelled it out clearly in his explanation to the first commandment in his Large Catechism, which for him was the foundational commandment upon which all the others rested: "A 'god' is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart. As I have often said, it is the trust and faith of the heart alone that make both God and an idol....For these two belong together, faith and God. Anything on which your heart relies and depends, I say, that is really your God." Anything in which we place our faith is our god; likewise, any ideology, not just those limited to religion, can become idolatrous and lead us away from God.

Such an acknowledgment points out that not all expressions of religious faith are necessarily healthy or helpful--nor should they all be accepted at face value. As a matter of fact, such a statement acknowledges the need to discern the true God from all false gods, a true, saving faith from all misguided faiths.

The Confessing Church Struggle in 1930s Germany is one example of such a struggle over the nature of faith and our understanding of God. When Hitler came to power in January 1933, the churches of Germany were confronted with a crisis. On the one hand, many in the church throughout Germany welcomed Hitler's promises of national and moral renewal and the return to traditional values. As a result, they were willing to overlook his inflamed rhetoric, believing it would either pass or could not be taken seriously. On the other hand, there were those who perceived danger ahead for the church that came with any compromise made with Hitler and the Nazi state. Members of the Confessing Church believed that the German Christians, by lending their support to Hitler and integrating Christianity and National Socialism into a racially pure "people's church," were distorting the Gospel. For those in the Confessing Church, the German Christians had

accommodated themselves to the political winds of the day and, as a result, had watered down or in some cases even altered the biblical message.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a leader in the Confessing Church movement from its inception. In place of the German Christian's "positive" Christianity, Bonhoeffer's theological agenda in the 1930s was meant to free the church from the false gods of nationalism and its implicit racism. He saw the Nazi confession of "blood, race, and soil" threatening the church's very life. As he stated at the time, "The question is really whether Germanism or Christianity", "either National Socialism or Christ."

His theology, which follows a continuous trajectory, is a response to that. Drawing on Luther's *theologia crucis*, he was able to offer a clearly articulated critique of National Socialism and the church from a scripturally-informed perspective. But in addition, his words stand as a corrective to any theology that seeks to find a point of contact between the Church's proclamation of the Gospel and any pseudo-religious nationalistic claims.

For example, as a co-writer of the 1933 draft of the Bethel Confession, Bonhoeffer offers a clear alternative to the theology of the German Christians. At its heart, the confession affirms the classic Christian teaching about Jesus: He is the "Son of God and Son of David, true God and true man;" he is "the end and fulfillment of the law," without whom the world would be lost under the wrath of God. He is "through the unbelief and for the sake of all people crucified" (DBW 12: 384). Therefore, Bonhoeffer insists that the church reject all false claims that seek to present Jesus in a "nordic fashion" or his cross as a "general symbol of religiosity or human truth" or "anything whatever."

In response to the German Christians who sought to present Jesus as a "nordic type," Bonhoeffer stresses the Jewishness of Jesus. And rather than accepting the widespread assumption that the Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus, Bonhoeffer, by stressing Jesus' own Jewishness, preferring to call him the "Son of David," concentrates on the sinfulness of all humankind, implicating not the Jews but all people in the death of Jesus. In contrast to any attempt to equate Christ's cross with general religious sentiments, Bonhoeffer says Jesus is the Son of God and Son of David "sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" and his cross is the "unique revelation of God" that brings reconciliation with God.

Three years later, in a 1936 letter to his brother-in-law Rudiger Schleicher, Bonhoeffer writes what is both a confession of faith and summary of his theology. He says: "I know about the God for whom I am searching either out of my own experiences and understanding, from my own interpretation of history or nature, that is, from within myself--or I know about that God on the basis of God's revelation of God's own word. Either I determine the place where I want to find God, or I let God determine the place where God wants to be found. If it is I who says where God is to be found, then I will always find a God there who in some manner corresponds to me, is pleasing to me, who is commensurate with my own

nature. But if it is God who says where God is to be found, then it will probably be a place that is not at all commensurate with my own nature and that does not please me at all. This place, however, is the cross of Jesus....It is not at all a place that we find pleasant or that might be a priori clear, but a place alien to us in every way, a place utterly repugnant to us. But precisely that is the place at which God chose to encounter us." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 14 [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, forthcoming], 146)

Bonhoeffer's theology is an expression of the *theologia crucis* in that everything we know about God we know in and through Jesus Christ. And the key to understanding Jesus Christ for us lies in the cross. At the cross all human schemes and plans are brought to naught. No longer can it be assumed that we can work our way to God. The cross is a clear indictment that we can no longer even try. What is quite clear in the cross is that this is God's way to us. If we want to find God, we must go to where God has chosen to place himself.

By contrast, religion in America, from conservative to liberal, evangelical to mainline protestant, is quite often based on a god of our own choosing, one who affirms us, and one who promotes triumphalism both in the church and society. Such a faith is by-and-large a *theologia gloriae* [=theology of glory. Luther's term for the opposite of theology of the cross], shaped more by a god that reflects ourselves than by the God revealed in scripture. Unfortunately, far too often the god we invoke is usually that of a god who mirrors our values, affirms our positions, and justifies our actions. The problem with such a religion is the assumption that God is on our side, that God confirms us in our goodness.

In many respects, much of what passes for religion in America today is the extension of the marketplace; we preach what sells, we give people what they want. What better security can the government provide than to wed religious language to the political agenda, for it certainly can lead to a "God is on our side" mentality and that we are doing the right thing. It lends justification to our form of violence, giving us the ammunition to perpetuate injustices in the name of national interest, which happens to be good for the world as well. The problems we are facing have nothing to do with us. The problem is out there, coming from others who are threatening our "God-given" way of life. Perhaps when political leaders enlist God to bless America or insist that God is on our side, they are referring to a god of their own choosing.

So it is that while many praise the return of religion in both the public and private spheres, Bonhoeffer provides a word of warning: not everything that passes as religion is equally the same--nor is it all good. In the same way that Nazi ideology worked its way into the language of the church and was embraced by the church because of its pledge to restore traditional values, today's religious language, both in the church and in society, can just as easily be promoting a false god. Religion, when falsely interpreted, can be a harmful element in society. When religion is

informed by factors other than scripture, it can lead to idolatry--worshiping a god of one's own creation.

Granted, 21st century America is not Nazi Germany. At the same time, however, we should be alarmed when we witness the welcome admixture of patriotism and religious fervor, all meant to support America's vision of the world. We have infused a wide stream of images and ideas into our concept of the Christian faith, some of which have no real foundation in the tradition, but are popular conceptions imposed on it. Bonhoeffer, on the other hand, engages modern culture, but does not want to relinquish the agenda to the world. He wants to keep it in the hands of God.

And so Bonhoeffer rejected both the claims of the German Christians and the Nazi leadership because they proclaimed a different Christ, the idea of a Christ who restores the fortunes and glory of the Reich; at the same time, he did not retreat into pietistic individualism, in which Christ is seen as the source of happiness and security. In their place, Bonhoeffer clung to and proclaimed only the biblical Christ, who came into the world in weakness and who was rejected, suffered and died for the sake of the world. This was not to leave the world as it was, but to call into question all human aspirations, which in our modern world are a part of our fallen humanity, to stand in the place of God.

The public square indeed is not naked, but it is not necessarily Christian either. There is a virtual smorgasbord of religious choices available to any discerning believer, so that one is bound to find a religion or God of one's own liking. As Christianity competes with other religions for people's faith, many of these beliefs are filtering into the Christian worldview; if this continues, the face of Christianity will be changed. In such a context, Bonhoeffer's argument proves helpful. Be it by Nazi ideology or secular religiosity, new elements can be inserted into the church's message that will eventually change the Gospel. By drawing a clear distinction between Christianity and religion, Bonhoeffer notes that real differences exist between religious claims and, therefore, we cannot simply pick-and-choose the elements we want. To do so creates a religion of our own liking, and one that is no longer Christian. In a context where nearly one quarter of American Christians believe in reincarnation, the Christian message is threatened today as much as it was by Nazi ideology yesterday.

Perhaps we get a glimpse of Bonhoeffer's theology addressing the American context in Eberhard Bethge's reflections on his own experience in America. Eberhard Bethge recalls a surprising experience of visiting Jerry Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, VA, in the early 1980s. He says that Falwell, in his sermon, indicated that they were doing battle with secular humanism and all the other godless forces at work in America. This was what he had expected to hear, so that was not surprising. The surprise came as they were leaving; an usher approached him and handed him two badges for his lapel. One was a cross that had "Jesus First" emblazoned on it; the other was an American flag. In recalling

this experience, Bethge said: "I could not help but think of myself in Germany in 1933. That was exactly what we believed for some time in German terms: on the one hand our nation's proud renewal, to which we wanted to devote our energy and time, and to make sacrifices, if need be; on the other hand, to Jesus Christ at the same time. Why not that relation and that equation? Then I remembered that slow and bitter revelation how in the interpretation, even in that 'Jesus First,' the flag in fact became the guiding force. Of course, Christ, but a German Christ; of course 'Jesus First,' but an American Jesus! And so to the long history of faith and of its executors another chapter is being added of a mixed image of Christ..." (Eberhard Bethge, "A Visit to Thomas Road Church," *The Wild Goose* (1:2), July, 1990, 15-16).

For him, the message could not have been more clear. From his experience of Germany in the 1930s and '40s, whenever the cross and the flag are put together, the flag always wins.

History has taught us that there is a real danger in wedding religious faith to any political ideology or cause. Inevitably religion will end up being used to validate one's political stance or somehow or other be placed in the service of the emperor rather than speaking God's word, which is both law and gospel. And when that happens, the church easily sacrifices speaking God's word; it becomes difficult for the church to be a critical voice.

As I reflect on the use of Bonhoeffer's theology to address contemporary America, I cannot help but be drawn to Luther's own stating of the problem in the 16th century: "a theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is." (LW 31, 53). If there is a theological statement that speaks directly to our context, this may surely be it.

While we cannot claim to know what Bonhoeffer would say today, as a student of Martin Luther, we know that he would be honest and "call the thing what it actually is." He would not refrain from speaking out when nationalism is portrayed as faith or wedded to religious beliefs. He would not compromise on "Christ alone" as the foundation and center of our faith--and would not shy away from pointing to those preaching some admixture of "Gospel and...." as proclaiming a different Gospel. He would do that because what we believe matters.

H. Gaylon Barker
Ridgefield, CT

(Gaylon is parish pastor at Zion Lutheran Church in Stamford, Connecticut, Adjunct Prof at Molloy College (Rockville Center NY), board member of the International Bonhoeffer Society and editor for the English language edition of Bonhoeffer's works).

God knows my pain

When cancer came crashing into my life on 21st April 2006, I was numbed with disbelief. To say that I was in a state of shock is an understatement. After all, cancer happens to other people, this goes to show how ignorant I am. I felt as if I was given a death penalty at the age of 40.

I know that deep inside me I need to cling on to God's promises and His love to go through this battle. With God as the chief commander and armed with all the prayer support from family, Church and friends, I went through triathlon, meaning from surgery to chemotherapy to radiation. On the surgery table, I was trembling with fear and could only recite Psalm 23 to calm myself. Following a speedy recovery, I went through 8 cycles of Chemo. I felt really sick. Nauseating, vomiting, bone and muscle aching were some side effects that I experienced. However, God's grace is always sufficient and instead of taking away the thorns, He literally carried me through each cycle holding me in His palm. He helped me to surrender my husband and kids to him, to trust Him as they belong to Him. God knows my pain and hurts for he too, did not exempt himself from suffering when he was hung upon that cross. Though outwardly, I may be wasting away, inwardly He renews day by day.

I have learnt that in life, no one can lift me from the deepest despair like Christ. There is no pit so deep that Christ's love is not deeper still. No matter how unfavorable the situation seemed, God is always there, he has never left us. Whenever I fear, it leads to doubt and eventually losing faith. Like Peter, who looked at the storm, begin to sink when he walk on water to Jesus. Jesus did not allow him to sink but saved him. Each time the nurse is unable to find a vein to poke, the countless sleepless nights and emotional struggles, Christ revealed himself through little miracles of love in action by people around me supporting me in this journey. A favorite verse from the bible also encouraged my confidence: "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

When one have cancer, it's like the whole family having it. Kin Cheong, in sickness and in health, walked with me through this journey. His bravery and uncomplaining attitude make me feel ashamed if I were to give up at any stage of the treatment. With trust and focus on God, all he have been through with me and the situation at work made him strong beyond his years and tolerant of the many acts in life that usually elicit anger. He described it as his defining moments in his spiritual journey. By October, God honored him with a job that allows him to spend more quality time with family. For Amos and Bernice, they have seen their prayers answered as they plead with God for their mother's life. They learnt that difficulties last for a brief period, then things get better. My family suffered more than I did. But I know that God has and is using all this for good in their lives.

Truly it is by the grace of God I have completed all treatments. I attribute this to the prayers of friends and family who were appealing my case before the Creator, with a strong conviction that God has complete authority over each person's life. I would like to thank my family and all of you for coming to my side and strengthening my weak knees. Thanks for not giving up on me and taking care of me when I really needed it. And most importantly, thanks be to God who is faithful, true to His word, forgiving, merciful and who has proven that He will never leave me.

All Glory Be To God
Poh Kiat



My Christmas greetings to our brothers and sisters in JCC, May the blessings of Christmas be yours during this holiday season and throughout the coming year
*.....Merry Christmas and Happy
New Year*

Sai Kong (in Doha)



The Best *Christ*





mas Gift Ever



5. SERMON

Message by Rev. Samuel Sia
Interpreted by Dr Chew Soon Ho

Dec 23, 2006

Organizer:

Thomas Tan

Speaker:

Rev Samuel Sia



MAKING NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS, READ THIS FIRST



Swee Leong recommended and lent me the book “HALF TIME” by Bob Buford – 192 pages in all, not too thick and also not too tough to chew on. He said that the book is good, and I surmised his other agenda for lending it to me when, once the

book was in my hand, he left me with a parting shot, “Read it ... you may want to write a review for the Vine...” Well, after having read the book, I have to agree with him that it is a good book and now it is my turn to recommend it to you. Borrow it from him quick and ... hmm ... please help me to write the review. ☺ What I am writing now is not exactly a review, because I don’t want you to read the review and then give up reading the book thinking that you have enough of it. No review in its brevity can do justice to the book. Here, let me just share some thoughts that have been triggered in my mind by my reading. As an appetizer to start you off on the book, let me quote from its back cover for an introduction on what it is about:

“Bob Buford believes the second half of your life can be better than the first. Much better. But first, you need time to figure out what you want to do with the rest of your life. In *Halftime*, Buford focuses on this important time of transition – the time when ... a person moves beyond the first half of the game of life. It’s halftime, a time of revitalization. A time for catching new vision for living the second, most rewarding half of life.”

The word ‘half’ denotes a central point, a middle position.

People talk about middle-age, mid-life crisis and the like when they ponder about their life’s journey. Of course, the middle stage of our lives needs not necessarily be in a crisis state; it may well be a very positive experience of leaps we make in our career or of fresh vivacity in

our miscellaneous endeavours as we apply the wisdom of half a life that we have traversed. No regrets, but a sanguine outlook.

But when exactly is the halftime point? Literally, if you estimate yourself to live up to 80 years old, then your halftime is at age 40. You know why people in their 40's are usually considered to be in their middle age? (Don't confuse this with The Middle Age.☺) If this figure is arrived at by considering the supposed statistical average life span of people, you know that it may unsurprisingly not apply to you. More and more people are becoming nonagenarians or even centenarians. Sadly also, more and more people because of adverse health – no thanks to human irresponsibility towards the living environment – are having their literal “middle age” in the 20's or even younger as they bid farewell to the world early.

It is not really important the exact literal middle of our life. What is recognized is that every one of us does have moments of pausing and contemplating at different points of time. Ambitions fulfilled or unfulfilled; hopes satisfied, dashed or in anticipation; old plans discarded and new plans made – All this occupies hours in ruminations and forward dreams, but where does it all lead us to? Our future destination remains fuzzy and the only sure thing is that we will become wiser on hindsight. Hindsight is good if it helps to sharpen our foresight. Hence, if our times of pausing and contemplation of how we have lived our lives thus far and of what we would look forward to is taken as figuratively represented by the halftime in a game (of soccer, for example) when players ponder the scores and re-strategize for better gains after a brief time-out, then the hindsight of what we have done right or wrong in the first half may suitably illuminates our path for the second half of our journey. Counting our halftime as up to now, a well-lived second half built upon the valuable hindsight derived from the first half may just enhance our lives and extend them meaningfully. And so our ‘halftime’ becomes continually pushed forward to each successive future point we pause and contemplate, and we end up living long and fruitful lives.

It is common knowledge that there are people who don't want to live long. They have such negative sentiments towards life because they are living poorly. They surrender in hopelessness. There are Christians

who “live life to the fullest” in physical indulgence and spiritual dissipation because they never bother with any halftime. In their outlook, there is no time to pause, no time-out, for a well thought-out transition to life’s greater fortunes more than what material riches and busyness can buy. They drag their lives on a journey on and on without any sense of direction, just being pushed and pulled by frail humanity’s impulses. They can benefit much from this inspiring book, “HALF TIME” by Bob Buford.

It is not my intention to write more, to replace the book with what I write. The book, with its chapter-by-chapter discussion guides, is also good for those who enjoy studying and learning together. It is well organized into three parts: The First Half, Halftime and The Second Half.

It comes to my mind that “half” also denotes partiality or “semi”. If you do something halfway, it does not mean that you have done exactly half your work. So halftime is a point for us to be aware that we have yet to complete our life’s course, not necessarily that we are at the halfway mark of our semi-complete experience of the fullness that God has in store for us.

Now, run to Swee Leong for the book. Don’t forget to help me write the review.

John Lee

DIALECT MINISTRY CAROLLING

On 16 Dec, the Dialect Ministry made it way to sing Christmas carols at a local institution. Bro. Peter Cheong was very encouraged by this experience that he came up to share his testimony.

The organizers were very grateful for all our support and presented a token of appreciation to JCC. Many of those who went can’t wait for another opportunity to serve in this ministry, if time permits.



SEEING MONEY CAN CHANGE BEHAVIOR

By Randolph E. Schmid, AP Science Writer

Study Demonstrates That Showing People Money Can Change Their Behavior

WASHINGTON (AP) -- "Show me the money," demanded Cuba Gooding Jr., in the movie "Jerry McGuire." He meant pay me the money, of course, but it turns out that merely showing it to people can change their behavior.



Kathleen Vohs, assistant professor of marketing at the University of Minnesota, and colleagues, conducted a series of nine experiments in which people were asked to do puzzles or other tasks and the behavior of people exposed to money was compared to others who were not prompted to think about it.

The two groups acted differently, the researchers report. "The mere presence of money changes people," Vohs said. "The effect can be negative, it can be positive. Exposure to money, or the concept of money, elevates a sense of self-sufficiency," and can make people less social.

For example, she said, a student with little money who wants to move to a new apartment gets a bunch of friends together and they have a few laughs along the way. But once they get a good job they hire a mover. That may be more efficient, but they lose out on some personal moments, she explained in a telephone interview.

"The underlying idea is that at some point early on in human evolution everyone probably needed someone else to help them achieve their goals," whether building a home or catching food. Eventually systems of exchange came along, and then money, which could be exchanged for things, allowing people to pursue their own aims without the aid of others. So, over time, people with money didn't need other people so much.

In an experiment 44 students at Florida State University were each given \$2 in quarters -- which they were told was leftover from a previous experiment -- and asked to unscramble sentences that divided them into two groups, one that was reminded of money by the sentence and others that were not.

When they left, the researcher noted that there was a box by the door for donations for needy students if they wanted to chip in, but they didn't have to.

On average, students who had read neutral sentences donated \$1.34 while those whose sentences reminded them of money kept more for themselves, giving an average of just 77 cents.

The experiments indicate that even quite trivial exposure to money changes peoples' goals and behavior, Carole B. Burgoyne and Stephen E. G. Lee of the University of Exeter in England said in a commentary on the paper.

"Subjects exposed to the idea of money subsequently show more self-reliant but also a more self-centered approach to problem-solving than subjects exposed to neutral concepts," said Lee and Burgoyne, who were not part of Vohs research team.

John D. Rockefeller was one of the wealthiest men who ever lived. After he died someone asked his accountant, "How much money did John D. leave?" The reply was classic: "He left ... all of it."

Thanksgiving

FOR IN EVERTHING GIVE
THANKS!!!!

We join in and welcome on board the
newly baptized JCC Members.....

Also we rejoice that in season or out,
our young ones can also avail
themselves to PRESENT the BEST
CHRISTmas Gift...to ALL..



Tony Koh



Anthony, Jim, Swee Leong and Peh Ping went to Cambodia on a mission trip recently. Few of us may be aware that before the trip, Anthony sprained his ankle and was limping. Thank God he went to Cambodia limping but came back healed.

I am sure he must have worried about going to Cambodia with all the land mines around and come back limping.

A Modern Interpretation of Ecclesiastes 5:10-15

¹⁰ Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.

¹¹ As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them?

¹² The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep.

¹³ I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner,

¹⁴ or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him.

¹⁵ Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs.

He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand.

The more you have the more you want; the more you have, the less you're satisfied.

The more you have, the more people (government also) will come after it. The more you have, the more you realize it does you no good.

The more you have, the more you have to worry about it.

The more you have, the more you can hurt yourself by holding on to it.

The more you have, the more you have to lose.

The more you have, the more you'll leave behind.

The above translation comes from a book, THE TREASURE PRINCIPLE by Randy Alcorn. What is the Treasure Principle? Simply put, it is this:

**YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU –
BUT YOU CAN SEND IT ON AHEAD.**

It is a very simple book to read and you do not need to have a head for figures to figure it out. You can borrow this book from Swee Leong when I return it to him.

Martin Cheah

BAPTISMS DEC 24, 2006



Li Xiang, Travis Hwang, Jessica Hwang and Samantha Chin were baptized by pouring while Margaret Lim was baptized by sprinkling. The amount of water used is not the issue, as emphasized by Pastor Samuel. I remember a nurse telling us there were 2 types of soap for washing your hands. One type of soap requires a lot of water to rinse it away and the other type of soap need not be rinsed away. Both are supposed to do the job of killing the germs as effectively.

One thing I will miss is the time I spent with Patrick as he dutifully waited for his wife, Samantha as she went through the Baptism classes every Sunday. I hope he will join us for the Christianity Explored course coming up in March 2007.



On the days before Christmas there was a lot of water dropping on us. Some parts of Singapore were flooded. However, thanks be to God, on the days that mattered, ie 23rd, when we had our Christmas celebration, 24th, when Orchard Road had its celebration and even on the 25th, which was Christmas day itself, the rain stopped falling. Apparently, this phenomenon was noticed by some people, it was mentioned in the newspapers and my non-Christian colleague also pointed it out to me. Were you sensitive enough to notice it or did you brush it off as merely coincidence?

Martin Cheah