

The Vine

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Editor's Word

Have you given thought about where you are working or living or playing golf at? Do you ever wonder why God placed you there? Yours is a purpose driven life, not your purpose but God's purpose for you.

Wong Mui gave a presentation on being an insider in a place where the church cannot reach but the insider can make the difference.

However, sometimes we confuse our role of insider as that of an undercover cop. Nobody around us knows we are Christians. We assimilate with the environment like a chameleon, thus we hide away our Christian values during the weekdays. To our colleagues we may just as well be one of them, drinking and carousing like all of them.

How do we dare to be different? Frankly, you have to be like the Muslim. No one in their right minds would offer a Muslim, pork. Neither would you ask

them to join you for lunch during their fasting month.

Even organizations specially cater to the needs of their Muslim employees. Why then do Christians not get similar preferential treatment? Possibly because we adapt ourselves well to all environments that no one even bother to consider our taboos. In fact, if I don't drink, my colleagues will make a fuss but not so if a Muslim colleague avoid the drink.

How then do you make an impact as an insider? Frankly, I don't think it is by completely disengaging from your colleagues. If so, Jesus would not be able to live among us sinners. In my case, I work among gamblers but they know my stand on this matter. I do not join them in their 4D, Toto, or other games of chance. I still attend their parties and celebrations but not to gamble. They have learnt to accept that I do not drink more than a glass or two of beer just to socialize, without getting drunk.

This acceptance has led them to accept an invitation to celebrate Christmas with me without any gambling and only limited drinking. Pray that indeed I will know how to entertain them in a Christian fashion.

Martin Cheah

My Testimony and Thankfulness



I am 67 years old. Before my retirement 12 years ago, I was a primary school Chinese Language teacher in Malaysia. From young till my graduation from secondary school, I was an atheist. This was perhaps due to the influence of my parents. They were both orphans who emigrated from China at a young age. They toiled for their livelihood, and therefore had no time for religion. My mother just followed tradition in her involvement with ancestral worship during Chinese New Year eve, Ching Ming Festival and the lunar seventh month. The family altar had two levels – On the upper level was placed only the ancestral tablets, without any idols; at the bottom level was placed only another wooden tablet with the inscription of the earth deity.

I studied in a pure Chinese secondary school and was greatly influenced by Confucian teachings. Regarding ghosts and gods, Confucius once taught his pupils, “If you believe it, then there is; but if you don’t, then there isn’t.” He further asserted, “Respect ghosts and gods, but be far away from them.” Confucius lived about 2500 years ago. It may be said that he was a great man of atheism. He never wanted to talk about life and death, avoiding the issue by asking, “If we do not yet know about life, how can we know about death?” Of life, death and spiritual things, the philosophy of the Sage left a deep impression in my heart. Later, I read about Darwin’s theory of evolution. According to Darwin, the Sun, Earth and the other planets in the Solar System arose out of a Big Bang in the universe. At first, the Earth only comprised land and sea. In the sea were many micro-organisms. These micro-organisms went through many generations of evolution to gradually become animals and plants. Some aquatic animals migrated to land and further evolved into the land animals like the elephants, tigers, gorillas, apes, etc. Man as a result evolved from the apes. I was led to believe such a theory without ever doubting its validity. I also came upon various other religious literature telling me that all matter in the

universe, including the origin of the Earth, all the animals, plants and minerals, came about by the agglomeration of disparate matter as they were destined to mass together, helped by chance, to become this or that. This origin theory deepened further my atheistic conviction.

However, the specious theories were very quickly knocked down by creationists. If the Solar System in fact arose out of a big bang, would all the planets as the products of an explosion be so orderly in revolving around the Sun with perfect timing and not crashing into one another? Furthermore, scientists have discovered that apart from our Solar System, there are many bigger solar systems in the universe. Definitely, they could not have been naturally formed by a sudden explosion! The universe is indeed infinite in size, so large that no man can fathom. If there is no creator behind, could the universe have been formed? If man really evolved from the apes and gorillas, why is it that after millions of years, today's apes remain as apes and gorillas remain as gorillas? As another example, if we gather all the parts needed to build a car, would the parts automatically come together to form the complete car without the involvement of human labour? Obviously, the origin theory cannot hold water.

When I was in my 40's, I read some Christian books and the Bible. I began to understand the creation theory and my confidence about atheism, evolutionism and the origin theory became shaky. Then I started to believe that there is God. Surely, this world had a creator – God, who built this world with great ingenuity. Look at the structure of our body – with brain, heart, lungs, red blood cells, white blood cells, blood platelets, etc., each part performing its functions with nary a bit of confusion. Besides, God made man in His image and gave man his soul which is distinct from other creatures, thus allowing man to have dominion over the other creatures. All this is absolutely believable.

Due to the messing by Satan, who tried to put a divide between man and God, man at times holds doubts about God's existence. After accepting Christ, I discovered a lot of miracles in the Bible, such as Jesus' feeding of the 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish, letting the blind see, healing the lame, raising the dead, ... Jesus himself was nailed to the Cross, and rose again on the third day. I was actually a bit unsure whether to believe them or not.

I told myself that I would only believe in miracles if one happens on me. God is great. He is omnipotent. He knows every person's thoughts and will, at the appropriate time, wield His authority to manifest His power.

At about 8 p.m. on the 8th of July 2007, I suffered a serious heart attack while singing karaoke in a community club. According to Singapore medical statistics, the survival rate for a serious heart attack is 3%, which means that 97% of victims die. This time that I was able to be saved must be due to God's care, God's miracle. Recalling the time I was sent to NUH, the attending doctor told me that three of my major heart arteries were severely blocked and in spasms, about to go dead. It was fortunate that electric shock was given just in time for me to escape from the valley of the shadow of death. Thank the Lord! This is God's will. He does not want me to leave for my heavenly home too soon, because He still needs me to spread the Gospel in this world. After all, only 8% of people in the world today believe in Christ; 92% are souls awaiting salvation!

My heart attack led me to deeply experience the support of all the brothers and sisters in Christ in Jurong Christian Church (both English and Chinese congregations) – in prayers, visitations, financial help, contributions of fruits and medicinal items – enabling me to recuperate speedily. I shall never forget your love. When I was in intensive care just waking up after my heart bypass surgery, my whole body was covered with tubes, my mind was a blank and I was filled with fear. A sister in Christ, Mdm Margaret, prayed for me and sang many hymns. It was a great comfort to me.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter in what form your care and concern takes, you have amply demonstrated your great love. The greatest of all love is God's love. 1 John 4:7-8 says, "Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." Finally, let me express my thankfulness to God again: Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah! Amen.

*Loh Keong Choong

**Loh Keong Choong is Pstr Anthony Loh's father. He wrote the testimony in Chinese, translated into English by John Lee.*

Do you know how long you will live?

(Will you live past 85 or 100 years?)

According to mortality statistics, women live longer lives than men. This is why when women buy annuities at the same time as men of similar age, the monthly payments they get are less than what the men get; and when they buy life insurance, their premiums are also lower.

More women than men live past 100 years of age. The latest in longevity news is a U.S. billionaire philanthropist, Mrs Brooke Astor, who kicked the bucket on the 13th last month at the age of 105. Here are some more examples of persons, predominantly women, who lived way past the century mark:



2007 – Yone Minagawa died at the age of 114 in Japan. She enjoyed eating sweets, and had attributed her longevity to eating well and getting a good night's sleep.

2006 – Elizabeth "Lizzie" Bolden died in America at the age of 116.

2005 – Hendrikje van Andel-Schipper, a Dutch woman, died at the age of 115. She attributed her longevity to eating a herring a day.

2002 – Antonio Todde, an Italian man, left this world just short of 113 years of age.

1997 – Jeanne Calment died in France at the age of 122. She had attributed her longevity to Port wine, a diet rich in olive oil, and her sense of humour.

Despite the longevity difference between men and women, they have one thing in common – a time must come sooner or later when they have to bid farewell to this world. Even if disease or accident does not strike, physical frailty will gradually climax to a peaceful and permanent sleep.

Some people are not happy to live long while there are also people who are fervent in search of secrets for longevity. The latter may wish to try the olive oil diet of Jeanne Calment or the a-herring-a-day ‘secret’ of Hendrikje van Andel-Schipper. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee. When it is time to go, there can be no argument. The decision on the time does not rest in us:

“Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’” (James 4:13-15)

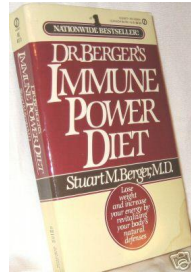
Conventional wisdom is that if we keep our body fit and healthy by eating well (choosing organic food instead of chemicals-laced junk food) and exercising well, we will have a better chance of long life. I don’t argue with that. Nevertheless, a generally better chance still does not offer the certainty of reaching any specific target of hope one may have for himself – 80 ... 90 ... 100 ... years of age. A fitness buff who exercises regularly and has healthy eating habits suddenly dies of a heart attack, ironically while exercising. How often have you heard this kind of sad news?

Proverbs 27:1 says, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.” This caution should have been drummed into the late J. I. Rodale and Dr. Stuart Berger:

- Rodale was a magazine publisher and a passionate advocate of organic farming and alternative health. At age 72, he predicted that he would live up to 100. After that boast, he made another one while being interviewed for a television programme – that his bones were as strong as ever. The greatest shocker was that he went to sleep (literally!) right in the midst of the interview, never waking up. He had died of a heart attack silently!



- In the best-selling health-advice book, *Dr. Berger's Immune Power Diet*, the doctor promoted a fantastic diet, the secret to youthfulness, promising that anyone following his advice would have long life. Most likely, he followed his own advice to his death at the “long-life” age of 40 – in his sleep!



We should know better than to boast and brag like Rodale and Berger. The instruction from the Bible is that instead of such boasting, which is evil, we should know the good we ought to do and just do it. (James 4:16-17) Do it now, not tomorrow, because tomorrow may just not come.

Let it remain forever a mystery to every person when it is his/her time to go. The Psalmist says, “But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, ‘You are my God. My times are in your hands ...’” (Ps 31:14-15) Yet, despite not knowing in advance the day or the hour that the Lord will call us home, we can still keep ourselves mentally alert till the end like what Hendrikje, the Dutch woman, did. She lived a fruitful life till the end and she parted with this world peacefully with these confident words, “It's been nice, but the man upstairs says it's time to go.”

John Lee

JIM LEE – FULL TIME CHURCH WORKER

16 Sep 2007 – The installation of bro Jim Lee as a church worker was conducted by Rev Martin Yee. Jim completed 4 years of full time theological study in SBC and is now an employee of JCC.

Let's give him our support and prayers.



Evan Almighty

I went to watch Evan Almighty thinking that it would be similar to Bruce Almighty, but to my surprise, it was quite a clean movie where people did not speak in vulgarities.

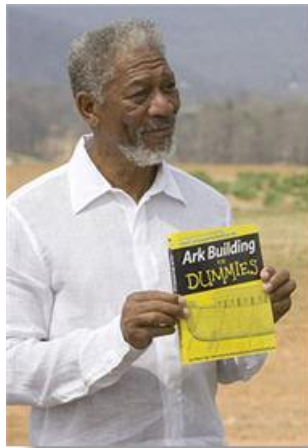
Here are some reviews from the Internet:

My understanding is that the Producer is an evangelical Christian, who had to agree to some questionable stuff in Bruce Almighty, but with its success, was able to make the family film he wanted to this time.

In one particularly poignant exchange between God and Evan, God asks him if he thinks when you pray and ask God for patience, does God give you patience, or puts you in a situation where you learn patience. If someone asks for courage, does God give them courage or put them in a situation where they can become courageous? Does God give you family togetherness, or does he put you in a situation where you pull together as a family? I thought these observations were right on the money, and probably ideas the general non-Christian viewing public has perhaps not even thought of before.

Although it is not a Biblical film, it does give some good insight on what Noah must have gone through when he obeyed God's command to build an ark. The doubting and the ridicule that Noah must have gone through were comically portrayed in the movie.

There were some insider jokes which you might miss, eg the wife's name was Joan (of arc, get it?), or a movie marquee, "The 40 year old virgin Mary" (a reference to the lead actor's previous hit movie). Anyway, watch the movie for good clean family fun. It's been a long time since movies have been this way.



Mission Month

Sep 2007 – Mission Month kicked off with our guest speaker, Mr Ken Chua, of Kairos course fame. He just completed the Kairos course for a group of about 30 people from JCC.



His message was on a change of focus or heart. Is Christ the centre of our heart, or is it our career or family?

The next speaker was Mr John Lim from WEC and following was Dr Rev William Chang. Although the Mission Committee had only planned a two-week mission focus, God provided us with 4 speakers, which allowed us to have a full month of mission focused sermons.



Besides just the sermons, the Mission Committee lined up with LCS to organize **The Journey**, a mission based experience. This was held at LCOR and although 12 members from JCC English signed up for the event, only 2 turned up. If we always relate JCC's 40th Anniversary with the Israelites 40 years of wandering, then I can imagine how we can relate the 2 people who turned up for The Journey as the 2 spies that went through the land of Canaan. I hope at least one of them will write his experience for us to read.



One of the initiatives the Mission Committee came up with was learn to speak Cambodian campaign. Hopefully, we will raise awareness of our Cambodia Mission plans and also encourage more people to try out what they have learnt in the mission field itself. For those who prefer to learn at a faster pace, you can go to this link:



<http://www.bongthom.com/akonline/phrasespageek.asp?pNum=4>

The coming mission trip to Cambodia is planned from the 4 to 13 December 2007. Sign up with Jim Lee if you feel called. Don't be like Jonah who fled from the call and ended up in the belly of a big fish. As in the case of Evan Almighty, when God calls, you can't run away.

SO YOU FEAR BEING THE CHURCH TREASURER

Every 2 to 3 years, JCC gives every member a chance to step into the role of the Church Treasurer. If you are the one who controls the purse in the home, than you are the one for the job. Obviously, if you work as an Accountant or Auditor in your worldly work, that qualifies you also.

What is the role of a Church Treasurer? Let me summarize for you from an extract I took out of the Internet:

The Person

As Church Treasurer you will have a very rewarding and satisfying job: you may already be familiar with accounts, but even if you are not you may discover that the tasks are not nearly as daunting as you may have imagined.

You have been asked to become the Church Treasurer for the qualities of honesty and integrity that others have recognised in you.

Yes it helps if you

- have an organised approach to work, a tidy mind and can think logically.
- are willing to learn and are not afraid to ask for help.
- have experience of clerical work.

The job involves you in every part of the life of the local church, gives you many opportunities to put your faith into practice as you advise on giving or on giving away or on choosing priorities for use of the church funds. You will be surprised how the members of the Church Council will be prepared to listen to you.

The Job

1. Has the responsibility for ensuring collection of all Church income,
2. To pay all expenses as authorised by the Church Council.
3. To report in compliance with the Charities Act and to provide an annual statement of receipts and payments and a statement of assets and liabilities for the Church Council and AGM.
4. To prepare a budget and enable the Church to have a sound financial policy.
5. To keep up-to-date with the ever changing CPF rules

The Method

You will soon find that the less you do in cash the easier it will be for you. Pay everything into the bank and make out cheques for everything and insist that this is the way you prefer to do it.

You may find it useful to carry a small notebook with you at all times. In this you will record all those small sums which are handed to you whenever you are at the church and which you can so easily forget about if they are not recorded: flower money, use of the halls money, magazine money etc.

Write them in your notebook and give the person concerned a receipt. The independent auditor of the accounts will require you to produce receipts/ vouchers for all payments made in cash.

Enter up all financial transactions in your cashbook or ledger as soon as possible.

The Budget

Before the end of the financial year the congregation is expecting some indication of the income and expenditure for the year and the outlook for the coming year. Budgeting is intelligent guesswork - based on what you already know. If the Church plans new work or outreach any cost implications of this need to be included.

When drawing up the expenses in the budget be cautious and make sure that you allow fully for all expenditure that can be foreseen and then, after budgeting for known income (rentals, etc.) challenge the congregation to meet the rest by their giving.

So how many of you buy shares and are able to read the prospectus which attracted you to invest in that share? How many of you are qualified accountants? How many of you are working as accountants or auditors? How many of you are able to read a bank statement? How many are able to decide whether to buy a car or not? As many as are able to do these, they are eligible for the Church Treasurer's position.

Now is the time to stand up and be counted. Let's make a statement (accounts, of course) for Christ and for JCC. Let's say, "Count on me, JCC!" We are all accountable for our choices.

The Editor

PULSE FOOD FAIR

On 16th September 2007, the youths had a food fair to raise funds for the upcoming December Pulse Camp.

The youths had a good and fun time fellowshiping with one another in both the production and selling of the food. Through this food fair, we've raised a total of \$742.20 and we would really like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support.

Zheng Lin

