



## Jurong Christian Church

The Vine Committee

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## Editor's Word

Have you wondered how the Editor manages to get the inspiration to write his word month after month and now every two months once?

Many regular writers have stopped

contributing to The Vine and some who promised to write never managed to do so. Surely, it is not the lack of command over the English language but I believe that the inspiration to write was not there for them.

I am **not** referring to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit less I be grouped together with the Gospel writers. I am just referring to human inspiration. For instance, in the last issue, the inspiration came when the newspapers wrote about the anniversary of the tearing down of the Berlin Wall. I finish my word in November although the issue only came out in December.

Most of my inspiration actually come from the newspapers as I try to tie what is happening in the world to what may be happening in the church and try to achieve a kind of relevance to the article, making it as up to date as possible. For instance I may try to tie what is happening in the world currently, wars, earthquakes, etc to Matthew 24, or maybe tell the story of how my car was bumped in the rear but while trying to talk to the Hokkien speaking driver of the other car, the bumper suddenly popped back into shape. Why did this happen, I don't know but as I drove off, a few meters further down the road, I saw a three car pile up. Did God stop me so that I did not get into a bigger mess?



However, for this issue, the inspiration came from a church member who told my daughter that my writing was pessimistic. I started to ponder whether a person with a pessimistic outlook can actually write optimistic articles? If I could, would you the reader find it not in line with my

personality and therefore brand me a hypocrite? Actually, I don't think I can write with an optimistic viewpoint. I am like the king who wrote: "Meaningless! Meaningless!; Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." (Ecc 1:2)

However, since you the reader may like to read something more optimistic for the New Year, let me extract from a book given to me by my colleague from New Creation church. It is from a devotional book entitled: "Destined to Reign" by Joseph Prince. I am extracting the reading for January 5.

## **Righteousness Is Not Right Doing but Right Being**

Romans 4:5 *But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.*

What do you think righteousness is about? Something you do or something you are? Right doing or right being?

The Bible tells us that after Jesus' sacrifice at the cross, God imputes righteousness not to those who strive to obey the law (Galatians 2:16), but to anyone who believes in His Son. Because Christ took our sins and gave us His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21), the moment we believe in Him, God treats us as righteous apart from our works or obedience. (Romans 4:5-8) This is new covenant righteousness – a righteousness that comes by faith and not works.

You are not righteous because of how morally upright you are. You are not righteous because you exercise self-control. You are not righteous because you read 10 chapters of the Bible daily. You are not righteous because you feel righteous. But you are the very righteousness of God in Christ solely because the sacrifice of Jesus made you so. When you believe this, your faith is accounted for righteousness.

And this is what God wants you to use your faith for. If you are righteous by your deeds, you don't need faith. You also don't need faith to know that you are sinful. But you need faith to believe and declare that you are the righteousness of God in Christ, in the midst of your struggles with temptation and sin.

For example, when you feel lousy because you have just shouted at your spouse, God wants you to exercise your faith to see yourself as still righteous in the midst of that failure. This living revelation that you are still righteous will give you the strength to love your spouse and reconcile things.

The devil may remind you of your foul temper and question your integrity: "How dare you call yourself righteous when you just did that?" Just ignore his lies and boldly declare, "I am not righteous because of what I have done or not done. I am righteous only because of the blood and finished work of Jesus at the cross!"

May you enjoy a Blessed New Year, Happy Valentine's and also Happy Chinese New Year. Cheers!

*Martin Cheah* (5 Jan 2010)

# Combined Youth Camp

This year's youth camp, held from the 12-15th December at the Diocesan Centre, was a combined Lutheran youth camp. Besides the many new friends we have made, the camp was an inspiring experience for all, and an opportunity where we could be renewed and refreshed in His Word once again.

Through the sermons by Pastor Soh and Pastor Samuel Wang, we learnt more about why we should worship, how we can listen to God, and our calling by God. Prior to the Sunday



Service at the Lutheran Church of our Redeemer (LCOR), Pastor Richard came to the Diocesan Centre and taught us about liturgical worship.

The Sunday service held at the (LCOR) was also an eye-opener for many of us. Here, we chanted Psalms, experienced the lighting of candles, and also joined in partaking of the wine and the bread in Holy Communion with fellow Lutherans. The daily Compline at the end of each day allowed us to bring our sins before God and also commit the next day into His hands.

On the second day, we went to the Botanic Gardens to play a series of games, before making our way to the Kallang River where we learnt dragon boating. It was a fun experience for all, as we splashed water with our oars in 'greeting' one another, and also held a friendly race before we ended.

The Special Night held on the third day was a truly a display of what we have learnt throughout the first few days of the camp. It was indeed a fun-filled night of laughter, light-heartedness, and humour, as group after group came up on stage to perform skits related to topics such as 'worship', 'prayer' and 'saint and sinners'.

Overall, this camp was a memorable experience for the camp committee, the leaders and the campers alike. The lessons we have learnt and the friendships we have forged are etched into our hearts. To God be the glory forever and ever.

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# *Beyond Self-Centred Worship*

**By Geoff Bullock**

Have you ever wondered how Paul and Silas could sing praises in a Philippian gaol after being stripped, flogged and clamped to the stocks? Or how Jesus could sing a hymn on the eve of his arrest, knowing everything that was about to happen to him? Or how Paul could describe worship with the spine-tingling phrase 'living sacrifice'?

It was because their worship was not based on what they liked. It was based on who they loved.

There is an explosion of worship in the church today. The buzz word is 'contemporary' and the aim is to 'enter into God's presence' and enjoy a sense of closeness with him. The music, the setting, the lyrics must all help create a fulfilling worship 'experience'.

But I am absolutely convinced that it's not the *worship* that God wants us to enjoy. It's him.

Christians have often felt that worship has to suit their tastes. Many times churches have been built based on people's preferences in worship style. *We want to choose how we will worship.*

We've made worship self-centred instead of God-centred. We lobby for what we want: 'I don't like the songs', 'I don't like the volume'. It's as if we're worshipping worship instead of worshipping God.

Imagine conducting your relationship with your spouse on the basis of only interacting in certain circumstances. In marriage you can't love based on self-interest; you have to love selflessly. You don't say, 'As long as I get everything I want out of this relationship I'll commit myself.' But that's the attitude we often have to worship. We say: 'You musicians, singers and pastors do your tricks, then we'll be happy.'

Worship is not a musical experience. Musicians, singers and worship leaders can no more create a worship experience than an evangelist can create a salvation experience. Both worship and salvation are decisions - decisions that only individuals can make.

When we allow someone else to take responsibility for our decisions we place human interests in front of God's. If my worship depends on others creating an atmosphere, I am allowing them to make my decision to worship for me.

Worship is not a result of how good the music is or whether my favourite songs are sung. It is not a consequence of whether I stand or sit, lift my hands or kneel. My worship must be an expression of my relationship with God - in song, in shouts and whispers, sitting, walking, or driving the car. Worship is my response to God.

If worship is a decision, then the greatest worship happens when someone who doesn't like a church's music or liturgical style prays, 'Not my will but yours be done, God - I'll worship you in spite of it.'

### **Your gifts aren't the issue**

There's another way in which we worship instead of worshipping God. Let me come at it by a round-about route.

Consider two ways of understanding why the church exists. The first is that it exists to equip the saints for the work of ministry. So part of our teaching and worship must be aimed at equipping the saints.

But there is a danger in this first perspective. It could lead us to think that people are in a church so that the church can release their individual gifts and ministries. This is back-to-front. People are actually in a church with their gifts to release the ministry of the church.

It's far more important to know where you are called than what you are called to do.

Let me give a practical example. My hands write songs by accident; they just happen to be attached to the rest of my body and I'm a songwriter. In the same way, I'm a songwriter at Hills Christian Life Centre more because I'm 'attached' to a worshipping, song-writing church than because Hills Christian Life Centre has a songwriter who writes songs. The call is on the church, and my talent as a songwriter helps the church fulfill its call.

There is a second way to understand the church's existence: It exists to fulfil God's call on its life. To live out God's vision. And the people in a church don't so much need to own that vision as to be owned by it. Once

that happens, the various facets of its life are given shape according to what God has called the church to be and do.

This has a profound effect on worship. It takes the focus away from what we want and replaces it with what is needed to fulfill the vision. It really doesn't matter whether we like the worship style or not; it's whether the style is consistent with the call and vision. Unless we think this way, we're in danger of creating our own entertainment - and hence of worshipping worship again.

### **Worship and the will of God**

In other words, for our worship to be a response to God, an expression of our love and devotion, it must be a reflection of his will in and through our lives. For me to express my love for my wife Janine, I must do more than say 'I love you'. I must mow the lawn, pick up my socks, wash the car, share her dreams and visions and goals - I must be a partner to her, working to be a team that expresses mutual love to each other selflessly.

It's the same in our relationship with God. I can't sing " 'I love you, Lord', 'I'll worship you', 'Be exalted' " without being a partner in his will and vision.

What is God's vision, his expectations? Is it that we hold nice, comfortable worship services with three praise songs, two worship songs, one prophecy, one offering, one message, two altar calls and a closing hymn? Is his expectation our comfort, our enjoyment, our tradition?

No. God's vision is that the world will know his Son. The Lord's expectation of us is crystal clear in Matthew 28:19-20: 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

God has called us into his contemporary world to make disciples. Our worship central  $\text{\textcircled{a}}$  is our decision to meet this commission.

Of course we must sing and dance and praise the Lord. But if while we sing and dance and praise we either ignore God's commission or create a culture that alienates those whom God has called us to reach, are we really worshipping God at all? Or are we, yet again, worshipping the worship instead of him?

## **Communication is more than words**

The church I'm part of is a middle-income, yuppie, contemporary church of baby boomers and their children. That's who we are, and that's whom God has called us to reach. So that's what we look and sound like. Other churches have different calls - perhaps to the elderly. In that case people will have to get used to singing hymns.

If every church became 'modern contemporary' in music and we all played Crowded House and Dire Straits, what would happen to churches in Vaucluse in Sydney or St Kilda in Melbourne, which need a totally different touch?

To put it in marketing terms, once we understand our mission (to make disciples), we need to find our market place (the people that God want us to reach). That will then give us our methodology.

We have to find and use the language of our market place. At Youth Alive rallies, for example, where 10-12,000 people cram into the Sydney Entertainment Centre, we know that 'Amazing Grace' or 'Shine Jesus Shine' aren't going to work with some 15-year-old home boy with his cap on backwards who's into the basketball culture. So we sing songs like 'Jump into the Jam with the Great I Am' - songs that reflect our passion for Jesus and our love and vitality for life in their language. In this way we reclaim their music to glorify God and open a window to Christian experience in language they can understand.

When I say 'language' I don't just mean terminology, words. People can go to a Madonna concert in Japan and not understand a word she says but still feel part of what she's doing because they understand the whole language - the visual communication, the sound, the music.

We need to speak people's language - not just in our music but in our newsletters and graphics and decor and preaching and dress.

When the church forgets this and loses sight of its mission and market place, it locks itself into its own culture. Anyone who comes in from outside has to undergo a cultural revolution, before they can get to our answer. In the end the only people we reach are ourselves. That's scandalous. We're called to be light in darkness, not light in light.

I'm not saying that all worship must be directed toward attracting non-believers – far from it. Worship is an individual's adoration of God. Our worship attention must be on intimacy with God led by the Spirit. So we must not make it so irrelevant that we lose the intimacy.

You won't reach your marketplace until you equip the saints, and you won't equip the saints by just speaking the language of the marketplace. You have to teach them *to* speak the language of the marketplace. There's a transition. So there must be a balance between equipping the saints and reaching the marketplace.

Sometimes, however, the saints get lost in enjoying the 'showers of blessings' that come through their relationship with God. When we go to church to stand under the shower of blessings, our worship involves that experience.

But life is more than standing under the shower. Life is also getting dressed and going to work. Our worship should translate into the outcome of our lives.

For the believer, an effect of worship is like a remedial massage at half-time to get us back on the field. It's healing for injuries so we can keep playing. It's the coach at half-time saying to a tired team, 'You can win' - and sending them out to turn the game around.

Worship, then, is refocussing. It's re-equipping. It's realigning yourself with the passion of God and realising that you have to say, 'Not my will but yours be done'.

Worship doesn't end with 'I exalt you'. It goes on to say, 'I must go out and take the experience to others.' I believe that God is changing the face of Christian worship today because he is trying to align us again with him and his vision.

We can't worship God truly and remain unchanged. When we worship, we push into God's heart. Older married couples can sometimes sit in a room together for an hour and a half and not speak to each other and yet communicate, because they've grown together and they understand each other's heart. It's like that with God. As we worship him we come to understand his heart, and we start to share his passion. Then his vision becomes our vision.



# COMBINE CELL GROUP OUTREACH - ABUNDANCE / TAMAN JURONG / OVERCOMERS

**MPH - 19 Dec 2009**

Welcome! Welcome! Welcome to our JCC - Combined Cell Groups' Christmas outreach. Please feel at home and do enjoy your evening with us.



Good evening. Welcome. How are you? Thank you and sure am glad that you came.

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!  
Glory To The New Born King.  
These words were sang and echoed throughout the MPH by some 65 participants (inclusive of 19 pre-believers).



Yup! That's what the members of the combined CGs of Abundance, Taman Jurong, Overcomers and their invited guests did. All of us were belting out, "Joy To The World! The Lord Is Come. Let earth receives her King".

From then onwards, all were treated to an evening programs, intentionally geared for our pre-believing guests to focus on the real meaning of Christmas, and eventually on The GREATEST GIFT that they can ever receive in their lifetime, should they decided to accept Jesus into their lives.



## **Christmas Carols**

Though at certain points, we entered and sang with the wrong key. It was okay as all were still filled with fun and joy. After all, we are not in any competition, but with friends to celebrate Christmas.

Our 1st song was, Mary's Boy Child, Jesus Christ, reminding, and re-emphasizing the



Birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ who brought Tidings of great Joy to human kind, for man will live forevermore because of Christmas Day. It ended with "Silent Night, Holy Night" with a sense of awe as we left the MPH with each one holding onto a lighted candle.

### **Flag dance.**

The celebration continued with a team of 3 young and lovely sisters (Joyce - leader, Juliana and Xiu Feng) from our very own Youth Church. Prior to their dance, Xiu Feng explained the meaning of certain moves of the dance to us. After that they treated and gave us an eye opener as to what the Flag Dance was about and it was choreographed by them.



Flag dance in actions. (from left – Joyce, Xiu Feng and Juliana)

Bravo! Keep it up, sisters.  
Well done, very well done.

May The Lord enlarge and  
bless our Dance Ministry for  
His Glory.

### **Children's Skit - THE LAMB.**

It was a very lovely, touching and awesome skit gave by our very own Kids Church children (Jia Lin as Eve/Mary, Cheng Kiat as Joseph, Bernice as Lucifer, Amos as Moses, Clement as Jesus, Gabriel as God, last but not least Derrick or usually known to us as KC as the Roman soldier).

The story opened up and touched on God's Creation, Satan's rebellion against God - how he caused sin to enter through Adam & Eve. Due to their act of



disobedience, deaths set in. PTL, the story ended with God's Redemptive Plan to save mankind through the sacrificial death of His One and Only Begotten Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ - THE LAMB OF GOD.

It was all about – THE LAMB PTL: Blind – sees. Lame – walks.  
(Jesus Christ – The Perfect Sacrificed). Dumb – talks. Leprosy – healed.

Though Jesus was crucified on the Cross, death could not hold Him.

After His Resurrection, He heals the sick - the blind could see, the lame could walk, the dumb could talk, the down - trodden and broken hearted were comforted, Salvation was freely given to those who believe in Him.



All these and more were acted out in mime by the children with 2 story tellers, Jennifer and Richard, retelling His-story to all present.

Yes, the story was all about THE LAMB - THE LAMB OF GOD - **JESUS CHRIST**.

### **The Greatest Gift of All**

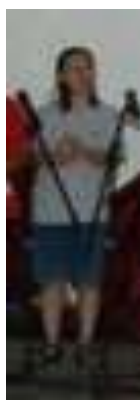
Complimenting the children's skit, our next section of the program focussed our guests to the Christmas' gifts, which Jesus could give to those who want it through Him - Unconditional love, Peace, Joy, and most of all, THE GREATEST GIFT - ETERNAL LIFE.



Christmas gift of: Exceeding  
**Joy**



Eternal  
**Life**



Unshakable  
**Peace**



Unconditional  
**Love**

This was conveyed through conversations by our 4 lovely sisters. From left to right: Poh Kiat, Charlotte, Jacqueline, and, Margaret.

### **Christmas' Message**

Using the Christmas gifts, Pastor Anthony captured the audience attention, when he flashed onto the screen, various toys and games - with the questions of, do you know what is it? Likewise, for the adults, pictures with \$ signs for bonus, cars, cash etc.

With their attention aroused, and eyes glued to the screen for more, Pastor Anthony proceeded on with the exposition on the Gospel by using the passage on "The Prodigal son, in Luke 15:11-24, to draw attention to the father's love for his long lost rebellious son, waiting and waiting for his wayward son's return, to love and embrace him all over again.

Drawing insightfully and spiritually into the story, Pastor Anthony explained that, that's "how God is waiting" for each one to return to Him.

Finally, using one of the most well known verses from The Holy Bible, John 3:16, Pastor Anthony gave an open invitation to those who were ready to receive Jesus Christ into their lives to do so by praying along with him.



With all heads bowed, those who are touched...  
....please repeat after me

### **Silent Night, Holy Night**

To end the outreach with awe, reverence and wonders, and yet again especially for our guests, lighting of candles were carried out for everyone, with the continuous singing of the beautiful and well-loved song, "Silent Night, Holy Night", prior to exiting from MPH to lobby for buffet dinner and fellowship.



With candles lighted singing - Silent Night, Holy Night. Though the outreach is over, evangelism has just begun. So, please do pray along with us for lost souls to be added into His Glorious Kingdom.

May All Glory, Honour, Praise and Worship Be To our Lord God Almighty.

Amen.

*Richard Lee*



## **UNITY IN THE CHURCH**

I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:12)

Oftentimes, when disagreements rise, reconciliation is made harder because eyes are focused on “the other person/party” and mouths blare out all the faults and the hypocrisies beheld. It does not help that there is no mirror to reflect the plank in the eyes that see. (Matthew 7:5)

Don't we all agree that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God? Let's think with the “I” at the fore of contemplation:

“I am a sinner.”

“I deserve help.”

“I deserve forgiveness.”

“I don’t deserve you to turn your face away from me.

“I don’t deserve condemnation.”

“I ... ..” (fill in the blank any way it suits.)

Obviously, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. What is good enough for the “I” in the above thoughts should be good enough for the other person/party. If the “I” would never think for self in negative tones under any circumstances, likewise should sincerity apply when contending with others.

Recently, it was rumoured that Tiger Woods was bashed with a golf club by his wife, for his marital infidelity many times over. Did he deserve it for all his wrongs? Maybe some women have sympathy with the poor wife and under their breath they are exclaiming, “Divorce him, leave him, he deserves it ...,” and working up all the dressing-down words they can muster to heap on the Tiger in distress instead of holding any charitable feeling for the man who obviously is in need of help for his problem. Extremely hard not to make the clarion call for action to deal with the serial serious offender, to sock it to him the utmost in punishment and extract from him the utmost in price – he deserves no mercy!

Take a pause, brothers and sisters in Christ. Now, read the following true story<sup>1</sup> of the Torbi (Primary School) Massacre in Kenya some years ago:

*“They had come. Two hundred bandits, through the school gates. Shots fired. Children began screaming. The bandits entered the classroom and killed children point blank. Some bandits came into the nursery and brutally slit the throats of children too young to read. 22 children died that day. 56 parents were killed. 68 children were orphaned.*

*“Hawo’s son Adano was killed that day. She said he left in the morning like normal. The next time she saw him, he was lying on the ground, lifeless. She says it pains her inside to think of what happened, but that she has to be strong for the sake of her other children. ‘I have not thought of revenge for even one day. I know what it feels like as a mother to lose a child. Why would I want someone else to feel what I’ve felt?’*

***“Her strength is loud. ‘Yes, I have forgiven them. Even the very day my son was killed I forgave. My religion teaches forgiveness. So I do.’ ”***

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<sup>1</sup> Story extracted from Vantage Point (Nov-Dec 2009), a publication of Eagles Communications Ltd.

The story of Torbi brings out the extreme cruelty man is capable of. In sound contrast must be the extreme forgiveness that is also possible (although easier said than done) as “My religion teaches forgiveness. So I do.”

Brothers and sisters in Christ, what has Jesus Christ taught us about forgiveness? I trust that all Christians know, so I don't have to expend space to go into the lessons. From time immemorial, the Church has been beset with conflicts between shepherds and sheep, sheep and sheep, and shepherds and shepherds. Certainly not a good testimony that children of God are supposed to present to the world! (1 Cor. 1:11 reveals that conflicts also existed in the Church during the Apostles' time.)

Last Christmas, Bro. Martin Cheah gave me a present – a very great gift – a book titled “UNCHRISTIAN, WHAT A NEW GENERATION REALLY THINKS ABOUT CHRISTIANITY ... AND WHY IT MATTERS”.<sup>2</sup> A blurb on the back cover of the book says what it is about:

*“Christians are supposed to represent Christ to the world. But according to the latest report card, something has gone terribly wrong. Using descriptions like ‘hypocritical’, ‘insensitive’, and ‘judgmental’, young Americans share an impression of Christians that’s nothing short of ... unchristian.”*

What an indictment! I believe the book speaks to Singaporeans and churches in all places as it does to Americans. It speaks to me terribly, as I stand in front of the mirror and look at the stranger (contrasting what I thought of myself as a saint) whom I have a hard time trying to recognize. Do you care to do the same exercise of reading the book with a mirror in front? Because I am a sinner, do I have to fear that one day I might be driven out of the Church because my fellow Christians feel that the Church is no place for a sinner? God forbid! Even if not driven out by my grace-filled brothers and sisters in Christ, would I one day walk away from (or walk out on) the Church because I succumb to Satan's temptation that I don't belong (because of my sin or the Church's sin), just like he was able to quote Scripture (deviously) in his attempt to tempt Jesus in the wilderness?

Thankfully, God is with me, though I am a sinner. It is because we are sinners that we need Christ. Christ needed not have come and the Church need not exist if there are no sinners. In fact, the Church is where sinners ought to flock to and be welcomed to receive the “righteousness from God [that] comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of

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<sup>2</sup> You may borrow the book from John Lee.

God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” (Romans 3:22-24)

Romans 5 teaches us that by the law, death came to all men (no one could escape) because all sinned. (“The law was added so that the trespass might increase.” – Rom. 5:20a) However, Jesus Christ came to supplant the law; hence, “where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 5:20b-21)

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? (Read Romans 6 for the answers.)

The struggle with sin is ongoing for all Christians. Christians are like the rabbit which does not like the muddy pool but may keep falling into it, and then consciously keep struggling to get out each time, and with great effort try to shake off the stain of mud/sin. Christians are not like the pig that keeps getting into a muddy pool and enjoys wading in it, not desirous of getting out to shake itself clean. Christians in a church form a fellowship/community where we are supposed to help one another, support one another, encourage one another – as we look at one another knowingly that we are all sinners who need mutual care and loving sustenance, justified by God’s grace sans encumbrance by human temperaments, tantrums or ego trips.

From the conflicts in the early Church to the divisions that the Church of today badly witnesses to the world while preaching love in the same breath, the whole underlying theme is man’s struggle with sin – no one is free from this struggle. “But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 3:21-24) I have underlined three words for emphasis.

There is really no difference what our position is, whether clergy or lay, whether we have been around for 10 years or for 10 months, whatever the skin colour and personal idiosyncrasies, ... — we believers in Christ are all benefactors of the righteousness from God, the righteousness that we ought to emphasise to rally one another to become slaves to it (Rom. 6:18) so that consequently, we would be drawn away from slavery to sin because now we have a powerful force to pull us



in the positive direction to counter our struggle with sin. The point is that we ought to focus on encouraging the good with love, not shining the spotlight on one another's sins without love. Where there is need to offer reproof, we do so in the spirit of love and nothing less.

Has **UNITY IN THE CHURCH** been so difficult because Christians have not been good enough to help one another in positive ways, with humility in short supply? Just like parents who preach and pick out all the faults of their children instead of their forte, do we often deal with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ similarly? Do we preach love and forgiveness in Christ (rather than in our own human spirit), and then sing the "easier said than done" tune with an air of moral superiority as we proceed to nail our "enemies" to the cross? Nowadays, it is equally common for women as well as men to be unfaithful in marriage; so whether you are a man or a woman, you may try to answer this question objectively as a Christian, bearing in mind what the Bible teaches about forgiveness: "IF YOU WERE THE VICTIM OF THE BETRAYAL, WOULD YOU FORGIVE THE TIGER THAT STRAYED?"

If your answer is "HARD TO," then try this question: "HOW HARD COULD IT BE FOR HAWO TO FORGIVE HER SON'S MERCILESS KILLERS?"

Your answers to the above questions, if typical of all Christians who preach Christ's love, would explain whether one may hope for the **UNITY** in which every person can shake hands with his/her "enemies" and then all become friends in the body of Christ, in the righteousness of God, bound by a cord of multiple strands that is not quickly broken. Whatever judgment or punishment is in God's hands, not ours. The body of Christ is the Church. We are an inalienable part of the body, though imperfect as each and every individual is. The **UNITY IN THE CHURCH** therefore inexorably rests on our personal attitude towards love and forgiveness as Christ has taught us!

*John Lee*

"There are no problems we cannot solve together, and very few that we can solve by ourselves" – Lyndon B. Johnson (36th President of the USA)

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity." – Psalms 133:1

# A TESTIMONY UNTO THE LORD

James Candiah

I came from a half-Christian home, my mother was a Christian, my father was an unbeliever. They were good parents, and I have three other brothers. Even at a tender age, the hand of the Lord was upon me. I had a happy childhood, albeit losing my father whilst in primary school was a sad episode in my life. In the short time he was with me, he had left a lasting legacy of love, care and discipline that remains with me to this day. My mother was a wonderful person who was largely responsible for the man I am today. She taught me the values of good hygiene, responsibility, patience, diligence, humour, goodness and humility among others. When God took her away from us, I was in the initial throes of fulfilling my national service liability to the nation. I thank God for my older brothers who comforted and egged me on to attain my goals.

My acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, when I was in secondary two, was the pivotal point in my life as it gave me a new direction and purpose. As I persevered, shakily at times, with my walk with the Lord, I felt a new awakening within my inner being. Having lost my parents at a relatively young age, I was left to grapple with a host of uncertainties as part and parcel of the growing up phase. As my brothers were studying and, after graduating, working abroad at that time, the adjustments were not easy. But I thank Almighty God for His constant, comforting presence in my life all those years, lovingly and patiently guiding me, one step at a time. What a wonder He is!

When doing my national service, I was most vulnerable. The language used, moral and other issues were some areas where a young man can easily become contaminated if not wary. I owe my preservation from these 'viruses' to the Lord Jesus who kept me in these trying and testing times. Spending time with Him daily, even in the midst of tension and stress which were my continual 'baggage' when I was in camp, helped me tremendously, energizing and vitalizing me to perform beyond the ordinary and, importantly, honouring my God.

With the completion of my full-time commitment to our nation, I embarked on a new phase of my development – tertiary in nature, locally and abroad. Again, the Lord's consistent guidance and constant presence helped me wholesomely in my academic endeavours. Studying is a joy when you understand its true purpose and ultimate objectives, and as a Christian, it

gave me the added dimension of knowing somewhat, God's design in the overall scheme of things. Secular academic knowledge is also from God, to be comprehended and utilized for the benefit of humanity. If we fathom this in its fullest essence, then studying and learning at all levels, truly become meaningful pursuits. Another important lesson I have learnt in the 'high pressured' area of wanting to attain scholastic excellence (while enjoying it) is this: put God first in everything, giving Him your best time – in quiet time, worship, meditation; being faithful and diligent in tithing, keeping His Word, etc, - and you will see that the lines will fall for you in the right places. As you do your part faithfully and in love, the Lord will do the rest – in studies, career choice, whatever. This is what I discovered, and still am. We have a pleasantly surprising and wonderful God who truly loves His people.

I believe the turning point in my Christian walk came in 1996 (March). I was at MacRitchie reservoir on one of my regular trips there for my long distance training runs. I was with someone who was new in the Lord then, and who was to be baptised the following month. I was sharing some aspects of the Holy Gospel when suddenly, without any warning, I remembered vividly the dream I had three days earlier. (This was revealed to me at that point in time at MacRitchie reservoir.) I had dreamt of our Lord Jesus Christ's second coming (as recorded in 1 Thess 4:16a-17) I remember seeing the archangel's massive wings behind our Lord, and then I was caught up. As I recollected, tears began to stream down my face. I was overwhelmed emotionally by the gravity of my realization, its magnitude and significance. My beloved brothers and sisters, believe me as I write to you about these things. You have read what God's Word says in the passage I have quoted, and also elsewhere in the Bible with regard to the Lord's second coming. Believe I say, as it is written, it will surely come to pass. God chose to reveal to me, a nobody, this heavenly vision for a special purpose. Nothing happens by chance. When I spoke with my pastor of the church I was attending then, he said (words to the effect), that God chooses whoever He pleases at His good pleasure for specific purposes. He also reiterated that when more is given to you, more is expected of you. However, he added, His Grace would be sufficient for you (2 Cor 12:9). The latter quotation certainly helped me to see, in the correct perspective, what is expected of me. Another aspect of my dream when I 'saw' the Lord is this: when I 'saw' Him descending, I lifted my left index finger to point to Him as I wanted the people around me to see my God. But alas, none around me looked up to the heavens to behold Him.

This is a clear indication (I now know) of what is expected, not only of me, but of all God's people.

Acts 1:8 states (KJV):

*"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."*

Amen.

Doubts began to assail me a little later (after the dream), as to whether these things I had recounted really transpired in my dream. This is a natural recourse of the evil one, to create doubts in the minds of God's people when a truth is revealed. As I prayed, God saw my heart, and He gave me a sign (which is even today on the index finger of my left hand, the finger with which I pointed to our God), confirming that these things did actually happen. Praise God! Hence my passion for the Holy Gospel and in the things pertaining to Him.

My beloved, I urge you, if we believe and love the Lord our God, should we not be complying with the Great Commission as stated in Acts 1:8, with great verve and passion? Especially so, as we see that the imminent return of our Lord Jesus is a foregone conclusion? This is not just the responsibility of the pastors and the leaders only, but of every one of God's 'born-again' people. This is not only to be done on a church basis, but also, as redeemed individuals, in our homes, workplaces, among friends, classmates, colleagues, etc., as the Holy Spirit guides us.

The above revelation of 'His Return' has given me a new impetus and drive in my walk with Him. I have begun to see things/events from different and fresh perspectives. My values have changed, and continuing to undergo transformation, as I look upward and seek goals and objectives that count for eternity. While we are sojourning here on earth, let's not forget (even for a moment) our godly heritage (1 Pet 2:9), and who we belong to. It's so easy for us to move in the direction of the world if we are not on guard at all times. That's why we need to cling onto God's Word faithfully – reading, studying, meditating and putting it into practice. I truly believe God wants us to enjoy abundantly the things that He has blessed us with, but in a manner that exalts and magnifies His holy and majestic Name.

To me, this dream reinforces my belief in what God's Word says of His imminent return. It tells me what I should do and be doing in the light of this glorious Truth. It strengthens and empowers me to do things pertaining to Him with a deeper compassion, conviction and passion. I know that because God has called me, I am emboldened to act in His authority, His power and just as importantly, in His love. Life, despite its challenges and difficulties, is meaningful as I have 'seen' its bigger picture.

What does this dream hold for the church of Jesus Christ? Plenty! If we understand the reason why He is returning, then whatever we should be doing, as individuals and as a corporate body (the church) would be in line with His explicit revelations in relation to our existence on planet Earth. His return has everything to do with His people, so that we may be with Him for eternity. Is this not our ultimate goal – to be with Jesus forever? Without reservation, I can declare that this should be the sole purpose of our present transitional state – to be with our God and Saviour now, and for all eternity. However, there is a cost! But His grace will see us through, enabling us to overcome. Trust and faith in God must go hand-in-hand if a breakthrough is to be achieved in our personal lives, and also corporately as His body. If we realize and appreciate these things, we should be able to see why, as God's chosen, we must strive to accomplish these things so that His will for us would be fulfilled in this life, preparing us for the time to come when He returns. We have to be fully aware of the urgency of the times we are in, and to take stock of our positions in Him, making every effort to move with the Holy Spirit of God in us, so that we do not become ensnared in the things of this world. The sure way to be overcomers is to fear God and keep His commandments. In this there is LIFE that counts for eternity.

I pray and trust God Almighty that what I have penned in this testimony (guided by the Holy Spirit) would have the desired impact of creating a new awakening in the hearts and minds of the readers. God's return is imminent, Jesus is coming for us. Are we ready? (John 14:2-3)

In His Love, always,  
James Candiah

## **INVEST AND NOT LOSE SLEEP**

**by John Lee**

While the justification to invest is in the Parable of the Talents, the way to invest in companies, say via the stock market, is as important if not more important than the act of investing idle funds that earn next to nothing in banks. The following steps may suggest to you a possible way to plan your investment that is least likely to make you lose sleep:

- Set aside a sum of money (say \$5000 out of a much larger sum you have in your savings) that you really can afford to lose 100% and are prepared to lose. Be true to yourself – don't just "say say only". This means that if you really lose it all, you can still party with your friends and not cry night and day as though the world is coming to an end. It is not advised that you invest a high percentage of your savings because you need to be wise to keep money available on call for normal or unexpected living needs.
- Select a good blue chip (not just any stock people call a blue chip), preferably super-blue; i.e., a company that has a strong history, solid management, good dividend policy (paying high dividends every year in the past number of years without fail), low debt positions, high cash positions and having a very important place in the economy that you know it is highly secure and unlikely to fail. Don't just depend on hearsay, recommendations, popularity (high daily trade volumes) or volatility (frequent rise and falls in prices that is tempting you with easy profits – which also means easy losses). Do your own research. Actually, it is not very difficult to look out for such companies.
- Be patient. Wait for the time when the chosen stock falls in price significantly so that there is an attractive gap in price between the present low and the high in the last 12 months (or any other sensible period of reckoning). Due to market psychology at work, prices do fall a lot at times even if the fall is not justified by the company's performance and stability. If the price does not seem like it is at the right level for your investment, be prepared to hold on to your cash and wait for the opportunity. Don't be impatient! Alternatively, you can search for another stock.
- As an example, you have selected stock X. In the last 12 months, the highest price was \$11. Now, the price has dropped to \$5 and people are selling even though it is a super-blue chip, the company being a pillar of the economy and unlikely to close down at the whims of economic conditions. Let's say that the Stock X has an annual dividend policy of paying at least 20 cents per share.
- Whether the price looks like going up or down, you make your move to buy it at \$5 because you have decided that it is a good price. Your \$5000 can buy you 1000 shares. At the dividend rate of \$0.20 per share, you can

hope to get \$200 annually for the \$5000 you invest (better than if you deposit the principal in a bank).

- **Once you have put the money into the shares, forget about the money. Treat it as lost already – every cent of it.** In this way, you don't have to check the market every now and then and let your heart beat up and down according to the wild rhythms of the market price movements. Remember, you have chosen the stock carefully and the company is very unlikely to collapse. Even if by chance you notice that the price has fallen to \$3, you won't be bothered and you can eat and sleep well and do all the daily functions that you have to do in life, including serving God in Church. After all, you have treated your \$5000 as gone, right? (If you can't treat the \$5000 as gone, probably you were not honest to yourself that it is money you can afford to lose.)
- You have "lost" the \$5000. Never mind. Just enjoy collecting the dividends every year – an amount much better than the interest you would earn from the bank. Does this not satisfy you that you have made a sensible investment? The dividend yield may or may not be guaranteed; but if you had conscientiously done your research and you had the assurance of good dividends being paid by the company for many continuous years, you should not worry.
- If the stock you have chosen is indeed super-blue (i.e., top-notch quality), its price bouncing up and down due to market moods should not scare anybody. Chances are good that after a number of years, apart from the dividends you have collected, you will be able to sell the stock to recoup your principal of \$5000 and possibly more. If you do sell, you may re-invest by choosing a new stock in the same manner as above.
- Remember that you are not to track the stock price day by day and make decisions on a daily-price-movement basis. Treat the \$5000 as "lost", so you won't be bogged down by depression.

If you follow the foregoing advice, you may not become a millionaire, but neither would you fall into a pauper state. There is always risk (refer Ecc. 11:2) in anything, but you have reduced your risk to a bare minimum while being reasonably assured that you are getting something at least better than leaving your sacrifice-able funds idle. **Your desire to invest in the stock market because your money is earning nothing in the bank has been met. Your purpose of investing is to get reasonable returns, not to strike a windfall.** It bears reminding that the invested funds should only be a portion of the savings you have, a portion that you can REALLY afford to lose. (Follow the advice of Ecc. 11:2 on dividing into portions.)

The **Final** chapter will be in the next issue of The Vine.....

# Operation Mom

On 28<sup>th</sup> Dec 2009, my mother went to see a neurologist for a brain checkup because she frequently complained of giddiness. The doctor decided to send her for a CT scan and found that she had some blood clots and blood in the brain. This is due to a fall she suffered a month ago and also because of the blood thinning medicine she was taking for her other health conditions which prevented the blood from clotting.

The doctor decided to do an emergency procedure on that very night to drain out the blood as it was very critical and she could get a stroke at any time. The doctor warned that since she was still taking the blood thinning medicine, there was a 2 to 3 percent risk of getting a stroke while on the operating table and be paralyzed on the left side of her body.

At that point of time, I was helpless. I immediately activated my cell group and some members of the church to pray for God's mercy and healing for my mom. I really want to thank God for His mercy and grace. After 1½ hours in the operating theatre, the surgeon called to tell me the good news that the operation was very successful. All Glory be unto our God, our refuge and strength and a present help in times of need.

I am also grateful for the care, concern and prayers of all who have prayed with me and encouraged me during this difficult moment. It is through this experience that I was drawn closer to God and totally dependent on Him.

9<sup>th</sup> Jan 2010 – my mom went for a review and the doctors gave us good news, her progress was very good. She should be so well that she could even go traveling by Chinese New Year.

***Jo See***

Pharmacy advisory: children know what medication your aged parents are taking.

