

The Vine Committee

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Recently there was a change of management in my company. Suddenly we were introduced to a monthly staff appraisal format which is claimed to be fairer. Obviously, after more than 31 years of the annual appraisal system,

there was bound to be some apprehension about the changes.

The new format is claimed to be fairer because it measures your performance over the whole year pulling you up if you were down at the end of the year. Sounds good. I know someone whose son kept failing his exams throughout the term but manage to pass his final exams. However, when the school applied the average on his whole year's endeavours, the final outcome was that he failed. I am sure he must have felt it unfair to improve at the end and yet was not allowed to pass.

One of my colleagues was not in favour of the new format for it seemed unfair to those who showed improvement at the year end like the student. I suggested that Christians also believed that the end is more important than the rest of your life, meaning that you may be a sinner all your life but at the end if you repented, confessed and believed in Jesus, you will be saved. Immediately, this colleague became angry because it was unacceptable to a non-Christian who believed in works for salvation to accept the free gift of God. It seems most unfair to non-Christians to accept that a sinner at the moment of death can be saved.

They forget that humans also judge by the end result. For instance if you drive a long distance at the approved speed limit and for a moment speed up and was caught by the traffic police, you cannot ask the policeman to average your speed over the distance and not fine you for speeding. Similarly, at the age of 60 you became so short tempered that in a moment

of anger you killed someone. You will face the penalty for murder or manslaughter despite living a “good” life for the past 59 years.

We can consider this situation from human logic but ultimately what does the Bible say about this? *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”* (Proverbs 14:12)

Another verse says that to turn away at the end is worse than to have not believed at all. *‘If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,” and, “A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.”* (2 Peter 2:20-22)

However the good news is that if you repent and believe, even at the last moment, you will be saved. This was illustrated in the story of the thief on the cross next to Jesus who said: *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”* (Luke 23:42-43)

Unfair you say but in the parable of a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard, Jesus replies: *‘Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am **generous**?’* (Matthew 20:13-15)



Thus in the case of Joanna Lee's father who lived a full life as a non-Christian and passed away a week after he became a Christian and was baptised, the Bible declares, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16)

Martin Cheah

How to write your own CG Bible Study material

using the 3S method

What is the 3S method?

This is a method of analysing the Bible text as taught to me by Pastor Andrew Thinagaran.

The first **S** stands for **Structure**. The Holy Bible is presented to us as a book with sentences and paragraphs which is suitable for reading. However it should be reconstructed into a structural presentation for study purposes. Basically, this means taking a sentence and structure it into point form, for example:

Philippians 3 (original presentation)

1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

2 Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh-- 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

Philippians 3 (structure presentation)

1 Finally, my brothers,
rejoice in the Lord!
It is no trouble for me to write
the same things to you again,
and it is a safeguard for you.

True Circumcision

2 Watch out for those dogs,
those men who do evil,
those mutilators of the flesh.
3 For it is we who are the circumcision,
we who worship by the Spirit of God,
who glory in Christ Jesus,
and who put no confidence in the
flesh—
4 though I myself have reasons for
such confidence.

This is quite simple to do with MS Word. Just copy the chapter into Word and using Enter and Tabs to structure it as shown above. According to the Jurong West CG, this brings out the meaning of the paragraph more clearly.

The next **S** stands for **Subheadings**. A little more difficult is for you to give a subheading to the verses. This is to group various points or ideas together under a subheading. For example, Philippians chapter 3 can be analysed as follows:

Verses	Headings
2-3	True Circumcision
5-7	Confidence in the flesh
8	True Confidence – In knowing Christ
9	True Confidence – In the righteousness of God

Verses	Headings
10-11	True Confidence – In becoming like Christ
12-16	Pressing Forward
17-19	Enemies of the cross
20-21	Citizens of Heaven

The 3rd **S** refers to **Summary**. From the steps above, you will now summarize the main ideas into fill-in-the-blanks type of statements to reinforce the points to the CG members. This worksheet is to be filled by the members before the meeting to ensure that they read the Bible passage beforehand. An example of this is as follows:

Verses	Headings	Remarks
2-3	True Circumcision	Those of true circumcision _____ by the Spirit of God, _____ in Christ Jesus and _____ in the flesh
5-7	Confidence in the flesh	Those who place confidence in the flesh are <u>circumcised</u> , of the people of <u>Israel</u> and faultless in <u>legalistic righteousness</u>

In the example above, the underlined words will be blanks for the members to fill in. Jurong West CG members are very keen to fill in the blanks, probably because I set it quite simple. The main objective is to make sure that they have read the Bible passage before the meeting, so there is no need to make it complicated.

CG Members will receive the structured presentation of the Bible passage and the fill-in-the-blanks worksheet together with a set of Discussion Questions before the CG meeting.

At the CG Meeting, we will read through the Bible passage again then go through the answers for the fill-in-the-blanks worksheet before proceeding to the discussion questions. Apparently, this method of study is helping the CG and they seem to enjoy the session as what John Lee mentions in his article in this issue.

I don't hold the copyright to this method as Pastor Andrew is the one who first gave us the study materials for books like Philemon and some of the other epistles. I just thought that I might learn from him how he prepares the materials and he came over one night and spent about 3 hours teaching me the methodology.

Admittedly, I am still learning and I still have to send my materials for Pastor Andrew to edit. If the above notes can help you to prepare your own study materials, great. If not, you can still invite Pastor Andrew to give you a 3 hour course on "How to prepare your own Bible study materials".

Martin Cheah

STEWARDSHIP...What Does This Mean to a Believer?

Manager. That's what a Christian steward is. He/She has been entrusted with the responsibility of managing God's property (Matt 25:14). Stewardship is being accountable to Him for what He has committed to us. The Christian is a steward of one's gifts and talents, time and money. In reality, one has no right to these in any way. Why? Because he/she is only a steward, not an owner. God is the owner. You may ask why God is the owner.

By Right of Creation

God created the whole universe and everything in it. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein." (Ps 24:1). "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." (Gen 2:7). God owns every man, woman, child because He is the Creator.

By Right of Redemption

Moreover, God has a further claim on the Christian. When humankind rebelled against God, it perished. It was cut off from a personal relationship with its Maker. God could have left the human race to itself then, but He did not. He went out of the way to bring us back to fellowship with Himself (2 Cor 5:18-21). Therefore he can claim us not only because He made us, but also because He paid an awesome price to redeem us (1 Cor 6:20).

Gospel, Talents, Time and Money

We are stewards of the Gospel. We are to faithfully proclaim the Good News by our lives and by way of speech. We should seek every opportunity to share Jesus with others. Our lives should match what our mouths say (1 Thess 2:9,10), because our Father's honour is at stake. Our gifts and talents are God's too. He gives them to us for a purpose: for the equipment of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up the body of Christ." (Eph 4:12). To utilize these abilities to the full, we must ask God to show us what they are. Then we are to employ them like a wise steward.

Time is also a trust. We are to be careful how we live our daily lives, "making the most of the time, for the days are evil." (Eph 5:15,16). Each of

us has a full complement of 24 hours a day. We should set priorities so that we do the things that are important.

A good schedule is a course of action, not a bondage. There are sometimes good reasons for breaking a schedule, but without one, you will be unable to remain on a sound path. You will fall back into time-wasting without realising it! Just think about this!

Our money belongs to God. The ten percent which we call our tithe and the ninety percent left to us are His. Hence, we should exercise wisdom and prudence in spending on our needs. God gives us the privilege of offering back to Him a part of what He gives us. We should therefore give regularly, liberally, joyfully and willingly (2 Cor 8,9). God has placed in our trust many other things. He gave us His creation (Ps8; Gen 1:28); so we are to preserve natural resources. He gave us health and strength; so we should care for ourselves by getting sufficient rest, regular exercising and eating a balanced diet, whilst observing sound hygienic practices. He gave us knowledge and insight; so we should use these benefits to help others. He gave us family and home, friends and love. We are to be responsible stewards of these as well.

Accountability and Faithfulness

Every trustee must give an account of how one discharged one's office. Each of us will render an account of oneself to God (Rom 14:12). Some of us are entrusted with less, but to whom much is given, of that person much shall be required. For faithfulness will not be measured by what we have or how much has been entrusted to us, but rather by how well we have invested what has been given to us. We long for the commendation, "well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your Master." (Matt 25:21).

Love's Response

We can never outlove God, or outgive Him. After we have given Him our all, we have only given what belongs to Him. He not only made us, but He also redeemed us with a gift so rich as to be indescribable (Rom 8:32). If we truly appreciate His love for us, we should have no reservations about making a total offering of ourselves. Such love, so amazing, so divine, surely demands our life, our soul, our all.

Shalom.

Bro (Dr.) James Candiah

Latest news from the USA...

My name is Samuel Tan and I spent most of my 31 years worshipping in JCC. I served in the Pulse Ministry as a co-cell group leader of AAT with Jason Tan for the past few years. I have been studying at Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, USA, since Aug 2012. I chose to give up my job in a statutory board to pursue a biblical education at Moody for 2 main reasons - firstly to be with my wife who is studying Occupational Therapy in Chicago after being apart from each other for a year as she began her studies in 2011, and secondly, to finish my theological studies which I began at Singapore Bible College as a part time student. I would like to take this opportunity to testify to God's goodness and provision by sharing what God has been doing in the course of my studies at Moody Bible Institute.



God cares for the people we choose not to see

God has shown me that He cares for the people that we often choose to overlook in society. God has given me the opportunity to meet with people who are homeless, poor, young men and women in juvenile detention centres, teenagers involved in gangs and members of the homosexual community. God has been working in these communities and I have been given the opportunity to get to work with some of the people who are already actively ministering to these people. I have heard many first hand stories: of people who are living on the streets, parents who witnessed their child being shot 8 times right in front of their own house, a classmate's distant 16 year old cousin shot fatally in the head and having her body dumped in front of a hospital by her friends who then drove off in fear, gang members who are just teenagers (~15 years old) seeing their friends being shot and killed right in front of their eyes, etc.

I have been to homes where there is very little food, homes that smell of drugs and crammed with grandparents, children and teenagers with no parents in sight Whenever I walk around town or on the way to school, I see people, sometimes mothers with young children, begging on the streets, sometimes in the bitter, windy cold (less than 5 degrees Celsius; winds can be up to 30km/hr).

Many times we hear these stories from other people, just like you are reading this now, and the impact is somewhat lost. But, when you actually get to look into their eyes as they tell you their stories, as you sit beside someone who hasn't showered in days or weeks and you smell the mixture of urine and dirt, as you shake their hands, pass them some food or pray for them, you begin to understand the amount of pain, brokenness

and hurt that these people have, which God wants to heal. The Gospels, especially Luke, record how Jesus ministered to lepers, tax collectors, women and children, essentially the marginalized people of society in those times. Indeed, it is not the healthy who need a doctor.

Today, these people are all around me. God has been teaching me to be aware of these people, not to look at them from afar or behind the safety of glass windows in buses, trains or cars. Nowadays, I am more aware of these people than before and as such, I try to carry some extra food in my bag, a piece of bread, fruit, chocolate or muesli bars, to give to someone in need, that they may experience the love of God.

God is powerful

Hurricane Sandy slammed into New York and New Jersey on the night of 29 Oct with winds of up to 130km/hr, waves of up to 4 metres, more than 100 people killed, millions without power for days, \$20 billion in damages. As I watched the news reports and video footage, it was a scary reminder of the power of nature. New York, the financial powerhouse of the world, the city built by men, a place with significant impact and influence in culture, media, art, research, technology, education and entertainment, basically crumbled and succumbed to the overwhelming power of nature. Everything that men built – the most complex subway system in the world, massive highways, majestic houses, expensive luxury cars – were destroyed overnight as water poured in continually and winds picked entire houses up, tossing them about like toys. The people were completely helpless as they saw everything being destroyed right in front of their eyes. It was such a humbling experience to see that, to be reminded that we need to be storing up eternal treasures in heaven and not material things on earth which can so easily be taken away.

God has also been showing me the frailty of life; Psalm 90 expresses it better than I ever could. Do take some time to read it. Some of my classmates, young men in their early twenties, have suddenly been afflicted with long term intestinal pain, liver problems that reject nutrients and prevent them from being absorbed by the body; they experience fatigue easily and a regular inability to get a good night's sleep. Personally, I woke up one day with pain in my jaw that sometimes extends right up to my head; this makes opening my mouth difficult, chewing becomes painful and eating is not an enjoyable experience. The pain has been here for about 4 days and still hasn't gone away. God has shown me that human bodies are so fragile and we need to depend on Him everyday to sustain

us, to give us life and health. Towards the end of Ps 90, it says “Relent, Lord! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.” This is my prayer, trusting in the power of God. The same powerful God, who created the world and calmed the storm, is the same God who created us and came to earth to heal and restore.

God gives and takes away

In the second week of the school term, my laptop crashed. Over the course of the next few weeks, I used Su Ren’s computer and computers in the library. It was inconvenient but it was workable. One day, as I was talking to some people in school over lunch, one of them shared that he had an old desktop, probably about 10 years old that was just sitting in his room unused. He was willing to give it to me for free. It was an amazing way that God provided. He knew my desires and provided in His own way, in His own time. God is showing me that He is my provider but more importantly, I believe that He is teaching me to be patient.

I am extremely thankful that the desktop works, but it is very slow. It takes 10-15 minutes for it to startup and open Microsoft Word, and it reboots by itself sometimes without any warning. The internet on my phone is also very slow, 10 times slower than the 3G speeds that I used to enjoy in Singapore (I know that 4G is now the in-thing). My tablet computer, the device I use to take notes in class, is also very slow, lagging badly if I have more than 5 pages of notes. This is something that I am not used to. In Singapore, I used to be almost obsessed with technology, always wanting to have the latest and the fastest devices, to want to do things more efficiently, in the shortest amount of time. Over time, I had become impatient, always seeking instant gratification without me knowing it. I believe God wants to take this mindset away from me. He wants me to slow down, not to be focused on getting things done faster in my own strength but to trust in His provision and His timing. He wants me to be comfortable with slowness. He is taking away my impatience and teaching me to be patient. There are times where God has shown me that if I strive to get things done on my own strength, I get tired and frustrated in the process. But when I give space for God to work, He does it in a way that is so much more meaningful and fulfilling, I get encouraged and motivated because I know that it is all God’s work. God has shown me that sometimes choosing to sleep and rest in Him can be the greatest step of faith to be taken for the day. The end result may be the same, but the lessons learnt and the shaping of character are completely different.

Another consequence of having such slow devices is that I realize that I do not spend as much time surfing the internet and checking Facebook. He has taken away my desire to be always connected, to read trivial Facebook and Twitter posts and replaced it with reading of books. I have never read so much in a long time (in 3 months, I have read almost half the Bible and maybe 7 other books)! I have learnt so much more from reading books than I have ever done by reading Facebook and Twitter. God has disconnected me from social media and reconnected me to a love of reading, which is far more enriching.

God is unconventional

Over the course of the past 3 months, God has shown me that He works in many different ways. He has opened my eyes to different perspectives of missions, church and outreaches.

I heard the testimony of a missionary couple working in Afghanistan for 30 years in the medical field, how her husband was killed by the Afghans but she continued to serve them. She spoke of how God has provided their needs but also shared that money being poured into short term missions could have been better used if sent to long term missionaries. God opened my mind to re-think the role, benefit and purpose of short term missions.

I heard pastors and church leaders sharing that their vision and mission was to build and equip people so that they may be sent out to start new ministries and churches. Their goal was not to bring more people into the church but rather, to bring church to the people. God opened my mind to re-think what the role the church should play: Is what the church doing now a true reflection of what we are called to do? Should the church be fundamentally inward looking or outward looking?

Through the various outreaches I have been involved in, God has opened my mind to re-think how outreaches can be done: Are we targeting a specific group (homeless, poor, working professionals, homosexuals, ex-offenders)? Is the focus of our outreach clear?

God has opened my mind to re-think how we measure success: Is success obtained when a large number of people come every week to church activities, to outreach events or are we looking at the depth of relationships that are being formed? To what extent do we value relationships,

intentionally seeking to develop depth in relationships or have we been focused on breadth of relationships by counting numbers?

God has opened my mind to re-think how to engage people. Is 1 to 1 mentoring beneficial, where the disciple learns only from one source and does not benefit from community? Are there platforms for artists to express themselves, to connect with other artists? Do we have platforms for people who are interested in sports or other activities to get involved in beyond simply organizing groups by age? Are groups static or dynamic? Are they to last for only a year or forever?

In these 3 months, God has been showing me, through firsthand experiences and from talking to people, that there are many ways in which He works, many of which are “unconventional” to me – Are we open to the way God works or have our mindsets been locked in so that we are afraid to try new things. The question that He continually poses to me is: Am I shortchanging myself by limiting God in my mind? Our God is greater and mightier than we can ever imagine. Let us start believing and trusting Him in all things great and small, to allow Him to do things in His time, by His way.

Samuel Tan

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

On any given Saturday you might spot Kelly Brady standing outside the local train station or on the campus of the community college, handing out copies of his Christian testimony to strangers.

You might assume he's some kind of itinerant evangelist or even a little eccentric. You probably wouldn't guess that he's really the senior pastor of a large church in an affluent community—but he is. And a few years ago, he saw a problem in his congregation.

"I was saddened by our church's lack of adult conversions. Then I took a look in the mirror. As the senior pastor, if I'm not sharing my faith, I shouldn't be surprised when our church isn't."

Drew Dyck, Editor of BuildingChurchLeaders.com

If you are having problems writing down your Personal Testimony, don't worry, The Vine is arranging for a professional trainer to give you a 2-hour session on "**How to write a Persuasive Testimony**". The training session will take place sometime next year after Chinese New Year. This session will help people of all ages. **Look out for it!**

CARE GROUP STUDY ON PHILIPPIANS 1 – NO MATTER WHAT!

In a recent Care Group meeting, we studied Philippians 1. There was already so much lesson that we could draw from Paul's letter to the Church in Philippi in Chapter 1 alone and surely there would be much more insight to gain as we progress in future meetings to the rest of the letter. It might be said that Paul was also addressing us and God would be answering his prayer for us that our love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight. (Philippians 1:9) My wife commented that the CG meeting was getting more and more interesting. May those who are missing out on the CG meetings take heed! ☺

Thanks to our CG Shepherd Martin Cheah who did much work to prepare the lesson material under the tutorship of Ps Andrew. The lesson material was easy to follow. As we were guided by the material to go through the Scripture verse by verse, the digestion of God's Word was a breeze and the lively discussion added zest to the spirit of fellowship. It was as though God spoke through Paul, and then Paul (via his letter) through our CG Shepherd to the CG members. The Church in Singapore is very much like the Church in Philippi in at least one sense – we all struggle in the face of trials and tribulations; we face hard knocks and doubts in our faith from time to time; and we often totter under the weight of circumstances and afflictions. The prayer of Paul must also be the prayer of our CG Shepherd with joy, because of our “partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in [us] will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:6)

It is also true for the Church in Singapore that there are people who preach Christ for the wrong reasons, some even to stir up trouble. However, there is no absence of those who preach out of goodwill, such as Paul, in defence of the gospel. No matter what, we know that ultimately Christ is preached. (Philippians 1:15-18) No matter what – It is clear from this that the way God works is not the way that human minds can grasp. A very good example is that in China, where Christianity is a minority religion and restrictions on religion used to be heavy, Christ is actually being preached to a rapidly growing number of Chinese who embrace the faith as they become pushed by rampant capitalism and therefore respond favorably to the pull of the gospel hope. And you know what – the Chairman of Amity Printing Co. Ltd (the only company authorized to print the Bible in China) said that over 100 million copies of the Bible have been printed in more than 90 languages (including ethnic minority languages) and distributed

globally. Certainly, no matter what, God can use all the pull and push factors, and Christ is preached even by people in chains (whether literally like Paul preaching to King Agrippa II, as Rev. Anthony shared on Sunday 11th Nov in his message from Acts 26:15-23; or figuratively like many among us Christians who feel that we are being shackled by the multifarious impediments to our Christian walk).

We learn from Paul that “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21) Before this learning, how many of us might have entertained the following thoughts?

- For to me, to live is to make lots of money and to die is to take the money with me for a luxurious afterlife.
- For to me, to live is to climb to the peak of the career mountain and to die is to be immortalized in the world by all the superlative eulogies my business kakis liberally pour out to my glory.
- For to me, to live is to enjoy all I can because life is short and to die is to be at peace with myself for having enjoyed myself to the fullest in this world.
- For to me, to live is _____ and to die is _____.

Finally, in Philippians 1, Paul exhorts all to live worthy of the Gospel: “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.” (Philippians 1:29-30)

No matter what!

JOHN LEE

P.S.

The CG meeting is getting more and more interesting, as my wife said. An open invitation is hereby extended to all who are interested to join. Our CG Shepherd Martin Cheah and all our members will welcome you with open arms.

JCC DIALECT GROUP'S OUTING ON 22 NOVEMBER 2012

It was very encouraging to see a full busload of 50 participants, including many senior citizens, enjoying the excursion on a weekday to places that they might not have gone on their own without the facilitation by the JCC Dialect Ministry.

We set off from Church at 9.30 a.m. The places of interest that we visited were: (1) The Unicurd Food Company at Senoko, (2) Woodlands Waterfront Park, (3) Fassler Gourmet Pte Ltd in Woodlands and (4) The Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall in Balestier.



At the Unicurd factory, the visitors listened with rapt attention as the friendly ambassador of the company explained the product range of tofu and their manufacturing methods.

The only thing not so pleasant for some of the senior folks who were mobility-challenged was that they had to climb two flights of stairs to see the factory floor. Looking on the positive side, it was an opportunity for some “forced” leg and aerobic exercise even for many of the younger ones.

Towards the end of the factory tour, we were treated to a sweet soya bean drink and many of us were only too happy to part with some money to take home some of the products on sale – hard tofu, soft tofu and bean-curd pudding (dòu huā).



From the Unicurd factory, we proceeded to the Woodlands Waterfront Park overlooking



Johor Baru. The view from the jetty was simply excellent. Before we tucked into our lunch, we broke out in song, singing Happy Birthday to one

of our senior aunties as she cut the birthday cake with good cheer. We had ample time to spare. It was relaxing at the park as everyone sauntered around, taking in the sprawling sight and fresh air. Before the trip, there was some apprehension that the noon weather might be too hot for comfort; but, as it turned out, the weather was quite fine – not hot, not cold, no rain – Great! Our “Hokkien Peng” (Dialect Troopers) and the men and women under their care must be silently singing adulations with the following lyrics:

*Chin Chia Ho, Lai Sin Ya So Chin Chia Ho (x2)
Goa Pai It Pai Ji Pai Sa Pai Si
Pai Go Pai Lak Kui E Le Pai
Chin Chia Ho, Lai Sin Ya So Chin Chia Ho*



Our next stop was the Fassler Gourmet, the salmon factory outlet in Woodlands, where raw fish is processed for wholesale and retail. Anybody can just drop in to buy factory-direct or even order in advance party platters of sushi. We had our eye-opening tour of various stations – Fish Descaling, Deboning, Salting, Smoking, Slicing, Sushi Tasting ... – Arh ... Sushi Tasting! You know, sushi is not cheap in the supermarket or restaurant and here we had free tasting. Those of you who did not join the tour – are you salivating just at the sight of Deacon Peter’s picture here?



Obviously, a number of us were not fully satisfied with the tasting; so we also bought home a good quantity of the



fresh fish, factory direct, securely packed into ice-boxes to keep in the freshness.



The final place of interest for the day was The Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial (晚晴园), which was located in a two-storey colonial style villa in Balestier. While some young folks may not be enthused with the story of a Chinese revolutionary like Sun (12 Nov 1866- 12 Mar 1925) and his link to us by



his establishment of a Singapore Chapter of his Alliance for Democracy (同盟会), the seniors in our tour group conducted their masterclass with their great knowledge of history. Their “touring commentaries” put to shame those who are supposed to be more educated and informed as students of history as a subject in school. Anyway, even if you don’t really bother about the “dryness” of historical narratives in words, you can still enjoy your visit to the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial just for the nostalgia with the pictures of old Singapore scenes and the bygone artifacts on display.



I am glad that I did not miss out on the excursion. Think of this: The excursion cost only \$5 per person and for this, air-con transport and a sumptuous lunch were included. I just read on the Internet that a certain staff club organized a one-day excursion to three places (Gardenia, Unicurd and a Bird’s Nest Outlet) for a fee of \$15 – \$18.

JOHN LEE

My Story

For my first 17 years, I grew up in a typical kampong in eastern Singapore, a mainly Chinese neighbourhood and predominantly Teochew. Growing up in a kampong was both carefree and an adventure. Our gang of mainly boys had our fill of stealing fruits, shooting birds, catching fish and any creatures in the swamps and rivers, and hours of playing various games including fire cracker war during Chinese New Year. We were not rich but comfortable, my father being an electrical contractor. One highlight was the many temple festivals celebrated in the kampong and nearby kampongs, not that my family celebrate these festivals, but because of the Chinese opera and associated food stalls. Both of my parents were not religious. My Mum celebrated the few mandatory Chinese festivals so as to be in line with most Chinese families. She was very open and when Apollo landed on the moon, she decided to stop worshipping the moon. My Dad did not really believe in anything, I was told that years ago, in a fit of anger, he even threw the family altar into the “jumban” (toilet). Maybe that is why I never saw any altar in my house. My school was a Catholic boys’ school where my brothers and most of my cousins attended. We could form teams for any game.



My first jolt from my comfort zone was when my Mum had a stroke when I was about ten. Surprisingly, I cannot remember being shocked or saddened. It was just an event. However, I remember the help that we received from many neighbours, many uncles and aunties from my Mum’s side. Without much training, very quickly I learned to wash, cook and clean for the family. My five older sisters and brothers were either working or married. Another brother, two years older, has low IQ and my younger sister could not help much. I guess that was when I learned to cook without any recipe. Ironically, I am now a cleaner in a school canteen. Another jolt was when my father lost his job when the Royal Navy withdrew from Singapore and was jobless for a few years. Fortunately, living in a kampong was low-cost. Although, my mum still suffered much physical disabilities from her stroke, she was able to rally everyone to start a small business, making and selling teochew kueh. Carrying baskets of freshly fried kueh and hawking at the crack of dawn became a routine. Back then, I don’t remember this as hard work, actually, it was fun with many neighbours being very supportive (my Mum’s kuehs are actually very good).

Being in a Catholic school, I was exposed to the worship of God. For the month of May and September, there were long prayers before school for the entire school. In addition, our school was fortunate to have a few very dedicated “brothers” and my secondary school principals were also “brothers”. In addition, when my Dad was jobless, I was given free foods and uniform from the Catholic Charity, St Vincent De Paul. Without any conscious decision, I began to pray every night, reciting the Lord’s Prayer and Hail Mary, as taught in school. I even roped in my younger sister to pray. Praying was just something that I found comforting and was not because of any issues or searching. There was a Christian mission troop from a nearby town which came regularly, telling stories, playing games and the best thing were the food, drinks and sweets. These were really treats for kampong kids who do not have much.

In 1977, when I was in pre-university, one of my classmates invited me to the Billy Graham crusade at the National Stadium. This was the first time that I heard that Jesus Christ is my Saviour. I even walked down to the field to accept Jesus as my Saviour. I was glad to receive my first Bible, a paperback copy and I think it was a RSV. Nevertheless, no church actually followed-up with me and I was soon drafted into the Army.

In 1980, I received a training award to study engineering in the Australian Military Academy. In God’s goodness, he provided a Christian to be my only course-mate from Singapore. And, today he is the god-father of Amanda. God had already prepared mentors for me there. One of my seniors (Yam Ah Mee) is a Christian and he really cared for us. And, he introduced his classmate, an Australian (Ian Rankin), to follow-up with me using Navigator’s materials. I remember spending early Sunday mornings with Ian doing Bible study and later, Ah Mee would pack a few of us into his old beetle for church.

Having to study and train in a military academy was not easy, there were high demands for academic excellence from being a SAF award holder and also tough military training. Many a time, it was lonely and frightening, but God was always there. As the song goes, “with Christ in the vessel, we can ride with the storms”, this is really true. Many times I had doubts that I could meet the academic requirements. God provided many Christian brothers and sisters to support me, especially in later years when Ah Mee left upon graduation. One group is the Overseas Christian Fellowship (OCF) which was mainly in the nearby university (ANU) and also the

student fellowship in the Military Academy. Attending the annual national OCF conference was very encouraging and fun. The love shown by fellow Christian students even those that you only meet at the conferences was Christ in action.

God is gracious and He provided a soul mate before I returned from Australia and she is now my wife. After searching every Sunday for a church in Singapore, God had a curious way of directing us to a church directly below our first home. This was where Pastor Nelson ministered to us and later, the now Bishop, Terry Kee, was our marriage counsellor and married us in a service which was in Teochew.

This is my story, how we were joined to the Lutheran family in Singapore and the web of events that led us to Jurong Christian Church, which we joined sometime in the early 1990s.

Goh Young Kwang

My Brush With Thyroid.....little Sharing

Over the past 4 to 5 months or so, nine out of ten persons I met have asked me, "You have lost quiet a lot of weight, are you on a diet or exercise routine. How have you been?"

I thought it was OK to lose some weight but since I was losing weight daily, I became concerned. What is the reason or reasons causing it?

So I decided to have a second Medical Check, blood test again, this round in detail. Confirmed - I was suffering from a Thyroid problem. Now I am taking prescription medication to control the Thyroid Glands.

It is a great surprise to me and I am also wondering WHY?

Thyroid symptoms caused me to be lethargic, weak and at times shivering. As a typical Lutheran I prayed and asked the LORD to have mercy and grant me healing.

Through this close brush with major illness, I realize the frailty of life. Our LIFE is in HIS Good Hand. By His MERCY and GRACE let me press on to finish the race.

Tony Koh

ALL GLORY BE UNTO GOD

On 27 Nov 12 when I was talking to Debra via Viber, she told me that she went for a prayer meeting and somehow the Holy Spirit just prompted her to pray for my second brother Richard and his wife, she did not know why but just obeyed. I told my mum and Martin about it and we were puzzled.

Two days later on 29 Nov at 3pm, my mum called to inform me that my sister-in-law was knocked by a car and was sent to TTSH's A&E department. My brother quickly rushed down and we were very worried and I started to pray and ask God for protection. When my brother reached the hospital, he called to inform me that my sister-in-law did not suffer any serious injury.

The accident happened when my sister-in-law was using the pedestrian crossing. Before she could reach the other side, a car came by, brushed against her and knocked her down. It seems that the brakes of the car were not functioning properly so she had a scratch and was sent for x-ray. Thanks be to God everything was fine, there were no injuries. Now we know why Debra was prompted by the Holy Spirit to intercede and pray for protection for my second brother and his wife.

Through this incident, I learn that we must always listen to the voice of God and be sensitive to His promptings. The spiritual world is very real, we must learn to always pray for one another and not be too caught up with the things of this world and neglect to pray and listen to HIS voice. I really want to thank the Lord for his protection over my family and to give **“Him All The Glory And Praise”**. Amen



Joo See

“...for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” (Philippians 2:13)