

The Vine Committee

Editors:

Martin Cheah
mart5003@yahoo.com
 John Lee
jbislee@gmail.com

Printer:

Nick Wong
digi_ics@yahoo.com

Writers this issue:

John Lee
 Diana Koh
 Gabriel Lim
 Jonathan Tan (Jr)
 Chong Yew Moi

Photos:

Martin Cheah
 Nick Wong



The church have been in the news lately as the City Harvest case comes to court and there was a case of the MOM vs FCBC and also a case against a Catholic priest of St Joseph's Church.

Does the church of Christ need such publicity? *"If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?"* (1Corinthians 6:1-2)

The Apostle Paul questioned the church in those days about their purpose for bringing to civilian court disputes which they should settle themselves. He reasons that *"The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already."* (1Corinthians 6:7)

Indeed, evangelism during these trying times get more difficult as these cases come to the forefront of the news. I had suggested to my colleague that if a person becomes a Christian, he will change for the better. The retort was: "Even Christians cheat....." Hopefully, we will not find any Christians lying under oath. Many times I have had to explain that there is no such thing as a "white" lie and this is on assumption that it was for a trivial matter like, "My boss is not in!" when he is standing right next to you.

Do all these news shake your beliefs? It should not. Our faith is not based on the leaders' or other Christians' failures and faults. We are all sinners and thus not perfect. Our faith rests on Jesus Christ the perfect sinless man and until someone proves Jesus to be a sinner, our faith in His perfect sacrifice on the Cross for our sins will still save us.

Do not look at the failings of our brothers and fall away from faith. *"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set*

before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” (Hebrews 12:2-3)

Do we become afraid to go out and evangelize because we fear that people will throw back into our faces the perceived suspect behavior of Christians in the press? The solution is found in 1Peter 2:11-12, “*Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*”

We have a 2 part strategy to be a Christ-like church, that is, to live the Great Commandment (Love) and the Great Commission (Evangelism). Note that it has to be done in that sequence. You have to love your fellow man before you can evangelize to him. After all, love drives a parent to jump into a pool to save his drowning child while strangers will stand by the sidelines and watch.

Do you pray for the salvation of your pre-believing spouse, children, relatives, friends, neighbours and colleagues, the government, the mission fields?

As I am writing this, it is my daughter’s birthday and she is over 6,000 km away in Brisbane where winter is turning to spring and the insects are coming out. She is over there jumping in fear as a cockroach had entered her room. What can I do over the Viber? I told her that the cockroach is probably more afraid of her. Thankfully, she has housemates who will take care of the problem for her. We pray for her everyday that God will watch over her and that is what He does.

Start praying today that God will “*send out workers into his harvest field.*” Be open that the “worker” will be you. May God empower you to go out into His harvest field.

Martin Cheah

25 August – Dialect Service – many were moved by Rev Emily Tan’s message and some came up to receive Christ while others came up for prayer.



From Burnout to Recharge

Have you put yourself out of service in the Church?



Are you burnt out like an overused light bulb, or are you rusted out like an unused car?

At the recent leaders' retreat at YWCA, I learnt that there is a difference between being "burnt out" and being "rusted out", although both incapacitate people from performance.



A light bulb gives out light. The Bible tells us that we are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14). Therefore, we are like the light bulb doing useful deeds in shining forth light before others so that they may see their right way forward and give glory to our Father in heaven. However, a light bulb cannot work on and on non-stop, without a break. If it does so, it will result in a burnout,

whereby it ceases to function to produce its former glorious brightness. Many of us have talents, and we apply our gifts to joyfully serve others. There is joy, but there is also hard work and sacrifice. We need to always keep track of our condition in order to continue effective work.

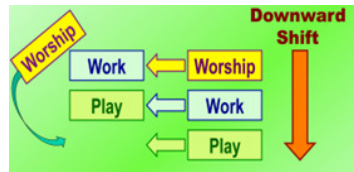
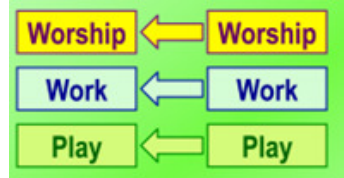
Think about this question: Can a light bulb blow if not for diligently carrying out its task of being a channel of blessing, drawing energy from a source and then releasing the energy in the form of useful light to brighten up the surroundings and benefit people? Similarly, Christian leaders who suffer burnouts are the workers who labour for the sake of others. They do not waste away their talents by idleness to become useless in service. They do not rust out. Yet, unfortunately, they may unwittingly become helpless when they suffer the human equivalent of a light bulb burnout – i.e., suffer from physical, mental and emotional exhaustion due to excessive demands upon energy, emotions and resources.

According to the retreat speaker, Mr Lim Geok Seng, people who are likely to get burnt out are those who are caring, devoted, hardworking and having high expectations. The common situation is that the few busy leaders are burnt out while the idle majority are rusted out. Unrealistic expectations, as well as unequal distribution of resources and responsibility, are potential causes of burnouts.

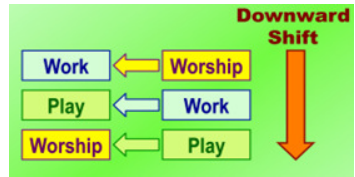
An important message for leaders is that they need to be properly aligned in their worship, work and play. They must worship at worship, work at work, and play at play, as illustrated by the diagram. What the speaker means is that we need to

concentrate on worship when we worship, concentrate on work when we work, and concentrate on play when we play. Each item (worship, work, play) has its significance and implication to our overall well-being and performance. He shows how these look like in a stack when they are properly aligned, with worship at the top because we ascribe our ultimate worth to it as we direct our worship to God.

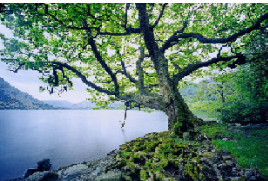
There is a saying that God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supplies. We are not doing God’s work God’s way when we allow worship to fall from the top of the stack to the bottom. This leads to a misalignment whereby work (instead of worship) becomes our ultimate worth and our preoccupation. We define ourselves in terms of work, drawing on our own limited resources instead of on God’s resources. In other words, we are out of focus in all that we do:



- **We worship at work.** Success at work now defines our worth. (We glory in our ability and achievement.)
- **We work at play.** Play is no longer for relaxation and recreation. It shows our ability and achievement. (Think of people at play to win.)
- **We play at worship.** Focus of worship is not to glory God but now for our enjoyment and entertainment. (Think of people who attend service to “get something out of it” instead of giving their heart to God.)



Mr Lim advises that we need to do a reset to factory default from time to time; i.e., to go back to God’s Design of a proper alignment of our worship, work and play. The next question he puts to us is this: “Are we connected to the Power Source and drawing constantly on that unlimited supply of Life?”



God is our Power Source. A Christian who is connected to the Power Source is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. (Ps. 1:3)

Our Lord also speaks to us:

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, “Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” – John 7:38

Come to Jesus

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30 ESV)

The word “labor” in Greek (*kopiao*) is in the active present tense, and means “to exert great effort to the point of exhaustion to become emotionally fatigued and discouraged.” The phrase “heavy laden” in Greek (*phortizo*) is in the past perfect tense, and means “to be overloaded and overburdened like beasts of burden.”

When we “labor” we are active, self-imposing a burden on ourselves as we pursue impossible goals and ideals, ending in failure and despair. On the other hand, when we are “heavy laden”, we are passive in taking on what is imposed by others – the rigid demand and unreal expectation – risking penalty and rejection. The agony may not just come from external hardships but more so from internal pain and reaction. Whether active (we “labor”) or passive (we are “heavy laden”), we tend to look first for every possible solution from personal human perspectives. Only when all else fail do we come to Jesus. This is not good. The Lord says, “Come to me ... I will give you rest.” It is Christ who gives us rest; external situations may not change, but we will have peace in heart. He is not telling us to go to him only as a last resort.

Take His yoke

Note that Jesus tells his disciples to take up their cross instead of His Cross in Matt 16:24, Mk 8:34 and Luke 9:23; but He says “Take my yoke” instead of “Take your own yoke” in Matt 11:29. Obviously, it would be too heavy a burden on us to take His Cross. Our Lord is “gentle and lowly in heart”, not harsh on us. Take His yoke and “you will find rest for your souls.”



Taking His yoke is to be yoked together with Christ. He is on the other side bearing the weight. Taking on His yoke will free us from all self-imposed burden. Doing so, we are working with Him as He carries the load. The truth in the statement “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” is clear. It shows the Lord’s caring heart.

Are you showing signs of burnout? Do you identify correctly the causes of your burnout? Think about these:

- Is the alignment issue where people “worship at work, work at play and play at worship” a real problem in our church? How do you suggest we can tackle this?
- Why would people and leaders run on empty (like a car going out of petrol/power)? How can you prevent it from happening to you?

My Reflection

The best thing about being in a room listening to someone delivering gems of wisdom is not just about the flavoursome spiritual morsels that we imbibe from the speaker who has been blessed to be a blessing to us, but is also about the stirring of the Spirit within each and every hearer of God’s message. With the work of the Spirit, the message has the power to increase beyond the parameters of human plan. Our brother-in-Christ, Mr Lim Geok Seng, allowed himself to be used as a vessel conveying God’s blessings to us, but God did not stop at that. As we moved into separate small groups for chummier discussions, we felt that time seemed to be always running short, because we just had so much to bless one another with our unique, as well as common, insights and experiences.



Now we know better how to make effort to move from BURNOUT to RECHARGE with the Power Source.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to Mr Lim Geok Seng for making available his PowerPoint slides that enabled valuable recall of his message to us. The pictures / graphics above are taken from the slides.



JOHN LEE

Reflections from JCC Ministry Leaders' Retreat (8 – 9 Aug)

Have you been to retreats? Have you ever been part of the planning for a retreat? As leaders in JCC, we all share fond memories of retreats and this one is no different from the others with its share of biblical goodness and sweetness in fellowship. Having attended the recent Ministry Leaders' Retreat at YWCA from 8 – 9 August, I am thrilled to witness and share about how the Lord ministered to us when we retreated into His presence.

This retreat drew leaders from all facets of the church life to the cozy venue of YWCA Fort Canning Lodge that we called "home" for 2 days. Being used to youth retreats held at a variety of chalets and church level retreats at resorts in neighboring countries, I did not find it hard to settle into clean and comfortable rooms with a free-flow of food at mealtimes. Such was the excellent planning done by Christina and the pastoral team to bless us leaders.



We were well fed at the retreat. But to only mention about physical food will be an understatement. The newly renovated café lodge where we had our meals ensured that even the pickiest member had something good to say about the food. A spread consisted of 2 staples and multiple dishes from crayfish to popiah, laksa to bobo chacha, ice-cream to an assortment of cakes. Although many of us were filled to the brim, we did not waiver in our attention to feast on God's Word during the teaching and sharing sessions.



Mr Lim Geok Seng, our insightful speaker, delivered the 3-part series titled "Soul Care for Leaders", addressing the following issues:

- From burnout to recharge
- From bondage to release and
- From busyness to restfulness.



In a relaxed manner, he systematically presented the causes and effects, symptoms and progression of these conditions that Christians frequently face. We found it easy to identify with the issues from our years of ministry and sought solace from the Bible and one another. Interestingly, I realized that the discussion sessions affirmed our common experiences and brought us closer together. It was inevitable that we recognized the need to surrender to the Lord in prayer. Praise God for His comfort and empowerment in response.

A retreat is never quite a retreat if there is no time for silent meditation and solitude in God’s presence. Under the guidance of Pastor Andrew, we immersed ourselves in silence after soaking in God’s Word. After the initial round of meditation, we eased into encountering God through being still and expectantly seeking the Holy Spirit to work in us. We were encouraged by the practice of seeking the Lord as a community. My roommate claimed it to be the most impactful experience in the retreat. Indeed, when we waited upon the Lord, the living God spoke to us individually. As the Lord declared in Jeremiah 29:13, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

Last but not least, I thank God for His personal touch on each of us when we had a morning walk with the Lord among the greenery of Fort Canning Park. Rev Anthony urged us to enjoy the presence of the Lord and examine our individual life and church life as we, each alone, contemplated God’s creation around us with our five senses. The creation testifies to God’s greatness and goodness. In addition, spending the morning with God quietened our hearts to listen to Him and rest in Him.



When it was time to gather and share some insights about matters revealed by God regarding JCC, we were amazed by the similarity and oneness of God’s heart for JCC. Jesus loves JCC and has a wonderful plan for us. Hence we should boldly continue to rely on God and delight in His presence for our individual life and church life in the years ahead.



Jonathan Tan

Cambodia Mission Trip Diary

Throughout the trip, God taught me many valuable lessons that I would not have learnt in Singapore. He opened my eyes to see the world from a wider perspective. It was indeed a wonderful and well-spent time, serving God and engaging Him.

Before embarking on our trip, we faced a problem, we were unsure whether we would be able to clear the customs. Our baggage contained milk powder and other gifts we would like to donate to the people in Cambodia. However, with prayer and trust, we managed to clear the customs, both in Singapore and Cambodia, with ease. Thank God!

Upon reaching Cambodia, I was a little uncomfortable with the many things that were out of my usual life in Singapore. (for example, the dirty toilets and the messy traffic.) Yet, it made me realise how blessed I am to be living in such a well-developed country in Singapore.

It was a time of fellowship with my brothers and sisters on the journey to Kampong Chnnang as we spent our time in the van singing Christian songs!

Thankfully, when we reached the Kampong, we were blessed with a nice room to stay and a sumptuous meal. We also made friends with the interns in the church, as we interacted over dinner and had a good time talking and teasing one another.

2nd Day:

We started the next day painting the outside of the centre. It was quite tough for me, as I had never done so much painting before. Also, I wanted to do my best so that I could look good in front of others, not being a slacker. However, while I was painting, I realised that I had missed the entire point of this trip, which was to serve God and not impress man. As I began to dwell on this fact and place my focus on God, wanting just to please Him, I became more productive and began to enjoy what I was doing.

During lunchtime, I witnessed the feeding programme (a part of the daily bread ministry). As I was serving the children food, I saw hundreds of kids with smiles on their faces as they came forward to collect lunch. Each one of them gave thanks to God when they received the food in



their hands.

This made me ponder over the fact that again, God has blessed me so much that I have never truly appreciated a meal. I never had to worry about my 3 meals and would eat whatever I wanted to. Yet some of the children in the kampong could not even afford to have one meal a day.

I learnt to thank God for the little things in life, about how blessed I am to have my 3 meals everyday.

Later, we had Children's English classes. We were told to assist the teachers in the classes. However, as it was raining, the teachers did not turn up and we had to conduct the lessons. Seeing the children so desperate to learn, we stepped up to teach them numbers through number games, and other simple words through Christian songs. It was the eagerness of these kids to learn that had me taken aback and realise how I have been taking education for granted! In turn, the little ones taught me how to count in Khmer! It was indeed a joyful time interacting with the children.

3rd day:

On the third day, we continued with the painting of the interior of the centre, which was the sanctuary. I was appointed the wiper and had to rush to wipe off stains when the paint dripped. It was a tougher job as compared to the previous day, as I had to rush to everyone's call. However, I was not alone; thanks to the interns, Chan thon and Rus, who offered to help me generously. I even bonded with them through the painting and wiping, forging closer friendship! It was a well-spent day serving God with all my strength.

4th day:

In the morning, we went to visit the school in Kampong Chnnang. One thing I noticed when I first stepped into the classrooms was that the classrooms were dimly lit and none of them had fans. Back in Singapore, we would complain if we do not get classrooms with air-conditioner. The children in Cambodia, however, were far different from us. They were paying attention to what was taught and focusing on their work despite the not-so-ideal conditions.

After that, we had the children's camp that we spent many weeks in Singapore planning for. It was one which we hoped would inspire many and touch children with God's Word through the games



and the activities. The theme of the camp was: Love God, Love People.

There was an overwhelming response of the children's camp. We planned for about 80 children. However, there were more than 200 who came. Praise God! ☺ As there were too many people present, some of our planned activities could not take place. However, by faith in God, we continued to run the camp through worship and sing-a-long which the children enjoyed very much. It was indeed a joy to see the children, who were shy at first and unwilling to do the actions, dancing and singing their hearts out to God.

What touched me was the number of people volunteering when the pastor asked who wanted to give thanks for the milk we were about to distribute to the children. So many people were raising their hands and fighting to be the one giving thanks to the Father, unlike in Singapore where it is hard to find youths and children so passionate to talk to God.

Thank God for the successful children's camp. For me, it was a blessing to be among the children, interacting with them and helping them to draw close to God! I also learnt to have faith when faced with impromptu challenges from God, just to trust and obey Him in whatever circumstances!

5th day:

It was a Sunday and my first time attending service in the centre. I was greatly inspired during the praise and worship session as I saw the people praising God with such enthusiasm, jumping and dancing for joy, lifting up their hands and voices to God in praise for all the good things He has done for them. It was not the music or the atmosphere that captivated me, but seeing them truly worshipping God, giving their 200% to God who deserves all praises!

After that, we went on a trip to explore the village, to the houses of some interns, the fish farms and etc. It was a fresh experience for me, someone who had almost never stepped out of the city, to experience how it was like to live in rural areas. I found out that people can lead simple lives and be happier than us who are usually too caught up in our work life.

In the afternoon, we continued with the second day of children's camp. It was a rather smooth sailing day for us as we carried out many activities; namely, praise and worship, games and craftwork.



I was most surprised when doing the friendship band, that God allowed the children to not only enjoy doing the friendship bands, but also to comprehend the meaning behind the 3 colours: Black, which signifies our sinful nature; Red, which is Jesus' blood that cleanses us from sin; and white, meaning that we are purified from sin.

In the evening, we attended another service – a youth service. It was heartening to know that though most of the youths had examinations the next day and lived faraway from the centre, they still made their way (by bicycle or by foot) to the centre to attend service. Also, as I interacted with them, I realised that some of their family members were non-Christians who discouraged them from coming to church, yet they persevered through their faith and attended service week after week.



The 6th day:

When we were told that we were planting trees and building fences, we thought that it would be a simple task and wondered why a full day was allocated. However, it was far tougher than all of us thought, as we spent hours digging holes for the fences, making sure that it was 70cm deep, and planting trees. It was a day of hard work as we toiled under the sun, in the absence of cold drinks and air-conditioning. We could only settle for plain water. However, through this, we were taught not to fix our eyes on the luxuries of life but truly on God who is the provider of everything!

The last day:

As we reached the city, I was reminded of my conversation with one of the youths who has never stepped out of the village. And I Thank God again that I am so blessed.

Overall, it was an awesome trip to Cambodia, and I really drew closer to God.

Every morning and night we would have praise and worship. It was just dwelling in God, knowing that he is our shepherd, who gives us peace and how we should remain in Him, etc. This kind of meditation in God's word every day and night was a hard thing to do in Singapore given the amount of work thrown to us everyday, and it was truly a time to strengthen my relationship with God.

Also, as I observed my surroundings, about the children and the differences between their lives and mine, (an example would be how they are happy wearing the same shirt every day, even when their clothes are torn and tattered), I was reminded of the passage in Matthew 6: 25-27 *“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”* How I am so blessed by my Heavenly Father with food, clothing and other basic necessities in addition to His great love for me!



Devotions around the village also allowed me to truly rest in God spiritually and mentally, as I look around and appreciate God’s creation. The meditations allowed me to tone down from the stressful and busy life in Singapore and engage God personally.



In conclusion, it was a really fruitful trip and I would like to go back to Cambodia on a mission trip again! :D

Diana Koh



I would like to thank God for safety while travelling. I almost lost my passport when going to Cambodia. Thank God that He was with us, protecting us and leading us to the centre there. Not only that, He had also blessed us with good health so that all of us were able to serve Him through the activities there.

Thank God for the good weather there. It was monsoon season. In the afternoon it would usually rain, which was good since the rain cooled down the temperature. The rain is also the people’s source of water, besides groundwater. They pray that God would provide rain every day. Though the rain disrupted our painting of the walls, it also provided rest for us. It was

some sort of a break time for us, considering that we Singaporeans always want to get the job done quick and fast.

I want to give thanks to God for the smooth running of the programs. We had spent months preparing for the 7 days there. We had programs such as a 2-day children camp, painting, building of fence, planting trees and house visitations. Many of these activities we had seldom or never done before, so they could be referred to as 'abnormal' activities. It was an experience for many of us. Thank God for the strength and the perseverance to endure these energy-draining activities.

I would like to thank both the mission team and the locals in Cambodia. These were the people who made the whole trip a success. The enthusiasm and unity of the team was one of the key factors making the whole trip fun and interesting. It was enjoyable working with this team to accomplish the tasks. The locals there were all friendly and loving. They treated us like we were part of their family. We got to know them bit by bit through small conversations and jokes. We hope these friendships will last for a long time.

I am privileged to have such an opportunity to share the love of God with the people there. I was much encouraged by the children's passion for Christ. They could pray non-stop with power and conviction. I feel that Christians should have a strong passion for Christ, to seek Him earnestly. We may be blessed with many material things, but they are definitely spiritually blessed.

I have learnt that unpredictable things can always happen to us. Initially we were expecting 80 – 100 children for the children camp. However, it turned out that God blessed us with 200 children, double of what we had expected! Though we were glad that so many children came, we realized that some of our initially planned programs were not suited for such a huge crowd. In the end we had to cancel them and change our whole program on the spot. God is always with us, no matter whether we see Him or not. He helped us pass through the difficulties though it was a lot of *impromptus*.

I have also learnt to be contented with what I have. The children in Cambodia don't have luxuries. They have no internet, no technology, no shopping centers or parks with lights.

Gabriel Lim

FREEDOM OF CHOICE TO BELIEVE

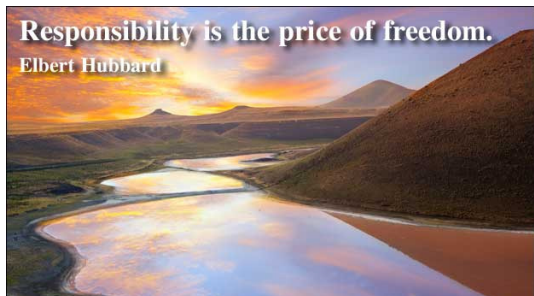
“I wouldn't call myself an atheist. I neither deny nor accept that there is a God,” said our former Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, in his new book¹.

“So I do not laugh at people who believe in God. But I do not necessarily believe in God - nor deny that there could be one.”

We can all understand. Mr Lee is not alone in this world in his “belief” in uncertainty, or ambivalence. There are people who call him an agnostic. An online dictionary defines an agnostic as:

- 1)
 - a. One who believes that it is impossible to know whether there is a God.
 - b. One who is sceptical about the existence of God but does not profess true atheism.
- 2) One who is doubtful or noncommittal about something.

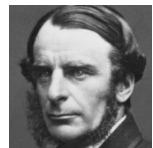
I believe in the freedom of belief. In other words, I believe in human free will; not in belief under compulsion lest the sincerity of one's belief becomes questionable and the belief becomes worthless whereby it would be better if the person honestly declares his unbelief. However, there is a saying that there is no such thing as absolute freedom. Everybody who makes a decision has been subject to the influences on his life past and present. This non-absolute freedom comes with a price we must be willing to pay. This price is called RESPONSIBILITY:



May I say that it is also about responsibility for one's well-being, both temporal and everlasting?

Charles Kingsley² said:

- “Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything beautiful, for beauty is God's handwriting.”
- “There are 2 freedoms – the false, where a man is



¹ Book title: One Man's View of the World

² **Charles Kingsley** (12 June 1819 – 23 January 1875) was a priest of the Church of England, a university professor, historian and novelist.

free to do [decide] what he likes; the true, where he is free to do [decide] what he ought.”

I have friends who are agnostics or atheists. There are also those who say, “I don’t believe in religion” or “I don’t believe in anything; I believe only in myself.” Hidden within their statements is either “innocence” or indifference. It is clear to me that a true belief in “no religion” is a belief (or conviction) in itself except that we don’t coin the word “religion” to define that particular conviction about there being no God or no life beyond our rational existence. Indifference can be the result of ennui (world-weariness), when we sink our soul into languor just like a drunkard sinking into oblivion to avoid the issues that seem too much trouble to worry, but **the issues don’t go away and will confront us again at a time when we are forced to wake up from our physical/spiritual stupor.**

We are responsible for the consequences of our choice, even if our choice is to sit on the fence or to cherish our “tidak apa attitude” (apathy) towards what is in store for us in the near or eternal future.

Our non-absolute freedoms are subject to the law of society and the law of nature. We are really free only within confines. There are truths that we cannot bend, whether we want to consciously or willingly embrace them or not. In our past childlike naïve rebellion against the truth that was communicated to us, we have grown in wisdom to recognize the price we have to pay for the freedom we had relished to rebel; going forward, does this hindsight wisdom convert into foresight wisdom to insure ourselves against having to pay a heavier price? I welcome freedom or the free will that God (or whoever, if you don’t believe in God) has granted us, and I agree with Ronald Reagan³ that “Freedom prospers when religion is vibrant and the rule of law under God is acknowledged.”



I emphasize that I welcome freedom. I salute freedom of belief. Yet, I recognize that there is nothing absolute about it. In support of a harmonious community, I heed Nelson Mandela’s advice that “to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”



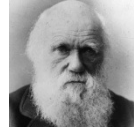
Therefore, I don’t laugh at others for their beliefs. I respect the freedom of my friends and the freedom of myself to make our choices of belief – whether it is:

- Belief in “something” or belief in “nothing” or

³ 40th President of the United States (1981–1989).

- Belief in “all is well if we don’t bother to contemplate anything that was, that is, and that will be”.

Do you ever contemplate the high significance of a right belief and the possible dire consequences of a wrong belief? If you do, it means that you bother to seek the truth and banish the “tidak apa” temptation. Even Charles Darwin⁴ tried. In 1879, he wrote, “In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God.— I think that generally (& more and more so as I grow older) but not always, that an agnostic would be the most correct description of my state of mind.”⁵ He did struggle about the existence of God. However, there is controversy about Darwin’s “death-bed” conversion to Christianity.⁶



As for me and my belief, I am satisfied that the heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands (Ps 19:1); and since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made. (Rom 1:19)

JOHN LEE

Dear Readers,

I put in the photos of all the personalities whom John quoted in his article above so that you will believe these people existed. Some people need to see to believe but “*blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*” (John 20:29)

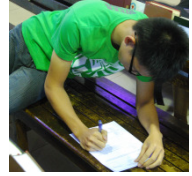
Editor

⁴ Darwin was a British scientist who laid the foundations of the theory of evolution.

⁵ <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/entry-12041>

⁶ (<http://carm.org/secular-movements/evolution/did-darwin-become-christian-his-deathbed>)

Happenings in August



Martin Shield Bible Quiz 2013 was a challenging event with six teams competing but a

youth team finally emerged the champions this year.

How did they manage to do it? **Study, lor!**



Over the Hari Raya and National Day holidays, the leadership of JCC had a spiritual retreat at the YWCA. Doesn't seem so from the photos but it was serious stuff (see John Lee's article on page 3).



On 3rd August, the Dialect Team again joined the Boys' Brigade to bring cheer to the elderly at Bo Tien Home. While the boys entertained them with games, Deacon Peter Cheong managed to play a Chinese musical instrument to entertain them.



TO INVEST OR NOT?

Recently I came across a link to a promotion of an Investment Newsletter which purport to guarantee financial gains if we follow the advice of the investment guru who does all the technical analysis for us investment dummies. Nothing new under the sun except that this investment guru claims to be an ex-pastor and now a financial expert seen on some TV news.

If you watched the link, it is the usual hard sell promo which keeps repeating on how much you can earn through investing, eg. turning \$40,000 to over \$300,000. So, I had to refer to some investment experts in our midst for advice on how true is this. The methodology used is standard practice according to the experts but the advertising strategy isn't.

How does an ex-pastor push his product? Obviously, he uses Bible verses to support his claims. He starts by emphasizing that the **love** of money is the root of all evil and that money is neutral. He brings up Solomon's wisdom in making money and then he goes to the parable of the talents.

Here is where his target audience is. He is concentrating on investment dummies who "bury" their talents instead of investing it. He is not concerned about the greedy or lovers of money because these people will certainly play the market and get burned. He is saying that those people who do not invest (probably with him) are like the servant who buried the talent.

Times have changed. During Bible times, putting the money in the bank will reap interest but these endtimes, putting the money in the bank will result in losses due to inflation being higher than interest rates. So do we have to invest to avoid being the lazy servant? I have just received back the capital for one of my investments after 5 years and there was no interest because one of the shares in the basket failed to profit. Good thing it was a capital guaranteed product. Isn't that worse than leaving it in the fixed deposit?

Am I the lazy servant because investment is not my cup of tea? Two of my sources agree that we should not invest if we don't do our homework. Should we all then spend our time studying the market trends, financial trends and sentiment trends like the experts?

Is not investing equal to burying your talent?

Martin Cheah

Durian Care Group

How would you define “Care Group”? A group coming regularly together and caring for each other. Quite right. But I think there is more to it. In the Christian context, our God has to be the center of our “Care Group”. 1 John 4:19 says “*we love because He first loved us*”. So our caring, which is an outward expression of love, should be a godly one - pure, sincere and loving.

The way JCC structures our Care Groups should be wholesome. There has to be a balance between worshipping God, praying, Bible study, fellowship and caring for each other. Each Care Group member should actively participate in every component to make the group as a unit, vibrant and growing. For Taman Jurong Care Group, we aspire to grow as such.

During our last CG session, we had more than our usual portion of fellowship. Jennifer came to our meeting with a bagful of durians. After the session, we adjourned for a durian feast. Most of us love the “King-of-fruit” but we are not so skillful in prying open the spiky husk. Kin Cheong and Cecilia had the laborious honor of serving us.



Overall, the feast was wonderful. But not everyone consumed the fruit. Want to know who abstained?

Thanks, Jen. When will be our next round of feasting on durian?



Chong Yew Moi