

The Vine Committee

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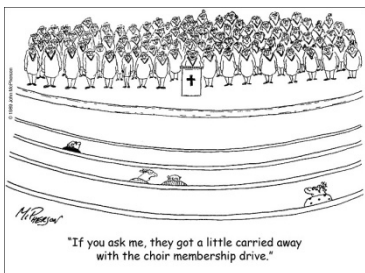


We tried out a new style of worship for one Sunday, without musical instruments. This style of worship is not unheard of in Christendom. In fact, according to Catholic Encyclopedia, for almost a thousand years Gregorian

chant, without any instrumental or harmonic addition, was the only music used in connection with the liturgy. This is what I gather from: <http://www.christianitytoday.com>

“Most church fathers saw the use of instruments in Jewish worship as a "childish" weakness, less glorifying to God than words of praise. In pagan worship, instrumental music and debauchery were often linked. Unaccompanied vocal music continued to be the norm in Christian worship for centuries. Then, in about the 10th or 12th century, Western Christians began to use the organ in the liturgy.”

“The Reformation kicked off large-scale worship wars. Catholics retained instrumental and organ music, Calvinists opted for unaccompanied congregational psalm-singing, and Lutherans adopted a mix of instrumental and vocal music.”



Imagine the cost savings to churches that practise acappella worship. No need for musical instruments and elaborate sound systems which can easily amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Will this be God's direction for us?

Martin Cheah

FROM BUSYNESS TO RESTFULNESS

The Bible carries a lesson from the ant. Here is the message:

“You lazy fool, look at an ant. Watch it closely; let it teach you a thing or two. Nobody has to tell it what to do. All summer it stores up food; at harvest it stockpiles provisions. So how long are you going to laze around doing nothing? How long before you get out of bed? A nap here, a nap there, a day off here, a day off there, sit back, take it easy—do you know what comes next? Just this: You can look forward to a dirt-poor life, poverty your permanent houseguest!” – Prov. 6:6-11 (MSG)

It is good to be busy, to be occupied with useful things instead of giving ourselves to idleness and becoming busybodies and gossipers. (2 Thess. 3:11; 1 Tim. 5:13)

At one extreme, there are people who fall into the sin of sloth (Prov. 21:25) and let their idle hands become the devil’s workshop. At the other extreme, there are people who toil in vain:

- Succumbing to the Martha-like anxiety, being harried due to wrong priorities. (Luke 10:38-42)
- Hating life like the author of Ecclesiastes once, because everything done is like meaninglessly chasing after the wind.

The author of Ecclesiastes highlighted these feelings in his anguish:

- “I hated all the things I had toiled ... because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun.” (Ecc. 2:18-19)
- “For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it.” (Ecc. 2:21)
- “All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest.” (Ecc. 2:23)

Do we find similar feelings in ourselves or our neighbours? Solomon tells us that “unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.” (Psalm 127:1-2)

It is right to be busy in the right way. What is our wrong quest? What is our right pursuit? How do we enter God’s rest? These were the questions that Mr Lim Geok Seng, our speaker at the Leaders’ Retreat at YWCA (August 2013) addressed when he delved into the last of his 3-part series of topics: “From Busyness to Restfulness”.

Wrong Quest

Why are we busy? These are some common answers:

- To gain success and riches.
- To create a better life in the future.
- To accomplish set goals and dreams.



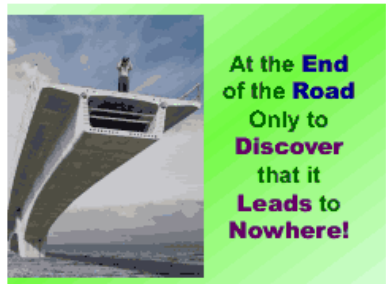
Success is often defined by the accomplishment of an aim or purpose, and the attainment of popularity or profit. Thomas Edison said that “Being busy does not always mean real work. Seeming to do is not doing.” Do we often find ourselves unproductively multi-tasking or running on a hamster wheel?



It is also well that we heed the warning of Socrates, to beware of the barrenness of a busy life. Busyness is not equivalent to productivity. Busyness comes with costs:

- 1) A visible cost in the active usage of time, effort and supplies.
- 2) An unseen cost of passive neglect of health, family and grace.

The cost may not be initially visible; but once it becomes noticed as the inevitable cumulative impact of our poor choices, it will hit home with deadly damage. If the busyness is all vanity, then what does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? (Ecc. 1:3) What lies at the end of the road? At the end of our busy pursuit, are we left with broken health, broken home or broken character? Do we become hard and heartless



in the relentless pursuit of success?

It is right to be busy in the right way. However, if we take a pause from our busyness, take a contemplative look at people's busyness against the backdrop of a very busy world 24/7, how do we see many chasing after all that is in the world, as the world passes along with its desires, neglectful of the will of God? (1 John 2:15-17)

"He who is too busy doing good finds no time to be good" – Rabindranath Tagore.

Right Pursuit

Very often we are too busy even to pause to think. At the retreat, we are free from the entanglements with our usual busyness and it is an opportunity for us to meditate on the thought-provoking questions to better understand our own busyness so that we can get it right for life success and lasting value.

"For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? (Mark 8:36)

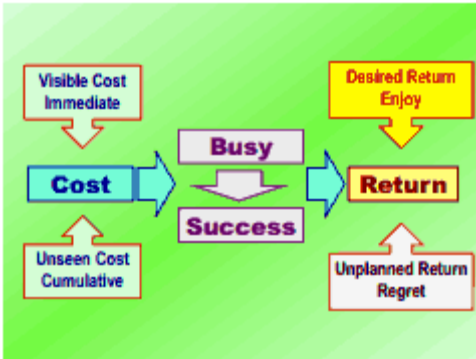
The word "gain" is an active verb, which suggests an intentional pursuit. The word "forfeit" is a passive verb, which suggests an unplanned consequence. It would be gravely wrong for one to actively go after the value that is the "whole world" and unwittingly (passively) surrender the value that is "his soul". There are various comparisons worthy of note:

- *Comparison of two values* – "the whole world" and "his soul" – we should know what is transitory and what is lasting.
- *Comparison of two returns* – the desired return (in expected gains in goals, dreams, progress) vs. the unplanned return (in unexpected loss of health, family, grace).
- *Comparison of two pursuits* – external pursuit (of position, possession, prestige and power) vs. internal pursuit (of love, joy, peace and character).

Getting Great Achievement and Accolade But having no one to share the joy is Empty and Hollow!	A grand Palatial Residence Without Love and Laughter Is a Cold and Lonesome place
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We must constantly watch our intentional pursuit and beware of the ensuing consequence through likely negligence.

Mr Lim reminds us that the true value of life is not measured by the external possession but by the internal character. When all the externals are stripped away, what do you have left? Are you still you? He posed these Central Questions:



“To Whom must we ultimately give account to? Who has the final Authority to decide my eternal destiny?”

At Final Judgment, the verdict is not based on achievement and performance but on heart and character. This is exemplified by the commendation to a “good and faithful servant” in Matt. 25:21.

His master said to him,

“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.”

The “good” here is contrasted with “wicked” in verse 26 – a “wicked” condition of the heart that thinks evil of the master, not trusting him and not loving him. The master does not ask, “How much have you done?” Instead, he considers, “Is your heart good or wicked?” The reward is the joy of the master, the joy of God’s presence.

1 John 3:2 tells us, “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.”

We will see Christ face to face and we will be transformed into His likeness. Ultimate joy! Ultimately, what counts is our relationship with God, able to enjoy His presence.

Entering God’s Rest

We read in Genesis that God finished His work of creation and rested on the 7th day, and he blessed the 7th day and made it holy. God rested not because He was tired and needed a break. He rested because the work was finished. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God ...” (Exodus 20:8-10)

Sabbath is “to the Lord”, indicating the cessation of His work of creation. Jesus declared against accusations of doing work on Sabbath day, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” (John 5:17) We know that Jesus healed on Sabbath day. Creation work is finished, but the work of love, grace and mercy continues.

Heb. 4:9-11 says that there remains “a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.”

How do we enter this Sabbath-rest? By our obedience to Christ! In Matt. 11:28, the Lord says, “Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” This is about rest for the soul, implying the ceasing from one’s own work and resting securely on what Christ has done.

Entering the Sabbath-rest is not about the cessation of our effort, and is not depending on our own endeavour, but is about resting on Christ’s finished work. Nothing that we do in human vanity can add anything to God’s finished work and so, while we do not remain idle just as God is still at his work to this day (John 5:17), we can function from a position of restful assurance, confident that we are accepted and loved, and everything good for us is taken care of by our obedience to Christ (based on Christ’s finished work on the Cross), and thus our worldly cares and concerns are superfluous, and we cease from self-justifying works. We should think of this rest as something like a satisfying sense of triumph and peacefulness secured in Christ against being overwrought by the worldly lures, which we should be very much aware of as causes of troubles.

Psalm 62:5

“Yes, my soul, find rest in God: my hope comes from him.”

Acknowledgement

Thanks to Mr Lim Geok Seng for making available his PowerPoint slides that enabled valuable recall of his message to us. The content of this article is composed with input from the slides.

JOHN LEE

Previous 2 parts of the 3-part series from the YWCA retreat

From Burnout to Recharge (published in August Vine)

From Bondage to Release (published in Sep Vine)

Appreciation

JCC English Leadership Team comprising Pastors, Council and HOMs.



From left to right: Patrick, Benedict, Peggy, Ewe Ewe, Jason, Julian, Rev Anthony, Pastor Andrew, Thomas, Kenneth, Se Ping, Jonathan, Wong Mui, Peter, Betsy and Martin.



Sunday 6th Oct, JCC showed her appreciation to all those who served, one way or another, by serving a buffet lunch to all.



Everyone has served, although some are more in the limelight, like the council and HOMs, while others are in the background, like the chargehands, helpers and editors. If you had prayed for anyone in JCC you have already served. Though only God knows you have done a great service. If you have encouraged someone or visited them in hospital, that's service. Men may have

overlooked you but today we appreciate everyone.

Three quotations from S.D. Gordon, "the greatest thing anyone can do for God and for man is to pray.", "Prayer is striking the winning blow.... service is gathering up the results.", "You can do more than pray **after** you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray **until** you have prayed."

Martin Cheah

28th Singapore Boys' Brigade Company

45th Anniversary cum Founder's Day Celebration

26 October 2013

This year marks the 45th Anniversary of the start of our Company in 1968. We held a celebration in conjunction with Founder's Day, which remembers the work of Sir William Alexander Smith, the founder of the Boys' Brigade Movement.



About 70 of the old Boys came to join us in the celebration. Among them were those from the pioneer batch of Boys who joined the Company in the 1970s. The wife of our first captain, Mr Ho Chee Kong, was present too. To help the old



Boys capture memories of the past, we sang songs that they used to sing before the weekly devotion, and play a game that required the participants to polish uniform parts.



We invited two of the old Boys, Thomas Tan and Simon Yen, to share about their past experience in the

Boys'

Brigade. It was encouraging to hear their testimony about how God impacted their lives through the Boys' Brigade. Our



officer Justin Tay shared how his purpose of joining the Boys' Brigade changed from joining a CCA to answering a calling from God.



We hope that through the event, the old Boys can re-establish and maintain contact with us. More importantly, we hope that they will make an effort to re-connect with God.



Chin Yew Neng

Carnal Christians

During our CG Meeting, a question came up on how we grade ourselves as Christians, 1 being worldly and 10 being godly. None of the members graded themselves more than 5, some as low as 2. So to encourage them to raise their scores, I asked them questions like: Do you gamble? Do you commit adultery? Do you skip church services? Do you like shopping? What if terrorists asked if you are Christian?

All agreed that the last question was a tough one. Some ventured to say that they were not too sure about the resilience of their faith to stand the test in such situations. I reminded them of the story found in Daniel 3:14-15, *Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace.*

I also reminded them of what Jesus said in Luke 12:8-9, *"I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God."*

I thought I had convinced them until it was pointed out to me that the apostle Peter actually denied Christ not once but three times. So we ended at a stalemate, I was not able to raise their scores. However back home, I reflected on Peter's denial issue. If it is okay because we will be forgiven, then Jesus made a contradictory statement in Luke.

Looking at Peter's life, we find that later, he was able to stand firm. *Then they [The Jewish Leaders] called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. Acts 4:18-19.* We also know from tradition that Peter was martyred during the reign of Emperor Nero.

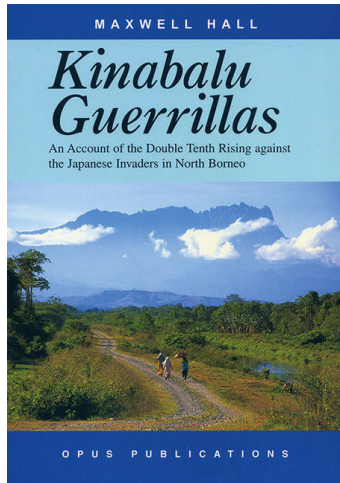
Agreed that when you are a level 2 Christian, you may be like Peter in the beginning but when you reach level 8 or 9, you will be like Peter in the later years of his life. How to reach level 8 or 9? I don't think man can help you. It has to be the Holy Spirit's work. *"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit"* - Acts 4:8, preceded what he said in Acts 4:18 above.

I even shared with the group that for less worthy reasons, man may be willing to die. My testimony was about my grandfather, Cheah Loong Ghee as recorded in the book Kinabalu Guerrillas:

“Cheah Loong Ghee received similar treatment and even worse. His refusal to speak was absolute. He said nothing under the most terrible torture, and steadfastly refused to reveal any information whatsoever. Few men have been through such ill treatment and retained their power of control. Not one single name or secret was ever dragged from his lips. Though pieces of his flesh were sliced from him and held before his eyes under threat of more to be cut, he refused to speak. He died suffering greatly in the prison in 1944.”

I never knew my grandfather, he died 10 years before I was born, probably even before my parents met. However reading this about him makes me wonder if I have the same strength of will as he had.

Hope you will not be discouraged that right now you may feel unable to stand for Jesus in situations that endanger your life. Pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit that you may be empowered to stand for Christ.



Martin Cheah

JGCK GRADUATION 2013



JGCK's annual graduation ceremony was well attended as the parents eagerly queued up to watch their children and maybe get up close and personal with Mr Tharman. Were you there?



Parental Love

The fourth Commandment to Lutherans is “Honor your father and your mother.”

Apparently, there is no commandment to honor your children. But there is an instruction: “*Children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.*” 2Corinthians 12:14

In Singapore, this mother was quoted, “I bought them good food - they ate more, we ate less.” And in China, a mother was quoted, “I never thought about whether my kids will take care of me when I was old, I just focused on taking care of them.”

There are other instructions to parents, for example: “*Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.*” (Colossians 3:21) and “*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*” (Ephesians 6:4) Seems like fathers are the problem yet before each of these verses, the Bible reminds, “*Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*” (Colossians 3:20) and “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*” (Ephesians 6:1)

I am not sure where the problem is. Is it because the children do not obey the parents that is why the father exasperate them or that even though the children obey the parents, the father still embitter them?

Though it is the mother who shows all the love and the father is the law, I hope I have not exasperated my child. I may not have been a great father, but I hope that I did, “*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*” (Proverbs 22:6)

Martin Cheah

10 connect
Thursday, October 6, 2011

“Looking at my Chinese neighbours, I felt their kids were doing better. It could be that they were giving better food to their children. I thought if I gave my kids good fish, their brains would function better. I thought there good food! They ate more, we ate less.”

Tough love

Relatively Speaking

Wives Dr. Abdul Razak (left) and Dr. Siti Nurhaliza (right) are seen with their children in a photo taken for the article.

THE STRAITS TIMES ASIA A15

Ageing Chinese sue children over lack of care

China projected to have 63m people aged over 50 by 2050

The caption reads: The caption reads about Maolin Zhang (left), 61, who says she still is her parents' main caretaker in Fuzhou, China, in a program broadcast on the local radio station. (AP/WIDE WORLD)

It used to be in the China that parents of old people were the norm. It was a common sight to see elderly people being carried off to hospital nearby when they were in an emergency and their children were not around. But now, as the population of the elderly grows, the children are not always there to help them. In fact, many elderly people and their families are suing their children for lack of care.

“I never thought about whether my kids would take care of me when I was old. I just focused on taking care of them.”

Maolin Zhang, 61, who says she still is her parents' main caretaker in Fuzhou, China, in a program broadcast on the local radio station.

“NO THOUGHT OF FUTURE”

“I never thought about whether my kids would take care of me when I was old. I just focused on taking care of them.”

Maolin Zhang, 61, who says she still is her parents' main caretaker in Fuzhou, China, in a program broadcast on the local radio station.

PRIDE AND ARROGANCE

There are differences between “pride” and “arrogance”.

If a child has done some good deed, is praised and rewarded during school assembly, his parents can feel proud of him indeed. Taking pride in an achievement is a respectable thing.

Let’s say you go for a job interview and you are expected to tell the interviewer your good points and why you should be given the job. There are two situations you would want to avoid:

- Firstly, being too shy to self-commend about how good and suitable you are for the job. If you are like this, the interviewer would most likely not be impressed by your lack of good things you have to say about yourself.
- Secondly, while it is great to be proud of your qualifications for the job, you wouldn’t want to put yourself across as a proud (conceited) person without any sense of restraint in self-praise. If you do so, you may actually sell yourself as a braggart instead.

It is good to have a healthy level of pride that boosts a self-confident image, but not an overbearing pride that tilts towards arrogance.

“Pride” has a positive meaning in English. When you go beyond necessity in self-praising your character or publicizing your laurels, doing so with an egotistic attitude of superiority, then the pride yields to arrogance, which carries the negative meaning that is often ascribed to pride itself.

When a person shares with you something positive about himself/herself, how do you tell whether it is pride or arrogance? Sometimes, the person shares by personal example on the conviction that an experience-based sharing is more effective to explicate a point. Being misunderstood for pushing self-importance may not be due to the thing shared per se but because of the tone, mannerism and habit. Personal encounters can be a powerful source of illustration and it would be a pity to hold back out of needless self-effacement or of fear of being taken the wrong way. Nevertheless, great care would be in order to put the illustration on a leash lest it overextends to make a blotch on others.

Advertising puffery is all so common in the world. You won't take it literally if an antiseptic manufacturer claims that its brand of antiseptic kills 99.9% of germs. (Note: There is still 0.1% of germs not killed, which can multiply very swiftly.☺) This type of bragging does no real harm as no reasonable person would take the claim literally. However, if the promoter of brand X of a product sings his sellers' own praises and makes claims to sully the reputation of sellers of brand Y of a related product or brand Z of an unrelated product, I think it is safe to say that the pride (which may be understandable) in one's product has degenerated into arrogance deserving of contempt. In the Internet era, it won't be surprising for the boastful and indiscreet person to receive a flaming response. This is regardless of whether there is any truth in the claims or not.

Bad advertising behavior infects Christians too. There are self-styled men of God who boldly promote themselves or their churches in self-aggrandizing ways with inapt puffery that is akin to commercial advertisements on billboards, radio and television. This may be more prevalent elsewhere than in Singapore, but being less glaring here does not mean the non-existence of it. Pride leading Christians to strut their "giftings" to promote themselves, and deprecate others, instead of honoring Christ is bad!

"The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day." (Isaiah 2:11)

Proverbs 8:13 says, "To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech."

In the OT, pride is sometimes used in the positive sense (e.g., Ps 47:4); but is mostly in the negative sense.

Why say "pride and arrogance" instead of "arrogance and pride"? I am inclined to think of pride as the inwardly-directed sentiment of one's status. It becomes sinful when it disposes one to shift confidence from God to self. First, there is this sinful emotion or egotism internally. Then it is directed outwards onto others and is negatively received as a supercilious attitude or arrogance. Thus, pride is first conceived in the heart and it gives birth to arrogance, not the other way round. Toba Beta (author of "Master of Stupidity") says it this way: "Pride is the mother of arrogance."

“Pride and arrogance” can be seen as two attributes bound together as one evil aspect of man’s nature that the LORD hates. If there is no pride, then arrogance does not rear its head. Still, positive pride has a motivational role if it takes its rightful place to give us due sense of self-esteem and personal satisfaction without straying into the territory of narcissistic ego that a meek heart has no room for.

“For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?” (1 Corinthians 4:7)



With boasting (arrogance) excluded by the law of faith (Romans 3:7), we can keep our positive pride in a healthy Godly heart.

“Let him who boasts boast in the Lord. For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.” (2 Corinthians 10:17-18)

JOHN LEE



“Life isn’t about having, it’s about being. You could surround yourself with all that money can buy, and you’d still be as miserable as a human can be. I know people with perfect bodies who don’t have half the happiness I’ve found. On my journeys I’ve seen more joy in the slums of Mumbai and the orphanages of Africa than in wealthy gated communities and on sprawling estates worth millions. Why is that? You’ll find contentment when your talents and passion are completely engaged, in full force. Recognise instant self-gratification for what it is. Resist the temptation to grab for material objects like the perfect house, the coolest clothes or the hottest car. The if I just had X, I would be happy syndrome is a mass delusion. When you look for happiness in mere objects, they are never enough. Look around. Look within.”



NICK VUJICIC

Dialect Outing 16 Oct 2013



They came, they made themselves comfortable on plastic stools, and then they listened intently as a young “koyok-seller” made his pitch on how good and effective his medicinal ointment was. Samples of milk and tea were served for tasting. One auntie was even given a little leg massage using the ointment.

Don't be mistaken. This was not in old Singapore. The “koyok-seller” was really a staff of Fei Fah Medical Manufacturing Pte Ltd at Kaki Bukit, and he was not selling “koyok” (Malay for quack medicine) but introducing his company's range of modern healthcare products. The date was 16th October 2013 when our folks from the Dialect Ministry paid a visit to the company, which has come a long way from its humble beginnings in 1950 as a traditional Chinese medical hall to become a well-known manufacturer and distributor of more than 50 healthcare products.



Was the ointment good? Sure it was, as many were persuaded to make purchases of treatment and diet products for rheumatism, gout, etc.

This outing was to be the last outing for the year 2013. Days before were days of heavy rain. Early morning on the day itself, I heard from radio class 100.3 the announcement of wet weather. Thank God that the weather was fine during the trip.

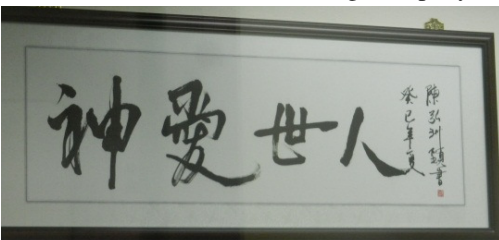


It was great to see the elderly folks happy and eager to participate in the outing. They started registering for this event 2 months ago. Also, they always travel well-prepared to make plentiful purchases of value. Therefore, it also turned out as expected at our second place of visit – ILC Trading, also at Kaki Bukit – where they snatched up the famous Lion City Bak Kut Teh spices after their tastebuds were whetted by the delicious soup sample.

We had lunch at Changi Airport Terminal 3, where some of the senior citizens were gladdened to have their first skytrain ride experience.

After the lunch, the group had a very educational trip to PUB’s Newater Plant, learning about how used water is reclaimed and turned into industrial and potable water to meet Singapore’s self-sufficiency. Everyone was given a sample of the Newater.

Finally, it was time to go home. As we bade farewell to this excursion, all us took back not just our purchases, but also the important memory that the following calligraphy provided us on our visit to the ILC Trading Company:



This may be the last excursion for this year, but more are being planned for the year ahead. Pray

God continue to bless the Dialect Ministry and our senior folks with abundant energy going forward

Peggy Tan

HALLOWEEN, REFORMATION AND THE CHRISTIAN

Every year on Halloween (31st Oct), various places around the world are invaded by “zombies, ghosts and goblins” – characters dressed in horror costumes with bloodcurdling makeup. Singapore has also caught on with this evil-appearing tradition that is especially popular in western countries.

A common question this provokes is whether Christians should be involved in such activities. There are some people who say, “Oh, it is just for fun. Don’t think too much about it and all is well.”

My riposte to this is that it is like Christmas. People can celebrate it just for fun with Santa Claus coming to town on a reindeer distributing sweets to well-behaved kids, a time good to spend by adults for thrills and indulgences to make it the highest grossing commercial holiday for businesses. However, doing so would be to miss out on the real meaning of Christmas – to remember the Nativity of Christ and the life-transforming love of God for sinners.

So it is with Halloween. It has become a celebration with treats and tricks, making it the second highest grossing commercial holiday after Christmas in some countries. Yes, people celebrate it just for fun, and conveniently forget the real meaning of Halloween – to remember the martyrs (like Polycarp¹), Saints of the Church in the 2nd century who died because of their faith in Christ.

The Chinese term for Halloween is 万圣节, which is actually a misnomer. Translated into English, it literally means All-Saints’-Day² (万=a great number; 圣=of saints; 节=day of commemoration). In actual fact, Halloween refers to “The Eve of All-Saints’-Day”. It does not refer to All-Saints’-Day itself. Hence, Halloween falls on 31st October while All Saints’ Day falls on 1st November. These dates were set in the very early times of the Church.

“Hallowe’en” is a contraction of All-Hallows’-Eve. Today, the word “hallow” is used as a verb meaning “holy”. In olden days, the word had the meaning of a noun; hence “hallows” means “holy persons” or “saints”; and All-Hallows’ Eve (Halloween) means the Eve-of-All-Saints’-Day.

¹ A 2nd-century Christian bishop of Smyrna.

² Important: All-Saints’-Day is not the same as All-Souls’-Day. The latter is observed only by the Roman Catholic Church to commemorate all faithful departed souls.

Christmas Eve is special in a way because of Christmas Day. Similarly, All Hallows' Eve (Halloween) is special in a way because of All-Saints'-Day.

We rejoice on Christmas Eve without forgetting the greater rejoicing on Christmas Day. Why is it that if people celebrate Halloween on 31st October, they don't bother to anticipate the actual All-Saints'-Day that falls on 1st November in commemoration of all saints who died faithful to Christ to the end and to whom will be given the victor's crown for eternity? (Rev. 2:10)

As we remember the saints past, we ought to be provoked to think of the saints present and their examples of steadfast faith we can imbibe. We ought to also contemplate to whom we have the responsibility to impart our faith according to the blessings we enjoy by God's grace in the hope that Jesus, the perfecter (Heb. 12:2), will bring that faith we impart to full blossom upon the saints future.

I humbly suggest that Christians can respect All-Saints'-Day, starting our wonder a day early on Halloween for the above reasons, but not to fall for the "trick and treating" of the devil to besmirch the name of the Church by mindlessly associating with zombies, ghosts and goblins. It is somewhat akin to Christians respecting Christmas for the right reasons and not falling for the tempting excesses of a commercial Christmas.

Do you realize that Halloween is also Reformation Day, the day in 1517 when Martin Luther started the Protestant Reformation by posting his 95 Theses on a church door at Wittenberg, Germany?

Very significantly, as we remember Halloween, we concurrently remember the effort of Martin Luther to free us from the old order of the Roman Catholic Church with its overemphasized veneration of the saints that led the flock astray to believe in the purchase of indulgences to assure salvation. So while we perceive any sensible reason to respect Halloween, such as to cherish in memory the faith of our Fathers that we can emulate, we know our limits. We do not idolize the saints. We are at the same time reminded by Martin Luther of the Reformation that we are justified by faith alone, not by our works or the works of the saints.

There is no way we can close our eyes to the Halloween celebrations around us. Even if we ourselves do not celebrate, our children may be drawn into the revelry by the fun they seek in a world of darkness that portrays "zombies, ghosts and goblins" as objects of merriment. In this world of darkness, we are called to be a guiding light. We should equip ourselves with the knowledge about Halloween, about our respect for the faith of our Fathers and the all-significant Reformation to steer any observance of the occasion in the right spiritual direction.

JOHN LEE

prayer & fasting

Fasting isn't a complicated business. When you fast, don't eat. You stay away from all food or refrain from specific types of food for a set amount of time. (Refraining from all food makes you the hungriest.) The duration of the fast may be a solo meal, one day, a week, or, in some cases, even longer.

Fasting from food can be done for a variety of purposes, either physical or spiritual. So abstaining from food alone doesn't constitute a Christian fast. Instead, a Christian fast is accompanied by a special focus on prayer during the fast, often substituting the time you'd spend eating with prayer instead.

In many Christian churches today, fasting has become a lost discipline, one that is rarely, if ever, discussed and practised. Yet, in spite of its decreased emphasis, there are a host of reasons to fast:

- **Fasting has always been considered standard operating procedure for Christians.** Fasting has been a common practice by God's faithful throughout history. The Old Testament includes a multitude of examples of the Israelites (Jews) fasting when seeking the Lord's blessing or direction. The New Testament records that Jesus himself fasted, as did leaders of the early Christian church.

Although Jesus assumes that his followers will fast, he *never* instructs people on the frequency or duration of fasts. Some Christians believe that he left those specifics up

to the Church to decide, while others believe he left it up to individuals as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

- **Fasting provides self-discipline and control in an undisciplined age.** The age in which we live despises discipline. When was the last time you saw a TV commercial with a slogan like one of these?
 - Buy this TV later, after you actually have the cash.
 - Eat just one of our chips, so you can have some tomorrow.
 - Do you really need a new car? Your old one still works fine.
 - Friends don't let friends drink. Period.
- **The benefits of fasting "rub off" in your relationship with God.** Normal exercise and a good, balanced diet go hand in hand in my life. Although fasting is a physical activity, the practice affects you deeply on the spiritual plane of your life as well. In other words, the amount of restraint and will power you practise physically has a tangible relationship to your willingness to submit to God's will.
- **Fasting fosters concentration on God and His will.** Oswald Chambers once said that fasting means "concentration," because when you're fasting, you have a heightened sense of attentiveness. Food or any physical sensation can satisfy, fill you up, and dull your senses and spiritual ears. In contrast, a 'hungry' stomach makes you more aware and alert to what God is trying to say to you.
- **Fasting provides a real-life illustration of dependency.** Although modern man thrives on the idea of being independent, beholden to no one, fasting helps you put the facts in the proper perspective. It's easy to believe in your independence with a full stomach, but when you start to

feel hunger pangs in your belly after missing a meal or two, you awaken to your body's dependency on food to survive. Fasting reveals a physical reliance on food that points to the ultimate dependency — the fact that you're dependent on God for things far more important than food (Matthew 4:4).

In the final analysis, fasting for spiritual purposes is a very personal exercise - a commitment to God to ensure that He brings to fulfillment the things asked for. How is this so? Fasting spiritually cleanses the filth that contaminates the flesh and the spirit thereby preparing one's whole being for the holy purpose of seeking the Almighty in specifics that we are encountering in our lives, .Of course our personal walk with Him must meet the criteria set out in His Holy Word before He answers (2 Chronicles 7:14). Imagine the effectiveness of adding fasting to prayer as a collective body of His people, seeking the Lord's favour in particular scenarios. Surely, those coveted favours would be forthcoming, sooner than later. (John 15:7)

Beloved family of God, let us move in tandem with God's Holy Spirit, individually and corporately, so that His Desired Will for His people in JCC will be realized, bringing forth the 'golden rain' (manifold blessings) on His church, and propelling us forward into a new spiritual dimension that honours and magnifies Yeshua (Jesus).

It's all about Him for He is above all.

Shalom.

In His Love, and serving with you,
brother *James Candiah*

What's Happening

We would like to bring to your attention activities that are happening even when you think JCC is not a happening church.



Sis Margaret shared that her mother was finally baptised after many decades. Thank God for the team (Rev Anthony and Deacon Peter) that went to her bedside in the hospital to perform the baptism.

Also, did you know that the Outreach MLT is very active in visiting new visitors? Do you even know who is in the Outreach MLT?



HOM Peggy Tan with Frodo and Zheng Lin compose the MLT. So if they call upon you to join them in their visits, lend them a hand.

Other ministries that are actively reaching out include the BB, GB and Dialect MLT.

Do remember our frontline soldiers - fast and pray for their success.



Martin Cheah

CELL CROSS OVER FELLOWSHIP

Cheng Guan (Susan Teo's younger brother, my Brother-in-Law) attended our ABUDANCE CELL and this was his experience.

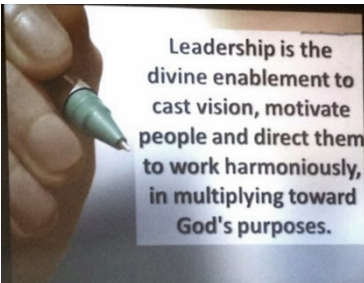
He found the cell members friendly and positive in sharing their views during the Bible Studies. He liked the songs we sang during the cell worship. He also felt that it is good to start and end the Cell Meeting with prayers. He encouraged everyone in the Cell to share at least 1 prayer item at every meeting so that we can uphold one another in prayer.

Others who had Cross Over Fellowship visits with us include Se Ping and Kenneth from Bethel CG. It is good that members from different cells meet up and share their strengths with the other groups.

*Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.
Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens a friend's character -Proverbs 27:17*

Tony Keh
Abundance CG

LEADERSHIP TRAINING



On Saturday 5th Oct, Rev Philip Huan taught the leaders and in one exercise he asked each leader to put a sticker into a circle which needs improvement. Surprise, no one thought we lack hospitality. **JCC - a hospitable church.**

