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HOM'S Reflections

March 23, 2015 will go down into the history books as the day our first Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew passed on from this life after a fruitful 91 years. There are many

things to remember him for and surely one of the most important is that he built Singapore into a developed nation it is today.

Mr Lee preceeds me by 29 years. If I live to his age, I will probably have done only a small fraction of what he is remembered for. "I have spent my life, so much of it, building up this country. There's nothing more that I need to do. At the end of the day, what have I got? A successful Singapore. What have I given up? My life." Lee Kuan Yew.

"I'm no longer in active politics. It's irrelevant to me what young Singaporeans think of me. What they think of me after I'm dead and gone in one generation will be determined by researchers who do PhDs on me, right? So there will be a lot of revisionism. As people revised Stalin, Brezhnev and one day now Yeltsin, and later on Putin. I've lived long enough to know that you may be idealized in life and reviled after you're dead." – Lee Kuan Yew



Goodbye Mr Lee Kuan Yew, rest in peace.

We can learn from this great man. He gave his life for his country and we can do no lesser as we give our lives to build God's kingdom. At the end of the day what will we get? *"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"* Matthew 25:23

Getting off track, in the following article, John recounts the meandering roads we took to reach our destination in Johor Baru during our recent CNY visitation trip there.

You may wonder why when I had a GPS I could still get lost. The main reason is because we did not trust fully what the GPS was telling us. We also had a hardcopy map which gave conflicting road directions. If we strictly followed one or the other we would probably have reached our destination much earlier.

Initially when we first started out, we could not understand what the American lady (the voice of the GPS) was mumbling because she was distorting all the Malay road names. Halfway through our journey after we were completely lost and cut off from Peter's car then we decided to depend solely on the GPS. We looked at the GPS map rather than listen for the road names and followed each turn accordingly.

Isn't life like a journey? We started out with our life all mapped out and ignore listening to God's voice. We make a lot of wrong turns but still refuse to listen to God's voice until we, like the Prodigal Son, finally realize that we are lost. Only then do we make a U-Turn in life and get back on the right track which leads us to our eternal destination.

Just thinking out loud, where did the father of the Prodigal Son get the money to throw a party on his return? *"There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them."* Luke 15:11-12

He already divided his property between his two sons, so he had nothing left? *"My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.'" Luke 15:31* He must have used the elder brother's share of the money to throw the party. Could this be the reason the elder brother was angry?

It would be welcome if individuals and churches generously step forward to share their money for the rebuilding of JCC without being like the elder brother in Jesus' parable - "this is my money for myself/ourselves" - especially after reading the newspaper report about our fundraising hitting a snag. Do we rally to raise funds to build the church or are we satisfied to stay put in 101? My daughter asked why King David wanted to build the temple. *"After the king was settled in his palace and the LORD had given*

him rest from all his enemies around him he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent." 2 Samuel 7:1-2

Presidents live in Istana, Kings live in castles, so God's house should not be a run-down building while people's houses are like palaces. However it should be noted that no building is big enough to house God. Solomon said, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!" 1Kings 8:27

In the final analysis, it is not the building per se but our hearts. Do we have hearts that honor God or just hearts that are concerned with things of this world. Read the article by Os Hillman about Two Types of People.



May I leave you with the words of Mr Spock, played by actor Leonard Nimoy, who passed away on 27 Feb 2015. **“Live Long and Prosper.”**

Martin Cheah

Side note:

While researching on actor Leonard Nimoy, I discovered that he had Jewish roots and the hand sign represents 'shin' the first letter for 'shalom' or peace. However, everything is murky in the internet. Others have claimed that it represents deVil where the fingers represent De V and iL.

The internet is filled with stories of secret societies using hand signs to identity themselves. Here are some examples.

What are some of these secret societies? The Illuminati, The Knights Templar, Freemasons, Rosicrucians, and others.



Since these hand signs are claimed to be satanic, it is advisable not to use them especially when posing for photos.

CNY Visitation to an extended family in Johor Baru by The Dialect Ministry Team

We are all familiar with the Lord's Great Commission for spreading the Gospel.

Those who attend the JCC Dialect Service will know that the Dialect Ministry has been blooming, with average weekly attendance of about 80 and worshippers stepping forward for New Life through baptism. Last year, 7 adults and 3 children from the Dialect Fellowship were baptized on Christmas Day, including a 3-generation family of grandmother, mother and children. On the 28th of Feb, we had the pleasure of being invited to this family's CNY get-together in Taman Ehsan Jaya, Tebrau, Johor. Present at the gathering were 17 members of the extended family of our sisters-in-Christ Hua Mei, Zhen Zhen and Li Zhu. Two uncles (siblings Hua Seng and Hua Long) of Hua Mei and Li Zhu had not long ago, after attending funeral wakes, prayed to accept Christ into their lives.



Go ye therefore and teach all nations, go, go, go ...

Yea, yea ... the Dialect Ministry Team (DLT) fully understands that its mission of sowing the gospel seed among dialect-speaking pre-believers is not circumscribed by the four walls of Jurong Christian Church. Where

opportunities arise to go, go, go ... beyond the walls and even to yonder nations, the Team is prepared to be in the Lord's service to share blessings and grow the church (the body of Christ).

It was a wonderful opportunity I had to be with 9 members of the DLT to take part in this CNY visitation. We continue to seek the pouring of God's grace abundantly on the whole extended family. With the spirit of joyful service to our Lord and thankfulness for His blessings, we sang Christian-themed CNY songs that were accompanied by a relaxed sharing of Christian messages by Deacon Peter. It gladdened the hearts to see family members across the generations clasping hands and joining one another in prayers.

Driving into Malaysia, with scant knowledge of the roads there, is always an adventure; but at the end of the mission when we could reflect that everything actually ended well, we knew whom we had to give thanks for – no one but our gracious Lord who was all the time by our side as our guide. We set off, reaching Woodlands checkpoint at about 2 p.m. in two cars, one driven by Peter and the other by Martin Cheah. For a short while, Martin tried to lead the way but he seemed a little confused by somewhat conflicting instructions from his borrowed GPS (Global Positioning System). Later, Peter took over the leading for the journey but it ended with the two cars losing each other. It was then decided that Peter and Martin

would go their own ways to the destination, by whatever roads each would choose to travel on. As the saying goes, all roads lead to Rome; and so even if Peter went one direction and Martin another, they would both end up at the same house – and so they did. Thanks be to God!



I was in Martin's car. At one point, when we were lost with the GPS not helpful, we decided to enter a Caltex petrol station to ask for direction. An elderly staff member was kind enough to help. The guidance he gave – “go straight ... keep right ... U-turn back ...” – seemed easy to follow as it was to be only over a short distance. Unfortunately, while trying to follow the advice, Martin got lost again. He had no choice but to turn back to depending on the GPS that we had distrusted for what seemed to

us to be conflicting instructions. As Martin drove on, I spotted a building that had the big words “God with us” on its façade. It was a bit of assurance that we had.

To cut the story short, the GPS that we grumbled about for its “unreliability” turned out to be quite reliable from that point on, taking us to our destination without much further confusion. On reflection, it was not the GPS that had been confusing in the early part of our merry-go-round on unfamiliar Johor roads, but it was our mistrust of it by our faulty opinions, choosing “our way” instead of the “GPS way”. After a merry-go-round when we had no other choice but to stick to the GPS instructions faithfully, the journey went well. The GPS is like God’s Positioning System guiding us – Was God through our adventure delivering a message to us to keep faith in Him, to follow **GOD’S WAY** instead of **MY WAY**?



We finally reached our destination at 4 p.m., much later than we planned. It was great relief to us as members of the host’s family came out to extend their warm welcome. We were able to settle ourselves down with some drinks and snacks before we continued with our celebration of Spring (CNY) with thanksgiving to God. We were already much warmed in our hearts to feel

God’s presence in our celebration with the joyous atmosphere and the great hospitality extended by the host. Towards the close, we were taken by pleasant surprise that a dinner was being catered for all at a nearby restaurant. On reflection, we arrived at the house at 4 p.m. and enjoyed our CNY celebration for 2 hours (a considerable duration) and the timing seemed just right for dinner to follow, but not quite according to the visitation timing in our plan. It seemed that the merry-go-round we had on our journey was unbeknownst to us serving to connect our visitation timing just right with the proper time for dinner.



In Chinese tradition, CNY celebration is not a lonely time of isolation, but a joyful time of gatherings. It is time to relish kinship, friendship and fellowship. In our visit to the extended family of our sisters-in-Christ Hua Mei, Zhen Zhen and Li Zhu in Johor, our mouths were

filled with laughter; our tongues, with CNY Christian songs of joy; and our hearts, with gladness that the Lord has done great things for them.

CNY celebration is also a celebration of springtime. May God continue to bless the Dialect Ministry to bloom from springtime to springtime.

John Lee.

TWO TYPES OF PEOPLE

by Os Hillman

"O LORD, by your hand save me from such men, from men of this world whose reward is in this life" (Ps 17:14).

There are two types of people in the world. There are those whose activities are designed to generate a reward in this lifetime. And there are those who live to generate a reward when they meet our Lord in Heaven.

How does one judge whether they are living for the future reward versus the earthly reward? There are several key indicators.

Future reward people tend to be givers. They make their time and resources available to be channeled for Kingdom purposes. They realize their sowing will ultimately be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ where what they have done on earth will be judged and rewarded by God (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Future reward people live a life based upon obedience-based decisions. They don't make decisions based on their perceived outcome. They realize a decision based on obedience alone may not result in an immediate outcome. Jesus was obedient to the cross, but the immediate outcome was His own death on the cross.

Future reward situations show up in daily life in a number of ways. Perhaps a person has wronged you and God calls you to forgive and even bless that person without expectation of their response. **Perhaps God calls you to sow money into a ministry** or another person's life **without expectation of return** from them. Perhaps you are called to serve another person without expectation of any earthly reward. The situations we might encounter are unlimited.

Are you living a life based on a future reward, or short term reward? Today, evaluate how you make decisions and **how you allocate resources**. This **will reveal whether you are a future reward Christian**.

Year of the blessed sheep, every year



Is this CNY the year of the goat or the year of the sheep?

Those who believe in the Chinese horoscope can argue over it until the goats, sheep or cows come home. I don't believe in Chinese horoscope, but I so happened to be born in such a year that the horoscope-believers would tell me that I am a goat/sheep. I would like to tell them that according to the Bible, I am a sheep; and the Lord Jesus is my Shepherd.

Let me share a Chinese poem:

羊年来到笑开颜，一生喜乐迎羊年。
要问为啥贼高兴，笑答我本属相羊。
祥瑞羊年本分年，六十寿辰乐淘淘。
亲朋好友齐来贺，弘扬羊年正能量。
愿我高寿羊福享，一生都把羊财发。

Translation:

The Sheep Year arrives, laughter fills the air;
Welcome Sheep Year, adieu to happy life.
Why the extreme joy, one is led to ask;
My cheery response: It being the year I belong.
An auspicious year is in my embrace;
My 60th birth anniversary I proclaim with joy.
Kith and kin gather to congratulate;
Their greetings add positive energy to the Sheep Year.
Wishing longevity and blessings for me;
With a life of prosperity rubbing off the sheep.

In CNY good wishes, we cannot escape the ideas of happiness, auspiciousness, prosperity and such that people consider desirable. There is nothing wrong with these greetings so long as we receive them with the right understanding. In fact, all these things can be brought under the single Chinese character 福, which means blessings or good fortune. Think about where the blessings or good fortune ought to originate from. Notice that the Chinese character 福 is made of two parts: 礻 and 畝. The first part, according to a study of ancient oracle bone inscriptions is a symbol that indicates divinity. The second part of the Chinese character 福 is itself made up of 3 parts: 一口田, which means a piece of land. In ancient times, a piece of land was considered wealth; owning one was considered to be

wealthy. Thus, looking at all the parts joined together to form the Chinese character 福, its meaning of blessings or good fortune gives us the idea that such must come from God above. The Chinese like to hang the Chinese character 囍 upside down on their walls. It is not surprising to those who understand it to mean that blessings or good fortune must come downwards from God who is above.



We commonly receive CNY wishes of 羊年吉祥 (auspicious/blessed Sheep Year). Note that the character for auspiciousness 祥(a desired quality) is made up of the symbol for divinity 礻 attached to the left of the symbol for sheep 羊. This illustrates the idea that we need to think of the sheep willingly attaching to the presence of God in order that blessedness 祥 ensues from the relationship with God.

We have just celebrated the Year of the Sheep in the Chinese calendar. The year is still fresh. The wishes of blessings that we generously gave out to others and received in return were welcome. Did we not wish for the blessings to last throughout the year and beyond it? Ps 100:3 tells us, "Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture."

Indeed, we are sheep of the Lord's pasture. We are His sheep not just for a day, week or year. We are His sheep from year to year willingly attaching ourselves to God's presence in our lives and so 我们年年庆羊年，年年羊儿吉祥。 Every year is a year of the sheep. We are blessed every year with the Lord as our Shepherd.

Join me with wishes for laughter, joy, auspiciousness, positive energy and prosperity for this sheep year (2015) and next (2016) and next ... all grounded in the spiritual blessings 囍 descending from our Great Shepherd above.



福杯满溢, 主赐平安, 喜乐的心, 爱主蒙福。

As the cup of blessings runneth over, we have peace from our Lord Jesus. Have a joyful heart. Love God and reap blessings.

羊 + 我 = 義
Sheep Me Righteousness

John Lee

Prayer Meetings

Friday 27th March 2015, I had been having a pain in my right heel for

two days already, probably due to a gout attack. At office, I had to hobble around in my safety shoes which aggravated the pain. I had turned down an office dinner event because of the prayer meeting but I was tired and didn't feel like climbing 4 storeys to get to the prayer room.

After my dinner, I was dozing off in front of the television when Joo See called me to take my bath. In a daze, I got off the couch and headed off to bathe and get ready for the prayer meeting. I felt that I had used God's Name in vain if I didn't attend the prayer meeting after turning down an office event for that reason.

I put on my lightest shoes and we arrived at 101 about 14 minutes late. I expected to see a crowd, not a big crowd, but more than just 2 pastors and 2 members. Together with Joo See and me, the six of us prayed for JCC. It is a good thing that God doesn't have a minimum requirement number of persons before He answers prayers.

Where were most Singaporeans that night? Maybe lining up for more than 8 hours in the queue in front of Parliament House.

Later that night, we picked Debra up from the MRT station after her prayer meeting at Hope Church. She mentioned that she also arrived late and could not get into the main hall but had to be in an overflow hall. She was astonished when she heard that only 6 persons turned up for the prayer meeting. Well, it doesn't matter if 6 persons prayed or hundreds prayed because "*For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.*"

Martin Cheah

The Message:



The Jurong West Care Group had its first post-CNY fellowship on 6th March, just a day after the CNY *chap goh meh* (15th night). We studied chapter 3 of the First Epistle of John. In the discussions, we learnt from one another.

Here I would like to share with Vine readers a message from the Scripture:

^{1John3:11} *For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.*

1 John 3:11-18

Earlier in 1 John 1:5, Apostle John said, *“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”*

The emphasis was that GOD IS LIGHT. This LIGHT is contrasted with darkness.

Now, in 1 John 3:11, the emphasis is on LOVE. The contrast to LOVE is hatred. (v. 15: *“Anyone who hates ... is a murderer.”*)

Note that where there is light, there is no darkness; where there is love, there is no hatred.

Do we prefer LIGHT and LOVE, or darkness and hatred? I can guess the answer you are ready to proffer. The reality is that knowing the truth about LIGHT and LOVE is one thing, living it out in our lives is a different matter. We can see in the world the amount of darkness and hatred. Occasionally, we rejoice in witnessing displays of LIGHT with acts of LOVE; but this is only occasionally.

Apostle John tells us that we should love one another. We are not given a choice to love or to hate. LOVE is imperative. In John 13:34, our Lord Jesus said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

We should. We must. To love one another is not just a message we have heard from the beginning. It is a command. GOD IS LOVE. (1 John 4:8)

We claim to have FAITH in God. Does this FAITH express itself through LOVE? (Gal. 5:6)

¹John 3:12 *Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.*
¹⁵ *Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.*

Are we in any likelihood to be evil in the heart like Cain to commit murder? God favoured Abel and thus his offering; God rejected Cain and thus his offering. Because of the evil in Cain's heart, he conceived hate against his brother.

"Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer." Such a person is no better than Cain, is not unlike Cain in committing murder because of the evil in his heart. God looked at Cain as a person first – his motivation and attitude of doing things – and then looked at his offering. In the same way, God looks at our motivations and attitudes before he cares for our offerings to Him. Cain's motivation and attitude were wrong to begin with when he made his offering to God. But that was not just that, for the evil in Cain's heart of hate then reared its head and murder arose out of the hate. Similarly, the potential upshot of our motivations and attitudes (not just the motivations and attitudes per se) is seriously regarded by God.

It may be hard to understand the connection of hate to the idea of having evil in the heart and being a murderer. It may be less difficult for us to recognise the serious connection if we consider this English sentence:

"The 40-mile-per-hour winds at the summit were murder."

The potential of the 40-mile-per-hour winds to take life was there even if it did not convert into actual fatality; it was lethal albeit not fatal – the same concept of the murderous potential of anger with wickedness (evil) for devastation to life (such as with character assassination, psychological impact, etc.). If you place yourself at the receiving end of anger, you know how it affects you – your life.

Murder is a vicious act. The viciousness has its source in the evil within the heart. Viciousness does arise from its source in the hatred that anyone conceives against a brother or sister. At times, a little sorrow begets anger, anger grows to hate and then the hate blows up into fury and fury unleashed wreaks havoc. The English expression "staring daggers" hints at

how seriously akin to the viciousness of murder a hate can be, and the expression “a pen is mightier than a sword” also tells us that an angry person can wreak a brutal destruction much greater with a metaphorical knife plunging into a person’s heart than with a physical knife.

Abel was a good man; but being good became a thorn in the flesh of Cain. This tells us that hatred may arise without justifiable cause. When someone says, “I hate _____ because _____,” it may very well be a fact that it is because of jealousy or similar preposterous reasons that point to the person’s own evil cantankerousness and moral deficit.

Socrates was a good man. Alcibiades (a politician and military commander in Ancient Greece) said this to him:

“Socrates, I hate you, for every time I meet you, you show me what I am.”

What a self-flagellating statement! Cain was likely to be in a somewhat similar situation where hate was conceived in his heart out of his own evil nature. When Apostle John directs us not to be like Cain, we should know the vulnerability or peril we would be exposed to if we were to be like Cain. Jesus did not do anything wrong, but he was charged and sentenced to die on the Cross. Even a just governor like Pontius Pilate could do nothing to spare Jesus from the punishment from the false charge. (Matt. 27:24) They (Pilate and Jesus) had to yield to the crowd that had hatred/evil in their (the crowd’s) hearts. Jesus’ righteous behaviour brought hatred. Was it His fault? Certainly not!

St. Aristides was a Christian Greek politician in Ancient Athens, famous for his righteousness (like Justice Bao in China was famous for his incorruptibility©). Unfortunately, he had a heavy price to pay for his righteousness – his death under an unjust trial, like the crucifixion of Jesus. When people see the proper behaviour of Christians, they can decide to praise and emulate; or they can decide to criticise and rival with their sinful ways. In this age of Internet social media, we see ample evidence of right behaviours being castigated while bad behaviours are hailed and wildly propagated. One of the jurors who voted Aristides guilty actually admitted that he did so because he was too tired of the righteous arguments in Aristides’ defence. No wonder Apostle John tells us:

^{1John3:13} *Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.*

Apostle John also wrote in John 15:18-19, *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”*

Just like Cain murdered his brother because “his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous,” (v. 12) we can say that the world hates righteousness because the righteousness points to the world’s own evil nature. ☹️ Since those of the world cannot run away from their evil ways, and the evil ways look glaringly obnoxious when placed in contrast with the righteous behaviours, they take the option of silencing the righteousness. Darkness and LIGHT do not mix, but we know that hard as the world tries to extinguish the LIGHT, the LIGHT is still shining in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:5)

The problem with hatred is not that people are ignorant of LOVE. Maybe it is stubbornness that causes people to hold back LOVE because it is easier to hate than to love, easier to cover ourselves in darkness than to equip ourselves to power up the surroundings with light.

Our Lord Jesus says in John 5:24, *“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”*

So we hear God’s Word and believe in Christ to cross over from death to life. But how do we know that we have crossed over from death to life? Apostle John provides the answer:

^{1John3:14} *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death.*

Hearing God’s Word and believing in Christ is the justification for our eternal life; loving each other is the fruit that we bear in testimony of our belief and hence obedience to the Lord’s command.

Recall that LOVE is the Lord’s command in John 13:34. A fig tree that does not produce fruit is a barren tree and withered; in this vein, a Christian who produces no LOVE is a desolate (lonesome) life “remaining in death” because the life of Christ is not in him. On the other hand, a fruitful tree signifies blessedness and an abundant life that prospers and propagates. Christians who are full of LOVE do not “remain in death” because they are

full of the life of Christ in them – thriving, fruitful – growing and reproducing the body.

People ordinarily think that when they are angry against a brother or sister but do not lift a finger to physically hurt, then it is ok. But if you are angry with a brother or sister, you are already subject to judgment. (Matt. 5:22)

Yes, just being angry is bad enough to invite judgment; just like just looking at a woman lustfully without consummating an illicit relationship is already committing adultery in the heart. (Matt. 5:28) People often mix up human standard with God's standard. Human standard focuses on what is manifest as wrongdoing (e.g., you are seen assaulting someone and that person is seen to die as a result – so it is murder!); however, God's focus is on the root source that has to be nipped with strong judgment before branches of transgressions grow out.

What do you think of this simile: anger is to kill as LOVE is to save?

^{1John3:16}“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.”

In anger, hostility prevails and controls one's follow-up actions. In LOVE, like the divine example of God's LOVE and the human example of parents' LOVE, the attitude is of giving oneself altruistically and sacrificially to save lives from perishing.

Cain's evil was shown in the transgression of resentment and thereafter murder – it was for himself (Cain) to live and for his brother (Abel) to perish from his sight. Murder most foul, we cry.

Love is shown in sacrifice; like our Lord Jesus self-sacrificially laying down his life for us that we might live on and on (for eternity). When we are angry with brothers and sisters and wish them bad, and the hatred (contrast LOVE) in our heart yields up the transgression of resentment and thereafter our actions of perishing them by character assassination, withholding of support for their acute needs (e.g., livelihood), causing them mental distress, etc., are we not guilty of destroying lives?

For Christians, the idea of giving in service, in personal sacrifice of time or possessions, or in any other way that applies one's life to the well-being of a brother or sister can be said to be some illustrations of giving altruistically

and self-sacrificingly. If this is too much for us, for in whatever we do we only think of personal convenience and our “nothing more but our scope of duty” self-centredness, then we are surely very far removed from knowing what love is as 1 John 3:16 describes.

“Laying down our lives for our brothers and sisters” contrasts with the ideas of “I live my life for myself” and “It’s alright in anger to conceive bad wishes for others.” It is often thought of as impossible to lay down our lives for others (in the literal sense) as Christ laid down his life for us. I would like you to think of this example:

Two equally senior executives are working in the same department where retrenchment is nigh due to company downsizing. One executive is 5 years from retirement age and has a stable family with wife and children financially independent. The other is younger, a widow who has young children and could not afford to lose the job. The older executive with his longer experience in the company could have comfortably earned his superior’s favour to stay with the company. However, knowing his colleague’s capabilities and good performance through the years, and her more critical need to keep her rice bowl, he volunteered to “lay his life down” (sacrifice himself) in order that his “sister” (colleague) might live (have her livelihood saved).

If a Christian cannot “lay down his life” as in dying to save a brother from a burning house, cannot “lay down his life” in the sense of putting aside the interest of his own life (with a well-paying job) for the sake of another like in the example of the executive above, cannot “lay down his life” in the sense of sacrificing some personal comfort of living to help a neighbour in need, cannot “lay down his life” in the sense of giving himself volunteering time and effort beyond “job scope” to help out a junior who is learning the ropes, ... it does not surprise me when people say it is impossible to abide by the LOVE in 1 John 3:16, or “very difficult” to follow in the outstanding human examples of self-sacrificing LOVE we do hear of on occasions.

In the foregoing, I have laid down examples of “laying down one’s life” from its absolute literal meaning of dying, on a descending scale of self-sacrifice, to the representational (metaphorical) sense of graciously using our life to make well the life of others.

The standard that Christ sets for us on LOVE is a supreme standard that I do not think any Christian is able to achieve in an instant. However, it is for every Christian to be aware of the supreme standard as a rung at the top of a ladder that we climb. Perhaps, the LOVE message in 1 John 3:16 is expressed in a language many Christians find it hard to chew. Perhaps, the simpler language of 1 Cor. 13 on LOVE is easier to digest and follow: Love is patient and kind, love is not envying, not boasting ...

Perhaps, when Christians following the LOVE guidance in 1 Cor. 13, they will unconsciously move up the ladder with each higher rung representing a higher standard until one day when a test arises, some may surprise themselves in a spontaneous testimony of the true LOVE they have for a brother or sister. Meanwhile, what are some of the practical ways we should do for our brothers and sisters? Apostle John says:

^{1John3:17} *If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?*

In society, there is a gap called the rich-poor divide. When talking of prosperity and poverty in the church, there is an extra layer of meaning which we enunciate; it is the spiritual richness and neediness among brothers and sisters. The willingness of the materially wealthy to help the financially poor is not good enough for the church if the spiritually rich are short in their willingness to bless the spiritually poor. Praise God that in the church, we can see good examples of faithful Christians who reach out to the young in faith or to pre-believers with patience and kindness despite moments that may be wearisome in having to deal with behavioural quirks of the latter who are not very well acclimatized to the church environment. Just as the motivations to hate and murder share a common seat in the morals and characters of the haters and murderers, the motivations of Christians to reach out to a brother or sister in need may or may not reflect LOVE in their hearts to enable one to say that the LOVE of God is in the Christians. It is possible to do good to others because "I have to" or "It is my appointed duty." But it is positively a different motivation and attitude worth encouraging when we act according to the general calling of God for us to open our hearts to the needy, and so we do good to others because "we want to." Understandably, our capabilities (big or small) differ from individual to individual, and may increase or decrease in the course of time. However, surely every one of us has the ability in some things. It is not whether our capabilities are big or small, but whether the LOVE of God in us makes our hearts big or small.

Luke 16:10-11 tells us, “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?”

“True riches” go beyond worldly wealth. We start with a small heart and a small capability, God will grow our hearts and our capabilities, and our spiritual riches. Otherwise they will just shrink further due to lack of use. Apostle John reminds us to love with actions and in truth.

^{1John3:18} *Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.*

It is easy to talk about LOVE, compassion, encouragement, etc.; but to walk the talk requires a lot of sacrifice. This is not merely about money. We can see very well in church or personal life, money alone does not solve all problems. We need sweat, we need hearts, we need hands on deck, we need to expend time and energy ... It is not easy, definitely. However, having the right attitude and character can give us strength. Our attitudes and characters define our actions, just like Cain’s. Jesus is the source of LOVE. If we have this LOVE in Christ, it will flow out of our hearts and immerse others in it too.

John Lee

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRAYER MEETING

(an extract from the Internet)

This Friday, at 8 pm, we will have prayer meeting. It is our church prayer meeting. It is a time set aside that we may get together as an assembly of saints to pray. Here, we pray for each other, for the ministries of this church, for other churches, for the government of Singapore and for the advancement of God’s kingdom here and in other lands.

Like most other prayer meetings when you come, you will not see the whole church there. You will see only a sampling of our regular congregation. While, I see the importance that the Scripture places on corporate prayer meetings, I know that as a church we are not doing very well in this area. I do realise that many of us are unable to come for a variety of good reasons such as work, coupled with distance, young

children, etc. But I wonder if some of us do not come because of a failure to grasp the importance of prayer meetings; and thus a failure to put in more effort to be there.

We find that the disciples constantly gathered in corporate prayer. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" (Acts 1:14).

In our busy modern society, it is practically impossible to meet regularly on ad hoc bases to pray, as did the early Christians. But the principle and importance of corporate prayer remains. It remains our duty to pray with fellow believers, to call out together to the Lord for the needs of the church. What better way to demonstrate our love for one another, than to meet to pray for one another during the week?

There is a big difference between the pastoral prayer and the corporate prayer at prayer meetings. Firstly, during prayer meeting, more than one person will pray—so we learn from each other and feel with each other. Secondly, the prayer meeting is more personal, so that specific personal and intimate items may be brought up and prayed for, which may not be possible during the pastoral prayers. Thirdly, in the prayer meeting, we may appropriately pray for the ministry of the coming weekend—the pulpit ministry, the catechism classes, the church in fellowship etc. Prayer does make a difference! Fourthly, during prayer meetings, an opportunity is given to everyone to update one another on his or her needs and items of thanksgiving, which is obviously impossible during worship services.

I am convinced that if more of us come to pray and take the prayer meeting seriously, we can expect the Lord to bless the ministry of our church in ways we cannot even imagine or ask for (cf. Eph 3:20). On the other hand, it will be hard for us to attain unto the unity of faith and love that we constantly pray for, if only a few come together to pray. Spurgeon is right, I believe, when he told his congregation: "Brethren, we shall never see much change for the better in our churches till the prayer meeting occupies a higher place in the esteem of Christians".

Will you not make extra effort to come, dearly beloved? And if you really cannot come for some valid reason, may I urge you to be praying with us in your family, and to let us know you are doing so.

Girls' Brigade Enrolment 2015

8 March 2015 - The first Girls' Brigade Enrolment at 101. Two companies of girls came for the service. There were no drill displays as 101 does not have a field for such events.

However there was adequate space for the younger girls to give a song presentation.



For the record, Mrs Martha John gave a message about Prayer.

