



For internal circulation only

The Vine Committee

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Of the 35 persons who answered our survey on the Family Day last month, 54% said it was Excellent and 39% thought it was Good. Only 1% (actually 1 person)

commented that it was Poor. The reason for the Poor score was that the field was not suitable for the elderly who were on wheelchairs. The next Family Day committee please take note of this situation for next year's event.

I checked the survey results and the poor fellow whom I left behind thought it was an Excellent event. Thank God all is forgiven. For the few people who voted Fair, it was mainly due to the food and the one Poor vote was for the venue. The Poor vote came from a JCC member, so it seems like it is harder to please our own members.

Had all our members partaken in the survey, I shudder to think what the results would be. The 35 persons who took the survey were mainly the guests for this event. Our own members have all grown so used to what to expect from a JCC event that instead of managing their expectations, they expect more. They expect the standards of a mega church event.

I take my hat off to the HOM of Outreach who had taken the brunt of all the complaints and "scoldings" from the members of JCC over the numerous events she had organized. She treats them like water off a duck's back and carries on working hard on the next project. On hand she is already holding portfolios in the Church Retreat, Carnival, the Golf Tournament and the Fund Raising Dinner. You may not even know who this lady is. Go find out and give her encouragement. Learn from her how to handle negative comments.

Feedback and how to give it. Over the past 25 years of The Vine, I have received not more than a handful of feedback. Perhaps people feel that if they have nothing good to say about The Vine, then it is best to keep their

peace. So the handful of feedback I got were generally good. Feedback is not meant to be praise only. Maybe if you told me 25 years ago that The Vine was a waste of time, then it could have been stopped and the editors spared to do other ministries.

However, feedback should not be given like you were Simon Cowell judging an America's Got Talent show. He is not a good role model to learn from about giving feedback. Cowell rose to fame and fortune on the basis of his brutal honesty, ignoring conventions of politeness to give candid feedback. Yes, he's unnecessarily mean and nasty.

"Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools, because they have to say something." - Plato

"If it takes a lot of words to say what you have in mind - give it more thought." - Dennis Roth

Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. - Proverbs 16:24

In the era of instantaneous news, like Facebook, STOMP and Yahoo News, the printed publication is almost obsolete. People rather blog their thoughts for the world to read than to publish it in The Vine. Sometimes they go too far, like Amos Yee, because they do not have an editor to rein them in. Who would like to have someone edit their writings? Other than to correct their grammar, most writers do not want editors to change their writing style or content. Even apostle John didn't like it: "*And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*" That could be the reason why we get such a dearth of articles for The Vine when there are so many activities going on out there which would be an encouragement to the body of Christ in JCC.

I am unable to attend this year's Church Retreat, so I will depend on those who attend to share your experiences and photos for the June issue of The Vine.

If you have any feedback, please be gentle with us. We are old men.

Martin Cheah

IS IT MORE BLESSED TO RECEIVE THAN TO GIVE?

If you give me \$50, I can then afford to have a good meal. Maybe I will still have some balance for a movie treat. If I give you \$50, I become poorer by that amount which I could otherwise put to some personal enjoyment. Isn't it more blessed to receive than to give?

Giving and receiving is not only about money. You may have watched the short



film about kindness shown on TV (courtesy of the Singapore Kindness Movement). The unfeeling heart of an elderly lady was won over by the untiring kindness of a little girl. When the girl was seriously ill, the old lady returned her kindness by visiting her in hospital and putting into her hand the lovely gift of a mud doll that the girl had liked. Her eyes slowly opened and a smile brightened her face. Everyone at her bedside was cheered by her coming around. The short film ended with the message: “IT IS IN GIVING THAT WE RECEIVE.”

“IT IS IN GIVING THAT WE RECEIVE” is in direct contrast to “It is more blessed to receive than to give.” Which is right?

Let's imagine 10 persons seated in a circle. Each does nothing but waits to receive something in love, service or material gift from somebody. As time continues, everyone is waiting and nothing happens. Nobody is blessed in any way.

Now, if everyone in the circle is eager to initiate some kind act and share something (food, gifts, service, etc.) with another; as the giving goes round, does it warm up the atmosphere (originally cold with everyone waiting and doing nothing)? Is not everyone blessed in some way by the kindness and camaraderie that go round?

**It is more
blessed to
give than
to receive.**
-Acts 20:35

So it is not more blessed to receive than to give. The words our Lord Jesus himself said are: “IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.” (Acts 20:35)

These words of our Lord Jesus are familiar, but many Christians do not seriously meditate on them to appreciate their weight.

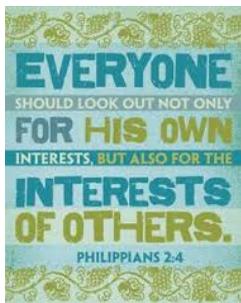
“My cup runneth over” is a quotation from Psalms 23:5 (KJV), which means that “I have more than enough for my needs.” The natural question to ask is: “What do I do with the extras?”

Someone may say, “Oh, the natural question is redundant to me. My cup is half empty.”

Another may say, “I have no need to deal with the question. My cup is only half full.”

Yet another may say, “Oh no, my cup is twice as big as yours, so I don’t have enough to spare.”

Actually, whether the cup is filled enough is a state of mind. Seeing a sufficiency in our cup attests to our mind feeling satisfied with what we have adequately with some to spare for others who are in some need of our giving. Over-attentiveness to vacuity in our cup may betray a mind of insatiability for more, expecting charity to come our way instead of us reaching out.



The child of God says, “Indeed, my cup runneth over!”

Admittedly, in reality, we are bound to encounter less than 100% subscription to the idea of Christian charity in the giving of our wealth in talents and/or material possessions. Nevertheless, this does not diminish the rationale of Acts 20:35; for, in the final reckoning, the givers end up receiving back more in a variety of manners.

In the church, we have many Christians faithfully serving in various ministries, each according to his capacity. We have many Christians willingly contributing whatever little or much in finances to the Church Rebuilding Project and various ministries of the church silently. The words “little” and “much” are just relative terms in human vocabulary. It does not matter to God whether in human comparisons what you share with the body of Christ is “a lot” or “little”. IT DOES MATTER whether your heart is in the right place; whether you consider your cup

to be half empty (whereby you earnestly feel only the need to receive more to fill your cup to your satisfaction) or you deem, as a child of God, that your cup runneth over and you are eager to bless others:

You gain blessings in return, not according to inappropriate self-seeking calculations but by occurrences in their natural courses.



People who use their right hands more than their left hands naturally are blessed with greater strengths in their right hands even if they do not consciously seek any such reward. People who share their talents, making decisions according to their personal relationship with God, NOT with the inappropriate attitude of seeking to burnish their personal glory by comparisons, naturally grow their talents without them consciously seeking the growth. People who are joyful in sharing love in fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ naturally develop bonds that are blessings in return.

Apostle Paul charged Timothy to “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” (1 Tim 6:17)

Those who have wealth they willingly and generously share from their cup that runneth over will gain blessings in return: “In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”



I quote from Our Daily Bread (June 2011):

Riches are a blessing only to those who make them a blessing to others.

If we've been blessed with riches,

We must be rich in deeds;

God wants us to be generous

In meeting others' needs.

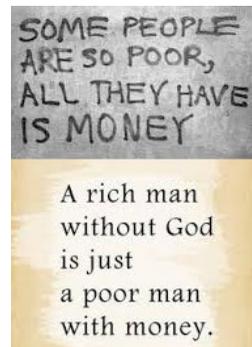
I believe that most people with sincere hearts do charity as a means to share the extras they have (in time, energy or personal resources) and in the process they reap the blessings of joy in seeing the happiness or the benefits upon those receiving their altruism. 助人为乐。 The rich state of mind (“My cup runneth over; I have the ability to share my blessing”) instead of the poverty state of mind (“My cup is still half empty; I need more to fill it before I can share”) becomes a source of joy, making one’s life happier.



Importantly, the notion of blessing is not necessarily defined in terms of monetary wealth. Chuck out of the window the prosperity gospel! Who is more blessed – a billionaire with a sick body or a humble worker enjoying good health and an active life?

It is not uncommon that a wealthy man sees himself not having enough. Why so? It may be that he is living a high life which is high cost, and so when he has his first million he feels that he should work for his second million; and when he has more, he seeks higher financial targets to feed his burgeoning taste for investments with accumulating loan debts. So the wealthy man says, “Give me a bit more time. When I make more, I can do more.” Such a person is not someone who ever will have enough to share blessings with others.

On the other hand, a person who has enough to share blessings with others is often not a loaded man with wealth to support a luxurious lifestyle. He knows contentment with what he has. He does not envy those who have more than him. With his humble state, he is able to empathize more with those who are in need. He tells himself, “I have enough. I don’t need more. I am blessed with a little extra more than what I seriously need for myself. This is my blessing. Let me share some with my brothers and sisters.



Do you come across “wealthy people who are poor” or “poor people who are rich”? They do provide us much food for thought.

John Lee

Mother's Day & Father's Day Reflections

Part 1

(Readers who don't understand Chinese may skip this part and go straight to Part 2.)

This month, we celebrate Mother's Day (10th May 2015). Next month, we will celebrate Father's Day (21st June 2015).

There is a popular Chinese children song in praise of mothers. Here is a suggested alternative in praise of fathers: ☺



世上只有爸爸好
有爸的孩子像个宝
投进爸爸的怀抱
幸福享不了

没有爸爸最苦恼
没爸的孩子像根草
离开爸爸的怀抱
幸福哪里找

Someone may suggest 3rd and 4th versions: 世上还有爸爸好 and 世上只有爸
妈好。

Should we put to a vote to find out which is the best version that truly sings of how good Mother and Father equally are in one's life none other can compare?

Here are the lyrics of the song "**Mother & Father**" which is found at



<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/broods/motherfather.html> where a ringtone is said to be available for download to your mobile:

(1)	<u>Chorus</u>
The nights are getting shorter I don't know where they go And I am getting older And it's starting to show	I don't want to wake up lonely I don't want to just be fine I don't want to keep on hoping Forget what I have in mind I don't want to wake up lonely I don't want to just be fine I don't want to keep on hoping Forget what I have in mind Forget what I have in mind
And ever since I left my mother It's much harder to know How to make my own life here How to make my own home	

<p>(2)</p> <p>I remember the time when a kiss on the hand was enough Cause we knew we were free And we knew what it meant to be loved</p> <p>But ever since I left my father It's much harder to know How to live my own life here When all I need is home</p>
<p>(3)</p> <p>As faces start to fade They're slipping through my hands It's where my heart was made And my feet will always land</p>

If you sing the song set to music, you will find it nice and touching.

爸妈都是好，但谁比较重要？(Who is more important?)

Fathers are male, mothers are female. In the beginning, God created man first, and then He created woman from the rib of man. So we can see that even God prioritized man over woman, am I not right? So even from the Creation narrative, we know that fathers are more important than mothers. **LOL**

Oh no, have I said anything wrong? Before mothers take umbrage, I should revise my statement to: 世上爸妈一样重要。(Father and Mother are equally important.) Here is the explanation:

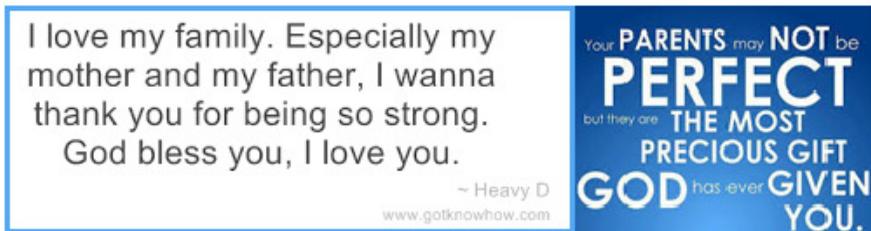


Truly, God created man first. But God knew that man could not be alone and well without a woman by his side, so He created woman to be man's faithful companion. The woman makes a lot of difference to the life of the man. Without the woman, the man would not be able to have descendants and there would be no fathers and no mothers in the world. Therefore, am I not right to say that 世上爸妈一样重要 (fathers and mothers are equally important), being collaborative contributors to the family?

Great is mother's love, but children need father's love too. Indeed, in human relationships, there is no greater love than the love we receive from our Mother and Father.

Part 2

Each of us is a mother's child as well as a father's child. The two are not mutually exclusive. Mother's Day and Father's Day are important days in the calendar for us to reflect on the "greatness without equal" of our parents without whom there would not be "Me". Our parents are equally our best companions when in time of need; and they are still equally our best



companions patiently and lovingly waiting for us at times when we dishonorably shoo them aside like strangers because we don't like their ways. The Bible has much to say about the importance of fathers and mothers.

Note that all the Ten Commandments pertain to love (the first three are about the love of God and the next seven are about human love of one another). The Catechism of St. Thomas Aquinas comments:

- ✓ We must love, not in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.
- ✓ For a man to love thus, he must avoid evil and do good.
- ✓ To avoid evil is in our power; but we are incapable of doing good to everyone.
- ✓ Thus, St. Augustine says that we should love all, but we are not bound to do good to all.
- ✓ But among those to whom we are bound to do good are those in some way united to us. Thus, "if any man have not care of his own

and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith." (1 Tim 5:8)

- ✓ Now, amongst all our relatives there are none closer than our father and mother.
- ✓ **"We ought to love God first,"** says St. Ambrose, **"then our father and mother."**

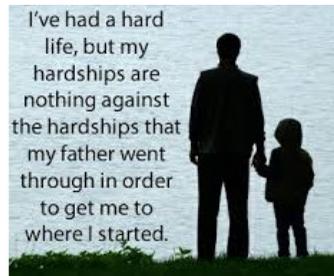
The following is additional evidence that the importance of fathers and mothers is very much rooted in the Christian faith:

- Out of the Ten Commandments, only the one pertaining to honoring our parents carries a promise (reward); the other nine do not!
- In the Old Testament, **"Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death. Because they have cursed their father or mother, their blood will be on their own head."** (Lev 20:9)
- Proverbs 15:20 underscores the importance of both parents, **"A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish man despises his mother."**
- It is recorded in the Gospel that when Jesus was a 12-year-old boy, he was not a rebellious child but was obedient to his parents.
- When Jesus was crucified, He did not forget His mother, Mary. As an expression of filial piety, He remembered to entrust her care to His beloved disciple, John.

Do children nowadays obey their parents or irritate them, honor their parents or look down on them, serve their parents or seek to be served, love their parents and value them or detest them and disrespect them?

Admittedly, no child is perfect. Imperfection notwithstanding, children are loved and cared for by their parents. The vast majority of parents give sacrificial love to their children. The parents are seriously concerned for their children's well-being at the expense of their own health and other benefits.

Admittedly, no parent is perfect. Imperfection notwithstanding, filial sons and daughters do not



neglect their God-sanctioned filial duty to love their parents.



Happy are children who bask in both mother's and father's love; and blessed are they who obey their parents in the Lord and heed the first commandment with a promise: "Honor your father and mother ... so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." (Eph 6:1-3 NIV)

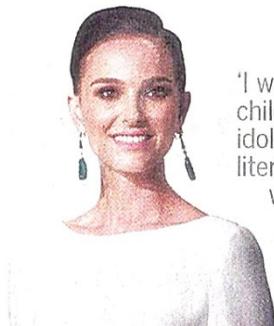
Filial piety is borne of love. Filial piety is also a teaching of Confucianism and all major religions. The love in filial piety is expressed outwards, not inwards toward self. It is not about feelings, desires, personal gains or emotional satisfaction; BUT it is about a decision to be patient, kind, not keeping records of wrongs ... (1 Cor.13:4-8).



It is great for children to have their mothers and fathers, and be able to celebrate Mother's Day and Father's Day. Hopefully, such a happy situation is never taken for granted and pined for only when the happy situation is missed.

Here is wishing all mothers a HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY and all fathers A HAPPY FATHER'S DAY.

John Lee



'I was reading the story of Abraham to my child and talking about not worshipping false idols. And this is literally a gold man. This is literally worshipping a gold idol – if you worship it. That's why it's not displayed on the wall. It's a false idol'

Actress Natalie Portman (left) explaining why she does not know where she kept the Oscar she won

The Shepherd

The shepherd was playing with his sling, trying to hit a target with a stone just like David hit Goliath on the head. Suddenly he stopped playing when he realized that one of his sheep was missing.

He counted again, ninety-nine! Earlier that morning, he had one hundred sheep when he took them out of the pen to the open field for grazing. If he returned with only ninety-nine sheep, his father would be very angry with him. What could he do? They were in the open field and if he left the ninety-nine sheep, they might also get lost. He did not have a sheep dog with him to watch the sheep if he were to go off to search for the lost sheep.

Many thoughts flooded his mind. What if he could not find the lost sheep and end up losing more? What if the lost sheep did not want to return? Wouldn't his father understand that it was a collateral loss? Didn't the high priest say, "It is better for one man to die for the many"? Would the ninety-nine sheep blame him if they were attacked by a lion while he was away searching for the lost sheep? It was a maths problem, risk of losing many more sheep compared to finding one lost sheep. What were his chances?

In the end, the fear of his father's dissatisfaction made up his mind. He left the ninety-nine sheep in the open field where there was full of grass so that they would continue feeding and not wander off. He set off to the north in search of the lost sheep.

After about half an hour of searching, he heard the bleating sound of the sheep. The lost sheep was happily feeding on some grass at the foot of the hill. The shepherd wondered if the sheep would return with him since it was already having food to eat and the grass seemed greener here.

The shepherd called out to the sheep. The sheep recognized his voice and turned to look at the shepherd. The sheep didn't move so the shepherd had to go down and pick it up onto his shoulders to bring it back to the flock.

At the end of the day, the shepherd brought his one hundred sheep back to the pen and he was very happy to have found his lost sheep. This is a story about sheep. Does it apply to man? Apparently not, because after this story was the story of the lost son.



Martin Cheah

The Lost Son

What is the difference between the parables of the lost sheep and the lost son, or better known as the prodigal son? In one story the shepherd left ninety-nine sheep to search for one lost sheep but in the other story, the father did not leave one son to search for the lost son.

Many of us like to compare the lost sheep with the lost son. They wonder why CG Shepherds do not go out in search of their lost members to bring them back. They will always refer to the parable of the lost sheep as an example of what a shepherd is expected to do.

I believe that every shepherd will be devastated to lose a sheep and some may even leave their CG to go look for the lost sheep. So why didn't the father go out to look for his lost son?

Firstly, we must find out how the sheep got "lost". Probably, the sheep was slow and did not catch up with the rest of the flock and got lost or the sheep wandered away from the flock when it was distracted by some greener grass on the other field.

However in the case of the lost son, he chose to leave his father's home and go to a country far away. The lost son did two things, firstly, he chose to leave and secondly, he went far away to avoid being found. Even if the father had gone out to find him, there was no guarantee that he would follow his father back. Firstly, he had to change his mind and want to come back. Secondly, his father was old and presumably not strong enough to drag his lost son back.

So what can the shepherd do? Are we to forget about the lost son and go on as normal with the remaining ones? Obviously, that is not the Holy Bible's message. The father kept looking out for his son daily hoping that he would come home. Some people might think the father was not proactive. He should have sent his servants out to drag his son back. The father knew better. You can drag a horse to water but you cannot force it to drink.

So like the father, I think the shepherd should pray daily for the lost son to return home. Unless and until he is willing to come home, no other means would be successful.

Prepare for a big feast when NJCC is built. We hope all our lost children will return home.

Martin Cheah

BEGINNING THE WORK OF RESTORATION - David Wilkerson

The book of Nehemiah offers a vivid picture of what happens to the church in times of ruin and apostasy. When Nehemiah and 43,000 other Jewish patriots returned to Jerusalem, they found the city lying in total ruin. The walls were torn down and the gates removed, so the inhabitants had no protection from their enemies . . . and a whole parade of antagonists plundered the city as they pleased.

These enemies had been given total dominion because of Israel's backsliding and disobedience to God's Word. Nehemiah wrote, "Because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress" (Nehemiah 9:37).

Jerusalem here is a type of the church of Jesus Christ today. Like the Israelites, many Christians are under sin's dominion and the iniquity in God's house has brought on distress and bondage, spreading poison throughout the Body of Christ.

How has this happened? The walls of truth have been torn down—those protective barriers that are erected when believers stand on God's Word. Because of our sin and compromise, those protective gates are falling, leaving multitudes of Christians open to Satan's power.

Yet Nehemiah here represents God's plan of restoration. This man knew that for any true revival to take place, there had to be a safe, protective wall of truth surrounding God's people.

So, did Nehemiah stride into the wall-less city calling for a revival of supernatural manifestations? No. The only manifestations seen after Nehemiah's arrival were men and women with picks and shovels in their hands. They were doing the hard work of rebuilding the city's walls and restoring its gates. And Nehemiah was leading it all.

This work of restoration began the moment Nehemiah took on the Lord's burden over the ruin in His house. When Nehemiah saw the affliction and reproach God's people were suffering, he fell to his knees, crying, "The wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire" (Nehemiah 1:3).

Interest-free Loan

JCC launched the Interest-Free Loan scheme on 31st May 2015. This is a last ditch effort to raise funds for the rebuilding project. Fearing that we are unable to raise enough funds through our offerings and fund raising projects, the council is turning to borrowing money from members and friends in an effort to raise \$6 million to meet part of our project costs.

What does it mean to you in monetary terms? If you offered JCC a \$10,000 loan for 3 years interest-free, most likely you are sacrificing about \$304 of interest that you would have got if you had put the same amount in a savings account for 3 years at a compound interest of 1%.

However to JCC it is a significant gain because if we were to take a bank loan of \$10,000 over 3 years at 3.25% interest, it could cost us \$11,700 in interest fees alone. (figures taken from Internet)

I may be wrong about the calculations of interest the bank charges but I am quite sure about the interest we earn from the savings account. It is quite an insignificant amount, otherwise, we will all be rich leaving the money in the bank.

In fact, leaving money in the bank could be detrimental to your wealth. If you had left \$1 in the bank when kopi O was only 50 cents, did you receive enough interest to buy 2 cups of kopi O which now costs 80 cents? Inflation according to economists has risen faster than interest rates.

From a spiritual viewpoint, money in the bank could be your idol, your false sense of security. As mentioned in John Lee's article, the rich could be poor because they are unwilling to spend the money in the bank which has become their idol. It is good to spend wisely but what do you do with all the money in the bank? Do you just want to see the bank account grow and grow while you hold back on spending? *"Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless."* Ecclesiastes 5:10

"Do not wear yourself out to get rich; do not trust your own cleverness. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle." Proverbs 23:4-5

"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrews 13:5

Chih Chiang's Ministry Update

From June 8th-10th, we are going to conduct a stay-over evangelism training camp to equip the freshmen in Basic Evangelism skills so that they can know how to share the gospel to their non-Christian friends.



Cru is a non-profit organization, we are raising financial support to help subsidise the freshmen for the upcoming training camp.

