

The Vine

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The Vine Committee

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HOM'S Reflections

On the last Sunday of September, the granddaughter of one of JCC's early missionary pastors, Rev Ralph Kusserow, visited JCC @ 101. She may

not have realized that this is not the original JCC that her grandfather served in way back in 1974. When Pastor Andrew asked how many people knew Rev Kusserow, only 4 persons raised their hands. They were

Roy, Juria, Freddie and Lissa. I believe Ronnie and Nancy would have raised their hands also if they had been around that Sunday.

This set my mind wondering. What if my grandchild visits NJCC 40 years down the road? Would there be anyone around who knew me? Most of my peers would be in Heaven by then. Only those who are in their twenties now would still be around. How many young people do I know? Certainly not many. So if I want to leave a legacy for my grandchild 40 years in the future, then I better get to know more young people now so that they will raise their hands 40 years from now and say, I knew Martin Cheah.



The Generation Gap makes each generation isolated. For example, with our Chinese Concert we are promoting a singer from the 60s named Pan Xiu Qiong who is unknown to our young people. This makes our target audience limited to the elderly only. So with only 16 days to go before the event, we are still unable to fill the hall on Friday night. If we had a K-Pop band, we would have filled the hall way back when we first mooted the idea but with only young people. So how do we get all the generations together? Is there something or someone everyone likes regardless of age?

When I look at the photo of the Abundance Cell Group at the bowling alley, I see the gap. It should be quite obvious. There are elderly, middle aged and very young people in the photo but the young adults are missing. When will the young adults grow to middle age and be part of the “adult” group?

When Jesus spoke to the crowds, were they of a particular age group? Some people would like to think so, especially those who do not believe in infant baptism. If that is the case, then how old was the young boy with the five loaves and two fishes? If we assumed he came alone then he must be quite fat because he could eat 5 fish burgers alone. The alternative is that since he was a young boy, he was there with his parents, that accounts for why he had 5 loaves with him.

There is a hymn with this verse:

In Christ there is no east or west
In him no south or north
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth

The hymn writer imagined that distances and race do not keep Christians separated but one in a great fellowship of love. He probably did not realize that the generation gap could cause a division in the fellowship.

Do you know what the last verse of the Old Testament says? Malachi 4:6, “And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” Isn’t that beautiful? Of all the topics that God could have chosen to close-out the Old Testament, He chose to express His desire for family unity, specifically between children and their father. Fathers are under attack in America. All the hordes of Hell are out to get the father in a home. The reason why is because the father is the authority! The Generation Gap challenges parental authority, particularly that of fathers. – David J Stewart

Christian generations need each other as well, so how can any gaps be bridged? A good start comes from valuing others above ourselves (Philippians 2:3). Value, respect and appreciate each other’s different styles, communication skills, preferences, approaches, and perspectives, and focus on the one major thing in common – Christ. If Christ is the overall focus, he will bridge the gap. – Barbara Dahlgren

Martin Cheah



The official date for the Mid-Autumn Festival 2015 is 27th September; but the celebration came early on the 19th in Jurong

Christian Church. The Chinese also call it the Mooncake Festival because traditionally mooncakes are eaten on the occasion.

Lanterns lit up the night, but brightening up the atmosphere was also the radiance from the smiles of church members, families and friends who came together to harvest crops of friendship and give thanks to God with wonderful singing by children and adults, led by sis. Peh Ern.

The “Mid-Autumn” in the festival name tells us clearly that the festival has a connection with one of the four seasons in the year that were created by God who gave the lights (sun, moon, stars) as signs of them. (Gen 1:14-19).



Thanks to Deacon Peter Cheong for sharing a short but informative message on what the festival is all really about according to its original purity, putting aside the superstitions and legends that were introduced by people later.



Sis. Lydia led the children on a cool lantern parade in the neighbourhood while sis. Seline and her team demonstrated mooncake-making to the keen adult learners.

The mooncake reminds us of the moon at its fullest and roundest at the time of the autumn equinox, and we worship the God who made the moon and give Him all glory for His creation.



Rom 1:25 talks about people who “exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised.”

Just because there are people who turn God-worship on a festival into idolatry (moon-worship) does not mean that the occasion does not befit us as Christians to celebrate it in the right way and bring God into focus.

The Mid-Autumn celebration is an opportunity which our Outreach Ministry does not miss every year to bring across the right message of God to people who are willing to hear.

Thank God for our brother Phang Kin Siong for making himself available this year to chair the planning and organizing of this event. Thanks also for all helpers who have done a great job in handling the logistics cheerfully.



Thank God too for the simple but appetizing buffet food that filled every stomach and the goody bag that puts a smile on every child.

Pray for God’s continuing blessings on JCC Outreach Ministry!

Peggy Lee



Singapore General Election

The battle was fought. The winners in all constituencies were declared. The PAP won by a huge vote swing overall. Apart from the PAP and her supporters, another group of people must be jubilant in celebration of a windfall – the bookies, because many punters would have lost money due to the result they did not expect.

Election surprises are not uncommon. The victorious drink to celebrate success; the defeated drink to drown their disappointment. This is all very natural.

In my humble opinion, the winners fought a hard battle. They received their victory prize. The defeated candidates fought a clean and worthy campaign. They deserved the people's recognition for their effort in voicing up some major concerns of citizens. The winners must know humility, as pride goes before a fall. The defeated can keep their chins high, knowing that even though they did not have the result they desired, the part they contributed to a democratic election was positive.

I am often reminded of the saying, "Man proposes, God disposes." There are people who are happy to see things one way, against those who are unhappy. The latter see some other things positively while the former take negative positions. The conflict of opinions never dies off. When some conflicting positions get sorted out, others arise. What one expects, he doesn't get; what he doesn't expect, he gets. Although the victories in all constituencies in this election depended on human votes, I see another dimension of it – God's will that we cannot argue against.

We congratulate the PAP for her mandate to form the government. Isaiah 9:6 tells us that THE GOVERNMENT rests on Christ's shoulders. Here, I type in different fonts to make a distinction between "the government" and "THE GOVERNMENT". I see "THE GOVERNMENT" as meaning THE GOVERNMENT of the

world, the authority that rules over all, and not simply a government of any geographical part. Christ is the KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Rev. 19:16) and he is watching over all earthly governments. The good ones will stay with His blessings, and the bad ones will have their day of reckoning. This is very evident in the world.

Someone sent me a message in Chinese comparing two “types” of governments. Here is a translation:

“I think an ignorant, incompetent and complacent government is more terrible than a capricious and corrupt government.”

My mind surveyed the countries near and far. I don’t need to cite examples of countries with one or the other of these “types” of governments, but I can say that Singaporeans would not rest well if we have either of these.

Thankfully, we have a decent government. It would be grossly unfair to our hardworking leaders if I say that the government is bad. Indeed, the government’s ability to lead the nation through decades of peace, prosperity and stability is the envy of countries that are fraught with unrests and accusations of incompetence or corruption.

Yet, I would make myself unbelievable if I say that the government is so good that there is no room to do better to assuage the worries of a lot of citizens who have made their strong feelings heard. Yes, I say “heard” because I know that the government is working hard on the issues. Whether these worried citizens are in the majority or minority does not negate the fact that there is a sizeable number who feel disenfranchised by their experiences.

We are blessed to have a caring government; but a government of distinction is one we seek. Maybe the government is going to feel some pressure from this high expectation; but Singaporeans are known to have high expectations in a lot of things, to be No. 1 in rankings despite owning just a little red dot on the world map. Maybe, we can temper our expectations a little; but still we have the right to look forward to a government that is more than just being “good” – one that is very able to manage the aspirations of both the strong and weak, provide for the needs of both the well-heeled and the indigent, and forge a cohesive society where every stratum from the natural proletariats to the natural aristocrats recognize that they are interdependent in the scheme of things to move forward as ONE PEOPLE, ONE NATION, ONE SINGAPORE.

After GE 2015, we have a new cabinet. We have infusion of fresh blood in Parliament. There will be new ideas and new vitality for good governance of Singapore. One aspect for our leaders to take care of is the hurtfulness of

divisive politics that, to put it mildly, is distracting to the larger agenda for the people to move onward with peace and harmony, and in unity with the governing authority.

“TODAY reports: While the elections have brought out some differences among voters, Singaporeans must unite and work around their differences to take the country forward, says Social and Family Development Minister Tan Chuan-Jin.”¹

*We have a government who is neither blindfolded
Nor stopped in her ears.*

*She listens attentively to voices from the ground
And know how to assuage people's fears.*

*A strong election mandate she has won
An opportunity to rally for unity.*

*The government will be consistent in words and actions
To restrain the evil of divisive politics.*

*Our eminent leaders will put nation above self
And be the hope of all Singaporeans for Singapore.*

The government does not have an easy job. While we place high hope on her to do things right for Singaporeans and Singapore, do we place faith in Christ since THE GOVERNMENT rests on His shoulders, for Him to bless this nation and put things right when they go wrong?

What do we desire for Singapore? Listen:

“Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” – Mk 11:24-25

Apostle Paul also exhorts:

¹ <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/tan-chuan-jin-urges/2123522.html>

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4).



I applaud the PAP for the big victory.

I encourage all not to forget to pray for our leaders, for Singapore, because all need blessings from the One who has THE GOVERNMENT on His shoulders.

MAJULAH SINGAPURA!

John Lee

Mr Tharman visited the home of JCC member Alan Soh and family during the pre-election campaigning.



Abundance Cell Fellowship Bowling Good Times

“Haze haze, go away. Don’t come again another day! My Cell group members have come out to play. Haze haze, go away. It is best for everyone today!” Does this sound familiar?

Our hearts called out for the haze to stay away on 24 September 2015 when the PSI reading was over 300 when the Abundance Cell group met for an indoor bowling fellowship at Singapore Polytechnic Graduates’ Guild (SPGG). A few of us walked with our N95 masks to SPGG from Dover MRT station. Our footsteps were lighter than the thickness of the haze hovering around us as we disappeared quickly into the shadows of Singapore Polytechnic (SP) before we arrived at SPGG.

As we emerged from the cloud of haze into the brightly lit bowling centre and lanes, it was an entry to a new world, where the PSI was quickly forgotten



at that moment. Once everyone arrived, those who would be bowling put on their shoes and chose their lanes for the games.

Laughter, cheers and chatter were in abundance as the adults were having as much fun as the kids. Others who could not bowl because of medical or personal reasons, found their spot of fun as we mingled around getting to know each other.

“And let us consider how we may spur

one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Heb 10:24- 25

The two hours passed by quickly as the bowling good times ended for dinner to begin. Reverend Anthony Loh gave his words of encouragement, prayed for the Cell group members and gave thanks for the food before we ordered our meals. Also, prizes for top scorers were given out as an encouragement for participation in support of the fellowship as a Cell Group. The winners shared their prized apples with others on the table, marking the true sportsmanship of love for fellow brothers and sisters-in-Christ at the table.

Isn't it wonderful to know that God has given us the opportunity to build each other up through fellowship where we get to know each other through God's Love and His Grace?

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” 1 Thessalonians 5:11



It is a nice picture, isn't it? Let the good times roll!

Haze haze, go away. Our Cell group had fun and fellowship today! Yah! So, let's continue to pray knowing that God will always be there for us every day.

Joyce Tan

27 September 2015

What time is it?

It's time to crave for pure spiritual milk.



*“Therefore, rid yourselves of all **malice** and all **deceit**, **hypocrisy**, **envy**, and **slander** of every kind. Like new-born babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.” (1 Pet. 2:1-3)*

New-born babies feed on nothing but milk. Without milk, they won't grow up healthily. Milk is also good for the matured – calcium for strong bones, protein for healthy muscles and many more health benefits. If physical milk is great for physical health, spiritual milk is great for spiritual health. Do you crave for pure spiritual milk as an infant craves for its mother's milk?

As milk gives us goodness, it takes away the badness, such as lowering high blood pressure and hence the risks of strokes, reducing the excessive production of cholesterol and reducing the risk of certain cancers. These are but some of the claims of the health benefits.

Similarly, pure spiritual milk can help us rid ourselves of the badness of our spiritual health, such as malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind.



Malice is a general term for all sorts of wickedness, including hatred, spite, meanness, cruelty and so forth. Often, the grievances in our heart give birth to malice, a desire to do other people in.

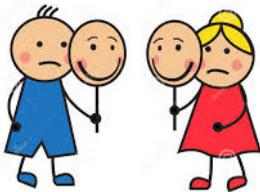


Deceit is used by wicked people. As a fisherman, Peter would have understood the imagery of baits and hooks used to achieve the aim of catching prey in the net. Deceit is a form of

dishonesty. The baits that deceitful people use are the pure lies, half-truths and tricks; and the hooks are the mischiefs that these evildoers want their targets to fall for.

Hypocrisy is like pious believers celebrating the holy day of the Passover with superficial saintliness while they keep the Festival with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness instead of with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Cor. 5:8)

The word “hypocrite” came from Greek with the original meaning of “stage actor” and the word “hypocrisy” carried the meaning of play-acting. Obviously, a stage-actor in play-acting is good in the art of pretense. I quote Matthew Henry Commentary:



“In civil conversation hypocrisy is counterfeit friendship, which is much practised by those who give high compliments, which they do not believe, make promises which they never intend to perform, or pretend friendship when mischief lies in their hearts.”

Oh, how mean hypocrites are, how much we detest them but ... wait ... do we pause to see the reflections in our mirrors and feel confidently assured that we pass the “no-hypocrisy” test with flying colours?



EnvyFace

Envy is what churches traditionally teach as one of the seven deadly sins (pride, greed, envy, wrath, lust, gluttony and sloth). To some, it is scary to contemplate the deadliness of these sins, but thank God “antidotes” are available to counteract them: humility neutralizes (is the antidote for) pride, generosity dissolves greed, love can overcome envy, kindness subdues wrath, self-control resists lust, temperance lightens gluttony and zeal quashes sloth.

Yes, love can overcome envy. It is not just loving others regardless of what they are, but also loving ourselves regardless of what we are. Envy rears its ugly head because we lack this “double love” – loving others and ourselves.

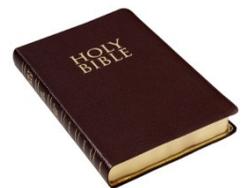
We compare upwards and feel a sinking feeling caused by our desires to measure up pressing down on us instead; and when we compare downwards, pride (another of the deadly sins) rears the other head which is actually an envy of self. Socrates said that envy is the ulcer of the soul. An ulcer can fester. Therefore, let us beware. Take love. Love brings positive feelings and banishes the negativity of envy.



Slander not, if you don't want to be called a fool. (Prov. 10:18) It is better to seal your lips than to loosen them and let others behold your foolishness. You don't have to be direct with false accusations against others to be guilty of slander. People can become slandered by your purveyance of incomplete truths, snide remarks, subtle words and deceptive body language.

Malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander are sins that Christians should be wary of. Can they be eradicated? If "antidotes" for the seven deadly sins are freely available (in the Word of God), surely it shouldn't be hard to find the "antidotes" for sins that are "less-deadly" because they are not traditionally classified in the deadly group. Sins of whatever descriptions are "all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent," and we should get rid of them by humbly accepting the Word planted in us, which can save us.

"... now that you have tasted that the Lord is good," it is time to crave for what is pure; i.e., pure spiritual milk – the pure and complete Word of God, not filtered or paraphrased for easy digestion, spiritual milk in its purest form.



Do you feel a craving?

John Lee



Christians are like a Cigarette Box

Last week at my family get together, my brother, who is a backslidden Catholic started making comments that religion is personal and people should not go around preaching to others. His basis was that the two oldest religions, Buddhism and Hinduism, do not do that. At that moment in time I replied that religion is indeed a personal choice but Christians must go around telling people of the consequences of their choices. Of course, I remembered to mention that Christianity is not a religion but rather a relationship between God (in Jesus) and man. Christians do not have to follow a lot of rules but only to believe in Jesus to be saved.

On reflection, now, I think that I should have given an example. Christians are like a cigarette box. They do not stop you from smoking but they remind you of the consequences of smoking.

So why do smokers not get annoyed and turned off by the ugly looking cigarette boxes but people get annoyed and turned off by Christians preaching the Good News? Why do they not claim their rights to freedom of choice without those hideous pictures on their favorite pastime. Yet they will sue any Christian who preaches to them. I asked a colleague who smokes and he said that he is immune to the pictures on the cigarette box. Probably the spirit that God put in a man does not get immune to the message of the Gospel, so there is always a struggle and that annoys the person.

Thinking further, I presume the two religions which believe in reincarnation really do not need to tell people of the consequences because there are no consequences. They just come back and repeat their lives again and again until they get it right. So to most non-believers, Buddhism and Hinduism seem like a most peaceable religion and they do not start wars or conflicts, unlike Christianity and Islam. However, this is a fallacy because in India, there are many conflicts between Hindus and other religions. While in China, the Shaolin monks are one of the fiercest warriors. My brother then mentioned the Spanish Inquisition and other atrocities carried out by Christians, especially my mother's great, great (I don't know how many "greats") grandfather, who was Hong Xiuquan, who in the name of Christianity, chopped off the feet of women who had bound feet during the Taiping Rebellion. Yet I think that religion does not teach people to do evil but rather that people in the mistaken name of religion do evil to their fellow man.



So how do you defend against the Inquisitions, not just the Spanish but also the Portuguese and others, which was the next jab at me? The original intents of these inquisitions were to wipe out heretics but I guess when the Grand Inquisitor got too much power, he got corrupted and went overboard. However if you read Catholic apologists, they will claim that the stories were highly exaggerated by Protestants to discredit them.



Once we start talking about religion, there would be many defenses we have to put up for actions carried out by man in the name of religion. Even Pope Francis got into the picture because he is in the USA and he should chastise the president for starting wars.

If there is an answer on the spot for every Christian related event in history, I don't know it. I just have to reflect on the arguments brought up and wonder why I didn't think of the answer then.

Maybe this article would have given you some of the answers I could not think of in the heat of the argument. However, I forgot what Dave Geisler taught us at the Evangelism classes. He advised us to attack instead of defend, ie to answer a question with another question so that the inquirer goes into the defensive.

For example:

He: "Your mother's ancestor claimed to be the brother of Jesus Christ and he did so many evil things."

Me: "Do you think someone who claims to be the literal brother of Jesus Christ could be a little nuts?"

He: "I guess he is a little nuts."

Me: "Then he did all the evil because he is nuts, not because he is Christian."

Well the above conversation did not happen. Instead, I just mentioned that Christians are also sinners and so they do sin.

May God grant us the words to speak when we are confounded.

Martin Cheah

Would you rather have Peace on Earth or Earth in Pieces?



Do you enjoy watching military parades?

Military parades are usually grand affairs. When you watch military parades, especially those of big countries, you can be spellbound by the soldiers marching in orderly ranks, the flaunting of strengths with a great exhibition of the latest in weapons and technologies, and the loud booms coming from a live display of firepower to show off one's might that is not to be messed with. They surely are very expensive affairs. Imagine the price-tag of each projectile that is exploded just to entertain the audience or warn imaginary potential enemies: "Don't play play with us!"

Recently, China put up a magnificent military parade of unprecedented scale, watched by many heads of state. Someone shared with me online a long digital picture scroll that was very beautifully made of the parade grounds. It was an impressive feast for the eyes –soldiers in smart formations and

weapons showcased in all their human glory. I was told to keep the picture as a precious collection. Instead of valuing the picture for keeps with eagerness, my mind wandered into the following thoughts.

Pardon me for my ignorance about international politics and power relationships. My small mind only thinks that big and powerful countries are most responsible for exacerbating the arms race. When one country shows off its military strength, surely another with the capabilities would not take it lying down. A battle of one-upmanship in equipping their fighting forces with greater offensive weapons in the name of defence can only exacerbate the arms race. Countries with strong militaries can be tempted to project hegemony in the world. At times, countries with modest means also face temptations to let their military ambitions take precedence over economic development and social care. The world does not seem capable of living in peace.

The picture scroll of military super-grandeur was awe-inspiring to me in another way – awe-inspiring at the humongous precious resources being expended on military ambitions, against an invisible backdrop of ordinary human beings in the world who are struggling over basic needs. Imagine how much each missile or each weapon can be converted to bread or rice to feed the hungry, and how much the brainpower of each military scientist or engineer can be converted to beneficially target solving the real survival problems of people in the world.

Wise Solomon said:

- Wisdom is better than strength. (Ecc. 9:16)
- Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good. (Ecc. 9:18)



In this world dwell people who are intelligent with powerful brains and might. Unfortunately, the human race has much of its conscience of humanity lost.

Do you feel impressed by all the military shows of strength, or feel sad for the world?

John Lee

Is the Bible a torch or a mirror?

(A study of James 1:22-25)

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”
– James 1:22

We read the Word of God. How do we apply it?

It is very easy to use the Word of God to chastise others for being unholy. The Bible then becomes like a torch that one holds in his hands. The torch is pointed at others, with all their flaws made abundantly clear in the light beam. “Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.” – James 1:23-24

James tells that the Word of God is like a mirror, which reflects light onto the one who looks into it. So if we look into the Word, we see our flaws made abundantly clear in the reflected light.



Bible Mirror



The Bible as a mirror is for us to make use of for our own gain in self-reproof, to undertake self-improvement as we deal with our own lives. The Bible is not a torch for us to pick out the faults of others.

“But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.” – James 1:25

Unfortunately, many people much prefer the Bible as a torch rather than as a mirror. That is why many Christians have a “holier than thou attitude” when dealing with brethren. They switch on the Bible-torch and quickly point out the speck of sawdust in their brother’s eye, but they don’t look into the Bible-mirror to note the plank in their own eye. (Matt. 7:3)



It is easy to never forget how others look like when we shine the Bible-torch at them. In contrast, it is easy for us to forget how we look like in the Bible-mirror.



“The Bible will keep you from sin,
or
sin will keep you from the Bible.”
Dwight L. Moody

A graphic with a yellow background. On the left is a black book with 'Holy Bible' written in gold. On the right is a quote in blue text: "The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible." followed by the name 'Dwight L. Moody' in blue.

After reading James 1:22-25, let us be aware that the Word of God is a spiritual mirror that we can look into that will show us who we are.

John Lee

So Happening

A band of intrepid people, 6 girls and a guy, visited Cambodia in the early part of September. They spent about a week there.



You seldom get to see them in front of the congregation but here in Cambodia, they were all in front, sharing and singing.

On 26th Sep, both the English and Chinese councils and ministry leaders had a consultation with Rev Keith Lai on spiritual matters. Rev Lai was our retreat speaker in Desaru in 2014. He will be preaching in JCC again in Nov.

