



Martin Shield 2016

The Vine Committee

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Winning Team
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HOM'S Reflections

You could win a million dollars by winning a gold medal at the Olympics, or you could win \$200,000 by winning a gold medal at the paralympics, or you could win a Subaru car by just placing your hand on the

car for the longest time. All these achievements take much effort and training and we Singaporeans should be encouraged to be hardworking and honest. So why do we want to introduce online gambling and turn hardwork into laziness and risk taking?

Maybe it all started in our primary school days where our exams were MCQs (Multiple Choice Questions) and those who did not study could still get through by sheer luck. We start to believe that Fortune Favours the Brave. How many have found out that statistically gambling have more losers

than winners. The short answer is no, you will never win. The odds of winning the usual 6/49 lottery are 1 in 13,983,816. You would have to play the game 9,692,842 times to have a 50/50 chance of winning at least once. Assuming you bought 100 lottery tickets a day, it would take 265.6 years to have a 50% chance of winning. To have a 90% chance of winning, it would take 882.2 years. (Calculation from Internet)

Yet neither maths nor logic can stop a person from having false hopes. However Christians in a long queue might be sheepish about it but when gambling goes online, what a floodgate it might release. People of all ages, classes, races or religions will subscribe to it in the privacy of their own homes.

Is Gambling a sin? The word "Gambling" does not appear anywhere in the Bible so say those who wish to defend their position. The word "Trinity" does not appear anywhere in the Bible also.

How do we deduce that gambling is not an acceptable practice? Why do people gamble? Obviously to win money. The Bible has many things to say about money. *No servant can serve two masters....* (Luke 16:13) *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.* (1 Timothy 6:10)

Gambling is an attempt to gain money without work. *Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.* (Proverbs 10:4)

Gambling also has the potential to turn into an addiction. *...for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.* (2 Peter 2:19)

Gambling provides a sense of false hope. Participants place their hope in winning, often against astronomical odds, instead of placing their hope in God. Throughout the Bible, we are constantly reminded that our hope is in God alone, not money, power, or position:

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. (Psalm 62:5, NIV)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13, NIV)

If you have come to a realization that gambling is not good for Singapore, then do not subscribe to it. It will die a natural death based on the law of demand and supply. We cannot change people's nature however Jesus said: *"It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble."* (Luke 17:1-3)

To our hardworking Paralympics gold medalist, **Yip Pin Xiu**, who said, "I am not doing this for the money", we are proud of you. Your disabilities did not stop you from working for the Gold medal.



Martin Cheah

Note: Reflections on Gambling extracted from the Internet.



Are you passionate about sharing God's blessings through the written word?

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." 1 Pet. 4:10

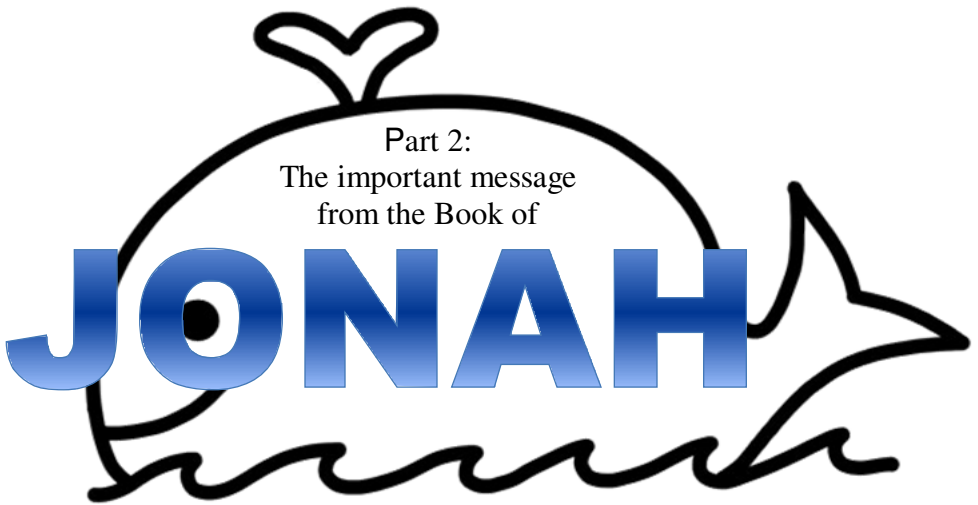
What can you write about, here are some ideas:

- A short personal testimony of few words
- A long, impressive and creative prose
- Some quick comments accompanying great photos that tell stories on their own
- An activity report in Queen's (King's) English or colourful Singlish

Remuneration:

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. (Matthew 16:27)

The Vine has been in publication for decades. It has edified many readers in ways we know or don't know. The existing team of writers certainly welcome you with open arms so that The Vine as a ministry can move forward more powerfully.



The Book of Jonah brings to us an important message about a gracious and compassionate God, never mind whether the great sea creature was a fish or whale or something else.

“The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: ‘Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.’ But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish.” – Jonah 1:1-2

The Assyrian capital of Nineveh was a notoriously brutal heathen nation and a huge threat to Israel. Yet, God was not too ready to abandon it straightaway. Instead, God extended His grace to the city by sending a missionary (Jonah) to preach to the wicked people and give them (Israel’s enemy) a chance to accept God’s forgiveness.

By being sent to prophesy to the city of Nineveh, Jonah was actually being called to be the first prophet to the nations. Could he evade a divine mission? Well, he tried.

Was it because Jonah was fearful of the wicked Ninevites that he decided to disobey God? Or was it because he was afraid of being branded a traitor by his own people if he were to go to Israel’s great enemy to preach God’s compassion?

In our own experience, we are familiar with situations when God's instruction to us directly challenge our human fear of consequences or go against our selfish emotions. God tells us to go one place to preach, but we go another place to hide from our missionary duty out of trepidation or aversion. In the case of Jonah, however, it might not simply be fear that drove his defiance of God. Obviously, as Israel's extreme patriot (with a measure of xenophobic nationalism – see *Jonah 1:9*), Jonah was not willing that Israel's enemy (Nineveh) should receive God's grace and forgiveness. From chapter 4 of the Book, we know that he would have liked it better if God was quick to anger and less abounding in love towards the Ninevites. He would have rejoiced if God had sent a calamity to wipe the Ninevites out instead of sending him to preach God's compassion.

God asked Jonah pointedly, “Is it right for you to be angry?”

Imagine that one day we are called to preach to an arch-enemy we wish to see dead instead. Delivering compassion to an enemy is hard to be anyone's cup of tea; but when we ourselves are in need of compassion from God for our own sinfulness, we would be intense in pleadings and supplications for forgiveness.

For disobeying God, Jonah received his just desserts by being held captive in the stomach of a great sea creature for 3 days and 3 nights. From inside the sea creature, Jonah prayed fervently. (*Jonah 2*)

The God who expressed compassion to the deeply sinful Ninevites was also the God of compassion who gave Jonah a second chance. With the second chance, Jonah was wise to obey. The Ninevites gave up their evil ways and repented. It was a win-win for Jonah and the Ninevites. Both were at the receiving end of God's grace. Jonah was forgiven for his original disobedience and Nineveh was not overthrown. Both outcomes (Jonah's survival in the belly of the sea creature and Nine-

veh's prompt repentance) would seem impossible by man's ordinary reckoning. **Nevertheless, the blessed outcomes bring us good news that God's grace is not only for the Hebrews but for all nations.**

God's grace is to be cherished by man, for by grace we are saved. In other words, without grace, we would all fail to claim our salvation. Yet, grace is not unregimented; and grace does not stand alone in determining our salvation. With grace, we still need faith for we are saved by grace through faith; and faith implies belief and belief must imply our willingness to obey God. **The story of Jonah tells us that despite grace, God also hands out discipline out of love.**



There was the storm because of Jonah's disobedience. By analogy, are the storms in our life the result of man's disobedience? People are naturally frightened when life's tempests blow, and they pray to their gods like the sailors on Jonah's boat did to no avail. Prayers won't help if the prayers are directed wrongly. Prayers may also be less effective if people pray without dealing with the crux of the problem as God may direct one to it. Do people try to escape from the storm in life simply by jumping overboard like Jonah persuading the sailors to throw him into the sea, wrongly assuming that it would be the end of all problems – his own problem and the resulting problem caused to others (the sailors) around him?

The escapism of Jonah – firstly, running away instead of going to Nineveh; and secondly, attempting self-destruction by asking to be thrown into the raging sea – was not a choice that a compassionate God would grant permission. In handing out the mission to Jonah in the first place, God knew that the mission would be accomplished. In handing out discipline, God knew His purpose to let Jonah learn His lesson and come out a better person in obedience to Him and fulfilling the assigned mission. Therefore, instead of letting Jonah disappear into the raging sea as he wanted, the great sea creature came along with the

effect of saving him while at the same time delivering him the lesson that God wanted him to receive.

The grace of God that Jonah and the great city of Nineveh received did not seem to be appreciated by Jonah. Jonah was angry and would rather that God had taken his life. Obviously, he buried himself only in his own thoughts and feelings for himself and his own people (the Hebrews) and was not supportive of God's will to bless others. God in his grace did not abandon Jonah to his own emotions, but gave him a further lesson by using the example of a plant that made him happy with the comfort of shade and then made him faint under the hot sun when the plant got chewed off by a worm. (Jonah 4)

*"For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people."
– Titus 2:11*

The grace of God belongs to all mankind. God calls the shots, man just obeys. Everything is subordinated to God and only faithful obedience is required of us. Man's passivity does not rule over God's activeness in the operating of His will. An individual's selfish heart (like Jonah's) will never prevail over God's sovereign determination. God, in His compassion, is patient to teach and prepare us for His mission. We may face discipline, but if we sincerely repent, God will forgive us.

Let us approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Heb. 4:16)

John Lee

M

A matter of equations

Mathematically speaking, it seems logical to our bosses that working more hours means being more productive. This means to get ahead, it makes sense to never take a weekend off because it means you would be making more money too. The equation would work out to be:

**More Time Spent Working + Some More Work
= More Productivity, More Money, More Happiness.**

Sounds right?

Maybe it makes a whole lot of sense to our employers but not the employees. After being robbed of our weekends, we are burnt out. However, if we have our way and we have weekends to ourselves and less hours to work each day, I wonder how we would actually spend that extra time. How do we live our lives outside work? At this time, the words **intentional living** come to my mind.

According to Wikipedia, **Intentional living** is any lifestyle based on an individual or group's conscious attempts to live according to their values and beliefs. These can include lifestyles based on religious or ethical values, as well as coaching, personal transformation and leadership training.

What is our lifestyle based on?

In Singapore, it is common to see in eateries people sitting at tables being more engaged with their mobile phones than spending the time conversing with each other. The question in my mind is this: What is the point of meeting up with friends and families for meals?

We live in a world that harps on our insecurities. Of never being **good/popular/worthy/successful/accomplished** enough. The number in my bank account, how people see me or the number of followers I had on social media is somehow equated to my worth and encourages me to do something to increase my worth. Even on an occasional vacation, we take our mobile phones to the pool so we don't get left behind. Not to forget, being seen hanging out with the right company is important too. A recent photo of Hillary Clinton sums this up pretty well, that we are often more concerned being seen with somebody than seeing or being with somebody.



Photo that is widely circulated from a twitter account

When we are with somebody, are we really just there with them physically?

1 Peter 1:18-19

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect

It is easy to get this whole 'intentional living' thing all twisted. Our motives easily morph into wanting something else instead of wanting the right and most important thing, taking things to an extreme that God did not intend. Being "in" the world means we can **enjoy** the things of the world, such as the beautiful creation God has given us but we have to remember we are not to immerse ourselves in what the world values, nor are we to chase after worldly pleasures.

We need to remember that God not only redeemed us from sin and penalty, He has also redeemed us from an empty life. Living the new life He has given us doesn't mean living aimlessly, taking a backseat in life. It is of living life intentionally instead of letting things happen to us. It is making a determined effort to strengthen our relationship with God.

Have you decided what your equation is going to be like?

Alicia Wong

Knowing Me, Knowing You - Exodus

“... Knowing me, knowing you (ah-haa), there is nothing we can do. Knowing me, knowing you (ah-Haa), we just have to face it, this time we’re through. Breaking up is never easy, I know but I have to go. Knowing me, knowing you, it is the best I can do...” This is extracted from the chorus sung by ABBA of the song, “Knowing Me Knowing You”.

No, no, no. The song is so sad and I am not referring to it. Through learning more about Exodus for the Martin Shield, it certainly helps to know more about God, families and ourselves in the process. The book of Exodus is not just a narration of the stories that happened many centuries ago. It reveals the power of God in all times and at all times.

We applaud the winners, Team Manna, of the Martin Shield and encourage all of you to continue to know God through studying of God’s Word, prayers and fellowship.

Exodus is one of the five books of the Old Testament. Of course, Moses was a key character in the chapters of Exodus. God showed Moses that He is the Maker and decision-maker of all things and circumstances whether we know about it or not. Moses penned everything that the Lord has said. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt because he believed in God to carry out God’s promises.

Illustrations, symbols, miracles and objects were used to show God’s mighty reign even when the Israelites were slaves under the rule of the Egyptians and after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. Did you notice God’s approach when he revealed himself through several ways in Exodus? It was beyond the burning bush and parting of the Red Sea. God did to make sure that the Israelites understood His intentions through Moses actions.

Moses walked closely with God every step of the way even when the Israelites complained most of the time. He interceded for them with God for water, food and protection.

How beautiful is the victory of God! Listen to the song from Moses and Miriam. Ex15:1-18.

“Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord. They sang because he had defeated their enemy in a wonderful way.

I will praise the Lord as I sing. I will praise him because he is great! The horses and their riders, he threw them into the sea. The Lord is my strength. He is the reason for my song. He has saved me! He is my God and I will praise him. He is my father's God. And I will sing about how great he is. The Lord fights wars. The Lord is his name. He threw Pharaoh's chariots and the Pharaoh's army into the sea. He has drowned Pharaoh's best officers in the Red Sea. The deep waters covered them and they sank down like a stone.

Your right hand, Lord has wonderful power. And with your right hand, you broke the enemy into pieces. With your great, royal power, you defeated those who opposed you. Your anger is as fierce as fire. So it burned them completely, like a fire burns straw. You were so angry that your powerful breath caused the water to stand up in a pile. The waves stood up like a wall. The deepest part of the sea became solid. Your enemy was very proud. I will pursue them. I will catch them. I will divide their goods with my people. I will take everything that I want from them. Then we will use our swords to kill them, the enemy said. But you blew with your powerful wind and the sea covered them. They sank in the water like heavy metal.

The Lord, no false gods compare with you. You are the great King and you are holy. People are afraid of you. And they respect you as you shine in wonderful light. You do wonderful acts. You reached out your right hand and the earth swallowed the Egyptians. Your great love never fails. So you will lead the people whom you have freed. You will guide them with your strength to the holy place where you lived. The nations will hear about this, and they will tremble. The Philistines will shake with fear and with great mental pain. The chiefs in the country called Edom will be very afraid. The leaders in the country called Moab will tremble with fear. The people in the country called Canaan will run away because terrible fear will seize them. Your great power will cause them to be as still as a stone. Then your people can pass by, Lord. The people, whom you saved, will pass by. You will bring your people to live on the mountain that you gave them. Lord, you have made that place your home, and you, Lord, has established your holy place. Our Lord will rule for all time."

Knowing me, knowing you! Know yourself and your relationship with God. God knows you even before we were born. The learning about God continues through Jesus!

Joyce Tan

SNIPPETS

10 Sep – **Pulse Summit**, the youths had a planning session for the future of the youth ministry.

Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.

(1Timothy 4:12)



1st Oct – JCC as it stands today. It is starting to look like the drawing.

“...the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.”

(Romans 4:17b)



22nd Sep – Deacon Peter had a fall while he was on a tour of the Holy Land.

Now that he is back, hopefully he can share some of his adventures in Israel.

“He will command His angels concerning You to guard You carefully; and they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.” (Luke 4:10-11)



Writing for JCC

1st Oct – There were many photos posted on the social media and the press about the occurrence of a double rainbow over parts of Singapore, including Jurong. For a view of this phenomenon, you can go to this link: <http://news.asiaone.com/news/singapore/double-rainbow-over-singapore-excites-many-evening>

Why can't I show you a photo of it in The Vine? Being an avid photography enthusiast, I would certainly have taken some photos of this event. However, I was totally oblivious of the fact. Even though it was plainly displayed in the sky above, I did not see it or notice it. I only came to know about it from the media.

I am not writing about the significance of this occurrence at this particular time coinciding with the unveiling of the new JCC or some religious festival. I am not particularly anointed to make a revelation of why this happen at this time.

I just brought it up because it reflects the importance of media. Even though the rainbows were in the sky plainly for all to see, many would have missed it. The media or newspapers were the means to bring the news to those who did not get to witness it firsthand. Would you say that the Holy Bible is media? This is the source of where most of us get our good news of salvation history.



Can the mega-churches grow without the use of media? I don't know but this I know, they make use of lots of media. Most, if not all mega-churches have websites, recordings of sermons, newsletters and CDs of messages and even songs by their talented members. Some even have books written by their pastors. Are we to ignore the use of media in JCC?

Media provides a source of additional income for their pastors. Some pastors claim that the church need not pay them because they have more than sufficient from their writings and recordings.

I am not saying that the Multi-Media Ministry (MMM) is the most important ministry of any church but it should not be the least important either. No doubt Jesus did not ask anyone to record his messages or write them down but that may be due to the fact that these media were not available at the time. If writing his messages were not important, then why did Luke say: *“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.”* (Luke 1:1-2)

Let me report that Pastor Andrew’s ministry verse is 1Corinthians 3:6: *“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.”* Then The Vine’s ministry verse should be Luke 1:3b: *“I too decided to write an orderly account for you...”*

We may want to maintain the oral traditions but sooner or later it will have to be written down or it will be forgotten. Many a times you say that so and so preached a good message but how do we relay this message to others if it were not recorded or written down? Even the preacher himself would not be able to repeat his message a few months down the road.

If you want to join a ministry to be in the spotlight, then be a preacher or worship leader or council. These are the important ministries. However if you do not have the gifting for such ministries, then consider how you could still support from the background, bringing their messages and reports to the masses through the media.

We need more people to join the MMM. There will be 5 storeys of stories to write about in the new JCC, too many for just 3 persons to handle. Consider to sign up even now before the pledge forms come up.

Martin Cheah

Psalm 40:1-3

Observation

¹ I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.
² He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.
³ He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the LORD
and put their trust in him.

David (Psalm 40:1-3)

This Psalm of David reflects a common experience in our Christian life.

There are a few clear elements we can identify with:

Firstly, the times when we encounter great distress, as if being buried deep in the mud and mire within a slimy pit that is too difficult for us to climb out by our own efforts.

Secondly, we cry out to God, “God, where art thou? Do you hear my cry of pain? Are you abandoning me ...?”

God’s response to our cries does not seem to be quickly forthcoming. In pleasures, time seems to fly; but in agony, a second of waiting feels like forever. Nevertheless, holding on to the promise of God’s faithfulness, we wait patiently.

God is indeed faithful; He hears our cries and He does not abandon us. He lifts us out of our depth of despair, out of the snags and hitches (mud and mire) that we are trapped in, and sinking. At last, we are free. We heave a sigh of relief as our feet are planted on solid ground. Our

faith in God, our patience in waiting, have been sorely tested. Struggling along, we finally pass the test and we actually develop a stronger sense of awe towards God. With songs and gratitude, we put renewed trust in our God; with hymns of praise and music, we worship Him.

Often, in little distress we think we are smart enough to deal with it and so we turn God aside. When in deep distress, we then despondently discover the human limit of our capability to handle. It is in downhearted moments that we are forced to look outward (outside of ourselves) to the Almighty, pleadingly and mustering all that we have of our patience and trust, fervently hoping against anguish for help to come. It is like children who strive to be on their own to manage some problems and take no notice of those above them in wisdom who are able to help. It is only when the problems deteriorate into knottiness and they enter a miserable situation that they pick up resolve to turn their eyes towards whom they should have faith in from the start.

Are we ignorant children of God who shun our Father in heaven many a time when we can turn to Him for help, but only cry out to Him when our bad circumstances reach the stage that we are sunk in the mud and mire of a slimy pit?

Consider the following stages:

- Trust in God is expressed when one is in deep suffering.
- Prayers (pleadings) are cried out.
- Patience is manifested in waiting upon God.
- Deliverance comes.
- Praise to God. Trust in God is affirmed good, and strengthened.

“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.” – Heb. 5:7

Christ is our example. When we wish for deliverance from dire predicaments, we need:

- (1) prayers and petitions with fervency and

(2) to direct our prayers and petitions to the one who matters.

If we turn our attention away from God and go to idols to seek help, can the idols save us?

We should never imagine that our state of distress could be in any way more severe than Christ's that God is unable to deliver us from it.

It does not matter whether our distress is of any particular kind or a jumble of vague issues. From Ps 40:12, we can tell that David's distress was more on account of sin in its hodgepodge of manifestations:

"For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me."

David's is not the only example we can find in the Bible about God's grace and mercy shown to those who cry out to Him for deliverance. Other examples are aplenty, such as in Hezekiah's deliverance from the pit of destruction (Isa. 38:17), Jeremiah being lifted out of his deep agony in the cistern of Malkijah (Jer. 38:6-12), Jonah's deliverance from the belly of hell (Jon. 2:2 KJV), etc.

"Many will see and fear the LORD, and put their trust in him." – Ps. 40:3b

The fear of the LORD is described as wisdom's instruction in Prov. 15:33.

The success of David's prayer and the many similar examples of deliverance from deep distress should be our encouragement. All who fear the LORD and have trust in him can put their hope in His unfailing grace and mercy.

John Lee

Martin's Shield 2016



After months of preparations by the teams and the organizers, the Martin's Shield was played over 2 Sundays and finally on 25th Sep, the winning team was MANNA.



Church Leaders

“It takes more than a busy church, a friendly church, or even an evangelical church to impact a community for Christ. It must be a church ablaze, led by leaders who are ablaze for God.”

– Wesley L. Duewel

