



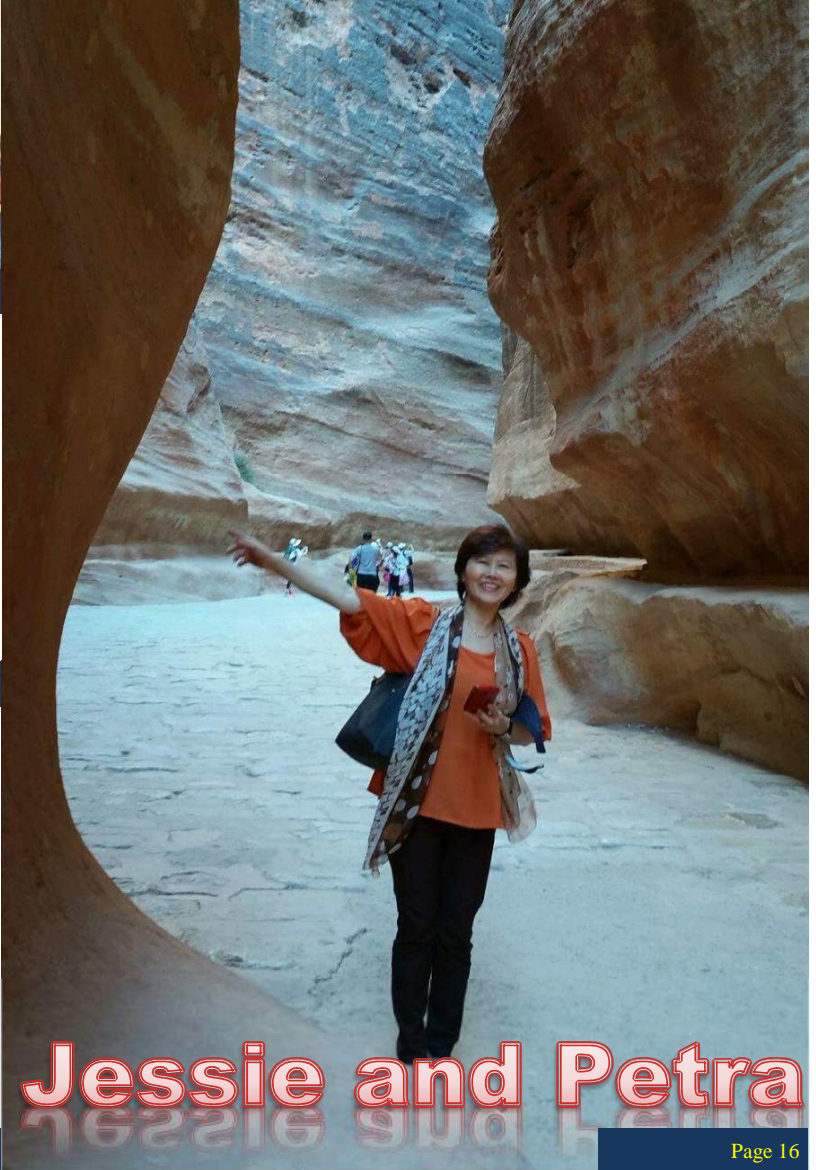
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Jessie at Petra
in Sep 2016



HOM'S Reflections

It was raining and the roads were chockablock with vehicles and I could only move forward at a snail's pace. Apparently, there was an accident on the AYE according to the DJ on Gold

90.5. I wasn't on the expressway but on the inner roads, yet I was not moving. The clock seemed to be quickly ticking away the minutes as I struggled to find a way through the traffic jam.

I had specially taken leave that day to fetch Debra to the Pharmacist Competency Examination which was held in a hall in the SGH. We thought that by driving her there we could give her some peace and calm before the exam. Instead, now we were in a state of panic as it was only about 40 minutes before the paper starts and we were still stuck at Clementi.

A decision was made. I weaved my car to the left lane and let Debra down. She was on her own now. Dad could not help her, only our Father in Heaven could. She made her way to the Clementi MRT station and we monitored her progress by phone. First message, she was already on the

train; second message, she had passed Redhill and while we crawled our way to Buona Vista, we received the last message that she had already reached Outram station.

Later we learnt that she broke her umbrella in her haste to open it and as she was walking from the Outram station to the exam hall, she received a call from the examiner to inquire if she was on the way. She managed to reach the exam hall (building 4 on the map) just 5 minutes before the start time.

Without much calm or rest, she went through the examination. By God's grace she passed the exam.



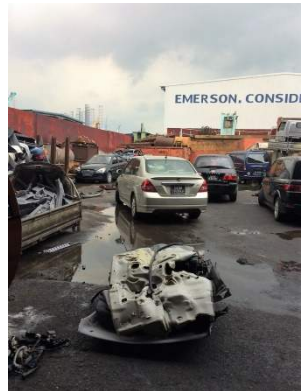
We prayed and the whole JWCG prayed and yet we had to go through the storm. Did we think that God would fail us? If the thought did pass through my mind, it did not stay long. We had a hope in a mighty God who is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask.

We reckoned that God must have moved us to take the inner road even though our usual route from our house to SGH would be through the AYE. If we were stuck in the AYE, there was no way to let Debra down to catch the MRT.

As I pondered on the situation, I come to the conclusion that even though things do not go smoothly as man planned it but God is overall in control of the situation. Remember Joseph who spent many years as a slave and in prison. He must have wondered if God had forsaken him. But from this side of history, we know that God had a better plan.

Anyway, this will be the last time I send anyone anywhere because as of 28th October, my car will be turned to scrap metal.

Even now as new JCC is near completion, some may wonder why God allowed delays in construction, still \$1 million short of target, still 30 tables to sell, worries about future maintenance costs, traffic control, coordination among the various churches, etc. Wonder all you like but don't forget to pray.



Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, submit your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:6-7

Martin Cheah

We must continue to pray for the authorities to grant us TOP earlier so we can move in by Dec 2016. Pray that the work will carry on smoothly, safely and fast.





LONELINESS

"I can't be alone," cried out the girl sitting cross-legged, looking pleadingly at me.

I rolled my eyes and sighed, wondering if I was finally getting a taste of how a parent deals with a petulant teenager. I was housing her at my place for a few weeks while her parents were out of town and found myself having many heart-to-heart talks with her. One of the subjects we spoke of was the one on loneliness, which was the reason she had this keen desire to become one of the more popular girls in school. She wanted attention from everyone, including her family. Talking to her did bring me back to a period of time when I was dropped out of many social groups because I wasn't cool anymore due to certain circumstances. I am sure anyone of us at any season of our lives would have experienced loneliness for one reason or another.

How did we deal with it?

First, we must be clear that being alone and being lonely are two different things. Being alone in a room does not equal to being lonely. One can be alone without being lonely, and one can be lonely in a crowded room. Loneliness is, therefore, a state of mind, an emotion brought on by feelings of separation from other human beings.

Causes of Loneliness¹

Loneliness doesn't develop overnight. It can be the result of a lifetime of influences that shape our personality or evolved after a major transition or trauma. Often we are unaware of the subtle forces that can slowly lead us into self-imposed isolation.

Some people tend to be loners because of circumstances in their childhood development. For example, growing up with an unaffectionate or overly critical parent may make one shy away from intimacy with others. Some people simply never learn to communicate well or get along with their peers. Others have overly aggressive or demanding personalities that make people withdraw out of intimidation. Conversely, people with low self-esteem often withdraw from

¹ Source taken from <http://www1.cbn.com/bible-teaching-loneliness>

social situations they believe will lead to rejection. Loneliness can become a lifestyle for the person who struggles with poorly developed interpersonal skills.

There are also many social factors that contribute to loneliness. We live in an age in which modern technology has made it easier to do things without other people and without leaving our homes. Television is the chief culprit that robs us of time with relatives and neighbors. For some, especially the elderly, the increased likelihood of becoming the victim of a crime keeps them from venturing out of their homes. Also, because our society is more mobile than in the past, families may relocate several times for career advancement or other reasons, which tends to discourage the development of deep friendships.

Loneliness can result from "situational factors," circumstances in life that increase the possibility of isolation. People who are unmarried, divorced or widowed are more likely to encounter loneliness simply because they are more likely to be alone. However, loneliness can also occur when a marriage relationship doesn't produce the closeness we expect. The student separated from home, the leader who must remain aloof from his subordinates, the individual with a disability or disease -- all face a greater chance of loneliness due to a situation in their lives.

Often loneliness brought on by developmental, social or situational factors leads to problems that only worsen loneliness. Alcoholism, drug abuse, family breakdown and other social ills are frequently rooted in loneliness and usually lead to greater alienation from meaningful human contact. The proliferation of gangs, religious cults and other deviant social groups can be attributed largely to people's need to belong somewhere and their failure to find acceptance in a traditional setting.

Whatever may be contributing to your loneliness, there is a way out. It begins with confronting a cause of loneliness that every human being must come to terms with -- the spiritual loneliness of being separated from God. Each of us has a need to connect with something larger than ourselves in order to fill the spiritual vacuum that exists within us all. The Bible is God's plan for developing the most important relationship in our lives.

The Walk

As I shared with the girl mentioned in the beginning of my article, a dynamic walk with God builds the foundations for building relationships with others. It is im-



portant for us not to be cut off from our immediate family, which is the group of brothers and sisters we have in church. They form a support group that functions just like our natural family. Christians who don't go to church or get involved in church activities cut themselves off from a rich source of companionship.

There are some specific things one can do to cope with loneliness and I provided a list. It is not comprehensive and is there just to provide some guidelines which hopefully, will help you progress out of the road of loneliness.

- Direct your thinking outward to others rather than thinking excessively about self.
- Determine that you can control your own attitudes and emotions. Ask God for His Spirit of love and joy (Galatians 5:22).
- Be friendly! Smile! Laugh! Positive actions and emotions are contagious and will encourage others to want to be around you (Proverbs 18:24).
- Go to church and engage in church activities and fellowship with others. Consider their needs and try to encourage and uplift them (Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 John 1:3).
- Adopt a pet from a shelter. A dog or cat will love you unconditionally as mine did!
- Volunteer your service to others. There are various volunteer programs at church or schools. Consider visiting a nursing home to cheer up the patients. You will soon have a different perspective about loneliness.
- Learn new things. Develop a new hobby. Expand your interests. Engage in conversations with others about current events and common interests.

- Use technology to be in touch. When used properly, the Internet can be an amazing blessing for communication and interaction with others. E-mail, Facebook and Twitter can be fun!
- Establish a circle of friends that you talk to on the phone. Include people who may also be in lonely situations. Make it your mission to help them. Ask your pastor or cell leaders about those who could use extra encouragement. Every day you can help brighten someone else's day.
- If you have deep loneliness and depression you can't pull out of, please seek help through counseling. Approach your cell leaders or pastors for help.

Alicia Wong

Connect -> Equip -> Mentor -> Release

With this proposed strategy in place, no longer will any newcomer/visitor feel lonely in the new JCC. This is the new cycle of life in JCC. Everyone who



comes into our church will grow with this flow.

Our Sunday Family Service will be from 10:45am to 12:15pm where the whole family will come together for worship.

From 2017, we will move **TOGETHER IN ONE HEART, ONE MIND, ONE SPIRIT** in the LORD'S MINISTRY.



The Fig Tree

Here is a picture of the leaf and fruit of a fig tree.

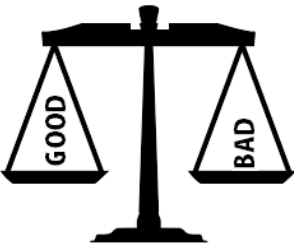


Does the leaf look familiar? ☺ The first use of it was by none other than our first ancestors – Adam and Eve – who sewed fig leaves to cover their nakedness in the Garden of Eden. (Gen. 3:7)

“During Solomon’s lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, everyone under their own vine and under their own fig tree. – 1 Kings 4:25

“Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken.” – Micah 4:4

It is evident from references to it in the Bible that the fig tree was common in ancient times. Not only did the tree gain prominence in the Creation story, Palestine was also described in Deut. 8:8 as a land of ... fig trees ...”



There are good fig trees and bad fig trees. The good ones can be very good, and the bad ones can be very bad. (Jer. 24:1-3) Here, we are seeing two extremes of good and bad, not simply borderline cases. Hear what the LORD, God of Israel compared the figs to the good and bad among the people of Israel (Jer. 24:5-10):

*“**Like these good figs**, I regard as good the exiles from Judah ... My eyes will watch over them for their good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them. I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart ...*

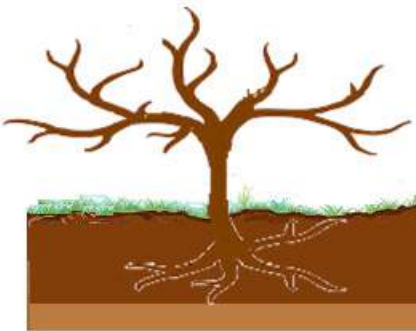
*“But **like the bad figs**, which are so bad that they cannot be eaten ... ‘so will I deal with Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the survivors from Jerusalem, whether they remain in this land or live in Egypt. I will make them abhorrent and an offense to all the*

kingdoms of the earth, a reproach and a byword, a curse² and an object of ridicule, wherever I banish them. I will send the sword, famine and plague against them until they are destroyed from the land I gave to them and their ancestors.”

As we contrast the extremes of good and bad of the figs as allegory of the people, we can feel a similar contrast of the extents of charity and severity that the LORD will deal with them accordingly.

In Matt. 21:18-19, we read about Jesus cursing a fig tree:

“Early in the morning, as Jesus was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, “May you never bear fruit again!” Immediately the tree withered.



What a curse! But why of all plants did the fig tree become the target of Jesus' curse? Was Jesus making an allusion to the Old Testament about bad figs deserving of others to see that they are cursed?

If so, then the lesson of the cursed fig tree to the followers of Jesus is not simply about being fruitful or unfruitful in service (although fruitfulness is a discernible part of a good fig), but about something more substantial; i.e., Jesus

used the fig tree as a metaphor of the Jewish nation. Good figs would be like the exiles from Judah; bad figs would be just good to see (with the outward appearance of abundant leaves) but not good to eat – an object of ridicule like Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the survivors from Jerusalem.” (See Jer. 24:5-10 above.)

To understand more about the reason for cursing the fig tree, we must go beyond the Bible passage that gives the account of the cursing.

Cursing of the fig tree was immediately followed by Jesus' three parables (Parable of the Two Sons, of Parable of the Tenants and Parable of the Wed-

² Footnote explanation in NIV 2011: “That is, their names will be used in cursing (see 29:22); or, others will see that they are cursed.”

ding Banquet), all of which shared a common theme of castigating and pronouncing judgment upon those Jews (the Scribes and Pharisees) who questioned His Authority.

Cursing the fig tree ➡ Two Sons ➡ Wicked Tenants ➡ Wedding Banquet

Jesus denounced them for:

- Hypocrisy – burdening others with all kinds of requirement but they themselves do not practice what they preach. (Matt. 23:1-4)
- Hypocrisy – looking pious, on the outside only! (Matt. 23:25-28)
- Hypocrisy – doing wicked deeds under banner of virtue (Matt. 23:29-36)
- Pride – pretentiousness (Matt. 23:5-12)
- Malevolent influence over those under their charge – Matt.23:13-15
- Being more concerned about the fine points of the Law and ignoring the more significant issues (Matt. 23:16-24)
- Being responsible for the judgment that would be upon the whole nation (Matt. 23:33-39)

Wow! That was a lot, and really uncomfortable to those at the receiving end of the rebukes. It looked not simply bad, but very bad. They who had just the exterior of religious piety were just like the barren fig possessing a lush grandeur with an imposing presence of foliage, but ... in the end, would just wither off.

Clearly, a single thread tied together the cursing of the very bad fig tree (with an utter withering that would show others that it was cursed), the ensuing three Parables and the harsh denunciations. In the cursing, Jesus had in mind both the “bad guys” he chastised and the disciples with him. In reply to the disciples’ question about how the tree withered so quickly, Jesus replied:

“Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. – Matt. 23:21

Indeed, the disciples witnessed how a bad fig (literally and metaphorically) was cursed. Much as they had learnt a lesson on the right choice for themselves – to be good figs – they would not be able to totally avoid being intimidated by the shadow of the bad figs growing all around them. To avoid being

encumbered by the bad figs would be a virtually impossible task which was, in Jewish metaphor, akin to moving mountains. Telling the mountain to “Go, throw yourself into the sea” had the same meaning as telling the hindrance to “Go, get out of my way and get lost!” which would reflect the degree of anguish over the unwelcome influence of the Scribes and Pharisees.

In OT times, there were good figs and bad figs, and the LORD, God of Israel, made His stance known. In NT times, there were also good figs and bad figs; and our Lord Jesus imparted precisely the same message about what would happen to the bad figs.

In the world today, do we still have bad figs in the appearances of bogus “teachers of the Law” and “modern Pharisees” who fit to a T the characters that were condemned as we read of in the Bible? Certainly, among God-believing peoples, there are cults and sects with leaders of hypocrisy and pretentiousness exercising a malevolent hold on those under their charge by orating on the fine points of their body’s laws and ignoring the major points of truth. These leaders will become responsible for the judgment that will be upon the whole cults/sects.

Even if the bad figs are in the minority, the good figs cannot help feeling unease at the sight of the bad shadows’ threatening clout. Matthew 23:21 gives us hope. If we have faith in Christ and not doubt, we can say to the mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done.



Fund Raising Dinner 2016
a feast of food and music on 19th Nov 2016 @ 101

John Lee

(photos for display purposes only)



HELLO? ARE YOU THERE, JESUS?

Are we, believers of God, creative in finding ways to know God better? Do we revere and come in awe when we remember our King, who is Lord of Lords, and the God of all nations? No news has been said enough to send the message to the world that our Jesus has died for our sins and for us, but was resurrected. Who? Our Jesus, our King.

How interesting to know that there are still so many people out there who do not know about Jesus. How good it is to know that people are capable to believe in people and things when their hearts have been set on what they believe in. How much more would they have believed if they knew that Jesus is a true and living God so much so that when dynasties changed through the generations, God is still the same even with the change in the seasons.

How much more if people really know that all it takes is just a faith as small as a mustard seed to believe in Jesus. Wonder what would happen?

Talk to Me, Jesus?

"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." Jer 33:3

It is heart-warming when good news is shared and it is taken as a blessing. We praise God for His intervention, grace and mercy. When not so good news is shared, do we see and share it also through the eyes of Jesus that it was his mercy and grace that abound?

Talk to Jesus in our prayers, daily thoughts and actions. Have a deeper understanding of God's ways and His Love will be shown to you through our talk and actions. Struggling? For some of us, we struggle to just struggle. This is progress. ☺

Know God through the walk with him and revere Him by remembering Him. So hard and difficult because what we see is not what we get. Our stamina weakens through physical torment and influences from others around us. Challenging? This is good because we are living life with Jesus in mind. ☺

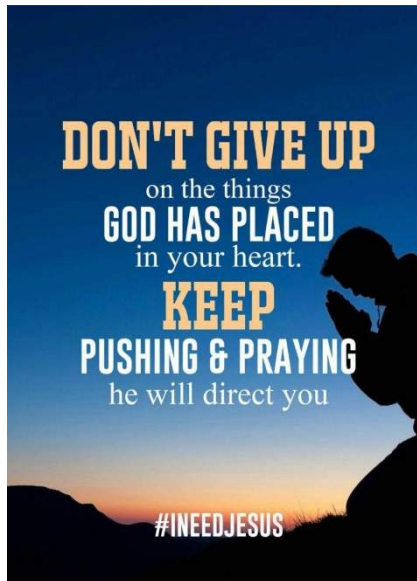
"In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears." Ps 18:6

Thank you, Jesus. Call you again?

"...but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe." Heb 1:2

Why not? Actually we have nothing to loose if we make frequent calls to Jesus. We have so much more to loose if we don't. Confusing? It is alright because it is a good start to know God over and over again. ☺

Just make the call to Jesus! He will hear you. He will reply in His time.



Joyce Tan



TESTIMONY OF A MAN WHO SAW JESUS

This old uncle was in the ICU when he saw Jesus smiling at him. Jesus told him to believe and he did and was healed from an unknown virus infection, which he caught while staying in the ICU.

Thank God for the grace of salvation. *For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.* Ephesians 2:8-9

EULOGY

At a seminar I attended a few years ago, a speaker asked the weirdest question I had ever heard.

"Is there anyone here who remembers your great grandmother or great-great-grandmother?"



The thoughts that went through my mind were nobody would be able to answer such a question. The current generation is so far removed from the past generations that there can't be any memories being passed down. Imagine my surprise when someone answered. He was able to recall something from the older generation because his great grandmother impressed upon her daughter-in-law so much that she was able to share with the younger generations the good qualities of her mother-in-law.

I guess that's what legacies are about. Just like what Psalm 145:4-6 says, *"One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts. They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They tell of the power of your awesome works and I will proclaim your great deeds."*

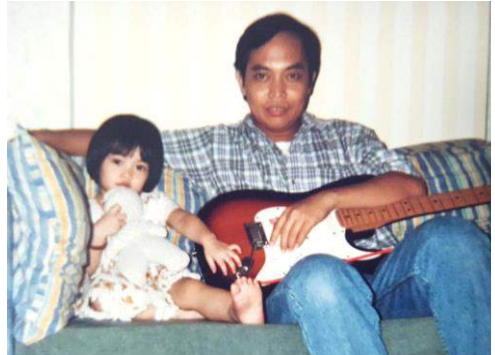
Looking at the heading of my article, you must be thinking, "Who has died recently?" Well, nobody recent. However, I wrote an eulogy of him in my blog in 2013 and recently, memories of him resurfaced. One may have thought that with the passing of time, our memories will fade. However, we have memories to keep specific people in our thoughts and our emotions like love, loyalty, gratitude... bind those memories to us. The stronger the emotion, the more vivid and influential the memory. I thought I would honour this man today by writing about him.

My husband and I first knew Harry Jee through our serving in the Music Ministry, which was the first ministry we served in after we moved into Jurong Christian Church. Harry played the bass guitar, the guitar and also backup as a vocalist, I did not have as much direct contact with him as compared to my husband, who worked alongside him as a drummer. What I know of him came from my husband. From my husband, I got to know that Harry was not in the best of health. Whenever his health permitted, he would serve. The few times I had seen him, he struck me as a jovial, humor-



ous and gifted musician who embraced technology. He would purchase certain musical apps from his phone and use them to add another dimension to the worship. At times he would share about his past as a musician in a band during his younger days.

All these information helped me know him better but what impressed us the most was not his musical talent. It was the effort he made in coming to church even when he was wrecked with pain, especially in the latter part of his life. During that period of time, we lived a few blocks away from church so there were times we met him on our way to church. It broke our hearts seeing him pause every few steps before continuing on. Respecting his privacy, my husband and I would say a silent prayer to ask God to ease his pain as he shouldered on. His grit touched us. Walking, a simple act that we do every day, was difficult for him. Yet, he served our God when he could. I did not have to ask him why he went to church despite his physical difficulties.



Certainly his actions spoke louder than words. At times, it may seem what we are doing in our lives is mundane, seemingly unimportant. However, know that God lives in us and through us, in big ways and small, regardless of our current situation or age (yes, no retirement age for the living!). Even when one has passed, he or she can still be fondly remembered in ways that are personal to us and also, glorify God.

Harry Jee, you are fondly remembered.

Alicia Wong



Photos provided by Ellesse, Harry's wife

Bless Israel - The Bible Lands (Study Tour) from 16 – 25 Sept 2016

By God's grace, Jessie and I had the opportunity to participate in a group familiarization/study tour to Israel/Jordan and walk the Bible Land – or should I say, the homeland of our forefathers? This tour was specially tailored for Chinese-speaking pastors and church leaders from various denominations from Singapore, Malaysia and Yunnan (China). It was an indescribable homecoming experience and an eye opener for most of the participants. For both us it was the fulfilment of our lifelong desire and dream to visit Israel, the Promised Land, and to see the Scripture come alive as we walked, explored and viewed the many biblical sites and museums throughout these 9 days, engaging our 6 senses, including our spiritual eye.



Here, I share briefly some snippets and photos from our visit.

Mount Nebo (Jordan)

Before entering Israel, the Promised Land, the group ascended Mt Nebo which is on the side of the Jordanian kingdom and were thrilled by the splendid view that God granted Moses before he died – a land flowing with milk and honey which He had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exodus 33: 1-3, Deut 34:1- 4). We could see the vast landscape, deserts, colourful mountain ranges and valleys in the horizon afar. The view from this mount was exhilarating and beautiful.



With our spiritual appetite whetted and stirred, we made our journey into Israel on the 4th day. We journeyed from Amman in Jordan, via King Hussein Highway (known also as King's Highway) which is linked to Allenby Bridge, on the side of Tel Aviv, the present capital of Israel. Like Singapore and Johore causeway link, there are also two separate distinct immigration/custom checkpoints manned by soldiers and police.



A snake-like sculpture in the form of the cross, representing the pole Moses held up in the wilderness, has been erected here as a memorial.



A museum and photo gallery with exhibits of archaeological findings, consisting of civilisation, cultural and religious artifacts belonging to that period.



The Promised Land – Israel in the far horizon, a land flowing with milk and honey



Greenhouses in the desert

From there, we passed the Judean Desert section of the Holy Land which stretches from the Negev along the western side of the Dead Sea up to the north of Jericho. A bone-dry and isolated area noted for its scorching heat, this strip of land is also known as the wilderness of Judah. This is probably the desolate area to which Jesus withdrew when Satan tempted Him at the beginning of His public ministry. (Mk1:12-13) The vast deserts, hills and mountain ranges along the route are all very much alive. Most prominent

being the Golan Heights, a prime military hot-bed during the Israel-Jordan 7-day war. Pockets of green oasis and cultivations are very much noticeable from this side of the journey compared to the Jordanian-control side – testimony indeed of our Father's love and faithfulness unto His people.

The daily sumptuous meals and additional supply of bottled water were more



Golan Heights seen from afar



Sea of Galilee seen from afar

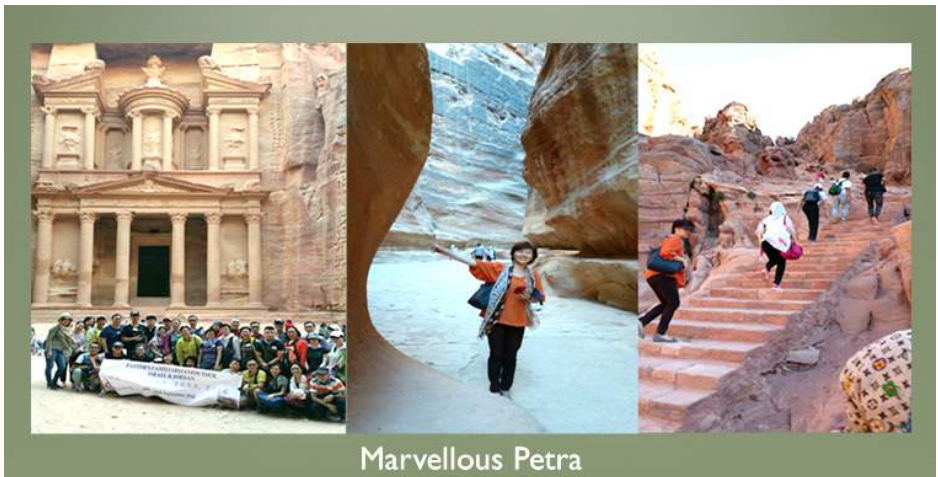


than enough to replenish our body fluid and restore our strength and energy to tackle and climb the rough flights of steps and rocky terrains as we visited and explored the many biblical and archaeological sites.

Petra (known as the rose-red city) (Jordan)

This is a UNESCO World Heritage Site which was recently voted one of the New 7 Wonders of the World.

Petra is the Greek word for “rock”, a name it gets from the wonderful colour of the rock from which many of the city’s structures were carved. It is a valley surrounded on all sides by very steep rocky cliffs, with a few narrow gorges leading inside. In this valley, the city of Petra was built. Its Biblical name was Sela. The earliest inhabitants of this area were the Horites (Hurrians). Later, Esau and his descendants, the Edomites, gradually replaced the Hurrians. The Edomites lived here when Israel came from Egypt during the Exodus about 1445 B.C. Here we visited interesting monuments such as the Treasury (a tomb of a Nabatean King), then the field of tombs, obelisks, the altar and the Al Madhbah. From this highest point, we can view the whole of the rock city.



In summary

This trip to Israel was very educational and edifying to Jessie and me. It enabled us to make the connections between what we read in the Bible and what we get to see – the real Biblical sites and archaeological evidences. No doubt other members in our travel group must have also felt like us that our on-the-ground experiences of the ancient places in Jordan and Israel have enhanced our comprehension of the Bible and deeply impacted our faith in Christ. At other available opportunities, we can share more with our greater confidence in the Word of God.

Deacon Peter Cheong



The Vine Recruitment Ad

Writers & Contributors Needed!

The harvest is plenteous but labourers are few



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.

“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

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)

What can you write about:

- 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

Interested? Apply by contacting us now at alicia.hweili@gmail.com