

September 2021

THE WINEPRESS

O taste and see that God is good



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ALLEGRA kidsREAD CLUB

PRAYER FOCUS FOR OCTOBER

What should you pray for in this brand
new month?

Seek the Lord in your personal walk with God,
the work of the Holy Spirit in JCC, David and
Goliath Preschool and plans ahead for 2022.

Prayer pointers can be found on the
next page.



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PRAYER FOCUS FOR AUGUST

- **The work of the Holy Spirit in JCC:**

God's Protection (Spiritual Iron Dome) over JCC – Sunday Services, Cell Meetings, Goshen Bridges.

The Holy Spirit to give us courage and His anointing as we minister to each other and the community.

- **David and Goliath Preschool:**

Pray for our recruitment drive, that all our vacancies will be filled up.

Pray for the principal and teachers as they prepare for the JCKK Graduation 2021 in October. May God's grace continue to be with the graduating children as they journey ahead.

- **Church Plan for 2022:**

Pray for wisdom upon the leaders as they make plans with hearts united to guide the church to "Go Deeper in Discipleship" (our theme for 2022).

May JCCians remain steadfast in faith even in stormy weather as they move along with God's plans for their lives and with His calling for Singapore churches to demonstrate the power of the Gospel as the Antioch of Asia.



Illustration: Jonathan Tan

OUR "FERRYING MISSION" TO SAVE LIVES

BY REV ANTHONY LOH

In a troubled world, we are bombarded by sad news daily about people in crises clutching at straws, refugees running for safe havens, lives threatened by diseases, etc. Amidst the gloomy scene, we also hear news of heart-warming acts of kindness from lifesavers who bring hope to the desperate, ferry evacuees from danger to safety, aid the sick and wounded, etc.

In the book "The World is on Fire" by Joni Tevis, the author recounts a heroic act in a flood disaster: "One man ferried people to safety on a raft made of cotton bales, one soul at a time; he saved ninety-nine ..."

Saving lives – ferrying people out of peril into safe harbour!

Saving lives – one soul at a time – is also every JCCian's "ferrying mission" in the important spiritual sense for which God is our safe harbour. (Ps 46:1)

Our "ferrying mission" is vital today because of the following reasons:

Eternal Destination (Eternal Safe Place)

It is the eternal destination that is at stake for every sinner. It is about the eternal relationship with the Father and the "eternal safe place" that God has prepared for all.

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." - John 3:16-17

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The rebuilding of JCC a few years ago was purposed by God for times like this when the world is in the throes of great challenges.

We are blessed by God's grace. JCCians are now called to be a blessing by joining His "ferrying mission" today. JCC is an important gateway for people to enter the Kingdom of God.

Urgency

"Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." - John 4:35

What is the urgency?

The signs of Christ's return are recorded in Daniel 12, Matthew 24, and the Book of Revelations.

Luke 21:16 tells us: *"Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."*

Pay attention to the events happening in the world: The abrupt descent of "a prosperous and contented world" to a new normal with economies decimated, our climate breaking down at a rapid pace, the increasing moral decay, rise of unbelief in God, escalating conflicts (wars and rumours of wars)...

Are we watchful and praying as the Lord instructed?

Our urgent call is to bring the gospel of peace and restoration of relationship with the Abba Father to the world today.

A PRIVILEGE AS CAPTAIN ON THE "FERRYING MISSION"

By now, you are aware of the Goshen Initiative that JCC has embarked on early this year. I thank JCCians for contributing their varied talents to support this Initiative in which we build various Goshen bridges (links) to the community.

One bridge leads to another – our Manna Bridge (bread distribution) makes us known to our neighbours and now their kids have come to join

JCC's Allegra kidsREAD Club.

I thank JCCians for supporting our JC 23 (Discipleship Mentor/Mentee initiative) and our Cell Group ministry which is also geared towards growing the members spiritually as disciples and disciple-makers.

Our Lord tells us, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35)

Our various forms of ministry works are various types of vessels (a simple raft, a better-built boat, etc.) we use for our "ferrying mission".

You, the disciples of Christ, are the captains of the vessels. It is a privilege to be on the "ferrying mission" as a disciple of Christ - to have the honour of being congratulated by the Lord. (Luke 10:23)



Illustration: Jonathan Tan

CONCLUSION

Who are we "ferrying" in our lives today?

On our "ferrying mission", we are captains of lives – helping people escape from the peril of death to a place of eternal security.

It involves sacrifice. It is an act of love. You can choose a simple raft or a bigger vessel, saving one soul at a time. There is no time to waste in saving lives.

THE ALPHA TO THE OMEGA

BY SAMUEL CHONG



AΩ

Introduction

Through this series, we hope to bring readers through the history of Christianity using the 26 letters of the English alphabet.

Each letter will feature a person/ place/ event/ item that helps us better understand the Bible, the history of the Church until today and how our lives

have been impacted.

We hope that you will have a better appreciation of the historical context surrounding biblical events and those thereafter, and see how God moves throughout history – His Story.



is for...

Cadaver Synod

"And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgement." – Hebrews 9:27 (ESV)



Le Pape Formose et Étienne VII ("Pope Formosus and Stephen VII") by Jean-Paul Laurens, 1870.

What was the Cadaver Synod?

The Cadaver Synod was a bizarre and macabre episode in Church history, where the dead Pope Formosus's corpse was put on trial in 897. However grotesque, this extraordinary incident exemplifies how the Church was often caught up in political turmoil throughout its history.

Background I: The Holy Roman Empire

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476, Germanic kingdoms ruled Italy. The papacy survived but became dependent on the protection of regional powers. One such powerful king, Charlemagne of the Carolingian Dynasty, was crowned "Emperor of the

Romans" by Pope Leo III in 800, introducing the position of the Holy Roman Emperor (more details in a subsequent article). The Carolingian emperors took up the role of protectors of the Church and became major players in the violent power struggles across Italy.

Background II: Three Popes in a Game of Thrones

Pope Stephen VI (r. 896 – 897) convened the synod (council), but his charges invoked an old feud between Pope John VIII (r. 872 – 882) and future Pope Formosus (r. 891 – 896).

Pope John VIII was preoccupied with countering Saracen incursions into southern Italy. To this end he sought military aid from various powers, including the Carolingians. To ingratiate himself with the Carolingian Emperor whom he had crowned, John had then-Bishop Formosus defrocked and excommunicated in 872 for supporting Arnulf of Carinthia, a Carolingian duke who eyed the Carolingian throne. The ostensible charge was that Formosus had violated church law by deserting his diocese without Papal permission and aspiring to the position of Archbishop of Bulgaria where he had served as a papal diplomat. However, it is possible that John saw Formosus as a threat, as the latter was already being considered for the papacy. Formosus's excommunication was withdrawn after he agreed never to return to Rome or exercise clerical duties.

John VIII was assassinated in 882 and Formosus was restored to his diocese, but all this while the Carolingian emperors were increasingly challenged for control over Italy by local dynasties such as the Spoleto.

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A coup led by Arnulf deposed the Carolingian Emperor, but the throne was instead occupied by Guy III of Spoleto, who was crowned Emperor by his close ally Pope Stephen V – Formosus's immediate predecessor.

Formosus became Pope in 891 but was distrustful of Emperor Guy and worked against him. When Guy forced Formosus to crown his son Lambert as co-emperor, Formosus retaliated by inviting Arnulf to liberate Italy and be crowned emperor in Rome.

As Guy died in battle elsewhere, Lambert sought papal confirmation of his imperial succession but was denied by the pro-Arnulf Formosus; Lambert thus imprisoned the pope.

Arnulf eventually liberated Rome, freed Formosus, and was crowned emperor in early 896 – a move Lambert disputed and resented.

The tables were turned when Arnulf suffered a stroke and withdrew to Bavaria, and Formosus died the same year. The Spoleto sponsored Stephen IV for the papacy and now controlled Rome. Incensed with Formosus's collusion with Arnulf, Lambert pressured Stephen to exact revenge...

The Synod

Stephen VI convened the synod in January 897 in Rome, ordering the exhumation of Formosus's rotting corpse (he had been dead for 7 months), dressing it in full papal vestments and propping it on a throne. A deacon was appointed to answer for the deceased pontiff.

Stephen revived John VIII's charges of desertion and further accused Formosus of performing bishop duties while excommunicated.

Stephen was alleged to have said to the corpse: "When you were bishop of Porto, why did you usurp the universal Roman See (i.e. become Pope) in such a spirit of ambition?"

Unsurprisingly, the corpse was found guilty and stripped of its papal vestments.

Stephen then ordered the three fingers of the right hand that had been used in life for blessings to be cut off, which invalidated all of Formosus's acts and ordinations (this ironically included Stephen's earlier ordination as Bishop).

The corpse was buried in a graveyard for foreigners,

but quickly exhumed and thrown into the Tiber River that flowed through Rome.

Aftermath

The incident turned public opinion in Rome against Stephen VI. Formosus's corpse washed up on the riverbank and was rumoured to perform miracles.

A public uprising deposed and imprisoned Stephen, where he was strangled soon after. Subsequent popes rehabilitated Formosus and had his remains reinterred in St Peter's Basilica; future trials of corpses were also prohibited.

Ecclesiastical and International Politics

The Cadaver Synod was a low point in Church history – a classic case of the Church getting embroiled in worldly politics.

This, however, was inevitable ever since Christianity was made the State Religion of the Roman Empire in 380, granting the Pope immense influence. Nonetheless, as the political situation shifted, the Church found itself requiring patronage and thus became subject to, even involved in, political machinations.

The Church would continue to wield significant influence and power in politics, war, and empire building for centuries. Church influence only started to wane in the 19th and 20th centuries in the wake of revolutions and wars.

All information taken from the relevant Wikipedia articles.

Let's see what you remember!

Click on the image below to access a short quiz.





Illustration: Jonathan Tan

JESUS, OUR BREAD OF LIFE (PART 1)

ADAPTED FROM SERMON BY REV FREDRIC LEE

Are we upbeat or beat-up?

The world economy is in a bad state. High mortality rates due to Covid-19 are being recorded in many countries.

Here in Singapore we might be looking forward to better days ahead with the relaxation of Covid-19 curbs, but our Minister of Health has warned that “deaths will rise as the economy opens up.”

If not suffering financially, many of us are suffering mentally. Our jobs, our studies, our future, our families, our relationships and our church life are all impacted.

We expect fellow Christians to be more passionate, compassionate, more caring, more effective in ministry, and exemplary in their faith and life; but are we disappointed?

When we examine ourselves in the light of God's Word, we discover that we all are alike – sinful law breakers. The shocking thing is that we might be

oblivious to our bad spiritual condition.

It is precisely because of all the dreadful afflictions that we have the urgency to proclaim the Good News that Jesus, the bread of life, is for us and for Singapore.

Look to one another for encouragement

In stressful circumstances, we can easily be discouraged. Christians do get discouraged. Pastors and spiritual leaders do get discouraged.

We are disappointed when our CG leaders are less than what we expect of them. Our council members, ministry leaders and “rank and file” servants of God in their humble roles all make mistakes and fail to measure up to our lofty expectations.

We put in so much effort and time to live a life worthy of our calling. We sacrifice our life to serve the Lord.

continued on the next page

When we look around and feel disappointed, do we complain to God? Even the prophet Elijah complained:

"I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."
(1 Kings 19:10)

It is good that we look to one another in church to encourage us, inspire us and strengthen our faith.

Often, we are lifted up, even in the midst of our aches over a lot of imperfections.

Let us examine our ways (Lam 3:40)

Some of us may not feel discouraged or down

because we have a rather positive disposition. There are brilliant people who feel that they are doing pretty well in their studies or work and so they don't want to bother Jesus. They think:

"We don't really need the bread of life. We have plenty of bread and croissant and cake too, thank you. Give the bread to the poor and needy."

It is not too far-fetched that if we are not careful in our attitude, we are prone to think better of ourselves, until we hear God's Law and then we realize that we are breaking God's commandments quite frequently indeed!

"Wait!" you may say, "We don't break the ten commandments. We don't murder or commit adultery and we don't make any idols."

EPH 4:25-5:2

Do you break God's commandments?

Let us examine ourselves in the light of God's Word and see our true condition.

01
Stop telling lies. (NLT)

02
In your anger do not sin.

03
Must steal no longer.

04
Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths.

05
Let everything you say be good and helpful. (NLT)

06
Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

07
Get rid of bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, together with every form of malice.

08
Be kind and compassionate to one another.

09
Forgiving each other, just as in Christ forgave you.

10
Follow God's example and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Here, I highlight two commands from the list on the previous page:

- **Stealing** can become so much a part of us that we don't even realize it. For example, illegally downloading copyrighted songs, videos, pictures.
- **Let everything you say be good and helpful.** It is very common to hear negative and critical comments. Listen carefully when you are in a meeting for good helpful and encouraging words. You find that it's not so common, but we can make it a habit to look for something good to say.

We should feel bad for failing to live a life worthy of our calling. God's Law convicts us of our sins. It reveals the wretched condition of our hearts.

As a result of human sin, creation is groaning as in the pains of childbirth. (Rom 8:22).

When Elijah was so depressed by his condition that he wanted to die, God heard his desperate cry, sent an angel to minister to him and fed him with supernatural bread, bread from heaven, which strengthened him to travel for 40 days and 40

nights.

Importance of the Holy Communion

Jesus hears your cry. He says, "I am the bread of life. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." (Jn 6:48, 51)

Jesus comes to deliver us from our sad state today. Hear the Word of the Lord who knows how we feel and what we need.

Jesus gives his body and his blood in, with, and under the bread and wine in Holy Communion for you and for me to eat and drink to receive life and strength. (Jn 6:53-56)

This is a powerful sacramental union that is as real as Elijah eating the bread baked over hot coals that appeared miraculously.

We need to commune as often as we can on Jesus the bread of life to refresh our faith and to strengthen our lives for the journey ahead of us.



BE A F.A.T. DISCIPLE

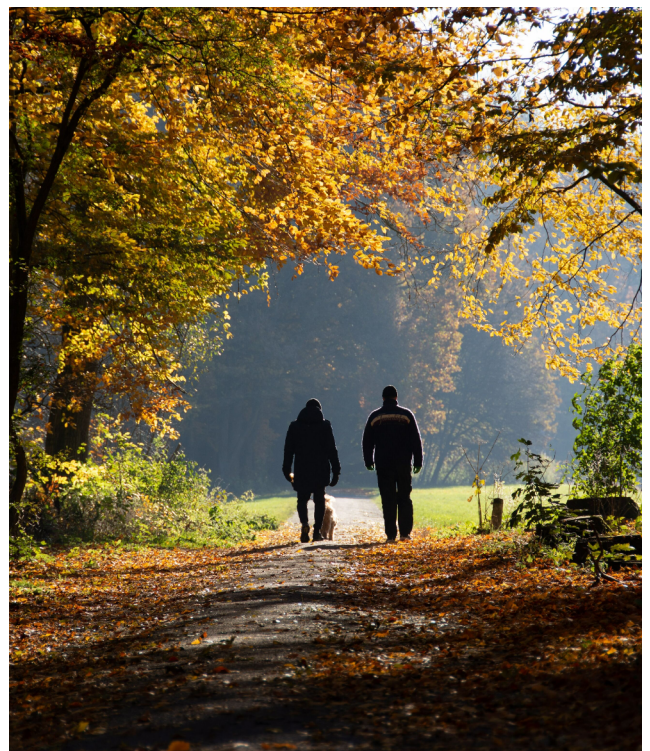
JIM LEE

Who is considered a disciple of Christ? Let's refer to two verses of scripture:

- "And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.'" (Mt 4:19)"
- And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passion and desires." (Gal 5:24)

Christians can find themselves lost in a world replete with a multitude of views and no lack of fervour in splitting hairs over definitions. Different descriptors – "conscientious Christian", "imitators of Christ", "born-again", etc. – have emerged, and they can be more bewildering than helpful.

In our admirable efforts to grow spiritually as



faithful disciples, I think simplicity is bliss. In simple terms, a disciple is one who believes and follows Jesus Christ.

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Settled with the fact that you and I who believe and follow Jesus Christ (despite our imperfections) are His disciples, we can turn our attention to understand what we need to become faithful disciples of Christ.

In this connection, an article by my former professor in SBC (Dr Koh Siang Kiang) prompts me to share with you the **F.A.T.** acronym which she used to enunciate the lessons she had learnt that kept her resilient in her many years of service to Jesus, her Lord and King.

I had also learnt about the acronym when I was a new believer.

F for FAITHFUL

If we read the bible diligently, we can discover many faithful servants of God. Apostle Paul (becoming a prominent disciple after his Damascus encounter with Jesus) amply demonstrated his faithfulness with his three missionary journeys proclaiming that Jesus is Lord and God.

In life and God's ministry, we face many challenges and distractions; and it was so for believers in Paul's time. Hence, the advice that Paul gave to his spiritual son, Timothy, to "avoid irreverent babble" (2 Tim 2:16 ESV) is still very relevant to us as we present ourselves to God as one approved, without need to be ashamed, as workers handling the word of truth. (Ref. 2 Tim 2:15)

A for AVAILABLE

A faithful disciple makes every effort to be present for his/her role and responsibilities. As Ecc 9:10 tells us, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might;" and Col 3:23, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men ..."

We read in the gospel how Peter, in his weakness, denied Jesus three times. However, the Lord gave Peter a second calling ("2nd chance") and appointed him to feed His lambs and tend His sheep. (John 21) Like Peter, we may find ourselves falling back in faith when our human frailty gets the better of us in trying moments. Know that when we fall, we can rise again because God does not give up on us. When Jesus called His first disciples, "Follow me ...," (Mt 4:19) the disciples immediately responded to the calling. They were blessed to be powerfully used because they were available. Ministry is a calling for everyone, NOT "for everyone but me."

Also, as Dr Koh shared, it is not a 9 to 5 job, but a 24/7 responsibility; with our availability for the purpose of building the Kingdom of God.

Can a faithful disciple be unavailable to receive blessings?

T for TEACHABLE: A disciple is set on a learning journey. In time, he will arrive at a point where he is able to reproduce another of the same kind. When he reaches that point, he is no longer just a disciple, but also a discipler who raises up disciples who are **F.A.T.** (i.e., Faithful, Available and Teachable).

Like Timothy, a matured disciple is exhorted to continue discipling/mentoring others – "and what you have heard [learned] from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men [and women] who will be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2: 2)

A discipler is a **FAITHFUL** disciple who is **AVAILABLE** as a **TEACHER** to instruct the wise so that they will be still wiser; and teach the righteous, so that they will increase in learning. (Ref. Prov 9:9)

Dr Koh made a cogent point with a L-plate: "This L-plate is what I use to remind myself and my students to be life-long learners."

It prompted a desire in my heart as a young Christian to keep learning from the Word of God and wise Christians/disciplers.

The Psalmist has this word for my encouragement:

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.

Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." (Ps 37:3-4)

For reflection

In what way are you or are you not a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ?

If you feel that you have fallen back like Peter when he denied Jesus, do not fret. God did not abandon Peter, and He does not abandon you. It is not too late for you to be **F.A.T.**



UNDERSTANDING GOD'S TIME

BY MARTIN CHEAH

"In His Time" is an old song that JWCG used to sing but has now forgotten. It's a song about God's perfect timing.

John Lee always quotes: "Man proposes, God disposes" a pithy version of Proverbs 19:21.

On **17th July**, my mother was warded in a private hospital after earlier falling from her bed at home. We thought a few days stay would help to relieve her pains.

However, after 13 days, she was still in pain and the cost had escalated to more than \$21K, so we decided to transfer her to a less costly alternative, maybe a community hospital or a nursing home.

Since my sister-in-law works in one of the government hospitals, she tried to get her into Yishun Community Hospital. We were unable to get a bed for her at a community hospital or a nursing home. So on 30th July, we transferred her back to my youngest brother's home wondering why God did not answer our prayers.

Then on 3rd August we heard that Yishun Community Hospital was a new COVID-19 cluster and thanked God my mother was not warded there.

Meanwhile, my sister-in-law who only recently joined a government hospital, through her network, was able to request a doctor from CGH to visit my mother at my youngest brother's home to assess her.

The doctor came and recommended some changes to her medicines to improve the pain management.

Was it God's perfect timing (only a few days before a Covid-19 cluster in CGH arose) that my sister-in-law was able to assist in the arrangement for a doctor to see my mother at home? This eased our decision to bring her home from hospital, and thus enabled us to visit her more freely.

We continued to pray that God would heal my mother's pains and most importantly of all to be gracious to her and grant her faith in Jesus for salvation. I am sharing with my brothers and sister who are backslided Catholics that God is working in all these events and I hope they will come back to Jesus.

A few days after paying the hospital bill, I received a surprise. Three years ago, I had placed \$20K into a Fixed Deposit. It matured at the right time, and I received a cheque for \$21K including interest – enough to cover the hospital bill.

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My mother seemed calmer back at home. Once when I visited her, she seemed to be in less pain than in the hospital. As I was leaving, she told me not to worry.

Suddenly on **17th August**, my youngest brother sent a message that he was rushing my mother to hospital. The whole family rushed to CGH A&E but she had already passed on.

As we looked at her still body, my 2nd brother asked me to say a prayer for her. I tried but after a few words, my voice trembled with emotion and I could not carry on. I wasn't the stoic person that I imagined myself to be.

"No matter how prepared you think you are for the death of a loved one, it still comes as shock, and it still hurts very deeply." – Billy Graham

My sister-in-law had contacts which she called and the undertaker came and did all the arrangements like booking a location to hold the vigil and funeral service and booking a time slot for the cremation.

At first, we could not find a suitable place to hold the wake (vigil) service but somehow God provided a comfortable hall in the Church of Our Lady Queen of Peace. We also booked a niche for her in the Church of the Holy Family's columbarium so that we have easy access to pay our respects frequently.

Then the family discussed and decided to hold the vigil service over 2 nights only, as my mother had hardly any relatives left since she was already 95 years old.

To our surprise we received so many visitors over the 2 nights that we had to juggle around due to the 30-pax limit imposed under the Covid-19 measures.

During these 3 days of vigil and the funeral service, there were prayers and Bible reading and my brothers and sister took turns to read the passages.

My sister and one brother even went up to receive Holy Communion. My hope is that their faith will be restored. May Jesus seek His lost sheep.

It is God's provision through the loving support of friends and relatives that the cost of the funeral arrangements was fully met.

Although there is now emptiness – an empty bed, an empty room and one less person to pray for, I pray that God will wipe every tear from her eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain – Revelations 21:4a

I received an email on 23 August with this encouraging message:

"God providentially allows hardships in our lives that are the opposite of what we desire because He knows they will meet our greatest need of knowing Him more intimately. Ironically, when God seems most distant because of what we face, He is often most active in our lives. When we least understand what God is doing, we are better positioned to know Him at a more personal level because of



the faith we need to exercise. God's goal is not our comprehending Him more completely, but our trusting Him more deeply."

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts." – Isaiah 55:8-9

Do I understand God's ways and timing? NO, but He makes all things beautiful in His time.

In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety. - Psalm 4:8

*In his time, in his time
He makes all things beautiful
In his time
Lord please show me everyday
As you're teaching me your way
That you do just what you say
In your time*

OPEN TALK WITH GOD



By Bryan Tay

Dear Lord,

I don't seem to be joyful all the time. When things go well in my life, I feel happy. But when things are back to normal, or when there is trouble, I don't feel that there is anything to be happy about. Is there a difference between being happy and joyful? And is it possible to be joyful at all times?

My precious child,

Feelings of happiness are affected by circumstances and events in your life. But **JOY** is what **I have promised to give you**. It is not affected by your external circumstances. If you want to live a continually joyful life, the first thing you need to do is to seek My Wisdom.

HOW CAN I BE JOYFUL ALWAYS?

I HAVE PUT MY JOY IN YOU

SEEK GOD'S WISDOM & UNDERSTANDING

... and "He will Joy Over Thee with Singing" – Zeph 3:17 (KJV)

For the Lord gives **WISDOM**; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Proverbs 2:6 (NIV)

Blessed are those who find **WISDOM**, those who gain understanding,
for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold.

She is more precious than rubies; **nothing you desire can compare with her**.

Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honour.

Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace.

She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed.

Proverbs 3: 13-18 (NIV)

The precepts of the Lord are right, giving **JOY** to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Psalms 19:8 (NIV)

You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with **JOY** in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Psalms 16:11 (NIV)





WHO AM I? BY MARTIN CHEAH

"As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years," – Psalm 90:10a

The inspired Psalmist mentions the average lifespan and the blessing of strength to live longer.

God has blessed me with the gift of life for close to 97% of this, and since my mother's death, I feel it is time to share some modest highlights of my average life.

A product of a joint venture between a Penang Baba-Hokkien man and a Sandakan Khek woman, I often jokingly refer to myself as a Nonya Khek (cake).

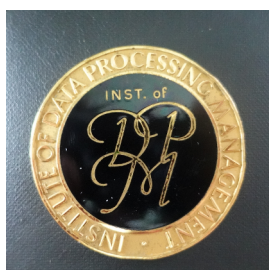
My designation is 1 of 4, the eldest of four siblings. Sixty-eight years ago, I was baptized as a baby in the Catholic Church of The Sacred Heart and my parents named me Martin.

There are many Catholic saints named Martin, so I choose to think that I was named after St Martin of Tours who is the patron saint of alcoholics because I worked 39 years in Tiger Brewery.

I studied in St Michael's Primary School and went on to St Joseph's Institution. During my O levels, my father passed away (no, not because of my results).

My results were only average and my second language was Malay because my father didn't think it was necessary for me to learn Mandarin. I am not academically inclined so didn't proceed to university but took some part-time courses in Book-keeping, Commercial Law, etc.

Later, I did attempt A levels as a private candidate with a combination of subjects which were neither here nor there. I passed all the subjects but of no significance.



In my working years, I did take a UK computer course and receive a Gold medal for one of the subject modules. I always thank God for that.

However, it was not



recognized by the company and I never got transferred to a computer department.

As a child I suffered from Asthma and at times had to sleep in a sitting position to ease the breathing. This could account for my hunch but I think it is mainly because I didn't listen to my mother who constantly reminded me to straighten up.

Probably due to this medical condition, I served my NS in the role of Audit Clerk at CMPB, Dempsey Road.

Before going into NS, I was working in a film distribution company for about 6 months. After NS, I joined the Duty-Free shop in Changi Airport. I moved on to PSA where I stayed for about 4 years and met my future wife there in the Audit department where we worked.

My next move was to an oil field services company and my final move was to F&N which later transferred my department to APB.



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Before meeting my future wife, I was just an ordinary Catholic who went to church every Sunday but was not active in any church activities.

After meeting her and her Christian friends, I was at first very defensive about my Catholic beliefs; but later I became very active in sharing the

Gospel in my next two companies.

We married in a Catholic church but after moving to Jurong West, we stopped attending Catholic mass but only attended Jurong Christian Church.

I became active in church activities, joining the English Council twice, served in the Missions committee, Fund Raising committee, etc.

I am still serving in the Social Concerns committee, Dialect ministry, Multi-Media ministry and as Cell Group leader of JWCG.

However, I must admit that I have never been great or gifted in any of these roles. Even those who know me for a fairly short time can realize it. I just do it because it must be done, not because I was specially appointed or trained by God.

As James 2:17 says, "faith by itself, if it does not have works (actions), is dead."

Thus, the verse for my life is Psalm 62:1, "Truly my soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him."

It will not be the works I do that saves me. Now you know this ordinary Christian, with no extraordinary talents, who is just serving the Lord in little ways to the best of his abilities.

Many people just listen but James 1:22 says, "*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*"

If God gave you only 1 talent, you better use it.

GOSHEN BRIDGES



JCC's Goshen Initiative seeks to connect with our community by creating outreach channels to share God's love in tangible ways. We call them Goshen Bridges. We are now calling for professionals and hobbyists who would like to impart their knowledge and skills through short sharing sessions (face-to-face or online) on a voluntary basis.

You can conduct workshops and create learning resources for online access. Through these community engagements, we hope to build rapport and establish relationships with our community to create opportunities to share the gospel.

**Note: this is a non-paid voluntary programme for all JCCians, to provide skill-sharing for all members of public. Register to find out more!*



Register to find out more!
jcc.sg/goshenbridge



ORDINARY TIME/EXTRAORDINARY TIME

BY JOHN LEE

OPPORTUNE TIME FOR A HOME RETREAT

In every Sunday Bulletin, you will notice that printed next to the date is an indication of the church time of year. Examples:

- May 16, 2021 – 7th Sunday of Easter
- May 23, 2021 – Day of Pentecost
- May 30, 2021 – 1st Sunday after Pentecost
- Nov 14, 2021 – 25th Sunday after Pentecost
- Nov 21, 2021 – Christ the King Sunday
- Nov 28, 2021 – 1st Sunday in Advent

Between Easter and Advent is the longest period in the liturgical calendar. It is a period called Ordinary Time in the sense that there is no major commemorative Christian event during this period. (There is another shorter Ordinary Time between Christmas and Lent.)

Presently, in this Ordinary Time, the world is facing an extraordinary time of pandemic crisis. Economic activities have been curtailed; people's liveliness drained as they spend less time outside of home due to Covid-19 restrictions.

When the church is in Ordinary Time, we are

spared much of the busyness associated with eventful church seasons.

God has built into our life a time for busyness and a time for retreat, a time for action-packed schedules and a quiet time to sit back and reflect. Are Christians missing out on their church retreats?

When the world is in pandemic extraordinary time, are people missing out on their moaning about being too full of activities (pre-Covid time) and unable to slow down?

Whether we reckon it as Ordinary Time by the liturgical calendar or extraordinary time by the raging pandemic, it is opportune time for a retreat – not beating a hasty retreat in spiritual surrender but taking a productive “retreat at home” to reconnect with God through our quiet time (now plentifully available) in prayers and meditations on His Word.

We can reflect on our fulfilments and flops in our “old normal” high-velocity hectic life and seek fresh direction for the “new normal” season.

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Warm-up activity for your Home Retreat

Here are 15 tiles scrambled up. Each tile contains one or more letters :

E	F	A	N	N	G	T	H	D		R	R	E	E
G	O		O	I	S	U	R	S	T	U	G	D	

The tiles are rearranged so that the letters on the tiles join up to form a message:

G	O	D		I	S		O	U	R		R	E	F	U	G
E		A	N	D		S	T	R	E	N	G	T	H		

Now, there are 16 scrambled tiles below. Unscramble them to find the hidden message of 11 words. (Clue: The 1st word is "NO" and one of the other words is "GOD".)

T	H	N	O	C	E	C	A	O	F	I	N	O	R	K	E	W		
W	O	F	O	R	T	O	P	T	H	E	N	S	G	O	D	L	R	D

Devotion Bible Study 1

Read Mark 4:35-41.

Caught in a dangerous storm, the disciples of Jesus were terrified. However, "He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed." (Ref. Ps 107:29)

- I. If Jesus can control a physical storm, will He also stop the Covid-19 to relieve His people of their panic?
- II. The faith of the disciples was sorely tested, but the finale boosted their faith in the Lord. As we go through the storms of all kinds in our life, will our faith pass the testing and grow stronger?

"Lord, forgive our doubts, for we sometimes take Your silence as nothing more than sleepy indifference. Remind us that You never sleep nor slumber, but always keep us under Your watchful eye. Amen." (TL SB)

A Fun Activity for Mental Exercise

Fill in the missing numbers (integers from 1 to 9) so that each row and each column is a math equation. Remember the BODMAS rule for $\div \times + -$ order of operations.

	-		+	5	2
+		-		+	
	+		-		12
-		+		+	
	+	8	+		11
8		5		10	

5	\times		+		41
+		+		+	
	-		+		8
\times		-		\div	
	+		+	2	17
47		2		3	

Devotion Bible Study 2

Read Heb 5:12; 6:10-11.

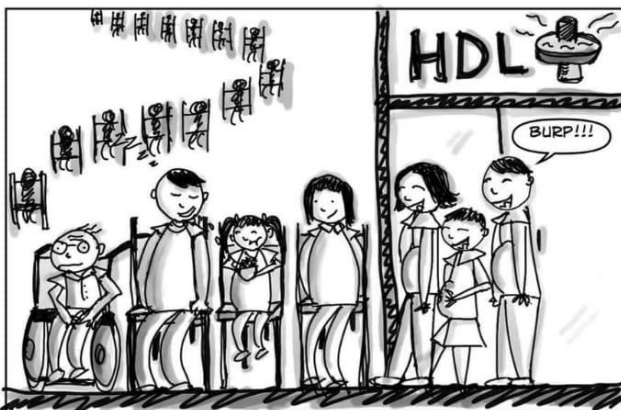
The readers of the epistle to the Hebrews were spiritually young who “need milk, not solid food!” (v 5:12) Nevertheless, they were diligent in Christian service. (v 6:11) They were encouraged to grow up in maturity.

- I. Can a Christian ever be “not spiritually mature enough” to render diligent service?
- II. Is God unjust? How does God dispense His rewards? Does a spiritual babe need to fear being abandoned by God?
- III. How can we build our hope, whether we consider ourselves “elementary Christians” or “mature Christians”?

Retreat Debrief

Be blessed to be a blessing!

If only they knew...



"For the wages of sin is death, but the **free gift of God** is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." - Romans 6:23 (ESV):

Why Do People Refuse the Greatest Gift Ever Offered? A Christian website lists some possible reasons:

1. Pride
2. Spiritual Blindness
3. Ignorance
4. Love of Sin

Religious people take great pride in keeping the Laws and doing good works. They believe God owes them a place in Heaven because they have kept all His Laws and done many good deeds and they have no need of a Saviour. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23), "and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags." (Isaiah 64:6b)

"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Corinthians 4:4)

They are ignorant because "they did not know the

righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." (Romans 10:3)

"Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed." (John 3:20) Mankind's sinful nature prevents them from coming to Jesus.

If you have not received the free gift of God, please open your eyes, turn away from self-righteousness and humble yourselves to receive Jesus as your Saviour.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us: "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him." People miss this and they replace faith with religious activity.

Believe and accept it as a **free gift of God**. No strings attached, only a promise that "whoever believes in Him (Jesus) shall not perish but have **eternal life**." - John 3:16b

BY THE WINEPRESS TEAM



ALLEGRA kidsREAD CLUB

BY PEGGY TAN

Under the Goshen Initiative, JCC launched the Allegra kidsREAD Club on 4th September in association with the National kidsREAD programme:

"The National kidsREAD programme (kidsREAD in short) is a nationwide reading programme officially launched on 23 April 2004 by then Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. kidsREAD is a collaborative effort by the National Library Board (NLB) together with the People's Association (PA) and four self-help groups to promote the love of reading and cultivate good reading habits among young Singaporeans, specifically children from low-income families. The target audience of kidsREAD is children between the ages of 4 and 8, regardless of race or religion." - NLB

The idea of setting up this kidsREAD Club in JCC came upon us some time in May. We made enquiries and had discussions with NLB. This led to a Zoom training provided by professional ACT 3 Drama staff for our kidsREAD volunteers – Beng Lay, Gek Luang, Loh Shan, Nancy Tan, Samantha Chin and Peggy Tan – who have all committed to serve on the kidsREAD programme for at least 6 months.

NLB supported us with all the needed paraphernalia – curriculum books, bags, stationery as well as T-shirts for the children and the volunteers.

"Allegra" means "active" in Italian. The children joining us in JCC (MPH5A/B) for our first session were 4 -6 years old who came from low-income families that we visited during our Manna Bridge bread distribution.

All the parents were excited to bring their children to the session, and the kidsREAD volunteers were equally eager to engage the children with storytelling and activities to develop their interest in books and help them pick up good values for life.

We will have a weekly one-hour session (every Saturday from 1 – 2 pm) for a period of 6 months.

We seek your prayers, not just for the Allegra kidsREAD Club but for all the Goshen Bridges that we shall build as God leads us, small step by small step, to link up with the community in practical and humble service.

Not to forget, you have a standing invitation to meet us on any of our Goshen Bridges where you can explore opportunities to "use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." (1 Pet 4:10)

"Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered." (Prov 11:25)