

January 2022



THE WINEPRESS

O taste and see that God is good



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IN THIS NEW YEAR, ARE YOU PURUSING YOUR 5CS?

PRAYER FOCUS FOR FEBRUARY

What should you pray for in this brand new month?

Seek the Lord to empower our ministries, give us renewal of faith in tough times and to move JCC forward through 2022 and beyond.

Prayer pointers can be found on page 4.

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GO DEEP IN DISCIPLESHIP WITH LOVE

BY REV ANTHONY LOH

We enter 2022 with cautious hope that the Covid-19 impact will get milder and milder. Yet, we are mindful to be on guard for safety as we are informed of the safe management measures to be retained for the approaching CNY.

Despite a long journey to recovery from pandemic fatigue, we keep faith in God as we manoeuvre around tight corners to do the work that He wants us to do. By God's grace, we keep ourselves focused on the spiritual theme for this year: GO DEEP IN DISCIPLESHIP.

Discipleship as a concept is simple. It is the discipline to follow Jesus. However, living the disciple's life brings out the full sense of the word "discipline" that we need to abide in, especially in hard times. Nobody foresaw the coming of the Covid storm which brought obstacles "all over the place" to obstruct church activities and limit fellowship gatherings. Many face severe personal and spiritual challenges. Even those with strongest faith can waiver. We need one another more than ever. We need to bind ourselves closely together to "Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always." (1 Chron 16:11)

JCCians are encouraged to GO DEEP IN DISCIPLESHIP – to retain our resolve to find liberation by surrendering to God, by casting our anguish upon Him. As disciples of Jesus, we take comfort in His words that we obey: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me." (John 14:1)

Foremost, we need to take the intentional step of pursuing truth and righteousness that pleases God instead of yielding to defeat by the circumstances. The Word of God tells us:

"Submit yourselves, then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

"Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." (Eph 6:13)

Go Deep in Discipleship (Sharing love through faithful service)

God gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. We retain our resolve to take God's love to one another and to others through our faithful service. In this vein,

we have been moving progressively in several important areas: Joshua Culture 23 (mentorship program), David & Goliath Preschool, Cell Ministry (formation of core teams), Goshen Initiative, Life Shine Community Service collaboration with our partner churches (New Life Baptist, Tamil Methodist, Renewal Christian Church), etc.

LOVE – Loving God and loving others – undergirds our discipleship efforts.

Firstly, love is from God and anyone who does not love does not know God. (John 4:7-8) As Tom Blackaby who speaks internationally on discipleship said, “God has always connected our relationship toward those around us with our relationship with him.”

Let us ensure that our inspiration for this new year is loving God because He first loves us.

Secondly, we love as it is Christ’s Command to us:

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (John 15:12)

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

Love is mentioned 28x in John 13-17.

Worldly Love vs. Godly Love

There is a difference between worldly love and godly love.

Worldly love is primarily emotional. It responds to kindness shown. It is primarily selfish in nature.

Illustration: The people helping Apostle Paul. “For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 2:21)

On the other hand, godly love is focused on others. It is selfless. “It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.” (1 Corinthians 13:5)

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,” (Philippians 2:3)

Husbands are reminded to love their wives (Ephesians 5:25) and women are urged to love their husbands and children. (Titus 2:4)

Love God, who has done so much for us!

Let us live out our sacrificial love by heeding the following points:

1. Letting God’s love envelope us daily. He is in our midst. (Zephaniah 3:17)
2. Ensure Christ is Lord of our lives (Rom 10:9; 14:8-9) and thus we commit to Christ our daily decisions. (Prov 3:5-6)
3. Forgive without restriction. (Luke 17:3-4)
4. Go and be Reconciled. (Mt 5:23-24)
5. “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” (Rom 12:18)
6. Show mercy (Luke 10:36-37)

We may be ordinary people but we can achieve an extraordinary year of transformation if we are connected right with God, our power source.





PRAYER FOCUS FOR FEBRUARY 2022

1) Our spiritual theme for this year: GO DEEP IN DISCIPLESHIP.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to empower JCCians to live the life of discipleship.

2) Our visionary leaders (Councilmen, HOM, MLT, Cell leaders) continuing to lead the church's mission boldly, giving themselves fully to the work of the Lord because they know that their labour in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Cor 15:58)

3) JCCians maintaining their conviction of heart and sense of urgency to reach out to the people around us, such as through the Goshen Initiative.

4) Pray for the People Group Team as they look into the issues concerning the cell ministry of JCC and develop ideas to reinvigorate the cell groups that have seen better days.

5) May the Holy Spirit anoint us and show us the way into God's presence in our Sunday services. May we be inspired to respond in prayers and praise as the love of God is shed in our hearts.

THE GOSHEN INITIATIVE

BY PEGGY TAN



Dear JCCians, encouragers and supporters of Goshen Initiative:

Global airlines, hotel, and restaurant industries are suffering massive blows by the Covid-19 storm. Many businesses have surrendered. Many others make adjustments and keep themselves steadfast for the day when the pandemic will be over. Happy will they be to reap the rewards for their longsuffering!

The pandemic waves do not spare the church the assault. Ministries have been impacted in no small measure. I am thankful to God and you, JCCians, who keep yourselves steadfast in encouraging the Goshen Initiative.

The sincere faith you have invested makes the difference.

Whatever you do, in whatever capacity, you have done it heartily as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. (Ref. Col 3:23-24)

Because of your steadfastness in faith, the Goshen Initiative has been ongoing to bless people in the community.

Yes, my dear brothers and sisters who are collaborating in Goshen. We are human enough with everyday sorrows and care as the pandemic billows roll. We make a choice to proceed with the billows instead of submerging under them. We make our wise choice to keep our faith, knowing that the storm is but a trial. With God's help, we will all go through it to reap the fruits –**gradually or surprisingly**.

We started the Goshen Initiative in mid-2021, believing God would lead the way.

Our Manna Bridge was just a humble effort of distributing bread to the needy. It wasn't much that we did, but God led the way to draw out children from our neighbourhood to join our Allegra kidsREAD Club.

By divine arrangement, during one of our bread distribution moments, we got to know one lady who had attended JCC years ago. She was invited to our online service and then our onsite service. After a few months of reconnecting with JCC, she was spiritually awakened and was baptised on Dec 5, 2021. All glory be to God for bringing His child back to Him via the Manna Bridge. Every sheep found is precious to the Lord!

continued on the next page



Through outreach to the children, we bring gladness to them, and they will convey the spirit of gladness home. It is not just about the Allegra kidsREAD Club. As our neighbours get to know more about JCC via our Goshen Bridges, they will send their kids to our David & Goliath Preschool, which will provide significant enhancement to our role in benefiting the children in the community.

What else are we doing in the Goshen Initiative?

Life Shine Community Services is a new work of collaboration with our tenant churches in the JCC Hub (New Life Baptist Church, Renewal Christian Church, Jurong Tamil Methodist Church) to reach out to the community. The steering committee has already had a few meetings to lay the groundwork.

Our partnership will be engaged with the Ministry of Social & Family Development to bring warmth and comfort to the VIC Group (Vulnerable in Community) which includes elderly people like tissue-sellers and cardboard collectors.

Urban Farming in the church premises is another collaborative effort to reach out to different people as we grow and provide edible vegetables, herbs, and fruits for the Taman Jurong community.

Bike Befriend Club was inaugurated on Jan 9, 2022. It will operate every Sunday from 3 – 4 p.m. Anyone with a bicycle in need of servicing can come and meet our volunteer servicemen, Patrick Low and

A hymn comes to my attention:

Light beyond the shadows

*When the troubles gather
And the billows roll,
Dark the way before you,
Cares oppress the soul,
There is blessed sunshine
Just beyond your view;
Oft 'tis but a trial
You are going thro'.*

Daniel Chew. While your bicycle's condition is being redressed, you are welcome to spend your time at our Dialect Worship Service, which commences at 3 p.m.

The pandemic is understandably a bad situation by human reckoning. However, past events tell us that God brings good from bad conditions. Ecc 3:1-8 tell us that for everything, there is a season. We can trust that everything happens for a reason, even when we are not wise enough to see it.

It looks like there is more work than there are labourers. With this imbalance between work and workers, your support is all the more critical. It makes me even more thankful for every bit of your presence in the Goshen Initiative. Against the backdrop of cares that oppress the soul, we see blessed sunshine beyond this trial.

There will always be unpredictable gyrations in the circumstances affecting our ministry works. Nevertheless, twists and turns do not put us off but stiffen our resolve to be flexible in our plans as we

build bridge by bridge the links to enable a broad spectrum of people to enter JCC as the Goshen Centre. In this place, they discover God's blessings to have, share, and multiply their numbers.

Let's continue to pray, especially when we see our limited means and performance. May God bless us with His Grace (so that we have nothing to boast about) because of our faith.

Looking forward to your continuing support this new year!



OUTREACH IN THE TIME OF COVID

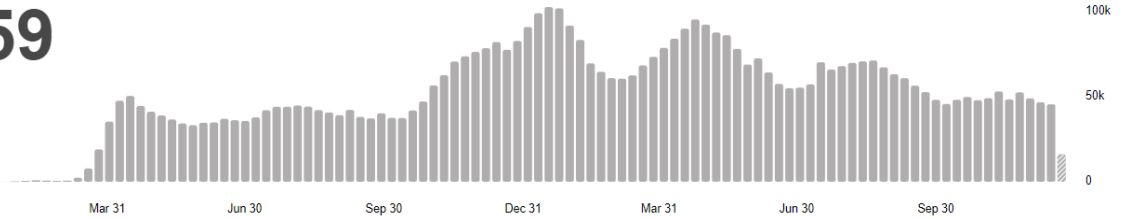
BY MARTIN CHEAH

5,411,759

deaths

Source: World Health Organization

Data may be incomplete for the current day or week.



In the past two years with COVID rules constantly changing, Outreach became a very restrictive activity. However, can we stop Outreach completely when we see the WHO death rates from Jan 2020 to Dec 2021? About 7,000 people around the world are dropping dead daily. The Lord commanded His followers from every generation to put our faith into action and to go make disciples. We just have to use imaginative ways and means to keep within the law.

We have the Goshen Initiative (see article in this issue), we have ZOOM missionaries and we also have small group events. Here is a report on several initiatives by Dr Albert Ong.

One method that works for outreach and Bible study is to meet at their homes.

For this group of tenants from Malaysia and India



staying in the same household, monthly sessions include having snacks or home-cooked meals, celebrating birthdays, sharing of cultural stories, challenges at work and even sharing of what each person was thankful for. After

building rapport, the Bible study leader can share the Gospel message.

Another way is to have occasions to celebrate. On Christmas Eve this year, out of the 12 guests invited, 7 came to the gathering at MPH3 which has a capacity for 50 persons. An additional 2 persons came after the party so a total 9 people joined the Christmas Eve service. Praise the Lord!

The Christmas message was presented to them and may the Holy Spirit stir their hearts to accept and know the Saviour.



Of the guests, Fook Far is attending the Chinese service while the rest indicated they are interested in badminton, cooking lesson, planting vegetables and learning English in JCC. On the whole, we felt the program

(with games and Christmas outreach) was very effective to reach out to the pre-believers. We pray for Frank, Shirley, Jia Wen, Joy, Kanthan, Peggy, Doreen, Ivan and Fook Far.

We propose future effective outreach on a regular small group basis like cooking class, outings, CNY, Easter/Good Friday celebrations, etc and ending with a Gospel message.

PS: the upcoming outreach activity will be how to make Japanese sushi, date and time to be announced later.

The Great Commission

If you thought Jesus said, "Look, if you are in the mood, if it works into your busy schedule, as a personal favour to Me, would you consider going into the world and making disciples?"

Then you have misread Matthew 28:18-20, here it is:

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**"*

As you read this, 7,000 persons all over the world may be passing away today.

WILL YOUR FOCUS BE COVID OR CHRIST

BY BRYAN TAY

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. - Isaiah 43:19



In two “short” years, the world has learnt to respect and fear the detrimental effects of COVID on our physical health. Yet, over the centuries, it has NOT bothered about the devastating impact of SIN, which not only affects our temporal physical bodies but also our soul and spirit for eternity. *Sin causes us to devise evil in our hearts, commit crimes against one another, reject and rebel against God, with the ultimate consequence of suffering eternal hellfire, separated from*

loved ones who have chosen to be reconciled to God. But the world does not seem to care enough to take precautions against sin like what it has done for COVID.

As Christians, can we afford not to care?

What we are doing about COVID	What we have been doing about SIN
We ensure that we quickly educate everybody, young and old about the harm caused by COVID to physical health.	We don't see the urgency of needing to hurry, for that matter, to educate everyone about SIN's detrimental effects on spirit, soul and body.
We design test kits, methodology (ART/PCR) and take measures to check for first signs of infection. No one should be contaminated lest they spread it to others.	We hardly notice or are concerned about whether sin has stained our spirit and corrupted our values and society. We quietly hope that sinful living is not contagious.
We want to be instantly notified if ever we get infected so that we can get treated immediately.	We procrastinate in eradicating sin in our lives and hope that no one will ever find out or tell us honestly about it. We fear being exposed!
We make deliberate efforts to avoid high-risk places and maintain a strict regimen of personal and public hygiene to stay safe.	We hardly consider the risks of being polluted by sin and unholy pursuits in our lifestyles, where we go, what we do and the company we keep.
We hope and pray that scientists and researchers will find a permanent cure for COVID.	We hardly do anything to administer the perfect cure for sin by praying for loved ones, friends and neighbours to be saved from eternal damnation.

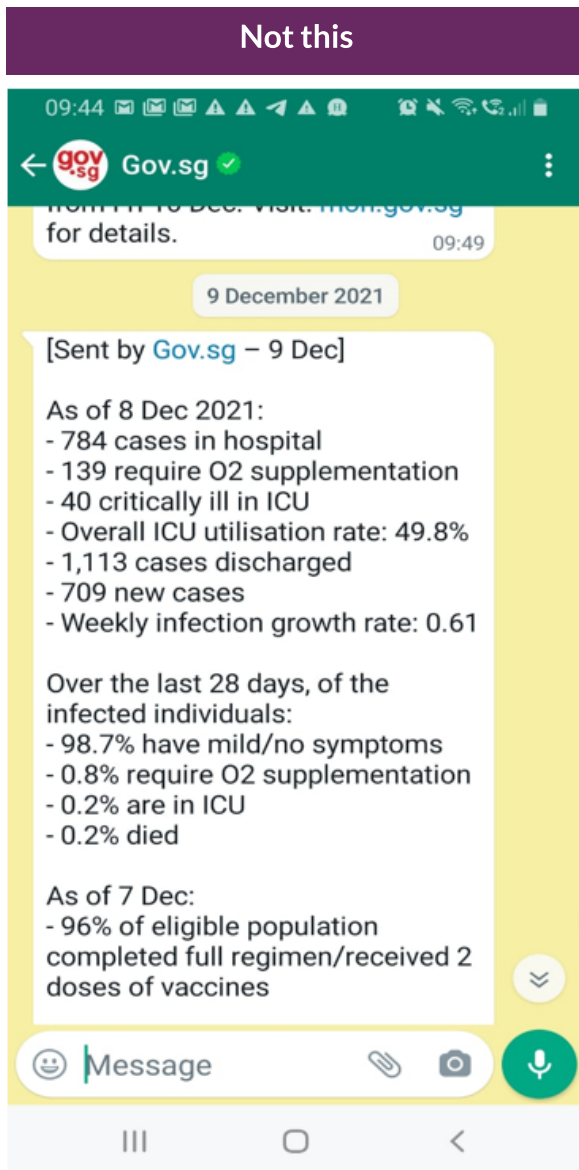
CoVID is just a Can of Virus Inducing Destruction.

But we have CHRIST the Lord and Giver of Life!

“Everything is possible for one who believes.”

Mark 9:23 (NIV)

Imagine with me the day when we receive daily reports on our mobile...



GOD IS DOING A NEW THING. LET US PERCEIVE AND BE A PART OF IT

- Ask God to convict us about the consequence of sin so that we will be moved to warn others.
- Set up detection mechanisms in our life. Allow friends, family and Christians to provide open rebuke when they see or know that we have done something wrong so that we can repent immediately.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to fill us and make us sensitive to His presence so that each time we are tempted by sin, we can choose to overcome it with His help.
- Commit our plans and activities to God and ask Him to direct our steps. Be willing to follow as He directs.
- Pray and tell people about the perfect cure that God has given in Christ. Share the good news and point them to the Fountain of Living Water.

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.

G

is for...

GAZA

"Then the Philistines seized [Samson], gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding grain in the prison." – Judges 16:21

What is Gaza?

Gaza is a city within the Gaza Strip, a Palestinian enclave along the Mediterranean coast, bordering Egypt and Israel. Despite the Strip's small area (365km², which is smaller than Singapore's 710km²), it is a land with rich history and mentioned in the Bible.



Gaza: The Old Testament Period

Canaanite settlement in the region of Gaza dates back about 5,000 years. The area was of strategic and commercial importance as an entrepot along the coastal route linking Egypt and the Levant (i.e. Syria), and Mesopotamia (i.e. Babylon) beyond.

The Bible mentions that Gaza was on the periphery

of the land of Canaan (Genesis 10:19) and that the Philistines had occupied the area (Deuteronomy 2:23). During the Exodus, God did not lead the Israelites on the road through the Philistine country (i.e. Gaza) though that was shorter and more straightforward due to the threat of war (Exodus 13:17). Joshua managed to drive out the Anakites (the race of giants described by the Twelve Spies) from the Promised Land, but a number managed to survive in the Philistine cities, including Gaza (Joshua 11:22). Gaza was also listed as part of the inheritance of the Tribe of Judah (Joshua 15:20, 47).

Gaza was also featured during the era of the Judges:

Samson sinned in Gaza by visiting a prostitute but managed to escape using his strength (Judges 16:1-3). However, after falling prey to Delilah, Samson was captured and imprisoned there, where he would later die by

bringing down the pillars of the temple of Dagon, taking thousands of Philistines with him (Judges 16:23-30).



Death of Samson by Gustave Doré, 1866

After the Philistines captured the Ark of the

continued on the next page

Covenant and suffered afflictions from God, they returned the Ark along with five gold tumours – one each for the Philistine cities including Gaza (1 Samuel 6:17).

Eventually, Gaza would be subdued by David, and it was listed under the areas ruled by Solomon (1 Kings 4:24). It is likely that the Philistines reasserted control over Gaza sometime after Solomon's death, as Hezekiah had to defeat them with God's help (2 Kings 18:5-8).

The prophets also pronounced prophecies against Gaza as part of God's wider judgement on the Philistines:

- Jeremiah prophesied that Gaza would mourn as Philistia was destroyed, which was fulfilled when Egypt attacked Gaza (Jeremiah 47).
- Amos prophesied that Gaza's fortresses would be destroyed for its attacks on Israel (Amos 1:6-7).

Zephaniah and Zechariah prophesied that Gaza would lose its king and be abandoned (Zephaniah 2:4, Zechariah 9:5).

When the Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians, Gaza came under Assyrian rule. The region would later change hands frequently during the wars between Egypt and Babylon.

Gaza in the Inter-Testament and New Testament periods

In 332 BC, Alexander the Great besieged and captured Gaza – the last territory on his path to Egypt. Gaza was organised into a city-state and Greek culture took root there. Gaza came under Roman rule in 63 BC. Emperor Augustus gave Gaza to King Herod the Great (the one in Matthew 2) in 30 BC but later annexed it to the Province of Syria after Herod's death in 4 BC.

Gaza was again mentioned in Acts, when Philip met and baptised the Ethiopian eunuch on the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza (Acts 8:26-40).

A troubled land – Gaza until today

Due to Greek influence from the time of Alexander, pagan worship was strong in Gaza. Coupled with persecution, Christianity's spread was hence initially inhibited, even after Christianity was legalised throughout the Roman Empire in 313 AD. Nonetheless, a small Christian population persisted, and a bishop represented Gaza at the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

Christianity's spread in Gaza was likely accelerated by Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza from 395-420 AD. He is said to have convinced the influential Empress Eudoxia to prevail upon the Emperor Arcadius to decree the destruction of pagan temples in Gaza. One of these temples was dedicated to Dagon, said to be built upon the site of the temple that Samson earlier toppled. A large church was built in its place in 406 AD and dedicated to John the Baptist.

Gaza would undergo further changes with the rise of Islam in the 7th century. Arab traders had already been influential in Gaza and Muhammad visited it prior to becoming a prophet. After Muhammad's death, the Muslim community was gathered under the leadership of the Rashidun Caliphate, which conquered Gaza from the Byzantines (i.e. Eastern Roman Empire) in 637 AD. Gaza's population quickly adopted Islam and the Arabic language, and churches were turned into mosques, including the Cathedral of John the Baptist, which became the Great Mosque of Gaza. Nonetheless, Christians and Jews were permitted to worship and trade, provided they acknowledged Muslim rule and paid the *Jizya* (tax levied on non-Muslim populations).



Courtyard and Minaret of the Great Mosque of Gaza, Maison Bonfils, late 19th century

Except for various periods during the Crusades,

Gaza remained under Muslim rule for over a millennium, under successive dynasties from the Ayyubids to the Ottomans. Successive wars and conflict would inflict destruction upon the city and its surroundings, notably by the Mongols under Hulagu Khan (a grandson of Genghis Khan) who destroyed Gaza in 1260 AD. Nonetheless, Gaza was rebuilt in subsequent years. By 1355 AD, the famed explorer Ibn Battuta wrote that Gaza was large and populous, with many mosques, notably the Great Mosque.

Gaza became part of the British Mandate of Palestine following the Ottoman Empire's dissolution after World War One. The end of British rule in 1948 was followed by the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli War. While the modern state of Israel was established, the Gaza Strip came under Egyptian occupation. Israel occupied Gaza during the 1967 Six-Day War after defeating the Arab coalition, and only withdrew in 1994 after the Oslo Accords were signed the year before.

The Gaza Strip was then under the control of the Palestinian National Authority (Fatah) until the rival fundamentalist group Hamas seized power in 2007

and has been in control till today. In response, Israel imposed a total blockade of the Strip and has launched offensive operations against Hamas over the past 15 years. Israeli-Palestinian conflict persists, with rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza being met with Israeli air strikes, most recently in May 2021.

Gaza in the Bible and Church History

Gaza, as a real location, grounds the Bible in historical accuracy. Being the land of the Philistines, it was a constant source of headaches for the Israelites. Nonetheless, God worked to save His people and deliver victory against Philistia. Gaza's strategic position along the major trade route also shows why larger powers sought to dominate it along with Israel (from God's perspective, this was because Israel had forsaken Him). Having endured conflict for most of its history, we look forward to the day that Christ brings peace to the Gaza Strip, as He will for all strife-stricken lands.

All information and images taken from the respective Wikipedia pages unless otherwise stated.



For further reading, do check out the following Wikipedia articles:

[Gaza City](#)

[Gaza Strip](#)

[History of Gaza](#)

[Porphyry of Gaza](#)

Let's see what you remember!

Click on the image below to access the short quiz.



Beach in Gaza City, circa 2006. Wikimedia Commons

REFLECTIONS ON THINGS I'M GRATEFUL FOR IN 2021

BY NATHAN LIM

Despite having experienced God's faithfulness and providence many times over the years, I sometimes still worry. I am grateful that in 2021, God reminded me in different ways that I do not need to worry.

God's providence for my family

My son, who was only four years old when we first went to Cambodia for missions 15 years ago, turned 18 years old in July last year and returned to prepare to join the National Service (NS). We were worried about how well he would adapt and even the possibility of him leaving God. So, we expressed to our mission organization that we would like to take a two-year unpaid leave to accompany our son through his NS. Although the first six months of NS were very tough for my son, who experienced plenty of spiritual hurts, he overcame different temptations and discouragements, eventually receiving an award from his supervisor. Apart from his NS friends, he also has a tight-knit group of church friends in terms of his social circle. Thank the Lord that he quickly had a stable church life, growing and serving (often online or in small groups). He usually buys Christian books, watches Christian videos, leads small groups, and invites relatives and friends to church or home to share the gospel with them. We've seen that we do not need to worry about his spiritual growth. I am also grateful that in 2021, God brought our daughter back to Singapore. In 2020, after graduating with her undergraduate degree in London, she told us that she would like to stay to do a one-year ministry training scheme at a church to become better equipped. We were initially worried about her funding and doing this in a Covid year. Thank the Lord that He provided for her, equipped and grew her, and led her to complete the year of training. She came back in July and started working in August as a teaching assistant



and quickly settled down to stable church life - even choosing to join a Mandarin congregation. During our unpaid leave, God also provided for our needs through our Malaysian tenants and through the support of long-time friends in Indonesia and Singapore, allowing us to live without worrying about finances.

God's faithfulness to His church

Thirteen years ago, God started a girls' dormitory and a church in Cambodia through us. In 2020, the church established a Church Committee, which included two church members who are seminary students, a local succeeding pastor, and a missionary couple who newly joined the church. Apart from Sunday services, they have Family Fellowship, Youth Fellowship, and Sunday School. Outreach ministries, including the girls' dorm's devotions, language classes, children's tuition classes, music classes, and village evangelism. In March 2020, three months before we left Cambodia, we were suddenly not allowed to gather in person. By God's grace, we started online Sunday services and devotions. Although other activities have had to pause, Sunday services have not yet had to stop. Today, one and a half years later, although in-person services have been on and off, the other ministries are slowly starting up again and returning to normal. These things have shown that our God is faithful; He watches over the work of His servants.

continued on the next page

Knowing that Jesus, the good shepherd, is watching over the church, we do not need to overly worry about the church's future.



New area of serving

We originally planned to travel between Indonesia, Cambodia, and Singapore every four months

during the second year of our leave. However, when July came and it became clear that we would not be able to travel between three countries, we prayed that God would show us what we should do. In September, through a Facebook post, I saw that JCC was looking for a Hokkien-speaking staff. I was then introduced to Thomas. After a few Sunday services, meetings and interviews, by God's grace, JCC was



able to apply for a work permit for me. In the last week of November, I officially became a part of JCC. Thank the Lord, and thank the Hokkien

congregation, leaders of JCC, and leaders of LCS for accepting me and allowing me to serve the Hokkien-speaking brothers and sisters. For me, this is a completely new field - I must start from the beginning for many things. I am truly weak, because again I worry - that I would not be able to do it and that I would not be able to reach JCC's expectations, I ask God for mercy. I pray that God would add to my strength and trust, and help me fully believe that it is not about what I can do, but that God is continuing to shape and build me because of His mercy. He is faithful and reliable.



MY JOURNEY AS A MENTOR

BY PEH ERN

I was asked to share about my journey as a mentor with the Joshua 23 project. When the project started in 2020, I did not officially sign up as a mentor because at that time I was taking stock of ministry commitments and for health reasons I just wanted to focus on serving in a specific ministry. However, in hindsight, I realize that it was God's leading through a brother in Christ who asked if I wanted to be a mentor to a dear sister in Christ. To be honest, I did not really know what to expect, but I trusted that if God opened this door, he would be the one to lead me along. We have been meeting for over a year and I am truly thankful for being given the opportunity to journey together. It has been an enriching experience because I also feel that in this journey I am being mentored as well.

It is not how much we know that matters in a mentoring relationship, but rather how much we care and accept one another and allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in our lives according to His timing and plan. I am also learning to give space and freedom for another to grow and learn at their own pace. But what I treasure most is the friendship that we have and the openness when we share and to know that we may not have all the answers yet, but we can offer our burden to Jesus who understands and stays with us. To my dear sister in Christ, thank you for your prayers and acceptance. It is a joy seeing you every time we meet.

To those out there who may be considering to be part of Joshua 23 project either as a mentor or a mentee, take the step of faith to see what God desires to do for you and through you.

God opened another door for me recently with another sister in Christ whom I am looking forward to journey together and see where His Spirit takes us. May God continue to lead us all as we follow His Lead.



PASTORS' APPRECIATION DANCE ITEM

BY ALICIA CHAN

Choreography: Alicia Chan

Narrator: Alvin Wong

Bible Verses: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Background music: Above the clouds by Michael FK.

[View video](#)

My cell group, Abundance 2, planned an appreciation lunch treat for our pastors about a month before Christmas. I was approached to develop a dance item for the Pastors' Appreciation to be performed live after the lunch treat. They know I have a severely ill dad (with his kidney function declining due to end-stage liver damage) and that I destress through dance. I took up the dance request as I already had a concept in my mind two years ago. I happened to be playing with the choreography. It is always my pleasure to express feelings and emotions through dance. And for this dance, I chose to share the message on "Generosity Encouraged" (2 Cor 9:6-11)

Generosity Encouraged

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God can bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever." 10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

I recall the notes I wrote about these verses in Dec 2013. God gives specific responsibilities for those who are rich materially or otherwise. I got to admit that I did not have many material possessions to offer then, and fast forward to 2021, and I am still the same. However, God has given me the gift of dance. I heeded His call to dance four years ago and went into this strangely satisfying but time-consuming path that healed my soul, closed several chapters of my past, and challenged me in so many different aspects of life. You can say that each time I dance, it is a celebration of life and thanksgiving no matter which stage I am currently at.

The beauty and grace of His creation constantly speak to me, renewing me. One thing that enables me to choreograph this piece despite my father's ailing health is that I know he takes joy in my dance even if he does not understand it. My father served as a musician in the church in the past though it has been decades since he returned. I am thankful that Reverend Zhong visited him and prayed for him last year. My father was responsive in the prayer and appreciated my cell members for covering Him with prayers. I am surprisingly pleased with the end product (the dance) because I was running between work, hospital, conference calls with family and rehearsals. I did not spend much time in it—much credit to God.

Also thankful to dear hubby for lending me his voice giving me feedback regarding my choreography and the recordings. May God continue to grant me the wisdom and abilities to do things according to His Will and to show His glory.

IN THIS NEW YEAR, ARE YOU PURSUING YOUR 5Cs?

BY JUNE LIM

A concept popularised in the 90's, the Singaporean dream was based on the quintessential '5Cs': cash, credit card, car, condominium, and country club. One was considered successful in life if he or she possessed all five Cs.

However, these aspirations no longer resonate with Singaporeans today. Many of the younger generation in Singapore grew up in a period of stability and prosperity. Coupled with evolving values and lifestyles accelerated by exposure to global cultures and influences, these 5Cs no longer form the foundation of a fulfilling life.

What if these 5Cs can be re-interpreted to offer a spiritually rich life instead? Here is my take on the five possessions which are worthy of our pursuit:

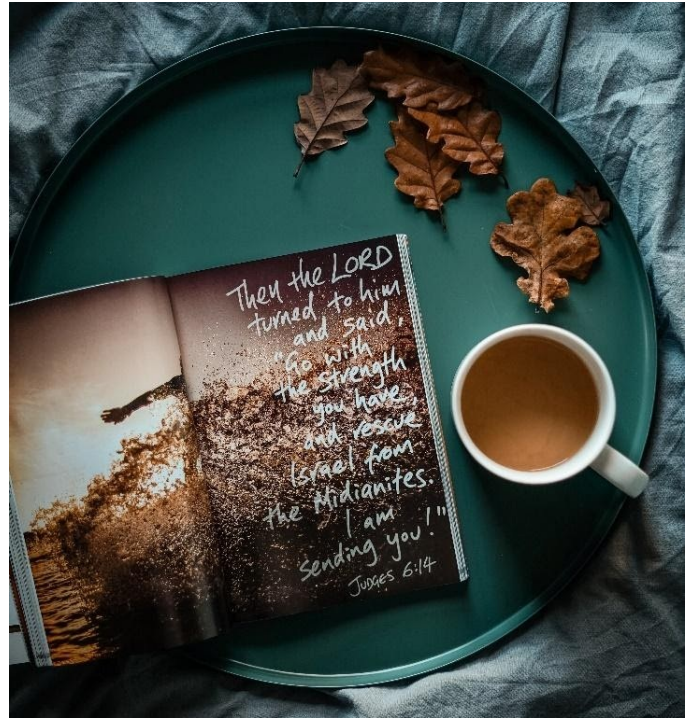
Church

In the Scripture, the Church is called the *ecclesia*, a Greek word that refers to the people of God who come together to give Him praise and seek His reign.

The past two pandemic years have shown us that the Church does not refer to just a physical place. Though in-person Church services were halted at times, Jurong Christian Church continued to work against all odds to ensure the online streaming, virtual prayer sessions, digital outreach were still running smoothly. To me, this demonstrated that the church is not a building but a body of believers with a specific nature and purpose – to praise and glorify God.

Cell Group

Smaller, intimate groups are essential in developing deeper discipleship and encouraging spiritual growth through personal ministry. Cell groups provide a way



for us to live out our faith instead of just attending weekly service and listening to sermons.

Jesus chose the long-term, closed, small group as His primary strategy for personal community and ministry. In the book of Acts, we read about how the church in Jerusalem met in large groups for worship and small groups for fellowship.

“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people.” (Acts 2:46-47)

Community

Though social media and other technology have made our world seemingly more connected, people have fewer genuine connections than ever before. As Christians, we share a common foundation of faith, and God has called us to live out the implications of that faith in a relational community. Therefore, we should step up to reflect the light of God's goodness to those around us, especially right here in the Taman Jurong community.

Many hidden gems are waiting to be uncovered!

Courage

In such chaotic times, it is easy to lose heart. I have faced detractors of my faith, and it was not easy to meet such opposing views. It takes courage to stand your ground and not waver in the face of 'modern philosophies' or 'progressive thinking'.

This verse motivates me greatly:

"Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6)

Let us not seek the praise or approval of the Lord's enemies but the praise and approval of the Lord himself. The Lord calls those who follow him to have courage and stand firm in the face of temptations.

Christ-like Character

As we journey life as Christian, forming a Christ-like character is undoubtedly a work-in-progress and a lifelong endeavour to work towards. It involves daily self-reflection and constant reminders for our inner life to reflect Christ's cleanliness of spirit.

More than just disinfecting our hands, we should disinfect our hearts and minds. Beyond just cleaning our spaces, we should clean up bad habits that hinder us from spiritual discipline.

"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his glory and goodness." (2 Peter 1:3)

God has already given us everything we need for a godly life. It is up to us to seize them and make the most out of this 5Cs. Wishing all a great 2022 ahead!

WHY DO CHINESE CHRISTIANS (ESPECIALLY OLDER GENERATION) GREET EACH OTHER 平安 PÍNG ĀN (WHICH MEANS PEACE)?

BY DR ALBERT ONG

How do we greet one another during the CNY celebration? Why is a meaningful and proper way important when we welcome one another with the word "peace"?

According to the biblical definitions, the word Barak (Hebrew) has spiritual connotations. It has very rich spiritual meanings but is hardly used by young people nowadays.

Definitions

1. blessing
2. (source of) blessing
3. blessing, prosperity
4. blessing, praise of God
5. a gift, present
6. treaty of peace

Makarios (Greek)

The ancient Greek word for "blessed" is makarios, which was originally used to describe those who lived in another world far from the problems and worries of others. Those who were "blessed" seemed

to be free from earthly cares and struggles.

On the CNY day, older folks give red packets to the young people. It's good and meaningful to say the word "peace." It carries with it not just monetary and material blessings. Most important is the spiritual blessings of God's guidance in the new year. May God's peace and presence go with you in your careers, studies and pursuits.

The word "peace" not only brings a spiritual impetus but also a solemn declaration of moral uprightness and behaviour (cf. Psalm 1). In the new year, choose the right path, friends and morals.

The greetings of peace carry the knowledge that in times of uncertainty, may God's peace and presence continue to be our new year resolution, compass and direction.

Let's greet one another with "Ping An, peace" to usher in the new year - a year of peace amid Covid-19 and economic uncertainty.

Seek the truth. **BY JUDY OH**



Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. – John 8:32

One of the definitions of the meaning of **Truth** from the Internet is *that which is true or in accordance with fact or reality.*

Is the story of the Jesus coming as a human, born of a virgin, living a sinless life, and dying to save sinners who believe, to eternal life— true?

Firstly, is it a myth without historical evidence? "The Case for Christ" by Lee Strobel states a number of compelling reasons of which one is that there is more historical evidence that Jesus existed than for many historical personages whose reality we take for granted. Secular sources attest to Jesus's ability to perform miracles, his crucifixion, and his early followers' belief in his Resurrection.

After his Resurrection (rising from the dead), Jesus appeared to his apostles. Jesus told Thomas, "Stop doubting and believe." Thomas replied, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who

have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:27-29)

Secondly it was recorded, "Jesus appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living," (1 Corinthians 15:6) These witnesses must have shared their testimonies by word of mouth.

Finally, is the Bible true? The Bible is a remarkable book -- the world's all-time bestseller with countless millions of copies in print. Actually, the Bible is a compilation of 66 books written by over 40 separate authors (from lowly peasants to noble kings) over a period of at least 1,600 years. These 66 books are divided in two parts, the "Old Testament" (39 books) and the "New Testament" (27 books). The Bible was completed in its entirety nearly 2,000 years ago and stands today as the best-preserved literary work of all antiquity with over 24,000 ancient New Testament manuscripts discovered thus far.



BLESSINGS

BY JOHN LEE

I receive many kind wishes for a **Blessed New Year**. The wishes are welcome. Nevertheless, I wonder what my well-wishers really mean:

- Do they mean to wish me happiness? Ps 34:8 (NIV) says that “blessed” is the one who takes refuge in the LORD. The word “blessed” is rendered as “happy” in NRSV.

Also, in many other OT passages (e.g., Job 5:17, Ps 119:1, Isa 30:18, etc.), and in the NT Beatitudes, the word “blessed” has the equivalence of “happy” between different translations of the bible.

- Do they mean to wish for me spiritual blessings or material blessings? Rom 15:27 mentions both types of blessings approvingly.
- Are they wishing me a fortunate New Year? The word “blessed” in Mal 3:12 and Ac 26:2 (NIV) is rendered as “fortunate” in HCSB and NCV translations, respectively.

It is nice to contemplate a blessed New Year covering all meanings of BLESSING.

From the above appetizer, let’s move on to a modest serving of more flavours of BLESSING in the menu.

When “God bless you,” you are the recipient of the blessing (God’s good favour) and God is the giver.

On the other hand, when the psalmist exclaims “*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!*” (Ps 103:1 ESV), he cannot be arrogating that man is delivering good favour to God. In fact, the phrase “Bless the LORD” here takes the meaning of “Praise the LORD.”

Here is a non-exhaustive list of some meanings of BLESSING in the Bible:

- **BLESS = PRAISE** when the giver of the BLESSING is man while the receiver is God.
*E.g. “Blessed be the name of the LORD ...” (Ps 113:2 ESV)
“Let the name of the LORD be praised ...” (Ps 113:2 NIV)*
- **BLESSING** (beneficial experiences for obedience) = opposite of CURSE (bad consequences for disobedience).
E.g. “Unimaginable blessings will catch up with and overflow to the Israelites if they obey [Deu 28:2], but curses will come if they do not [Deu 28:15].” – TLSB notes

- In the Beatitudes, **BLESSING** (happiness) = opposite of MISERY (woe).

“Blessed are you ...” (Lk 6:20-22 NIV)

“But woe to you ...” (Lk 6:24-26 NIV)

- **BLESSING** = a general expression of good wishes. No suggestion of specific benefits.

E.g. “Early the next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then he left and returned home.” (Gen 31:55)

Importance of grasping the right meaning

In Christian felicitations, there is usually no serious issue with the usage of the word BLESSING. In Bible study, there may be occasions to clarify some misguided opinion arising from wrong interpretations. For example, how would you respond when someone quotes the following passage and claims that evildoers are also “blessed” – getting into God’s favour?

“You have said, ‘It is futile to serve God. What do we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the Lord Almighty?’

continued on the next column

But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly evildoers prosper, and even when they put God to the test, they get away with it.” (Mal 3:14-15 NIV)

In languages, a single word can have multiple distinct meanings or a broad connotation with nuanced shades. So it is with any word in Hebrew or Greek.

Mal 3:14-15 (NIV) comes under the heading “Israel Speaks Arrogantly Against God.”

The spotlight is on the Israelites’ arrogance. “

We count the arrogant happy” (NRSV) – but for now only (i.e., temporarily) as the day of God’s judgment is imminent. (Ref Mal 4:1) “Blessed” in this context can also be rendered as “fortunate” (as in HCSB).

Contextually, the BLESSING in Mal 3:15 cannot be interpreted as God’s favour. Analogously, many evildoers in the world today are called “happy”, “blessed” or “prosperous”; but none of these depictions suggest anything about them receiving God’s favour.

In Bible study, grasping the nuances of meanings contextually helps the apologist of truth in debunking flawed interpretations – not just of BLESSING but also of other words.

NOMINATION OF NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS



In the coming JCC AGM in May 2022, two councilmen will complete their term of service in the leadership of the English Council. Let’s pray and seek our Lord for new leaders to be identified and nominated to serve HIM for the next term of 2 years (2022-2024).

Minimum Requirements of the potential candidate

- At least 21 years old and have been a church member for at least 1 year.
- Preferably he or she is actively serving in a JCC ministry for at least 2 years.
- Attending worship service regularly.
- Preferably attending a cell group in the church regularly.

If you want to serve in this capacity or know of an active member whom you want to nominate to stand for election, kindly fill in the Nomination Form which can be obtained from the Nomination Committee, and submit it to the Nomination Committee by 27 Feb 2022.

Nominating Committee: Teo Beng Lay, Ronnie Lim, Chong Wong Mui, Rev Anthony Loh



CRY OUT TO GOD

*Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save,
nor his ear too dull to hear.*

Isaiah 59:1 (NIV)

God delights to hear our prayers and petitions. As earthly parents, we delight to fulfil the requests of our children within reasonable bounds. Nothing is too insignificant for God to know or care about. If He cares for the birds in the sky and the lilies in the fields, how much more precious are we to Him?

He has a treasure house in heaven, waiting to send out love-infused presents of salvation, healing, deliverance and resources to meet our needs. The moment we pray according to His will, the answer to each prayer is prepared and stamped “**Shipped to [your address]**”.

God’s delivery system is triggered by our faith, persistence and earnest prayers in the mighty Name of Jesus. Each time we pray and cry out to God, the prayer bell in heaven rings. This bell is connected with a rope that dangles right in front of us. Therefore, let us not just tug at the rope occasionally or pull it languidly. Let us pull the rope with all our might!

What does this mean for practical living?

God loves to hear from us. He delights to respond to the prayers of His children. He has given us a direct line to Him.

As long as we seek to accomplish His will and pray in Jesus’ name, He will definitely answer. His Holy Spirit resides in us. We know that the Spirit searches the deep things of God. The Spirit knows the will of God and will reveal it to us if we will pause and take care to listen.

Let us come before God like a child, with child-like faith. Ask God for what we need, seek Him for answers to our problems and knock on His door until He opens it and gives us what we need.

Persistence is key. It does not mean uttering our prayer items repetitively like a shopping list. It means reminding God about His promise to meet our real needs. It means refusing to accept God’s silence. Let us spend time in our closet and cry out to Him. Intercede for the nations, our loved ones and those whom He has placed upon our hearts. See Him work because we prayed!

What does God say about this?

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. - John 16:24 (NIV)

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. - Romans 8:26 (NIV)

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. - 1 John 5: 14,15 (NIV)

Reflect and respond to God’s Word

1. Recall a situation when you wished you had prayed more but did not. What happened?
2. What prevents you from ringing the “prayer bell” in heaven in both normal and desperate life situations?

Each time you pray, ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to pray in accordance with God’s will.

LET'S THINK AND TALK STRAIGHT

BY BRYAN TAY

"A son honors his father, and a slave his master.

If I am a father, where is the honor due me?

If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the LORD Almighty."

Malachi 1:6



Last year, in each issue of WinePRESS, I wrote short dialogues on "Open Talk with God" [I Say: God says] where I shared the outcomes of my conversations with God regarding some life situations. Yet, knowing what God says in one thing, believing and doing what He has said is another. Therein lies the issue. Does God really matter to me? We cannot be only hearers of His Word. We must be DOERS. I sense that it is time for us to be open about ourselves, what we are really thinking and doing about what God says. We have heard "enough" about how we must glorify God, how His Word is truth, how His love is great, how His Name is majestic...but wait...

So what... then what?

I feel it is time for us to look at ourselves. It is about you and I. At least for now, pause for a moment and stop directing our attention to God.

Don't take comfort by hiding in the long shadow of "shouting Hallelujah and giving glory to God". If we really honour Him as our Father, Lord and Master, we will do something to show our active obedience to His Word and commands. Let us look inwards and do some soul searching. A tree is known for its fruit.

God is asking:

What have you been doing?

What have you been busy with?

What will you do from now?

I welcome your comments, thoughts and sharing on this reflection. Write to jccwinepress@gmail.com. We will publish your contribution in the next issue.



NEW YEAR QUIZ

1. The calendar we use with 1st January as the start of a new year is:
- Gregorian Calendar
 - Julian Calendar
 - Roman Calendar
 - Lunisolar calendar

2. Which of the following statements is incorrect?
- The Gregorian Calendar was named after Pope Gregory XIII
 - The Julian Calendar was named after Julius Caesar.
 - The terms “anno Domini” (AD) and “before Christ” (BC) are used with Gregorian and Julian Calendars.
 - The ancient Roman Calendar referenced the sundial in reckoning time.

3. “Every year that is exactly divisible by four is a leap year, except for years that are exactly divisible by 100, but these centurial years are leap years if they are exactly divisible by 400.” Based on the above definition, our next centurial leap year will be:
- 2100
 - 2200
 - 2300
 - 2400

4. Chinese New Year is called 春节 (Spring Festival) in China. Which of the following statement is incorrect?
- Seasons are appointed and sustained by God. (Ps 104:19; Ac 14:17; Eze 34:26)
 - “Sluggards do not plow in spring; so at harvest time they look but find nothing.” (Prov 20:4)
 - Spring rain is a sign of blessing. (Job 29:23)
 - Spring is a time of growth. (SS 2:11-13)

5. Chinese New Year is based on a lunar calendar. Pick the right statement:
- The year (年) is divided into months (月) corresponding to the moon’s revolutions
 - The Moon Festival is celebrated on the 15th day, the first full moon of the year.
 - The legend of 嫦娥 (Moon Fairy) is associated with the Chinese New Year.
 - In Singapore, adults and children let off fireworks to frighten off the年 (‘nian’) monster.

6. Which of the following CNY greetings would be least appropriate to anyone who does not believe in luck? (Eph 1:11)

- 一帆风顺 学习进步
- 身体健康 工作顺利
- 百事可乐 吉祥如意
- 家庭和睦 事业有成

Biblical New Year

7. God said to Moses and Aaron in Ex 12:2, “This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.” Thus, the biblical New Year was decreed by God with the following significance:
- Dating the months from the exodus reflected the reality of a whole new order of life that was going to begin for the Israelites.
 - God was teaching the Israelites to link their measuring of time to His calling on their lives.
 - Every New Year would be a reminder of God’s redemptive act in the Passover.
 - All of the above.

Christian New Year

8. The Christian New Year begins with the season of _____, according to the Church’s liturgical calendar.
- Advent
 - Epiphany
 - Easter
 - Lent
9. Which of the following is not the purpose of the Church’s Liturgical Calendar?
- Each New Year, Christians distinguish themselves from the non-Christians who celebrate a different new year.
 - Each New Year, we commemorate Jesus’ miraculous birth and refresh our spirit to focus on what He did and still does for His church.
 - Over the course of each year, the Liturgy orders our worship and life around Jesus Christ.
 - The calendar enables us to be guided in our reflections through the seasons of the church covering Jesus’ entire life and saving works – birth, baptism, public ministry, death on the Cross, resurrection and second coming.
10. Regarding New Year resolutions, which of the following verses tell us it is good to make plans and manage our time well?
- Proverbs 21:5 & John 15:5
 - Ephesians 5:16 & John 15:5
 - Proverbs 14:30; 21:5
 - Proverbs 21:5 & Ephesians 5:16