



THE VINE

for internal circulation only

Vol 5/98 May 1998

PASTOR'S WORD

As we seek to develop our JCC church community in deeper strength, we recognize the integral and crucial roles families play as building blocks of the church and society.

Family relationships affect the vitality of those who serve in the church. A bad husband-wife relationship can sometimes paralyze the ministry of a member concerned.

This month we are glad to have Rev John Nelson to conduct the marriage enrichment seminar and vow renewal service for us.

The better the husband-wife relationship is, the better is the well being of the church as well.

LOVE IS A DECISION, NOT AN EMOTION

To husbands: How can we be the kind of husbands God wants us to be to our wives? First, we need to understand that love is a decision, not an emotion. Love is something we must decide to do, not something we should wait to feel like doing. Its most comprehensive definition is found in I Corinthians, chapter 13, where we find that love is patient and kind. It does not envy or boast. It is not proud, rude, self-seeking or easily angered. Love keeps no record of wrongs. It does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Love always protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres.

LOVING OUR WIVES IS NOT OPTIONAL

The second thing we need to recognize is that loving our wives is not optional. In Ephesians 5:25 we are commanded to love them. If you intentionally and consciously have failed to love your wife as you should, you can be sure that many of the other things that are out of balance in your life can be traced to this decision. If you wish to improve your relationship with God, improve your relationship with your wife and watch things begin to happen.

You may say, "That's easy to say, but you don't know my wife's character!" But if your wife is not so lovable, what made her that way? When you married her, something motivated you to make that commitment. Whether or not it was love then, it is within your power to be determined that from this point forward you will love her. As you act on your decision to love your wife, be assured that God will bless



your obedience. The chances are very good that He will also bless your wife, and as she discovers that you are serious (which may take a while), she might also turn out to be a person you never thought existed.

You are not responsible for her loving you. You are only responsible for loving her. Conduct yourself in a fashion pleasing to God and see if He doesn't reward you through your wife.

CONSENSUS IN DECISION-MAKING

Scripture tells us that wives should submit to their husbands. It's just as important for husbands to love their wives. Rather than making unilateral decisions as the "head of the wife", husbands must recognize that God's best involves decision-making by consensus between husband and wife. There will be times when you and your wife are not in agreement and a decision needs to be made. That is the point at which the wife needs to accede to the husband's position as her head. However, the more we engage in decision-making by consensus with

our wives, the fewer instances there will be of actual disagreement.

PRAY WITH YOUR WIFE

Another thing that holds great potential for success is praying together with your wife. If she is unwilling to pray in front of you, perhaps she would be willing to join you while you pray aloud. If your relationship is so off-track that she will not even listen to you pray, then increase your regular daily time with God. Ask Him to move her to that point in her relationship with Him that she will pray with you. Establish a regular time each day to pray together and give that time the highest priority. Take whatever steps that are necessary to prevent interruption including, if necessary, taking the phone off the hook and instructing children that you are not to be disturbed. If you have very small ones, you and your wife may need to pray together while they are asleep. During this prayer time, you will find that you are willing to tell God things about yourself and about your relationship with your wife that you have been unable to tell her directly. As she listens to your conversation with the Lord,

she will become much more open to discussing things with Him in front of you. This process can be very reinforcing. In a relatively short period, you will find yourselves talking to each other through God in a way you never imagined possible. Just set aside five or ten minutes to begin this process and see where God takes you.



DECIDE HOW YOU CAN PLEASE HER

Next, determine some of the things you need to do to please your wife. Then make a list and begin to do them. Better yet, let her make the list. Establish a regular time each day or each week that you will work on her priorities. As she sees your best intentions translating into

action, you will begin to see a much more lovable mate than you might otherwise ever have imagined.

An important technique is to get your finances straight. Sit down with your wife and establish a budget. Generally speaking, a wife's freedom from anxiety is directly proportional to the state of the family's finances.

Establish predictability in your relationship. Schedule certain things to happen at certain times and be faithful to observe the schedule. At least one family meal should be scheduled daily with all family members in attendance. Each family member should have a regular time to go to bed and a regular time to get up. One of the biggest myths encountered in the husband-wife relationship is that both spouses need to go to bed at the same time. While there is certainly nothing wrong with that if both agree, you should not insist that your wife go to bed at the same time as you do. In fact, you will

find increasing freedom in your relationship if you will give her the freedom to determine her own bedtime and rising time.

SPEND QUALITY AND QUANTITY TIME TOGETHER

Spend quality time with your wife and on a regular basis. Ask her how much of your time she wishes to have and give that a priority second only to your time with God.

It is extremely important to your wife that she is able to rely on what you have told

her. Therefore, be reliable. Commit yourself to following through on what you have promised. When you fail, go to your wife and ask her to forgive you. Unless you are habitually unreliable, she will; and asking for forgiveness will do worlds for your relationship.

Be thoughtful. Telephone her once each day just to let her know you are thinking of her. Flowers are almost universally appreciated by wives, and they don't have to be expensive.



You and your wife may wish to go on a JCC church retreat together.

WIVES, PRAY FOR YOUR HUSBANDS

A brief word to the wives: pray for your husband. As you identify areas in his life that need the assistance of the Holy Spirit, don't make the mistake of doing God's work for Him. You may need to limit your efforts to prayers and rejoice as God answers them. You may also need to concentrate on the characteristics of love identified earlier in this article, particularly patience. Concentrate on the positive aspects of your relationship with your husband and rejoice as those areas increase.

May the Lord be gracious and merciful to us all. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

Pastor Martin Yee

LOVE



puts the music in laughter,
the beauty in song,
the warmth in a shoulder,
the gentle in strong ...

LOVE



puts the magic in memories,
the sunshine in skies,
the gladness in giving,
the starlight in eyes ...

LOVE



puts the fun in together,
the sad in apart,
the hope in tomorrow,
the joy in a heart.

**WE
WELCOME
YOU**

*Phua Gek Hong
Winnie & Kelvin Cheong
Randy & Chrystal Paul*



We were glad to meet you as you joined us for worship in April.

May God continue to enrich us in our fellowship with one another.

Badminton Champions

Picture story by Martin Cheah
Photos by Willy Hor.



After months of grueling (grueling because most of us have not picked up the racket for uncountable years) practices at the various CC around Jurong, the championship game was played at Yihua CC, home ground of Jurong East Care Group.

The champion team for Badminton Challenge 1998 was Taman Jurong Care Group. The trophy was presented to them on 3rd May, after the service. What's the secret of their victory? Probably the large selection of players whose average age is lower than most of the other care groups. How to beat them? The other care groups must go out and recruit younger people to join their care groups. Start now and prepare for next year.



盲人福音事工

Gospel Mission To The Blind Ltd

8 Lorong 27A Geylang #02-06 Gullin Building Singapore 388101 Tel: 7414490

April 15, 1998

Jurong Christian Church
2 Tah Ching Road
Jurong Town
Singapore 618744

Attn: Mission Secretary, Poh Kiat

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings to you in the mighty Name of our Lord and Saviour.

Thank you very much for your cheque of S\$501.00 being your mission pledge for months of Jan. to March '98. Our receipt is enclosed.

We appreciate very much your faithful support of our work. We thank God for you, for blessing us and the blind friends whom we reach out to. Thank you for this partnership of reaching out to the blind with us. On Easter Sunday, four blind friends were baptized in different churches. We praise God for enabling us to reach out to them. May God's kingdom expand as we serve Him together.

May God continue to bless all of you there richly.

Yours in Christ's Service,

Cheong Cheng Choo (Mrs.)
On behalf of all at GMB

SEMBAWANG PARK OUTING

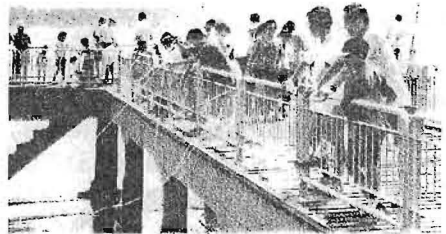
Picture story by Martin Cheah.
Photos by Willy Hor.



Songs and games were the order of the day, above we see the pastors leading the games and below is a section of the members singing praises to God for the fine weather.



Listening intently to the instructions on the games, the children were all ready to go.



Fishing was the order of the day for some. However, at the end of the day, not a single fish was caught. Soon Eong, our fish expert, said that even if a fish was caught here, it would probably not be safe to eat due to the pollution of the water.

May 1 - Picnic at Sembawang Park organised by JCC. Were you there? If not, where were you? Walking for Christ? Attending some other worship service? Bumming around at home? Or still labouring in the office? If you missed this outing, look out for the next one, coming up sometime in the next half of the year.

REFLECTION FROM THE WORDS OF OSWALD CHAMBERS ON PRAYER

By Tan Swee Leong

Over the past year, I have been reading the work of Oswald Chambers - "*My Utmost for His Highest*" - during my Quiet Time.

Oswald Chambers was born in 1874 in Aberdeen, Scotland, and was converted in his teens under the ministry of Charles Spurgeon. He conducted an itinerant Bible teaching ministry and in 1911 founded the Bible Training College in London. He died at the age of 43 and although he wrote only one book "*Baffled to Fight Better*", more than 30 books bear his name. For more than 50 years after his death, his wife Gertrude Hobbs, a court stenographer, laboured to compile her shorthand notes taken during their seven years of marriage to give the world his works.

"*My Utmost for His Highest*" is one of the best-selling devotional books of all times. This Christian classic, which is a compilation of Chambers' talks and lectures, gives a one-page commentary and devotional guide with its rich spiritual insights and life-changing perspectives.

To quote Oswald Chambers, "if we lose the heavenly vision God has given us, we alone are responsible - not God. We lose the vision

because of our own lack of spiritual growth. If we do not apply our beliefs about God to the issues of everyday life, the vision God has given us will never be fulfilled. The only way to be obedient to the heavenly vision is to give our utmost for His Highest, our best for His glory ... "

The book was given to me by a business friend, one of the few Christians who openly testifies to his faith and Lordship of Christ and seek to uphold Him in his dealings and decisions. He told me that he has been reading this book for the past 10 years.



Oswald Chambers

The following are some of Chambers' writings on **Prayer** that have given me new insights and have impacted me:

† *Have you been asking God what He is going to do? He will never tell you. God does not tell you what He is going to do -- He reveals to you who He is.*

† *God's purpose is not just to answer our prayers, but that through prayer we might come to discern His mind.*

† *We hear it said that a person's life will suffer if he doesn't pray, but I question that. What will suffer is the life of the*

Son of God in him, which is nourished not by food, but by prayer.

- † *We look upon prayer simply as a means of getting things for ourselves, but the biblical purpose of prayer is that we may get to know God Himself.*
- † *To say that "prayer changes things" is not as close to the truth as saying, "Prayer changes me and then I change things."*
- † *Prayer changes the way a person looks at things. Prayer is not a matter of changing things externally, but one of working miracles in a person's inner nature.*
- † *Prayer does not equip us for greater works -- prayer is the greater work. Yet we think of prayer as some commonsense exercise of our higher powers that simply prepares us for God's work.*
- † *Troubles almost always make us look to God, but His blessings tend to divert our attention elsewhere.*
- † *The busyness of things obscures our concentration on God.*

And finally a word of practical advice:

Prayer is a battle, and no matter where you are, your duty is to pray. Wherever God has placed you and whatever your circumstances, you should pray, continually offering up prayers to Him. We must learn to work according to God's direction.

How Do we

make decisions

in church

By Dr Robert Solomon, Dean of Students, Trinity Theological College

Paul must have found it very difficult to convince his fellow travellers that they were making a dangerous and potentially fatal decision (Acts 27). Paul was a prisoner under the care of Julius the centurion. They had set sail and already experienced many difficulties along the way. They had changed ships and landed at the ironically named Fair Havens (v.8).

The decision the travellers had to make was whether to go on sailing from Fair Havens. Paul warned against such a move. He felt deep in his heart that setting sail at that time was going to be very dangerous (vv 9,10). However, Paul found it difficult to be heard for he was against a triumvirate of voices who argued so convincingly against Paul's warnings.

Firstly, there were the experts. The pilot and the owner of the

ship advised that they should set sail (v. 11). Who can argue against the experts?

Secondly, there was the majority. The travellers must have taken a vote or straw poll and found out that the majority agreed with the experts and decided to set sail from Fair Havens (v.11). Paul's voice was a lonely voice that was easily drowned by the popular vote.

Thirdly, Paul had to contend with the circumstances. A gentle south wind began to blow as if to confirm the wisdom of the decision that the majority had made on the advice of the experts (v.13). Surely, they had made the right decision. Even the circumstances showed evidence of that! This hardened the decision and Paul failed in his attempt to convince the travellers. Once they set sail, the gentle wind showed its true colours; it gave way to a fierce hurricane



that resulted in a shipwreck. It was only by the grace of God that all were saved from what was certain death.

Why can expert advice go wrong? I am not denigrating experts for after all we live in a world of experts. Experts have their place and I thank God for them when they serve the ministry of the church whether in finance, social work or communication. The phenomenon of a proliferating number of PhDs in church may give us a sense of confidence that we are blessed with experts. It may be so. However, modern experts may only be well-informed about a narrow field. Knowledge can be narrow but wisdom is broad just as it is deep. We live in an age of a growing number of well-informed, but not necessarily well-formed experts. Expertise as understood in the modern world and spiritual maturity may not be the same thing.

To allow experts to run the church may not always be good. In choosing leaders, our focus has shifted from clean people to clever people. Of course, purity and professionalism, character

and competence are not mutually exclusive. But it is foolhardy to assume that competence guarantees character and that one's worldly success in the marketplace shows sound spirituality within. We are often dazzled by the experts of the world and listen to them more intently than we listen to God's Word. We also tend to fill the leadership positions in churches with experts. **Success in the marketplace and success in the Kingdom of God can and do operate on very different principles.**

The contemporary church also seems to be excessively guided by what is popular. However, the majority and what is popular may be wrong. We in the church are also citizens of the world. We rub shoulders with people who thrive in the modern world. It is easy to like what is popular in the world. It is equally easy to bring into the church what is popular in the world. But we have to beware lest as a church we are primarily guided by the popular vote. The church should not be led by opinion polls more than the Word. **Relevance to the world and faithfulness to God are dual goals of the church**

ministry but there are many potential tensions in working out these goals.

Relying too much on circumstances to guide us may make the church pragmatic. We live in two worlds. The greater part of reality is unseen and we need to remember

Everyone felt the gentle south wind but it was Paul the spiritual leader who could see beyond and sense a hurricane coming (Acts 27: 13-14).

Experts, majority votes, and circumstances all have their rightful places in guiding the church

Success in the marketplace and success in the Kingdom of God can and do operate on very different principles.

this when we make decisions. As a people of God our heritage includes invisible armies of God and the still small voice of God. Everyone can see the bush but not everyone sees the burning bush (as Moses did). **The only way to see beyond our human and finite horizons is to pray and study God's Word which are, incidentally, two primary tasks of pastors and those in spiritual leadership (Acts 6:4).** Unfortunately we often keep our leaders so busy that their eyes are focused only on the horizons which everyone can see.

in making decisions but we may have given too much credit to them for the professional, popular and pragmatic can all lead us astray without prayer. Paul had a better experience with another group of people - the church at Antioch (Acts 13: 1-3). There, the people too made a decision. They sent Paul and Barnabas on a missionary enterprise. That decision was a godly decision because it was made in the context of worship, prayer and loving fellowship. **Corporate guidance, after all, is not essen-**

tially a matter of management technique. It has to do with relationships, vertical and horizontal.

The people in Acts 27 were a crowd whereas those in Acts 13 were a community. That is the major difference in the two groups. Godly choices cannot be planted in the barren soil of a crowd. Rather, they are planted and they bud and bloom and bear fruit in the fertile soil of an authentic community. As churches our hope in ensuring that we make good and godly decisions in our corporate lives is to stop remaining as a crowd in church and to be transformed from a crowd into a community. Our modern models of spirituality and Christian discipleship focus on the individual and familial dimensions but we have few models on the community level. We have many books on how to live as individual Chris-

tians and as Christian families but books dealing with being a Christian community are few and far between.

And so, many churches remain as crowds of individual Christians. We make a mess when it comes to making decisions. We worship the techniques and tools we have acquired from the world. **Unless we develop true Christian communities, we cannot make it our habit to make godly corporate decisions which are righteous as well as compassionate.** If Paul is with us today, I wonder what he will say of your church and mine in this respect. Will we give him a hard time?

(Article condensed from the January - March 1998 issue of "TRUMPET", a Trinity Theological College publication. Reproduced by permission of TTC and Dr Robert Solomon.)

How Do we
make decisions
in church

