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SERVE CHRIST, STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH

BY: Rev. UN HOCK WEE

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”
(Romans 12:4-5)

Paul the Apostle wrote the Epistle of Romans to be given to the believers in Rome. He himself had never been to Rome. He desired to visit Rome but was prevented by the Holy Spirit. Rome, at the time of Paul, was the center/capital of business. So the Christians were very important and so was the church. It was a very strategic place for evangelism and it brought many people to know the Lord. He was encouraging the Christians to live their faith and share the gospel. The Christians were called to work as a **T.E.A.M.**

I. T - TOGETHER WORK AS A TEAM

Work together as a **team** just as each of us has one body with many members. It is not one person or two persons, not ten or twenty serving but one big TEAM.

Our body is composed of many parts: the heart, liver, kidneys, and intestines among others. If one part will cease to function for a day, the whole body will be affected because they are interrelated with one another. Likewise, if one part of the body is not feeling well, the rest will also be affected and some parts will have to work

double time.

Therefore, the heart can not say, “You know, I’m all tangled up with veins. For the last 45 years, all I do is beat and beat. Lub, dub... lub, dub... lub, dub... I’m tired of it. It’s time for someone else to step up and do this job. Okay, feet, it’s up to you. You pump the blood.”

The lungs can not also say, “We are so unappreciated around here. I don’t think the other organs realize that they couldn’t do their jobs without us. What if I quit doing my job for a few minutes and let everyone see how valuable we are. The brain thinks he’s big stuff. Humph! Let him do without some oxygen for a while and we’ll see how important he is!”

The liver can’t also complain, “Why do I get to do all the dirty work? You think it’s fun living with the green and yellow fluid? I easily feel irritated and bitter. I’ve been doing this job for 45 years now and no one takes notice of my importance. Why should I continue?”

On the contrary, we need all the body parts to cooperate and work together for our body to be healthy and for the body to function well. Togetherness or teamwork is exactly what the apostle Paul is describing in our text today.

a. We are all co-workers of Christ

The moment we come to know Christ, all of us are called to serve. Be willing to serve the Lord. It is not just the pastor ministering the Lord, it is not just the church



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leaders or fellowship officers doing the work of the Lord. All Christian believers are supposed to serve the Lord.

Dr. Paul Brand, a well known doctor and author, was raised in India. His parents were missionaries there. In his book entitled "In His Image," he wrote one of the most touching stories I've ever read. He wrote that when his mother was 75 years old, she was still walking miles every day, visiting the villages in the southern part of India and teaching the people about Jesus. She would pray for the sick & bring them some medicine, gave biscuits to little children and some money to the less fortunate. One day, as she was traveling alone, she fell down, broke her legs, and could no longer stand. Her son suggested that she stay home for the rest of her life but she turned around and said, "Of what value is that? If we try to preserve this body for just a few more years and not let God use it, of what value is that?"

She continued riding on her donkey to go to the villages until she couldn't stay on her donkey anymore at the age of 93. This however did not stop her from serving. She asked two persons to carry her and continued to share the love of Jesus to her neighbors until the Lord took her away at the age of 95.

b. We Can Work in Harmony

We can work together because we are in Christ. Through Christ, we can work in harmony. We are all His servants serving our God, the King of kings & Lord of lords.

One day, three men were walking and came along a raging river. They needed to get to the other side, but had no idea on how to do it. The first man prayed to God saying, "Please God, give me the strength to cross this river." Poof! God gave him big arms and strong legs, and he was trying to swim over but the current was so strong so he couldn't do it. The second man who had a boat but didn't have the strength to sail it also prayed to God saying, "Please God, give me the strength and ability to cross this river." The third man did not have the strength

nor a boat to get across also prayed. After praying, the one with the boat invited them to come aboard and the one who got great strength sailed the boat. All three reached the other side safely.

Likewise, we can use the unique gifts God has given us and work in harmony with other members for the greater good of the church and for the glory of God!



II. E - EVERYONE SUPPORTS EACH OTHER AS A TEAM

It is good when everybody gets involved as a team. The scripture states that all parts of our body must work together so that we can function well, stay healthy and be in good shape. The hands have to work, the feet have to walk, the heart has to beat, the nose has to breathe and etc. so the body can live life to the fullest.

a. Everyone is Important

We should not have the attitude of feeling better or more important than the others. Some may have bigger roles in life & ministry while others seem to have minor roles, but actually, each role is of utmost importance in the eyes of God. Those blessed with many gifts should know how to be humble and let God use them. Those who feel that they have lesser gifts should not feel inferior either. We are all created differently and have our own uniqueness for we are all God's children. He loves us all the same.

Lord Nelson of England was about to attend an important meeting when their nation was under attack. He heard that two of his officers were at odds with each other. He called them in and said, "Gentlemen, give me



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your hands.” The two captains put their hands in the Commander’s hands, and he squeezed them with a tight grip. “Men,” he said, “remember the ENEMY is OUT THERE!” Yes, we are not the enemies but are brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us be united to fight against the enemy who causes division in the church and creates obstacles contrary to the doctrine as stated in Romans 16:17.

b. Understand Each Other

If the heart is weak, the feet have to walk slowly so that everything will function well. Likewise, the other parts of the body have to understand and compensate for the limitation or flaws of the one part that is weaker or sick. We need to understand that:

1. Everyone is unique - Some do things very fast while the others do things rather slowly. No two persons are exactly the same. Just like our fingerprints, we may have many similarities but not all.

2. Everyone should help each other - Each of our roles is important and one should do his part in order for the whole to be normal, healthy, and harmonious. The father's role is to work and feed the family. The mother has to care for the children. And the children should know how to obey and be submissive. Considering the importance of each role, the family must be united as each perform his role well.

In the same way, church leaders plan and motivate members, while the members cooperate and submit. All of us are called to serve and every role is important in the family of God.

III. A - ACCOMPLISH GREAT THINGS FOR GOD AS A TEAM

When people cooperate and do their work well, great things could be accomplished and the result will be tremendous.

Fanny Crosby was the composers of over 8000 songs many of which we enjoy singing. At 6 weeks of age, she developed a minor eye inflammation and was taken

to a local doctor for treatment. However, the doctor carelessly used the wrong medicine on her eyes and she became totally and permanently blind. Interviewed years later, Fanny Crosby said she harbored *no bitterness* against the physician. In fact, she once said, "If I could meet him now, I would thank him over and over again for making me blind." She felt that her *blindness was a gift from God* to help her write the hymns that flowed from her pen.

As long as we are willing to let God use us, then we can accomplish great things for Him. When God's people work together, we can accomplish even greater things. We can solve huge problems. We can overcome fearsome opposition. No matter how hard the task could be, remember we have *a great and awesome GOD* (Psalm 145:3).

IV. M – MORE FRUITS AS A RESULT OF TEAMWORK

One pastor named Will Willimon was a chaplain in Duke University, one of the most prestigious universities in America. In his challenge to the graduates one day, he told them that it is so great to see so many graduates who will be working in big companies and have the potential to become next Bill Gates. He said, “.....some of you could be driving BMWs or live in Beverly Hills but today, I will challenge you to take part in a greater project. It is one of the toughest jobs I will be doing in my life. I will be teaching in one of America's public school in Los Angeles. Report says two of our teachers were killed while on the job last year. I cannot do it by myself and I want to invite you to go there and by God's grace, change their lives. If you are interested, please fill up your name after I close in prayer.” After praying, many came and took the challenge of this greater task.

Let us all become co-workers of Christ. Everyone is important and we want our church to be strengthened. Let us serve Christ, serve one another and strengthen the Church.

CHRIST OUR CORNERSTONE

BY: PASTOR ANGELO GUTIERREZ

At the beginning of last school year, I asked my students to write down any question related to Christianity that they would like to be answered. When I went back to the office, I immediately read their questions and found that some of them were simple; some were amusing; and some were serious. But there were a few things that caught my attention:

“What is Christianity?” “Why do some people reject the gospel?” “How can we know if we are true Christians?” “How can people do, say, and act sinfully yet still continue to go to church?” To answer this last question will be helpful in answering the other questions raised. And to this, Colossians 2:6-7 is most helpful. The Apostle Paul wrote:

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”

Coffee shops such as Starbucks offer a wide variety of coffee drinks to almost every unique taste of man. The plain coffee today has become so simple that there seems to be a need to add something else to it. Plain brewed coffee apparently is not enough for the people of today.

That was what the false teachers were doing during Paul's time. They were adding other mystical teachings to

Christianity implying that Christ Himself is not enough. They were deceiving the Christians by saying, “What you learned about Jesus was all right, but there's something more aside from Christ which will help you grow more deeply in your faith.”

There's nothing wrong in wanting to grow spiritually. But the problem with false teachers is how they try to accomplish this. They don't just ignore Christ. They seek for something more than Christ!

That is why the Apostle Paul was firm in correcting this. Our Christian walk is forever rooted in Christ, for He is the very foundation of the Christian faith. As we start with Christ, so we continue to live in Christ; after all, He is the Alpha and the Omega. In these two verses, Paul set forth principles which he intended to address in each chapter of Colossians. He not only summarized for us his concern that Christians must remain faithful to Christ, but also that Christians should grow in Him.

True Christians will continue to live in Him

In verse 6 we are being reminded that all Christians live *in* Christ. In other words, we are being challenged to live a lifestyle worthy of the Lord. We are called to live a life that is consistent with what we profess – as true followers of Jesus Christ.



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I want us to take note of the very words that Paul used to describe Jesus. He called Him, “Christ Jesus the Lord.” “Christ” the Messiah, the One who has come to save His people. “Jesus” whose very name reminds us that God the Savior has come to rescue His people from sin. The “Lord” which reminds us that Jesus is not merely a good man, He is not merely an example, and He is not just any Savior; but He is a Savior because He is God, He is the ruler of His people. Jesus is our Lord and Master; and since you have received Him as Master, so you must walk *in* Him! Live in a way that is consistent with what you first professed when you came to Christ.

Verse 6 also gives us two important principles behind living in Christ. First, it shows us that receiving Christ is not the end but the beginning of spiritual life. Most of us can still recall that moment when we accepted Christ and committed ourselves to Him. But we often think that is the peak of the Spirit's work in us. Absolutely not! It's just the beginning of the Spirit's work in us. Receiving Christ, professing Him and acknowledging Him to be our Savior do not end our spiritual adventure; rather, it inaugurates or starts a spiritual relationship which will last forever.

When my wife and I got married, we decided to write our own vows. In front of many witnesses, I professed my love and commitment to the woman I intend to spend the rest of my life with. After this declaration, does it mean that our relationship has reached its peak and is over? Of course not! As all married couples among us know, the declaration of our vows is the start of our new relationship with each other, as husband and wife.

In the same way, the moment we professed to believe in Christ, our relationship with Him begins. The apostle Paul wanted us to remember that receiving Christ is not something that you just did in the past; rather, it is something that continues on in our life here on earth and even after death.

The second principle is that our growth and progress in the Christian life must be consistent with its beginning. If we

began the Christian life by professing Christ as Lord, our Christian walk must be consistent with this. If Christ is the object of our faith, if we believe that He is the one who saves us, then Christ must be the source of our spiritual growth and development. He is the one on whom we must depend on. He is the only one who can and will give us the spiritual resources we need in our relationship with God.

It was said that the life of a Christian can be described in one of four ways: as a journey, as a battle, as a pilgrimage, and as a race. Select your own metaphor, but the necessity to finish is always the same. If life is a journey, it must be completed. If life is a battle, it must be finished. If life is a pilgrimage, it must be concluded. And if it is a race, it must be won. Just as what the song “*Find Us Faithful*” tells us, “*May all who come behind us find us faithful; may the fire of our devotion light their way. May the footprints that we leave lead them to believe; and the lives we live inspire them to obey.*”

True Christians will constantly grow in Him

In verse 7, Paul described Christian growth with some important phrases. The first phrase is “*rooted and built up in him.*” This phrase reminds us that the Christian life always involves growing. And Paul was teaching us here that all Christians grow in grace, having been rooted and built up in Christ. This phrase is a description of what a person who walks in Christ looks like. Thus, it is but right that Christians are expected to grow. He is not saying I want you to grow; he is saying you will grow. If you are a believer, you definitely will grow. You are going to be growing in Christ. He expected our interest in spiritual growth and he expected to see growth itself in believers. And he expected this growth not to be by our own strength, but he expects this growth to be dependent on Christ.

The second thing is the middle phrase: “*strengthened in the faith as you were taught.*” Paul reminded us here that the Christian life involves believing the truth. In other words, Paul was reminding us that all Christians are founded on the faith once he is saved. And we don't just believe in anything.





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We believe in the truth. We believe in the Word which the apostles preached, which Christ preached. We believe in the Word which is given to us in Scripture. And our faith is established in that instruction. The Apostle Paul reminded us here that to be established in faith means to be united with the truth. As we acknowledge that Christ Jesus is Lord, may we seek to deepen not only our knowledge of the truth, but also the appreciation for the depth of these Christian teachings.

Charles Spurgeon once said that *“Men to be truly won to Christ must be truly won to truth.”* That is absolutely true. If we are to continue to grow in grace, we must continue to expose ourselves to the truth of the Scriptures.

Concerning this, I always remember two Christian slogans on which I live by. The first one is *“Right doctrine produces right living.”* How we live our lives reflects how we understand God and His ways. If we really understand the extent and depth of what God has done for us through His one and only Son, we will live our lives in gratitude of this grace and mercy.

The second one is this, *“In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity.”* This means that all the teachings that concern our salvation, we will stand united by them. As for the teachings that are not critical to our salvation yet important to our spiritual growth, we exercise freedom; respecting the views of other people. And finally, in all things, we exercise love towards each other.

Christians must always be thankful in Him

Then at the end of verse 7, Apostle Paul taught that the Christian life involves thanksgiving. By implication, Paul tells us that all Christians must always be filled with gratitude to God. Paul is reminding us that to be filled with thanksgiving, to have a thankful heart, is a mark of the Spirit's work in us. Gratitude directs our hearts toward God from whom all growth come and to whom, therefore, all praise and glory should be given. Thanksgiving and gratitude move us away from ourselves and onto God. It begins with humility and it

ends in praise.

Paul considers this to be a mark of the Christian life. When he described what it is to live and walk in the Lord, he included growing, believing, and thanksgiving. Therefore, ingratitude always points to a spiritual deficiency.

There are many of us here today who have friends and acquaintances who seem to have everything. They are enormously materially blessed. They may be blessed greatly in terms of their status, their influence in the community, their position, and the esteem in which they are held. And yet some of us know some of them to be extremely unhappy people. And you might wonder, “How could a person have so much and be so bitter?”

On the other hand, many of us here know many people who don't have so much. They don't share in some of the enormous resources that others have. And yet, strangely, we find some of them to be grateful people. They seem to have little, yet they are always thanking God for it. What is the difference between those sorts of people? The answer is Christ!

As Christians, we are in union with one who is far more important than any human being. We are in union with Christ from the day we accepted Him as our Lord and Savior. It is from this union alone that the Christian grows. And that union is not temporary, nor is it insufficient.

The Bible says the growing Christian is one who is established in the faith, who is rooted in Christ, and is overflowing with thanksgiving. Are Christians expected to grow into a deeper knowledge of Christ? Absolutely! In Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It is in Him that we grow. So when people come and whisper in our ears and say, “You need Christ plus this or these,” may we turn a deaf ear to that type of coaxing. However persuasive the words may be, may we say to them, “Oh, no, in Christ I have my all in all.”

CAREFULLY EXAMINE ONESELF WITH THE GOSPEL TRUTH

BASED ON ROMANS 12:3

BY: PASTOR ERIC CHAN

To begin, my task for this article is to expound on the first of the three sub-themes we have for this year taken from Romans 12:3-8. The said passage is the concluding remarks of the Apostle Paul after he had expounded on the equality of all men in terms of God's working for salvation (chapters 1-11). Here in Romans, the Bible said both Jew and Gentiles are sinners alike, but God's Righteousness, which comes by Faith in Christ, is sufficient for anyone to be reconciled to God and make us alive in Christ. In other words, apart from the mysterious working of God for salvation, everyone is DEAD IN SIN. So, without a doubt, salvation comes by faith in Christ alone through the grace of God.

Allow me to enumerate the three church sub-themes for this year: the Word of God asks us to do the first and most important step, which is to CAREFULLY EXAMINE ONESELF WITH THE GOSPEL TRUTH (12:3); after which, we should CAUTIOUSLY WORK TOGETHER AS ONE BODY IN CHRIST (12:4-5); and finally, to CANDIDLY EXPLORE GOD'S GIFT and USE IT IN PROPORTION TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH (12:6-8). Our goal is to mobilize Christians to SERVE GOD AND STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH.

An article entitled "Christianity in Crisis" written by Andrew Sullivan came out as the cover story for *Newsweek Magazine* last Holy Week. Sullivan, who professed to be a believer of Christ's resurrection and divinity, wrote against the traditional church - he asked Americans to abandon the church and follow Jesus Christ. Sounds reasonable, but wait! Something is terribly wrong. Perhaps, Sullivan's

understanding of the church is different from its biblical definition.

In the *Book of Ephesians*, the Word of God defined the church as an entity with Christ as the head, and Christians as the body of Christ. So, how can we separate the church from Jesus Christ? Of course, we cannot. However, this does not mean Sullivan was wrong in his analysis of the church. Rather, "Sullivan was referring to the reality that within the church - the institution of the Christian faith - politics, moneymaking and power play are prevalent"¹. Yet, let me emphasize that this is true not only today, but since the inception of Christianity.

In the *Book of Acts*, the Word of God said Simon the Sorcerer believed and was baptized and yet, it turned out that his heart was never right with God seeing that he tried to buy the power of the Holy Spirit with money. In the early days of Christianity, darkness overshadowed Christian truths because Christian leaders succumbed to politics and power play. Worst, some even sought after riches. Why? I would suggest, like Simon the Sorcerer, people whose hearts are never right with God have penetrated the church, not only then, but even today. If Andrew Sullivan argued from this perspective, then it's worth a second look. Christianity in itself is never in crisis, because God is sovereign over all things. Nothing will ever escape God's attention. But these things came to past because God has a better purpose. The Word of God said, "*But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us (2 Cor. 4:7)*".



CAREFULLY EXAMINE ONESELF WITH THE GOSPEL TRUTH

Earlier, I shared about the background of Paul's letter to the Roman church, which had a mixture of Jew and Gentile worshippers. Such a mixture caused an ensuing conflict between the two culturally diverse groups of people. For this reason, the Apostle Paul cautioned both groups to reflect on their commonality - the grace and mercy of God - rather than on their differences. Thereby, in Romans 12:1-2, Paul gave this concluding remark, *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will."*

God did not call people to be believers so that they can establish a human institution that teaches the Christian faith, which Andrew Sullivan interprets as the church. Rather, Christians are followers of Jesus Christ, people who should NO LONGER CONFORM TO THE WORLDLY MINDSET BUT SEEK TO PLEASE GOD in everything. So, Paul continued on and said, *"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you"* - Romans 12:3.

Truly, before anyone should embark on the Christian ministry, they ought to CAREFULLY EXAMINE THEMSELVES WITH THE CHRISTIAN FAITH - no one is ever qualified for God's ministry unless the Lord reckons and enables them to do so. In other words, Christian ministry is not about having the talent, but the heart to please God. It's not about the quantity, but the quality of service. Undoubtedly, it's about wholehearted commitment exemplified by the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11, and many other similar accounts of the Scripture. However, let me qualify that this does not mean we should not recognize the gifted from within the church; rather, discern carefully if the PERSON'S HEART IS RIGHT WITH GOD - that is what the Scripture meant in Romans 12:3.

Andrew Sullivan made a general sweeping

conclusion that Christianity is in crisis due to the many ministers who have fallen into disgrace, intrigue and controversies. Yes, we should watch out for wolves in sheep's clothing, but the point of Christianity is for us to look unto Jesus, not to ministers. Because like anyone else, ministers are humans with fallen nature, struggling to be perfect but cannot. Christianity is not in crisis. So, the Word of God admonishes us to fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen; since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

We always say that the *return of Jesus Christ* to fulfil all His promises and to judge the unbelieving world is at hand. But sadly, Christians seem to be focused more on the present age than the eternal future. The Apostle Peter gave a good reminder to everyone who profess faith in Jesus Christ, *"Rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed ... If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear His name. For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the Gospel of God? (1Pet. 4:13, 16-17)"*

That should be a fearful thought for anyone who claims to be a Christian. God is righteous and just, He will never compromise. He demanded faithfulness from the Israelites, and the same is demanded of us who believes in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ rebuked the Pharisees for hypocrisy, would it be any different for Christians?

On the other hand, let's take it that Andrew Sullivan was right in saying Christianity is in crisis. So, what are you prepared to do? Don't just be a spectator or a commentator. If your heart is right with God, then come forward and be of use to God - strengthen the church of Christ. Let everyone know and believe that indeed you are called by God, so you are determined to do just that - SERVE GOD AND STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH.

¹ <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2012/04/01/andrew-sullivan-christianity-in-crisis.html>, April 26, 2012.



RIGHT GOSPEL: OUR ONLY HOPE

BY: PASTOR WAYNE CHUA

Galatians 1:6 to 10 (New International Version)

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! ⁹As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! ¹⁰Am I now trying to win the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If we were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

When Rubik's cube became famous, a lot of imitations came out in the market. The price for the original Rubik's cube was around P200. The imitation, on the other hand, costs about 20 to 50 pesos. At that time, I bought the fake one; I remember I bought it for 25 pesos. It was fun at the start but as I was already completing the colors, one block fell, and then another, and then another...until almost half of the Rubik's cube was detached. It was an unforgettable experience. For a while I was enjoying it, but it only took a few hours for my enjoyment to subside and my money, wasted.

For some people, subscribing to a fake one and losing 25 pesos is not much. But what if our lives are at stakes here? Are we still going to try it? The reason why Paul rebuked the Galatians was because they believed in a different gospel.... a gospel which was never taught in the Scriptures, a gospel that was made by humans. This perverted gospel required that a

man be circumcised so that he might have salvation. This was part of the Jewish customs that was never a part of the Doctrine of the Scriptures. The Bible tells us that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not something that we have done but what our Lord Jesus had accomplished on the cross approximately 2,000 years ago. Ephesians 2:8-10 gives us a summary of this Gospel.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (New International Version)

This Gospel was the Gospel that Paul and the apostles were preaching. This Gospel does not talk about something that man should add in order to complete it. No, it was very clear that this Gospel is not a work of man but rather, the work of God. This is what we call monergism, the doctrine that the Holy Spirit acts independently of the human will in the work of regeneration¹. In simpler terms, salvation is the work of the Father through the Holy Spirit so that men could believe and persevere in the Lord Jesus Christ. No more, no less. No compromise, no improvement, it should be exactly as what the Scriptures says.

Paul was very firm when he wrote that even if he or an angel will change the Gospel (to add or remove something from the Gospel), then let that person be eternally condemned or punished forever. Such strong and powerful words that Paul gave. He was serious, he was not joking. The



RIGHT GOSPEL: OUR ONLY HOPE



Gospel should never be compromised. According to Boice, any system of salvation that varies from the true Gospel is a counterfeit or fake gospel². Indeed, Paul was serious because there is no other gospel that can provide sinful human beings salvation except the true Gospel that can only be found in the correct exposition of the Scriptures. If a person falls into a trap of a wrong gospel, then that person would still end up in hell, no matter how that person believes...because it is not the right Gospel. This is how important it is. This was very crucial to Paul that in these few verses, he repeated his point twice. Verses 8 and 9 give us the exact point of Paul.

When Paul was repeating his point twice, he also gave the punishment suitable for those who continue to give a wrong gospel, *let him be eternally condemned*. Another word for this is what we call anathema. This word is used in the Old Testament to refer to those idols, images and sacred objects that the Canaanites had. Instead of plundering these things in ancient times, God commanded the Israelites to burn these things³. Paul gave this *anathema* to the people who were persistent in disturbing the church because they were not just innocent believers who had a wrong understanding of the Gospel, but they were continually teaching what was wrong. Their discipline was not just an ordinary warning, but they should be excommunicated in the church. Later in Galatians 5:9 Paul wrote: "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." Paul's point was that this small thing, if ignored, will eventually affect the whole church and bring the whole church down to destruction.

Two things I would like us to focus. First, seek the true Gospel. We live in a world where the term "piracy" is not just applicable to the people in the sea but in everywhere. There

are a lot of counterfeit things. If on Paul's time, there were already people who were teaching a counterfeit gospel; then in our time, there will be more. If you read the letters of John and Jude in the latter part of Scriptures, you could see their warning of false prophets that are coming and have already come. Our world is infested by all kinds of wrong teaching...the question is...are we sure that what we are believing is the true Gospel? Remember, "If the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit that you are worshipping is not exactly similar to what the Bible says, then you are worshipping in vain...for they are idols."⁴ The key? Going back and studying the Scriptures intently and consistently.

Second, Church discipline is of utmost importance. The church itself should have a good grasp of biblical discipline. You could see from the verses how Paul was very angry with the false teachers. He didn't say, "Be patient with them or give them another chance." No, he said, "let them be anathema." Paul knew the danger they bring to the church. Let us be reminded that there are damages that can easily be fixed, there are damages that take time to fix, and there are damages that can never be recovered. Let us have a good discernment in Church discipline.

In conclusion, let us once again be reminded of what John the Apostle wrote in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 22:18 to 19 (New International Version):

"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."

May the Gracious Creator of everything continue to provide us grace and may our lives continue to be what we are created to be...in His image. God bless you all!!!!

¹ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/monergism?s=t>

² Boice, James Montgomery, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Galatians*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, Michigan. Pp. 428.

³ Youngblood, Ronald. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Thomas Nelson Publisher. Nashville, Tennessee. Page 54.

⁴ A quote that I just made while going through the book of Galatians, and while focusing on the study of false gospels. If by any chance this is already quoted... please let me know.

AN HONOR DUE THEM

BY: PASTOR CHARMINE YU-GUTIERREZ

Celebrating Mother's Day and Father's Day has become different for me. Not only because I've become a mother now (although sometimes that fact is still so surreal for me and I find it a bit weird when people greet me a "happy mother's day"). But these celebrations have become different for me mainly because, having a family of my own, the Good Lord enabled me to have a deeper sense of appreciation and love to my parents.

The hardships and sacrifices of parents often remain a general, impersonal truth until a person suddenly finds himself/herself in the parenthood scene. Well, at least that's the case with me. A few days after my child was born, I was hit by the realization that my mom went through the similar mixture of stress and joy that I was experiencing. I could see that God fuels me and my husband with love for our child so that we can take care of our daughter even in rough times. And I vividly understand then that my parents were fueled as well by their love for me.

A Love that is Not Often Reciprocated

Generally, loving their children comes naturally for parents. And this kind of love is deep and persevering. Children, no matter how many wrong and hurtful things they have done, are still unconditionally loved by their

parents. But ironically, that's not often the case with children loving their parents. It's quite easy for them, especially as they grow up, to disregard their parents, be ashamed of them or worse, to be annoyed with them. And most of the time, love is not manifested anymore in how children treat their moms and dads. Perhaps that is why God commands us to honor our parents. Sadly, that act does not easily come out of us even if we say that we love the people who brought us in this world.

The Reminder to Honor Our Parents

God said in Exodus 20:12, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you." This fifth commandment continues to be a reminder to all people, even and perhaps especially to men and women now. This command has been resounded several times in the Old and New Testament. The book of Proverbs highlights the wisdom of obeying our parents and taking to heart what they have taught us (Proverbs 1:8, 23:22). Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, explained the extent of this commandment and corrected the misguided application of it (Matthew 15:4, 19:19, Mark 7:10, 10:19, Luke 18:20). The apostle Paul also reminded Christians to obey their mother and father because this is right in God's eyes (Ephesians 6:1-3, Colossians 3:20).



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Obey Them In the Lord

Of course, these command and exhortations are always in accordance with God's teachings. They should not be misconstrued as a license to sin mainly because our parents may be asking us to do something that is contrary to God's standard. It is worthwhile to keep in mind that it is God who designed the purpose and role of a family and its members, and parents are created to be establishers of God's ways and teachings in the family. God is our authority, and He ordained parents to point their children toward God, not away from Him.

The Long-Term Reward

Honoring our parents may feel like a tall order. And often, the deed overwhelms us that we end up disobeying it or if we do obey it, we do it grudgingly or apathetically. Possibly, it is because children usually feel that this task does not have any bearing on them whether they obey or not. But the Bible clearly states otherwise. In fact, the consequence is long-term.

Proverbs 1:8 teaches us, *"Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck."* Keeping our parents' instructions and teachings (that direct us toward God) is a beautiful, honorable and joyous element to one's life. Just like a crown on one's head or a prize around one's neck, diligently observing what our parents taught us gives us triumphant, celebratory days. The things that they taught us about our Great God will surely bring about a wise and satisfying life if we obediently heed them. *"My son, do not lose sight of these- keep sound wisdom and discretion, and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck"* (Proverbs 3:21-22).

Simple Ways on How We Can Honor Our Parents

The command to honor our father and mother is undoubtedly familiar to us. Sunday school children everywhere are taught to remember this well. Christians worldwide often hear this command being preached on Mother's Day and on Father's Day. But how do we do this? Time and time again I have wondered how this command should be specifically applied and reflected in our lives now. What is the extent of this command and what does this encompass? As years pass, God has graciously enabled me to see the many aspects of honoring our parents, most of which I hoped that I have realized years ago. Here's my two cents' worth:

1. *We need to do what our parents tell us to do.* And not do what they forbid us to. We need to keep in mind that these should be done in the Lord, that is, according to His teachings. The call to obey sounds routine and is nothing new. But obeying our parents should neither be ignored nor taken for granted. How many times have we prioritized menial things over doing what our parents asked us to do? And how many times have we justified our actions simply because we do not want to follow what our parents want? *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right"* (Ephesians 6:1).
2. *We need to spend time with our parents.* Growing up makes children more and more independent. But sometimes this independence gets distorted and children spend less and less time with their parents as they grow up. Ever since my father died last February, I can't help but think of the time I spent with him, and they seem to be not enough. That's usually the case for people who lost their love ones. We realize the importance of spending time with them only when it's already too late. Spending time



AN HONOR DUE THEM

with our parents means that we value the time we're together. It does not matter so much what activity we do together, but the time we happily sit or walk beside them would show that we love them.

3. *We need to remember to obey what our parents taught us, even if they are not there to check on us.* Obeying our father and mother is usually motivated by the knowledge that there are eyes on us. But it brings much joy to parents when their child does the things that he had been taught to do even if they are away from their mom and dad. Parents want their child to remember what they taught him about right and wrong and do what is right even if the only ones who could see is him and God.

4. *We need to love our parents with our words and actions and not despise them.* Misunderstandings and disagreements are inevitably present in human relationships, and sometimes most especially in our relationship with our parents. But how we deal with this and our behavior toward them is at times inconsistent with love. We treat them rudely or disrespectfully usually because this stems from our lack of forgiveness for them. But who are we to withhold forgiveness? Are we not sinners ourselves who desire to be forgiven by Our Heavenly Father for the many wrongs we have done? Let us remember to be humble before our parents as we humble

ourselves before God who gave our father and mother their roles in our life. "Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old" (Proverbs 23:22).

5. *We need to consistently pray for our parents.* We may have heard this again and again, but if we truly love and honor someone, we include them in our prayers. This is not a one-time deal or a mechanical task. We ought to pray for our father and mother consistently

and with a conscious effort. Let's remember to pray for their well-being, their endeavors in life, and their relationships with us and others. When we hit a bump in our relationship with our parents, we should bring it to God in prayer, asking Him to enable us to honor our parents as He would desire. But most of all, we must pray that they would continue to grow in their relationship with

God. As they face stress and problems day in and day out, let us pray for them that they would deal with all these as they depend on God's strength and wisdom. If our parents are not Christians, may we all the more pray that they would hear, understand and embrace the Gospel.

May we honor our father and mother on whom our very existence depends, because this pleases our Lord. "Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice" (Proverbs 23:25).



MY ENCOUNTER AS A PRE-SCHOOL TEACHER

BY: JUDGE JOCELYN UY PO

Before I became a lawyer, and then a judge, I took a part time job at the Philippine Christian Gospel School as a pre-school teacher. In one of our Bible classes, I was telling the story of Noah and his ark. I told the story with my usual actions and sound effects. There was no beat box then, but I had all the sounds covered. After an exhausting session, I told the little boys and girls to take a piece of paper and draw Noah's Ark. To guide them, I started to draw my own Noah's Ark. Then I walked around to check if the students understood what they were supposed to do. As I was supervising around, I noticed that one student was intensely shading his whole paper with his pencil. I frantically ran to his side. As I looked down, I saw his paper was all shaded up and crumpled. I said, "Did you understand what Sian Si just told you to do? You are supposed to draw Noah's Ark and not to shade your paper black." He looked up at me,



nodded and continued shading. Frustrated, I asked, "What are you doing? It's all so dirty now!" Alvin, with sweat on his brow and not even stopping for a moment answered, "Sian Si, I already drew Noah's Ark. I am now drawing the heavy rain. It rained for so long, so long, and it rained for so long..." and as he said those words, his hands kept shading and shading his paper. Then he added, "If you look carefully, Noah's Ark is there, Sian Si." I said, "Really? Where?" "It's there! See, see, see..." Honestly I did not clearly see Noah's Ark that day. Instead, I saw a brilliant child's interpretation of Noah and his Ark, and, of course, the heavy rain. It is so heartwarming and amazing how little children see things differently. Things we adult sometimes take for granted. Thus, it is so wonderful to pause for a while to take time to listen to little children. Small wonder heaven belongs to these little ones...

An Irreverent Look at the History of

CHRISTIANITY

A SPECIAL SERIES BY THE IRREVERENT HISTORIAN

PART 5: THE HELLENISTIC AGE

In our last installment, Alexander the Great, a young king from Macedonia, unified Greece and defeated the Persian Empire. The Jews, who had enjoyed political and religious freedom under liberal Persian rule, now find themselves in a dramatically different world...

THE FALL OF ALEXANDER

Most people would be content after conquering the largest empire the world had ever seen. But not Alexander the Great. Even before he consolidated his position in Persia, he launched a campaign to conquer the Asian subcontinent.

He fought his way through what would become modern-day Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan, winning victory after victory. Then his troops met the forces of King Porus on the banks of the Hydaspes River (now called Jhelum River).

The Macedons won a great victory, but also suffered heavy losses. Alexander's army had no satisfactory answer to the rampaging war elephants used by the Indians. Thus, when he ordered his army to cross the Hypasis River (now called Beas River) to fight against other Indian kingdoms, they mutinied.

Alexander tried in vain to persuade his men. Why, they were very close to the other side of the world – it was just a thousand kilometers to the end of India! He was relying on incorrect maps, because the ancient Greeks did not know about the existence of China, East Asia (or much less, the continents of North and South America).

But his men could not be convinced. They heard that the enemy had a huge army of 80,000 horsemen, 200,000 infantry, 6,000 chariots, and 6,000 war elephants. Besides, they had been away from home for eight long years, and longed to see their families again.

Wasn't the main objective to defeat the Persians? What were they doing, risking their lives in India? Left with no choice, Alexander returned to Babylon. Strangely, he never returned home to Greece.

Now fancying himself a god-king, Alexander adopted many Persian customs. This made many of his own countrymen uncomfortable, because they believed they could only bow down to their gods on Mount Olympus.

Alexander tried to unite the Macedonians and Persians by holding a mass wedding between his senior officers and Persian noblewomen; the marriages didn't last even a year. Alexander was planning an invasion of Arabia when he became sick and died at the ripe old age of 32, at 332 BCE.

What killed Alexander the Great? The answer is one of history's greatest mysteries. Based on the symptoms described by Greek historians, he was either brought down by malaria, typhoid fever, or even the West Nile virus. Other theories range from alcohol poisoning, acute pancreatitis, and even poisoning through arsenic or strychnine.

Alexander had left no suitable heir (his son Alexander IV was still in his wife's womb). His top generals wanted to take control, and fought many bloody wars among themselves. This chaotic period was known as the *Diadochi* (Greek for "Successors"). The wars constantly raged for forty years, until four main dynasties emerged from the fighting.

The Antigonid Dynasty was based in Macedon, and had control of Greece. The Ptolemaic Dynasty, based in Alexandria, controlled Egypt and Israel. The Seleucid Dynasty, based in Antioch (now in modern-day Turkey) controlled Syria, Iraq, and Iran. It was also the strongest among the four dynasties. Finally, the tiny Attalid Dynasty, based in Pergamon (also in Turkey), controlled a portion of Turkey.

We are concerned only with the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Dynasties, as both have taken control of Judea at different times. We will not discuss the other dynasties any further in our series.

POST-EXILIC JUDEA

We now backtrack to the Second Temple period, to see what the Jews have been up to.

Recall from part four of our story: the Jews were permitted to return home and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. They were given religious freedom, but they were still subjects of the Persian empire. So, their king was still the Persian king; they were not allowed to reestablish the line of kings that started from David and ended with Zedekiah.

During the captivity, and in the post-exilic period before the Temple was rebuilt, the Jews worshiped together at prayer houses called *synagogues*. They had no choice otherwise. The use of synagogues gave the Jews a portable way to worship God wherever they were. This was one of the reasons why Judaism survived the destruction of its holy city. When the second temple was built, synagogues remained an important part of Jewish religious life.

The high priests controlled the Temple, and had the final say on rites, rituals, and sacrifices performed there. Since the Temple was at the very center of Jewish life, the priests had a lot of influence. They were the upper class of society, and claimed to be descended from Zadok, the first high priest to serve in King Solomon's Temple.

Over time, the priests became known as the *Sadducees* (a word derived from "Zadok"), a sect with considerable influence: they represented Judea internationally, administered it internally, and collected taxes.

Over time, many sages, scribes and scholars who ministered at the synagogues gained religious credibility. They studied the Torah intensively, mixing it with

oral tradition to provide their interpretation of the scriptures. The public considered them to be experts of the scriptures.

This sages and scribes eventually became the *Pharisees* (a word that means "Separatist"), who were the antithesis of the Sadducees. The Pharisees were liberal compared to the conservative Sadducees; they were middle-class instead of elite; they respected oral tradition instead of just written canon; and they were more democratic than the Sadducee autocrats.

A third sect, the *Essenes*, also emerged during this period. Far smaller than the Pharisees or Sadducees, the Essenes withdrew from contemporary Jewish life to live in communal religious groups. Much like the Amish in America today, the Essenes stressed asceticism (abstinence from worldly pleasures), poverty, and for some, celibacy. The Essenes have little political power because they shunned the outside world.

Jewish religious life had stabilized somewhat into the three major sects. One important thing to note was that all three sects comprised a small portion of Judaism. In fact, most Jews did not belong to a faction.

Although allegations of corruption at the highest levels built up over the years, this was not enough to seriously challenge the power of the Sadducees. It took Alexander the Great's conquest of Judea to shake up the establishment, as the country was introduced to a whole new way of life, through a process known as *Hellenization*.

HELLENIZATION

When Alexander the Great conquered Persia, he facilitated the spread of Greek culture and knowledge. The Greeks (who called themselves Hellenes) valued individualism, and directed their thinking to the material world. They valued the acquisition of worldly knowledge was highly prized, and spread their values through Alexander's wins.

However, the Greeks did not impose all aspects of their culture onto conquered territories. They could not, because they were outnumbered. Instead, Greek culture was fused with native cultures to form something new. This process called Hellenization.

Judea did not escape the pressures of Hellenization. Alexander's conquest essentially caused the unified Judaism religion to split in two. One side, the orthodox

Hasideans, wanted to maintain the status quo, while the proponents of *Hellenistic Judaism* wanted to embrace Greek culture and establish a religious tradition that had Greek and Jewish elements.

For most of the Hellenistic Age, Judea fell under the control of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, which was governed from Egypt. Many Hellenized Jews moved to the capital Alexandria, and by the second generation had forgotten ancient Hebrew. They could only read and write the Greek language.

To help his subjects, King Ptolemy II gathered a group of seventy-two Elders. He placed them separately into each of 72 chambers, and instructed them to translate the Torah (first five books of the Bible) into Greek.

According to Talmudic tradition, each of the seventy-two separate translations were completely identical. Over the years, more books were added, until the entire Hebrew canon, from Genesis through Malachi, was completely translated in 132 BCE. We know this manuscript today as the *Septuagint* or *LXX* (Latin for seventy, referring to the number of initial translators).

The Septuagint was widely used, especially during the New Testament Era. By that time, Greek was the main language of the region. By necessity, the early Christian church, which welcomed gentiles, used the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. The translation of the Hebrew biblical canon to Greek was a very important output of the Hellenistic Age.

The Ptolemaic Dynasty was kind to the Jews, and for the most part left them alone just as the Persians did. However, the succeeding generations proved to be



The desecration of the Temple

increasingly feeble rulers – physically and figuratively – because the Ptolemaic kings married their sisters to respect Egyptian tradition.

The Ptolemies finally lost Palestine in 200 BCE, and Judea became a part of the Seleucid Dynasty under the rule of King Antiochus III the Great. Antiochus allowed his subjects to “live according to their ancestral customs.” His son, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, was not quite as tolerant.



Antiochus IV Epiphanes

When Antiochus IV became king, a Jew named Jason saw a chance to become high priest. The position was being fought over by the current high priest, Onias III, and Simon the Benjamite.

Jason paid Antiochus a bribe to be appointed the new high priest, and Antiochus agreed. This set a new (and bad) precedent, because

Jason was not a priest nor a scholar, and had no valid claim to the priesthood. This gave the secular Seleucid authorities to appoint religious leaders, greatly undermining Jewish autonomy.

Jason was a Hellenized Jew (you can see this from his Greek name alone). He built a new Greek-style city, and named it after the king: Antioch. He also built a gymnasium in Jerusalem. A gymnasium was a place where young boys and men trained – naked. This adoption of Greek culture, by the high priest himself, was a big slap in the faces of traditionalist Jews.

However, Jason’s position was not secure. A few years later, in 172 BCE, another Hellenized Jew named Menelaus paid Antiochus an even higher bribe to become high priest. After he got the position, he paid for the bribe by plundering the Temple’s treasures.

Jason was unhappy, but could do little unless Antiochus was busy elsewhere. His chance came a year later, when Antiochus invaded Egypt to kill off the Ptolemaic Dynasty. When rumors reached Jerusalem that Antiochus was killed in battle, Jason seized this opportunity. He led a mutiny, took control of Jerusalem, and killed many of Menelaus’ followers.

Unfortunately for Jason, Antiochus was very much alive. He was actually close to taking over Egypt, but the city of Rome feared that he would become too

powerful. They forced him to retreat, which he did reluctantly. The humiliated king took out his anger on the rebellious city of Jerusalem.

Antiochus swept his army into the city, and ordered his men to kill everyone indiscriminately. For three days, the Seleucids rampaged in the city, killing 40,000 and selling another 40,000 to slavery. Menelaus was reinstated as high priest, and he convinced Antiochus to forcibly hellenize all of the Jews.

Many things that defined Jewish life were outlawed. Owning a copy of the Torah, and having your child circumcised, became a crime punishable by death. The Jews were not allowed to hold any ritual sacrifice, observe the Sabbath day, or have any religious feasts.

Perhaps most insultingly, Antiochus desecrated the Temple by putting a statue of Zeus, the leader of the Greek gods, on an altar inside the Temple. As an insult, he also ordered that pigs – animals Jews considered ritually unclean – be sacrificed in the Holy of Holies.

Hellenized Jews rejoiced at the government's support. Finally, their stale old religion was being modernized. The orthodox Jews could only gnash their teeth – there was nothing they could do against the strongest army in the region.

However, it sometimes takes just a small spark to cause a great fire. Somewhere, in the town of Modi'in (halfway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv today), a Hasmonean priest named Mattathias finally resisted Antiochus' orders.

When he received an order to make an offering to Zeus, he refused. A Hellenized Jew stepped forward to do it for him, but Mattathias killed him. The priest then fled with his family into the wilderness to escape punishment. His actions inspired the people of Judea, and led to a full-blown rebellion against the Seleucids.

How did Antiochus respond to this insult? Did the rebellion succeed? Find out in our sixth installment, *The Hasmoneans and Beyond*, only on Gospel Light!

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE IRREVERENT HISTORIAN

The astute Bible reader would know that chronologically, there are four hundred years of silence from the end of the Old Testament (Malachi) to the start of the New Testament (Matthew). Any history during this portion of our narrative is therefore taken from alternate sources. One of the most prominent sources is *Antiquities of the Jews*, a historical study by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who lived in Roman times during the first century AD.

Our Protestant canon agrees with the Jewish Masoretic Text – that there are thirty-nine books from Genesis to Malachi in the Old Testament. Other Christian faiths, like Roman Catholicism and the Eastern Orthodoxy, include additional books. We draw heavily on these books, which we term as the *Apocrypha* (meaning “of questionable authenticity”) and the other faiths term as *Deuterocanon* (meaning “secondary canon”), particularly from the Books of the Maccabees.

We believe that it is impossible to ignore these sources, especially when we aim to give a comprehensive look at the history of Christianity – warts and all. Please keep an open mind. After all, this series *is* supposed to be irreverent! If you have any questions or comments, please scan the QR code to the right, or e-mail us at history@cebugospelchurch.com. We will publish relevant opinions, and answer any of your burning questions. As always, brickbats or bouquets are welcome (but we prefer bouquets!).



永生的祝願

白鴿

在世上眾多的人群中，各有不同品格，如此世上有義人和惡人的分別。這就形成各人有各人的志趣。尤其是我們的仇敵—魔鬼，肆無忌憚地使用誘惑，使人神志昏庸且無意識地來辨別真假的神。於是有些人竟然蒙昧地去膜拜假神，企禱福澤、康健、延年益壽。但有些人很是滑稽，在他擁有福、祿、壽齊全，生活優裕的環境下，居然異想天開，妄想要成為神仙。

在漢朝，有位名叫劉安的人，他是皇家宗室，他雖然被封為高官厚爵，還貪戀要得道成仙，過著逍遙自在的生活。於是他不惜付出代價，不遺餘力地派人走偏遼遠四方，去探索神仙的蹤跡。意想不到，居然有八位老叟，自稱是神仙，要面見劉安。向來傲慢的守門人，見他們鬚眉皆白且老邁，拒絕向主人通報，並譏調他們是無賴之輩，八位老叟豁然大笑，搖身一變竟是八位小孩。這時守門人很是驚服，迅速入內向主人通報。這就是返老還童的典故。

故事是出自晉葛洪所編寫的「神仙傳」。至於神仙的傳說，是虛擬的，是不值得我們相信。只是當時印度佛教傳入中國文人，作者便借機描摹佛教的術語，編著無可考證的神話。因此在漢朝和唐朝時代，一般顯赫的貴族們，瘋狂而放任地探索仙藥。所以，當代詩人—白居易，親眼看到這樣的情形，情不自禁地寫下了這首詩。

海茫茫一戎求仙者

海漫漫，直下無底傍無邊，雲濤烟浪最深處，人傳中有三神山。山上多生不死藥，服之羽化為天仙。秦皇漢武信此語，方士年年採藥去。蓬萊今古但聞名，煙水茫茫無覓處。

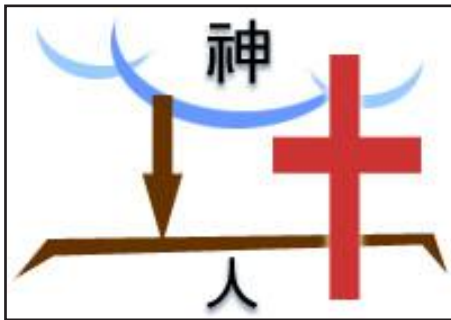
這首詩是詩人勸戒當代的人們，不要做虛幻的事。其大意是海浪澎湃遼闊無邊際，潛水直下猶如無底坑，破浪淘湧如煙如雲般廣漠處，人們流言有三座神山，（即蓬萊、方丈、瀛洲），山上滋生不死的仙藥。秦始皇和漢武帝相信此傳說，每年派遣道教方士去採藥。蓬萊古往今來聲名雖遠佈，寬廣蒼茫的海如煙霧般地竟無邊涯，居然無從找尋其蹤跡。

令人嘖嘖的！有些人在信仰上，並沒有澈底查究，更沒有經過審查判斷是非曲折，枉然浪費錢財，時間及人力，追尋虛無飄渺的情事。但我們祇要心神能夠領悟永生之路，並不是非分之想。因為耶穌基督曾經宣告說：「我就是道路，真理，生命。若不藉著我，沒有人能到父那裏去。」（約14:6）這給我們多麼憑信的信息。因為主耶穌藉著祂的大能，在歷史上留下顯赫的史蹟，使世人無法抹煞祂的宣告。這宣告對世人是極為珍貴的。所以我們可以分為三方面來探討：

1. 主耶穌說：「我就是道路」。我們處在世路崎嶇的人生路徑上，正是淒風哭雨，徜徉迂緩不知何處是出路？但主耶穌公然宣告說：「我就是道路」。「道路」就是神的道、神的話，也就是主耶穌的話。主耶穌的話是在聖經裏面。聖經是藉著聖靈運行先賢的思維所編寫的。所以我們若行神的道、神的話。我們必須以悔悟的心領受神的話，謙恭遵守神的話。因為萬物都是從神的話而來的，萬物都在表揚神的話。因而使徒保羅說：「弟兄們，我們既因耶穌的血，得以坦然進入至聖所，是藉著祂給我們開了一條又新又活的路，從幔子經過，這幔子就是祂的身體。」（來10:19-20）。所以藉著主耶穌是唯一通往「永生」的道路。

2. 主耶穌說：「我就是真理」。約翰福音第一

永生的祝願



章十四節說：「道成肉身，住在我們中間，充充滿滿的有恩典有真理。」同樣的在十七節又說：「恩典和真理，都是由耶穌基督來的。」所以耶穌基督是真理的本身。因而真理是絕

對的，是永遠不能改變的；真理是完善的，是沒有任何殘缺的，所以真理絕不能靠著能朽敗的文字和言語，乃是出自永垂不朽的真理本身。約翰福音八章三十二節說：「你們必曉得真理，真理必叫你們得以自由。」人要得著真理，必須先曉得真理。人若曉得主耶穌是神的兒子，神設立祂為唯一的救主，就必定信祂，接受祂為救主，這就是得著主-真理了。所以，「只等真理的聖靈來了，祂要引導你們明白一切的真理。」(約16:13)。救主幫助我們，使我們靠著聖靈，親身經歷真理，將真理實行出來。

3·主耶穌說：「我就是生命」。生命對每個人都很珍貴的，一旦人失去了生命，他一生所企盼的願望，便如煙消雲散，消失得無影無踪。所以主耶穌宣告說：「我就是生命」。因為祂是一切生命的源頭，人的生命是祂所賜的。當祂創造人類那時刻，將祂的生氣吹進人裏面，使人成為有靈的活人。(創2:7)只是當時人竟悖逆神而犯罪。導到與神關係隔絕。(創2:17)然而因神仍舊憐惜人類，差遣耶穌基督「道成肉身」，將祂的生命作救贖的代價，為罪人被釘死字架上。終究從死裏復活，因祂的復活，凡信靠祂的人，因著祂的救恩，才能成為有靈的活人。所以，唯有耶穌基督才能賜人生命，唯有耶穌基督才能賜人永生。

因而我們應當謙恭遵守神的道，堅毅持循神的真理，戰戰兢兢地尋求神所賜的永生。我們對神的虔誠應有的趨向：

1·要敬畏神：「敬畏耶和華是智慧的開端」(箴1:7)。這是所羅門規勸世人的言詞，要求世人要順服受教。所以智慧包括道德上的要求，使人們在處事上，若竭力追求智慧，便會認識神。也就是在認識神上，我們對神便有謙恭的心志，戰戰兢兢對神有畏懼，

不致對人對事發生不義的舉止。使我們面對待人接物方面上，要以仁義，公平，正直為準則。更不可欺貧重富，因為聖經說：垂棄貧窮的，就是蔑視造物主宰。所以我們日常生活中一切言行、行為，都要省察是否合神的意旨。因而所羅門說：「敬畏耶和華的，大有依靠，他的兒女，也有避難所。敬畏耶和華，就是生命的泉源，可以使人離開死亡的網羅」(箴14:26-27)。

2·要效法耶穌基督：主耶穌說：「跟從我的，就不在黑暗裏走，必得著生命的光。」(約8:12)光與暗是分別代表善與惡的兩方面的本性。讓我們來判斷、推理，從而認識到一切事物的本質和法則。因主耶穌把真光說明其中大意，並將屬真理的人與惡人區別出來。光象徵生命、喜樂、拯救；黑暗代表死亡、憂愁、沉淪。所以使徒保羅說：「不要效法這個世界，只要心意更新而變化，叫你們查驗何為神的善良、純全可喜悅的旨意。」(羅12:2)這是規勸我們要效法耶穌的榜樣。不要與這個烏烟瘴氣的世界同流合污。我們要比世人更高一等。對於待人接物方面，心志要光明正大。這正是耶穌對眾人說：「我是世界的光。跟從我的，不在黑暗裏走，必要得著生命的光。」大凡誠心跟從主耶穌，就是神的奴僕並順從神的義的規模，及至成聖。保羅勸勉我們說：「你們該當效法我，像我效法基督一樣。」(林前11:1)所以我們該以耶穌基督的心為心，竭誠追隨祂。

3·要討主的喜悅：使徒保羅說：「所以無論是住在身內，離開身外，我們立了志向，要得主的喜悅。」(林後5:9)。這是基督徒生活的指標。所以保羅並不畏懼現在的苦難，因為他堅強地仰望永遠的生命和榮耀。雖然受死亡和痛苦所轄制；但他是堅定住在基督裏，不斷更新內在的生命。所以我們必要摒棄一切虛浮的榮譽、地位、以及利己的財富。同樣的，當我們能放棄自己的意志，將我們的意志與神的意旨，配合相互合一。而我們在世受到的羞辱、憂患，神將賜我們喜樂作為裝飾，作為給我們的補償。當我們在世被轄制而屈服在卑賤的地位，神將賞賜我們永遠的寶座；當我們在世在服事上能謙虛、順服，神將要賞賜榮耀的冠冕。同時，我們能得主的喜悅，所得的獎賞於將來在永生的國度裏，必能與神共享喜樂與安慰，身有寄托，心有安穩的福分！

CGC EXPERIENCE

BY: JUSTIN JIREH FONG

If I am to categorize the aspects where I appreciate my practicum experience, it will be contained as follows: pastoral mentorship, vast ministry exposure, and encouraging reception from members.

Pastoral mentorship

The first thing I greatly appreciate is the pastoral mentorship. The pastors were able to share their lives with us and it indeed was encouraging. They shared their ups and downs while in the ministry. In sharing life lessons, each lesson was hardly devoid of what the Bible taught. As a result, a valuable takeaway I got is a renewed desire to familiarize myself with the whole Bible.

Another encouraging pastoral mentorship (perhaps unknowingly) imparted to us was the closeness of the pastoral staff. They helped and prayed for each other's ministries, looked out for each one's needs,

and regularly enjoyed time together to relax. By their example, God has shown me the advantages of unity and camaraderie especially among pastors.



Vast ministry exposure

A second appreciation I have was for the vast exposure to different ministries. By being assigned to different ministries weekly, I got a taste of how full time ministry would be. The experience had excited me for finally entering full time church work. I had the opportunity to explore different topics in Scripture and see how it relates to people with different backgrounds. Moreover, the weekly need

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to prepare kept me on my toes and allowed me to enter into a closer walk with God through the study of His word. I believe God has used this experience to prepare me for future ministries.

Encouraging reception from members

A third appreciation is for the reception of the members. The kids of the Elementary CYF were lively and related with us as if we have already been around for some time. Most were not shy to approach us and openly conversed and joked around with us. Furthermore, seeing them excited for the worship songs and their attentiveness during the one session that I was there warmed my heart. I can only pray that God continually builds their desire for Him.

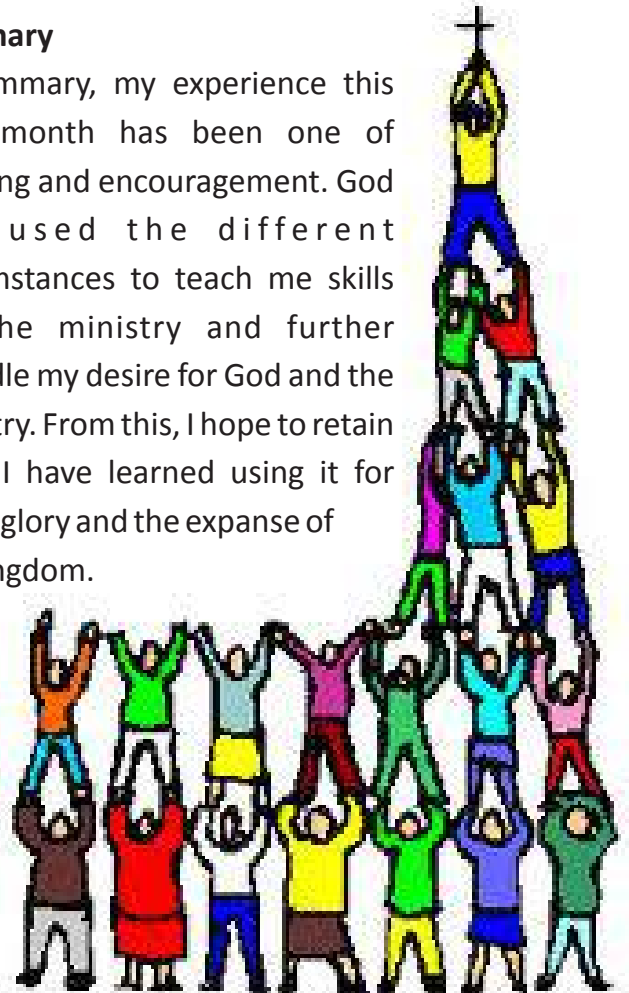
The youth were also friendly and genuinely appeared to have a heart for God. Their eagerness to come for their discipleship sessions and CYF is commendable. Some have expressed their struggles at school reflecting their preference for God and in living holy lives. Their friendliness towards other people was likewise remarkable. It appeared to me that the CBDTI conference had a welcome environment. As I have particularly seen from my CGC group, they openly complimented and befriended those from other provinces. To me, it provided a glimpse of the love the Bible teaches that

Christians ought to have for each other.

The adults were also all smiles whenever we met them. Many have encouraged us with smiles—graciously accompanying and sharing their thoughts with us. Those I met in the fellowships appeared receptive of the Word as well. During and after the sharing, some have opened how what was shared applied to their lives.

Summary

In summary, my experience this past month has been one of learning and encouragement. God has used the different circumstances to teach me skills for the ministry and further rekindle my desire for God and the ministry. From this, I hope to retain what I have learned using it for God's glory and the expanse of His kingdom.



TECHNOLOGY: BOON OR BANE?

BY: RICHARD JOSEPH LI

I had recently returned from Canada leaving both my wife Kimberly and my son Kenzie behind for a few more weeks before they come home to Cebu. I already missed them a great deal and though it is a bit hard, I know that it is all worth it. I know that this is indeed God's will and that it is all for my family's future.

This trip had been special right from the start. Special because not only was it for my wife's permanent residency requirements in Canada but also because it was the very first time we went on a long trip with just the three of us: my wife Kimberly, son Kenzie and yours truly.

It was special because we experienced a lot of firsts in this trip. It was my wife's first trip to Canada. It was also my son's first plane ride and a really long one at that. This was also the very first time we went away without my son's nanny or my parents who would often help us in taking care of Z. And this was also the very first long vacation I have had with Kimberly since we got married.

Throughout our trip and during the preparation of writing this article, I reflected on one thing that I believe had a great impact on the outcome of our trip and to a certain degree, on our entire lives including yours. This thing we call as Technology.

To put it simply, technology has altered our lives in so many ways and means, far beyond anything we can ever imagine.

The question really is – has technology improved our lives for the better and if so, to what extent and in what manner? Or, has it changed our lives for the worse and made

us prisoners of our own inventions?

Take for example the means of communication. Since my wife and I knew we would be apart for at least six weeks, we made sure that we had all our gadgets ready.

We have our laptops for daily or weekly Facebook messages, emails and updates on what's up and happening. Yet, if it was 15 years ago, the only means of communication we could have was through snail mail. This means that by the time she would receive my letter and write back to me – she might end up receiving her own reply here at home since it would take around a month for the mails to arrive.

We also had our iPhone's and iPad's ready so we can send instant messages and on occasions when we would really miss each other and I would want to see my cute little boy Z – then we can do Facetime and see each other in real time even if we are thousands of miles apart. Again, 15 years ago – I would have to be working in either a high tech computer company or government facility to be able to access this kind of technology. I am sure that those machines would also be pretty huge in size. How lucky we are that these devices can now be literally held by our own little hands. How convenient!

Convenience, just like technology – has it really improved our lives and changed us for the better? Or has it made our lives too easy that it has inadvertently made us lazy?

I remember during the very 1st week that we were in Canada, I had to renew my driver's license. What normally takes hours to do in the Philippines, I was able to do in less than 5 minutes. I remember Kimberly asking me if I had

TECHNOLOGY: BOON OR BANE?

forgotten something from my bag since I was back so quickly and told her that nope, I was done. You should have seen her facial expression. Indeed, it was so fast, efficient and convenient.

The same thing happened to her when she applied and got her Social Identification Number. That is the Canadian version of SSS or GSIS. What would take literally an entire day to do here in the Philippines, we were able to do in less than an hour there in Canada. Why? Simply because of system and no red-tapes. Everything works!!!

I remember thinking how convenient it is to do things there in Canada that people actually expect speed and efficiency in all the things they do. This is not a bad thing I guess, as long as they remember that for things to work smoothly, there were people who worked hard to put up the system.

My take on that is, while it is fine to expect convenience especially if you live in a developed country like Canada, you just have to make sure you do not become totally DEPENDENT on the system because slip ups and mistakes can happen once in a while since we are not God and we are only human –What happens when we are too dependent on technology and it fails us? How can we survive?

Technology, when properly used and fully appreciated, can go a long way. Going back to say the iPad, my son Kenzie watches popular children educational shows with it. In fact, because of some of the apps that have been developed for the iPad, he has even improved his numbers, letters and even communication skills in ways we could have never done before at his young age. Not to mention how it



kept him “behaved” during the 12-hour leg of our trip from Hong Kong to Canada. In this case, thank God indeed for

technology!

Of course, to every good side of a story, there is also a risk or a negative side. We have children and even adults who use the iPad or computers too much and too often that they don't develop their social skills anymore and sometimes forget about the “real” world until it becomes too late and they end up getting stuck in a make believe cyber-world. Whose fault is this? And what can we do to make sure this doesn't happen to us or even to our own children? I have always believed that home is where it all starts. I have always believed in the saying that home is where the heart is. And as parents, it is our duty to nurture our children's hearts and minds in ways that are pleasing not only to ourselves but most especially to Him who has created us all – our one and only true CREATOR and MASTER.

My son Kenzie is lucky because he lives in a time when technology and many of man's inventions can make lots of good and great things happen in this world. It is my duty as a father – to make sure that I keep him grounded as he grows up. It is my job to make sure that as he continues to learn – that he should always remember that all things work for the good of those who love Him who is Lord of all. And it is my role to set a good example in a hope that one day, he too will make good use of the gifts that God has given him and use them well.

I don't know with you – but I thank God everyday for giving us the wisdom to invent such wonderful things like the iPad, iPhone and such. I thank God everyday because it allows me some sort of “quality time” with my family even if we are thousands of miles apart. And I am excited to see where this technology will lead us and how we can really use such inventions to further not only man's dreams and aspirations but more importantly, God's purpose and Great Commission.

As a father to a three year old child, I look forward to seeing my son use God's gifts and talents to make our world a better place. As a Christian father – I am filled with hope that for as long as I continue to teach my son to be grounded in God's teachings and to always remember who the TRUE CREATOR is, he will somehow make a difference in this complicated world not only in the eyes of men, but in the heart of our Lord and God.

上帝賜福的人

小山

在1664年,美國出名的哈佛大學(Harvard)採用一本學校規則,其三個要點如下:

- 1.) 每個人應考慮到人生的終點,要去查考聖經,知道並認識上帝和耶穌基督,就是永生
- 2.) 看到主賜智慧,每個人應在暗中祈求祂的智慧
- 3.) 每個人應每天讀經二次,以便隨時操練屬靈的真理和其應用

因此在十七世紀,哈佛大學的畢業生之百分五十二作宣教士,可見查考聖經的重要。

一. 有福的人

馬太5:3-10,主耶穌教訓中有八種有福的人:

- 虛心的人有福了,因為天國是他們的。
- 哀慟的人有福了,因為他們必得安慰。
- 溫柔的人有福了,因為他們必承受地土。
- 飢渴的人有福了,因為他們必得飽足。
- 憐恤人的人有福了,因為他們必蒙憐恤。
- 清心的人有福了,因為他們必得見上帝。
- 使人和睦的人有福了,因為他們必稱為上帝的兒子。
- 為義受逼迫的人有福了,因為天國是他們的。

這些有福的人都是遠離罪惡,順從上帝的人。

詩篇共一百五十篇,第一篇是非常重要的。上帝將之放在全書卷的開頭是有深長的意義的。詩篇第一篇是一篇智慧的詩,是全詩篇的引言,其主旨極其廣闊,和全聖經相似。因為提到人類的罪性,義人和惡人之道路和人生的終點。

二. 義人的行為

詩1:1-2形容有福的人行為之二方面。第一節說出負面的行為:就是不從惡人的計謀,不站罪人的道路,不坐褻慢人的座位。這裡所說的「惡人」、「罪人」、「褻慢人」都是被撒但利用的人。我們在未信主耶穌時是死在罪惡和過犯中,也是被牠利用的人。

甚麼是惡人的計謀呢?就是使徒保羅所說的魔鬼詭計;牠是裝作光明的天使來誘惑我們;我們若不謹慎就會中牠的詭計。牠試探人的方法從起初到現在都是一樣。就是在上帝的話語加上一個問號,撒但試探夏娃時就是用這種計謀。主對亞當說:「不可吃分別善惡樹的果子,因為你吃的日子一定死。」牠對亞當的妻子夏娃說:「吃了不一定死;因為上帝知道你們吃的日子眼睛就明亮了,你們就如上帝知道善惡。」撒但也用同樣方法試探主耶穌,當主餓的時候

上帝賜福的人



就對祂說：「你若是上帝的兒子，可以吩咐這塊石頭變成食物。」主回答說：經上記着說『人活着不是單靠食物，乃是靠上帝口裡所出的一切話』。可見我們若要抵擋魔鬼的詭計，一定應熟讀聖經，使用聖靈的寶劍。

馬太7:13-14說「你們要進窄門，因為引到滅亡，那門是寬的，路是大的，進去的人多。引到永生，那門是窄的，路是小的，找着的人也少。」因此我們而努力進窄門，不要站罪人的道路。

啟2:12-13說「你要寫信給別迦摩教會的使者說，那有兩刃利劍的說，我知道你的居所，就是有撒但座位之處。當我忠心的見證人安提帕在你們中間，撒但所住的地方被殺之時...」撒但的座位和褻慢人的座位相似且差不多。撒但是主耶穌的仇敵，也是基督徒的仇敵。所以我們不要與牠同坐褻慢人的座位。

三. 義人如樹，作上帝賜福的導管

上帝賜福給我們可作上帝恩典的導管。提到上帝的賜福會心中喜樂，但使他人得恩典更是有喜樂。在徒20:35保羅說：「我凡事給你們作榜樣，叫你們知道，應當這樣勞苦，扶助軟弱的人，又當記念主耶穌的

話，說，施比受更為有福。」

義人的樹是活潑常青，按時結果子，持久有用。樹最重要的部分是地下紮根，吸收水分和營養。作為基督的一個部分，要屬靈紮根以便從主耶穌支取屬靈的能力。溪水代表上帝屬靈賜福的根源，來幫助祂的子民。約15:4主說「你們要常在我裡面，我也常在你們裡面。枝子若不常在葡萄樹上，自己就不能結果子。」同樣信徒要常在主裡面就會常結屬靈果子。果子包括傳福音，搶救靈魂，有敬虔的德行；獻金錢、時間、才幹給上帝的工作，事主和行善，頌讚上帝；將榮耀歸給上帝。

四. 義人和惡人的比較

義人像樹是有生命，按時結果子，葉也不枯乾。凡他所作的盡都順利。惡人乃像糠粃被風吹散，他們沒有紮根，是死的，無用的，沒有價值。最後被人丟在火裡燒掉了。

聖經常用二個人作比較。首先的亞當末後的亞當，該隱和亞伯，以實瑪利和以撒，以掃和雅各，大衛和掃羅，基督和敵基督。

第5節「因此當審判的時候，惡人必站立不住。罪人在義人的會中，也是如此。」審判官是主耶穌，祂要分別麥和稗，綿羊和山羊，信和不信，樹和糠粃。

義人的道路是永生的道路；惡人的道路卻必滅亡。

第6節說「因為耶和華知道義人的道路，惡人的道路，卻必滅亡。」主知道義人的道路不是說在祂腦裡的意念，而是說上帝揀選義人，保守看顧他們，供給他們，引導他們走永生的道路。

最後，我們知道上帝以賜福給義人為開始，以惡人的滅亡為結束。在這末世，民攻打民，國攻打國，天災人禍，地震風颳等等，基督徒要以基督的心為心，努力傳福音救靈魂，來完成主的大使命。

TESTIMONIES FROM CGC DELEGATES TO THE 15TH CBDTI YOUTH CAMP

Note: *The testimonies that we have required the delegates to submit were written anonymously. This is due to the camp evaluation sheet attached together with the testimonies.*

Testimony 1

This conference helped me learn how to stop my sinful habits so I can carry my cross and follow Jesus. What struck me the most was the stories of people who stood up for their faith in Jesus in the face of death. From now on, I will shine for Jesus and show people what God has done in my life by being a positive influence to others and not being influenced by worldly things. I want to thank the speakers and counselors for teaching me things and for all the new friends I made in this camp.

Testimony 2

Praise the Lord for the wonderful opportunity we all have to be able to join the camp!

Having been raised in a Christian home, there wasn't any dramatic life-changing moment in my life. Ever since I was still a child, I attended Sunday School and eventually, just like my other Christian buddies, I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. Soon after, I was baptized. So far, my walk with God isn't really that intimate, but then I can say one way or another that it has been growing slowly through the years. Praise the Lord for that.

When I decided to join CBDTI, honestly, my reason wasn't really that genuine. Yes, I wanted to come here for God, but deep inside I also wanted to have a break from reality and to have some fun together with my friends. Given that God is

faithful, He gave me what I wanted and I was really having so much fun in this camp. But then, that wasn't all God gave me...He taught me a very important lesson through one of the speakers: We should love God wholeheartedly...I just hope and pray that after this camp, I would really be able to love God wholeheartedly...that I may be able to serve Him in everything I do, and do it for the glory of God! To God be the glory forever!

Testimony 3

The topic about *iWait* had the most impact on me. When I was still in grade 5 or 6, my cousin started to have "M.U.'s". Every day she would call or text me just to share what happened to her with her *ka-M.U.* And I was jealous of her after hearing her stories. So I wanted to have one. When I reached high school, I started to have one. At first it was good, then after some time, my grades started to go down. Then I decided to stop it.

After hearing the message, I learned that we should wait for the right time and focus first on the Lord's affairs!!! We are still young to enter into a relationship. We should wait for the right time. And we should not be troubled that we still don't have boyfriends or girlfriends yet because God will provide our lifetime partner at the right time.

Now that I'm going to 3rd year high school, I will not go into relationships even if others force me to. I will not go into

TESTIMONIES FROM CGC DELEGATES TO THE 15TH CBDTI YOUTH CAMP

something that I might regret later. Now, I just need to focus on my studies, my family, and most especially on God.

Testimony 4

I thank God that He allowed me another opportunity to be in a summer youth camp. This year's CBDTI is actually the second summer camp I've ever attended. Through our God-given speakers, I have learned quite a lot...What impacted me the most is the special message entitled *iWait*. I guess it's because I've always been the romantic type of person and that I can somehow relate. I also think it's because of one particular sin: I focus more on my crush than God. I try to change my ways (really), but we all know how hard it is to do so.

Fortunately, thanks to God and His Word, I came up with an action plan that I will make myself follow diligently:

I can have as many crushes as I want, and every time I do, I

will remember that it's just a crush. I am not in love even if it feels so...right. Once, there was one person whom I had a huge crush on knew that I liked him, he told me: "God will give you the best guy in the world, even better than me, just wait." And he's right, I just need to wait on God and focus on God's affairs for now. To be more specific, so that I will not always think of my crush, I would use my free time to either study the Bible or a certain lesson in class that I don't understand. And as a back-up, I'll read more books, and choose books written by Christian authors and not from romantic genres (hopefully I can finish more than 20 Christian books in a year). Of course, I can't neglect my family and friends, and I'll do my best to enjoy my youth, especially since I'm entering my junior year. Last, but not the least, I'll pray for wisdom, strength and patience, and of course, guidance. So if you could please, include a little prayer for me, too. Thank you so much!



FROM FEAR TO FAITH

BY: JOVELYN APOSTOL

Fear...

If there was one emotion I had as Summer Practicum 2012 drew near, that was it... fear. A fear of the unknown future, of expectations that might not be met and more.

But to be able to write here now testifies of God's unconditional grace and faithfulness. And that when He, time and time again, told us in His words to not be afraid nor be worried, He meant it and He is serious about His promises. To depend upon Him and trust His words are all that we should do.

Join me now as I recall my journey from fear to faith in my five-week opportunity of being a part of the Lord's ministry in Cebu, particularly Cebu Gospel Church.

Although practicum as defined by www.freedictionary.com is a school course... that is designed to give students supervised practical application of previously studied theory, I still had the chance to sit down, study and listen, and be part of the seminars and events held by the church, not just in one but in quite a number actually:

- Sunday School Teachers and Assistants Teambuilding
(With Cebu City in view, it's hard to say adieu;)
 - Youth Officers and Counselors Teambuilding
(Strings attached, let each one's heart be touched.)
 - Carefully Examining One's Self with the Gospel Seminar
(Death to life, self-pity to confidence, being fools to being wise—look not to self but to Christ.)
 - Survey Studies of 1 and 2 Samuel Seminar
(Three well-known kings Saul, David and Solomon, the difference? To whom they put their trust on;)
 - Preparing the Youth to be Future Leaders Seminar
(Being saved and called to serve, let us be equipped to serve.)
- Let it be an encouragement. Not everybody is given the chance to study in a seminary. Although



FROM FEAR TO FAITH

seminary is a good place to be equipped even for those not pursuing pastoral ministry, may we not miss the various programs the church is privileged to hold. We never lose when we study God's word. Just have to make sure it does not just stay in the mind but travels to the heart then overflows to the hand, tongue and more.

- There are a lot of things one has learned and has appreciated more from this 5-week experience. Let a few be highlighted:
- On God's sovereignty – Over and over, the Lord, through circumstances and His word, shows that indeed there is no accident in life. He reigns and is in control, even the very little things we may not even be aware of. And although we do not understand everything, just as "... secret things belong to God but things revealed belong to us (Deuteronomy 29:29)", we have a good, loving and just God. We can entrust our unknown future to our all-knowing Almighty God.
 - On learning – Lessons and new things are really not only learned in a classroom/church formal setting, but they can also be learned in conversations over food, over coffee, informal discussions, actions seen in the life of another and more. Relationships also play a major factor.
 - On teaching – Be ready for children's questions and be able to explain it at the level they will understand. Consider this a

true-to-life experience right at CGC Auditorium one Sunday morning:

Cute little girl on 3 different times:

"Teacher, what's murder?"

"Teacher, what's adultery?"

"Teacher, what's "justify?"

And that just showed that she was listening! Thank you for your encouragement, little girl. And thank God for His wisdom and grace at that time:)

- On life – As early as now, one can feel that one is not growing any younger, but seeing the elderly still very active in visitations, Bible studies, fellowships and prayer meetings was surely an encouragement.

Whatever our age, may we appreciate those who are older, learn from their wisdom and experience, make the most of the present, maximize our service to God and glorify God in whatever we do, 24/7.

Though this was not my first time to find myself in the map of Cebu City, there were sure a lot of first-times in this exciting trip, including:

- being away from home for the longest time (thank God for communication technologies)
- sleeping by myself and staying in the church parsonage (a first-class!)
- being a part of the first interactive musical play I've ever seen or even heard about!
- joining and being a part of the regional CBDTI Youth Camp
- preaching at the pulpit (MGC) one Sunday morning
- meeting and being encouraged by the oldest person I personally know – Miding Tsi.
- learning Fookien from the youngest Chinese "teacher" I know (turning three-



FROM FEAR TO FAITH

years-old Siansi Avi Claire!

- enjoying sumptuous meals in different places courtesy of different people's generosity (this contributed greatly to the x-pounds that co-practicum-er Justin and I gained after five weeks!)
- and much, much more!

May this testimony be also an opportunity to show my gratitude to the whole body of Cebu Gospel Church: for the hospitality, generosity and warm welcome, for allowing BSOP students to be trained and have hands-on equipping, experiencing the love and encouragement of brothers and sisters in this part of the Philippines. May we continue to strive not only in love, not only in truth, but both in love and truth. And that in whatever circumstance, may we praise the Lord and find ourselves quoting the prophet Habakkuk:

Though the fig tree does not bud
 and there are no grapes on the vines,
 though the olive crop fails
 and the fields produce no food,
 though there are no sheep in the pen
 and no cattle in the stalls,
 yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
 I will be joyful in God my Savior.
 The Sovereign LORD is my strength;
 he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
 he enables me to go on the heights.
 (Habakkuk 3:17-19)



And 'til the end, may we be found faithful and rejoicing in Christ our Lord.

One thing I will surely miss is the Cebu sky. I'm not sure what makes it different. But the sky seems clearer, bluer, and brighter. Looking up Manila sky is like wearing a fogged spectacle maybe because of the smog. I guess, my practicum experience can be compared to this. With the things I learned, new friendships formed, and the experiences as a whole, I see some things now, by God's grace, like the Cebu sky, clearer. So, Cebu sky and all under you, "til we meet again."

To God be all the glory, honor, praise and thanksgiving.

A MOTHER'S LOVE - DEDICATED TO ALL MOTHERS

BY: J.D.E.

May 13, 2012 'Mother's Day' was the day when we thank our mothers for the times they have spent with us. From the day she got pregnant to the day she labored for hours just to let us see the world until now, our moms have been taking care of us. You may say that you're already an adult and have kids of your own, it doesn't mean that you can't express your love and thanks to your mother anymore. Instead, as a parent yourself, you'd understand how much of a problem you've been to your mothers.

I'm a 16 year old teenager and I can tell you that we, as children, sometimes complain, murmur, and grumble about how our mothers keep scolding us, telling us what to do and all that. But for just one minute, think about having to live your life alone and learning things the hard way. Ask yourselves if you would have survived and achieved all you have done without the help of those around you. Our mothers won't be with us forever and though we grumble and even talk back to them, they won't stop being moms because when the time comes for them to leave us, they want us to know and to remember that they love us. They want to leave you with memories that will encourage you when you have your own family and have come to experience how it feels like to take care of a child.

In class, my classmates say I'm like a mom, wanting to take care of everyone. At first I didn't see what they meant so I thought it was a joke. I admit that I act like a mother towards my best friend, but I never thought that taking care of one's



best friend would affect the rest of them. Our mothers are our first teachers and though I don't remember much of my childhood past, I know that my mother was always there. We often say that our mothers meddle with our lives, especially boys when it comes to their girlfriends. True enough, our mothers do check some of our personal things so as to keep us safe and to see if the things we're doing are for the best of our interests.

I've read a story about a mother who wrote letters to her unborn child. Every day she would write a letter and keep it in a box. Years after, she and her daughter had a fight. She couldn't say anything that would let her daughter believe that she loved her and still do. Suddenly remembering the boxes of love letters, she quietly placed them in her daughter's room. A few days later, her daughter came to her asking a question, "How could you love me without knowing me?" Yes, why do our mothers love us without even knowing who we are? How rebellious and hateful we'd get? One thing is for sure, our mothers love us and will always love us no matter what, even if they don't write letters to us. They love us and you can tell this by how they've always supported us how our mothers have tried to do everything to keep us safe. One thing I can say is this, "Thank you, Mom!" A thousand thanks won't be enough but still, our mothers are the heroes of our lives!! And the one thing we could do in this special day was to greet them, "Happy Mother's Day!!!"

三條河流

許郭錦繡

聖經有記載許多河流, 其中有三條河流是特殊的, 因為它與我們屬靈的生命有莫大的關係, 而且也有豐富屬靈的教示。

伯拉河 – Euphrates River

尼羅河 – Nile River

約但河 – Jordan River



(一) 伯拉河 – Euphrates River

又稱為「大河」, 也是伊甸園中四河流之一, 創世記記載有四道河流從伊甸園流出來滋潤那園子。第一道名叫比遜河(Pishon River). 第二道名叫基訓河(Gihon River). 第三道名叫希底結河(Tigris River). 第四道就是伯拉河(Euphrates River). (創2:10-14)

伯拉河是在亞洲西南部最長的河流. 它長有一千七百八十英里, 從土耳其(Turkey)直穿進希底結(Tigris). 然後下流到波斯灣(Persian Gulf). 也是以色列國東南面的邊界。當所羅門作王

時, 所有鄰國從伯拉河直到埃及都帶貢物給他。

「伯拉」的意思是「爆破」"Bursting"及「豐滿」"Bountiful"。當河水上漲時, 水入曠野使土地肥沃, 農產昌盛。

與伯拉河有關的聖經人物如下:

A. 亞伯拉罕 – Abraham

耶和華吩咐亞伯拉罕離開本地本族父家往他要指示他的地方去. 上帝曾經與他立約說: 「我已賜給你的

三條河流

後裔從埃及河直到伯拉大河之地」(創15:18-21)。伯拉河是到達迦南地必經之路。

B. 約書亞-Joshua

約書亞勸民說：「現在你們要敬畏耶和華，誠心實意的事奉他，將你們列祖在大河那邊和埃及所事奉的神除掉，去事奉耶和華。若是你以事奉耶和華為不好，今日就可選擇所要事奉的。是你們列祖在大河裡所事奉的神呢？是他們所住這地的亞摩利人的神呢？至於我和我的家，我必是事奉耶和華」(書24:14-15)。約書亞向以色列民挑戰，叫他們選擇事奉大河(就是伯拉河)的神或事奉耶和華。

C. 四個使者-The Four Angels

有四個被捆綁在伯拉河的使者將被釋放(啟9:15)。「第六位天使吹號，我就聽見聲音從神面前金壇的四角出來，吩咐那吹號的第六位天使說：把那個捆綁在伯拉大河的四個使者釋放了。那四個使者就被釋放。他們原是預備好了。到某年某日某時要殺人的三分之一。」(啟9:13-15)

D. 第六個天使-The Sixth Angel

「第六位天使把碗倒在伯拉大河上。河水就乾了。要給那從日出之地所來的眾王預備道路」(啟16:12)。這是預言將來世界各國的軍兵要集聚經過成了乾地的伯拉河，而在神全能的大日集合打哈米多頓(Armageddon)之戰爭。

(二) 尼羅河-Nile River

尼羅河(Nile River)是世界最長的河流。其長有3914.6英里。其次是3902.2英里的亞馬順河(Amazon River)。再次是3876英里的長江流域(Yangtze River)。

尼羅的希臘原文“Neillos”，意思是山谷(Valley)。當河水上漲時就流入埃及曠野，留黑色的沉澱物。所以古時的埃及人稱這河為Ar - 黑色。

這河分為藍尼羅(Blue Nile)及白尼羅(White Nile)，共有經過的九個國家如下：

Blue Nile – Ethiopia, Zaire, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi

White Nile – Uganda, Sudan, Egypt

在1960-1970年，埃及為防備水災就建築了Aswan Dam。除了供為埃及交通的道以外，也是支持漁業發展的中心。

法老王曾經作夢看見在尼羅河有七隻乾瘦牛吞吃了七隻肥壯的牛，又七個細弱的穗子吞了那七個又肥大又飽滿的穗子。(創41:1-7)

與尼羅河有關的聖經人物如下：

A. 法老王命令將所有男嬰掉在尼羅河中-King Pharaoh ordered all Israelites babies be thrown into the Nile River

約瑟死後，埃及的新王起來治理，看見以色列民生養眾多，恐怕日後和仇敵聯合來攻擊他們。就加重苦工，嚴嚴的苦待他們，並下令將所有以色列人所生的男孩丟在尼羅河中(出1:22)

B. 摩西將尼羅河變為血-Moses turned Nile into blood

摩西出生三個月後，母親就將他放在箱裡，擱在尼羅河的蘆荻中。幸得法老女兒可憐他，將他救出收納作他的兒子。後來摩西因殺死一位埃及人就逃往米甸。經過了一段時期，上帝向他顯現，要他回埃及帶領以色列民出埃及。但法老心剛硬，上帝就吩咐摩西把杖打尼羅河，河水就變為血，河裡的魚都死掉了。人也沒有水喝了。(出7:17-19)

C. 以色列民留戀埃及大河那邊的美物-The Israelites Craved for Meat & Food in Egypt

摩西領以色列民出埃及後第二個月十五日，人民就開始發怨言說：「巴不得我們早死在埃及地耶和華的手下，那時我們坐在肉鍋旁邊喫得飽足，你將我們領出來到曠野，是要叫這全會眾都餓死啊！」(出16:3)，以色列民留戀埃及大河那邊的肉及美物甘願為奴，不珍惜自由的可貴。

(三) 約但河-Jordan River

約但河位於亞洲的西部，約有200英里，是以色列國東部及巴勒斯坦的邊界，也是以色列(Israel)，約旦(Jordan)，敘利亞(Syria)及黎巴嫩(Lebanon)基本需用的水源。約但河希臘文為“Yardane”。意思是“下降”(Descender)。它分成三階段向下而流：

(一) Mount Hermon ⇨ Lake Huleh

(二) Lake Huleh ⇨ Sea of Galilee

(三) Sea of Galilee ⇨ Red Sea

約但河在以色列的歷史佔了非常重要的位置。舊約有題到一百七十五次，而新約也有十五次。

三條河流

與約但河有關的聖經人物如下：

A. 亞伯拉罕—Abraham

羅得的僕人及亞伯拉罕的僕人相爭。亞伯拉罕讓羅得首先選擇。羅得選上了約但河全平原直到瑣珥往東遷移，他們就彼此分離了(創13:5-11)

B. 約書亞—Joshua

約書亞命令以色列民取十二塊石頭，作為後代永遠的記念神怎樣使約但河水泥斷絕，讓他們經過，方可到流乳如蜜的迦南地去(書4:4-9)

C. 大衛—David

大衛經過約但河，逃脫其子押沙龍(撒下17:22)

D. 以利亞—Elijah

以利亞對亞哈王說：「這幾年我若不禱告，必不降露不下雨。然後耶和華吩咐他離開這裡往東去，藏在約但河東邊的基立溪旁。在那裡喝那溪裡的水，又有烏鴉供養他」(列上17:1-5)

E. 以利沙—Elisha

「耶和華要用旋風接以利亞昇天的時候，以利亞叫以利沙在吉甲等候。但以利沙堅持與他同行到耶利哥，又往約但河去。以利亞將自己的外衣捲起來，用以打水，水就左右分開，二人走乾地而過。過去後，以利亞對以利沙說：「我未曾被接去離開你，你要我為你做什麼，只管求我。」以利沙說：「願感動你的靈加倍地感動我。」以利亞說：「我被接去離開你的時候，你若看見我，就必得著，不然必得不著。他正走著說話，忽有火車火馬將二人隔開，以利亞就乘風昇天去了。隨後，以利沙拾起以利亞身上掉下來的外衣，打約但河，水也左右分開，以利沙就過來了。」(列下2:1-14)

F. 乃縵—Naaman

乃縵犯了大麻瘋，求以利沙醫治。以利沙吩咐一個使者叫他去約但河淋浴七回。本來他不肯，因為他認為埃及有許多河比約但河清潔，幸得他聽了僕人的勸告，謙卑順服，獲得痊癒。

G. 施洗約翰—John the Baptist

施洗約翰在曠野傳悔改的福音，猶太全地及耶路撒冷的人都承認他們的罪。施洗約翰就在約但河為他們行洗禮。(可1:4-5)

H. 耶穌基督—Jesus Christ

耶穌從加利利的拿撒勒來，在約但河受了約翰的洗。他從水裡一上來，就看見天裂開，聖靈彷彿鴿子降在他身上，又有聲音從天上來說：「你是我的愛子，我喜悅你」。(可1:9-10)

這三條河流與我們屬靈生命有何關係呢？

伯拉河=世俗之河—Euphrates River: River of the Pagans

(一) 離開世俗觀念—Forsake pagan thoughts

亞伯拉罕進入迦南地必須經過伯拉河。

同樣，每一位信徒也必須經過世俗之河，離開世俗迷信的觀念，方可進入神所要賜我們佳美之地。

(二) 敬拜獨一真神—Worship the one and only true God

約書亞記載當時有大河那邊，埃及和亞摩利人的神，也是耶和華禁止以色列事奉的假神。

今天世界有許多虛假的神。我們應該揀選那位又真又活有靈有力的上帝，誠心來敬拜他。

(三) 當心惡魔誘惑—Beware of demon's temptation

「四位使者在伯拉河釋放後，要殺害全世界三分之一的人」(啟9:13-15)。

今天世界末日預兆一直的應驗了，生活在這罪惡貫滿的世界，惡魔權勢興旺，我們應該更加謹慎，信心站住，不受迷惑。

(四) 做醒禱告，預備神的再來—Be alert and pray in preparation for His Second Coming

第六位天使把碗倒在伯拉大河上，河水就成乾路為眾王過去。他們集聚在起預備打哈米多頓(Armageddon)之戰。

我們務要做醒禱告，求主賜我們剛強壯膽，堅定不移的信心，來勝過一切試探，苦難和危險。

尼羅河=世界之河—Nile River: River of the Worldly

(一) 因妒生恨，殺害無辜者—Jealously instilled hatred that killed the innocents

法老王因嫉妒以色列民，就想辦法滅絕他們，下令所有男嬰丟在尼羅河中。求主除去我們心中的嫉妒，使我們能夠與人和睦同居，和平相處。

(二) 剛硬不信，必致滅亡—Those with hardened hearts and unbelief shall perish

三條河流

法老王心裡剛硬,不信有上帝,上帝降下十個災禍,其中之一就是將尼羅河為血,因此魚類都死了,人因沒有水喝也死了。

求主鎔化我們剛硬的心,賜我們血肉的心,使我們遵守祂的誠命,相信祂的語。

(三) 為貪戀世界,人沉淪於罪中 – The love of the world causes men to fall in sin

以色列民不但不感激神使他們脫離為奴之地成為自由人,相反的,他們責罵摩西為什麼領他們出埃及,因為他們仍舊留戀在埃及河那邊所享受甘甜的瓜和有肥脂的肉鍋。

今天世界各種的誘惑往往帶來了人許多的苦悶,主說:「人若愛世界愛父的便不在裡面。」當我們愛世界勝於愛上帝時,愛主的心就漸漸冷淡,以致墮落於罪中。

約但河=成聖之河 – Jordan River: River of Sanctification

(一) 彼此推讓,蒙神祝福 – God blesses those who give preference to others

亞伯拉罕沒有與羅得相爭.他讓羅得首先選擇約但河較美之地.結果上帝加倍的賜福給他。

在人生的途中,我們多少會經歷到沒有公義,沒有公平,受了虧損.但是,我們有一位公義的主,祂會監察一切,為我們伸冤,補足我們的缺乏。

(二) 記念主恩,讚美感謝 – Remember to praise Him and give thanks for His blessings

約書亞命令以色列民從約但河取出的十二塊石頭帶過河去吉甲.砌成紀念碑.作後代人永遠的紀念。

同樣的,神在我們每一個人身上有數不盡的恩典,我們應該懂得報答主恩,多多行善,樂意奉獻,甘心事奉。

(三) 勇敢往前,靠主得勝 – Be Courageous; Press On unto Victory

押沙龍為搶奪王位,背叛其父大衛,帶兵軍要殺害他,幸得有人告訴大衛,叫他過約但河,脫離陷害。

當我們遇到敵人的欺侮時,不要害怕.要靠主剛強壯膽,倚靠祂的大能,因為得勝在乎耶和華。

(四) 完全交託,主必眷顧 – Fully trust Him because He cares for us.

以利亞藏在約但河,上帝差遣烏鴉供養他。

同樣的,我們應當一無罣慮,將一切憂慮卸給神,因為他顧念我們(彼前5:7)。

(五) 專心隨主,為主效勞 – Follow & serve Him wholeheartedly

以利沙一直跟隨以利亞到約但河去,終於得到以利亞加倍之靈。

我們應該效法以利沙事主的精神,不停為聖工效勞,將來必得天上的獎賞。

(六) 信靠順服,蒙得拯救 – Those who trust and obey in Him shall be saved

乃縵謙卑順服以利沙,到約但河去淋浴,終得了醫治。

我們若相信主耶穌,謹守祂的命令,也必蒙拯救。

(七) 悔改認罪,播傳福音 – Repent and preach the Gospel

施洗約翰在曠野預備主的道,修直他的路(可1:3),傳講悔改福音的信息,為信者在約但河施行洗禮。

如今我們也不要以福音為恥,趁著白天,遵照耶穌的大使命,向萬民傳福音。

(八) 與主結連被聖靈充滿 – Abide in Him and be filled with the Spirit

當耶穌在約但河受洗時,聖靈從天上降臨在他身上。

我們要與主結連,受聖靈的膏沐,作一個有美好見證的基督徒。

總之,以上的三條河,我們必須 – We should:

(一) 經過伯拉河 – 俗世之河 (Pass through the Euphrates River – River of the Pagans)

(二) 離開尼羅河 – 世界之河 (Depart from Nile River – River of the Worldly)

(三) 浸沉約但河 – 成聖之河 (Immerse in Jordan River – River of Sanctification)

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COMPILED BY: PASTOR ROSALINE LIM

COME AND ADORE!

Christmas is one of the most festive seasons the whole world celebrates together. People from different countries celebrate Christmas but do they really understand the true meaning of Christmas?

Sadly, many people today still don't know the true reason for celebrating

Christmas. They may have heard about Jesus being born in a manger, about the shepherds in the field, that three Magi guided by a special star visited Him and so on and so forth ... But it doesn't just end there for there is more to it.

Last December 25, 2011 the church choir presented a beautiful short cantata

entitled "Come and Adore". Christ came to this world to be the Savior of mankind. He was born to die for our sins on the cross. As we celebrate Christmas every year, let us come before Him and adore Him, worship Him and love Him like the way He loves us.

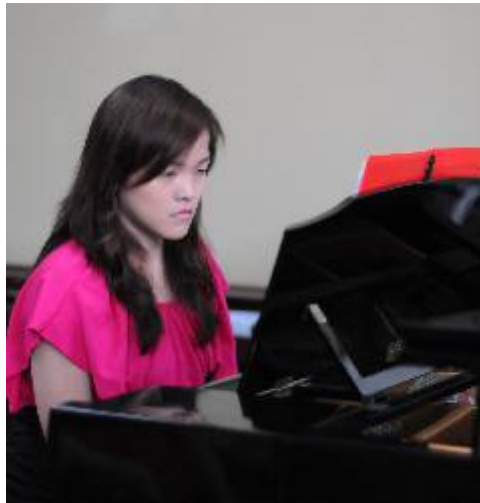
Christmas Thanksgiving Dinner was also held at Grand Convention Center that same day with song, dance numbers and skit presented by the church choir, pastoral staff & various fellowships. Sister's Fellowship bagged the prize for the Caroling Contest. Everybody went home full and happy not just from the sumptuous dinner, raffle draws and programs, but most especially from the message of God's love by Rev. Dennis Nordine.

The birth of Christ is a reminder of how our Heavenly Father loves us even if we don't deserve it. He loves us first so that we might love Him with the love He has for us.





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CHILD DEDICATION

Babies always bring great joy to parents. Their smiles & giggles brighten up parents' hearts. Their quirky reactions make us laugh and our days lighten up.

Truly, children are blessings from God. Last February 5, 2012 Baby James Carlisle Young and Baby Andrea Cassidy Te were dedicated to our loving Father.

May we also remember their parents as they raise them up in



Christian homes.

YOUNG PRO FELLOWSHIP POST-VALENTINES SPECIAL

Last February 16, 2012, the CGC-Young Pro Fellowship had a post-valentine special together with two other Chinese churches in Cebu: Bethany Church and The Living Christian Church. About 80 to 85 single/ married young professionals joined.

The goal was to have bonding

with the Christian young professionals from other Chinese churches and at the same time, invite the young professionals of our church to join the Young-pro Fellowship every Thursday night.

There were food, sharing and games. Bro. Gabriel Yap Jr. and Sis. Aileen T. Yap were the panelists on the

topic of "marriage" that night.

Let us hope and pray that through that gathering, the young professionals would be inspired to join the fellowship and that they may be used by God in their career and work.



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CHURCH @ 96

Time passed by so quickly. It seems like yesterday when our church celebrated her 95th anniversary last year. Our church is the second oldest Chinese church here in the Philippines.

Last March 18, 2012, CGC celebrated her 96th anniversary with a special speaker from Hong Kong - Dr. Albert Wu, a visiting professor of BSOP.

May we continue to pray for our church, our fellowships, our leaders,

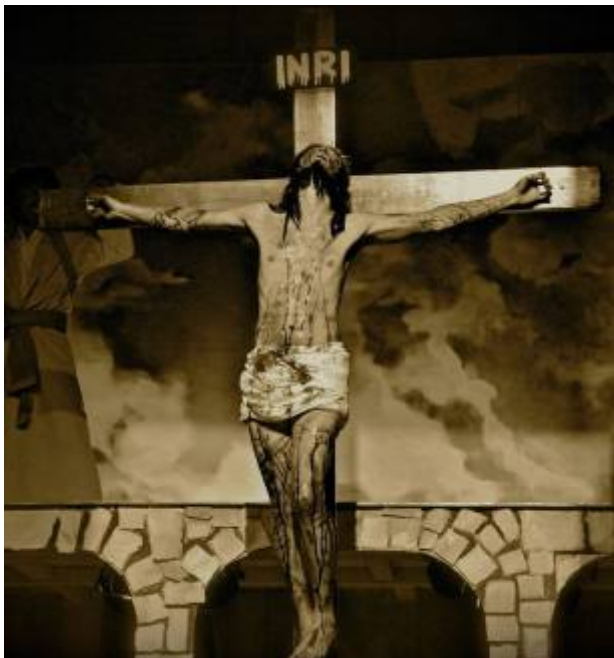
pastors and even ourselves so we can become blessings to our church.

“May we be the solution not the problem ... the cure not the pain ... a blessing not a curse... and an encouragement not a discouragement...” As a family, let us encourage each other and build each other up for the glory of God!!!



“There is NO church on the planet that will make everyone happy every single week...and...according to the Scriptures, that isn't really supposed to be our obsession. many times, we become so concerned with offending people that we actually offend Jesus.” - Perry Noble

EASTER CANTATA “RAISE THE CROWN”



It has been quite sometime since the church choir last presented a musical play. Well, the moment had finally come on April 8, 2012.

The church choir presented a musical play entitled “Raise the Crown”. This interactive drama portrayed the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ with the audience as active participants. We are very

grateful for the more than forty member cast who gave their best that night. Praise God for our very own Sis. Elizabeth Oh who flew back from Canada to conduct the cantata, and for Sis. Penelop Ong, our play director. Glory to God for the successful presentation. May we enjoy not just the songs and the play, but take the message at heart. May it remind us of how Christ took our place from the wrath of His Father. As Christians or “little Christ”, let us act like Him, leave our old self behind and live up to the Christ's name.



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C.B.D.T.I “iFollow”

CDBTI— one of the most awaited Youth camp from different Chinese churches in the Visayas. It is composed of Chinese churches from Cebu (Bethany Christian Church, Cebu Gospel Church and The Living Christian Church), and churches from Bacolod, Dumaguete, Tacloban and Iloilo. The camp held in Alta Cebu Garden Village Resort in Cordova, Cebu last April 9-13, 2012 was attended by 178 youths from ages 13 to 22.

Theme was “iFollow” based on Galatians chapter 5 with Rev. Stephen Tan as the main speaker.

Certain topics were also discussed: “iCorrect” by Rev. John Ong was about church etiquettes. “iWait/iResist” by Ptr. Thomas Sioson Jr was about having the right relationship toward the opposite

sex & waiting until marriage. “iShine” by Rev. Albert Ong was on how to have good impact towards others as a youth.

Seven youths from different churches gave their lives to the Lord for fulltime service and one of them was from our church. May God give them clarity of



their calling and touch the hearts of their parents to support them when the time comes.



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FIRST THEME SEMINAR: “CAREFULLY EXAMINE ONESELF WITH THE GOSPEL TRUTH” BY: REV. PHILIP CO



Our church’s first theme seminar entitled “Carefully Examine Oneself with the Gospel Truth” was conducted by Rev. Philip Co on April 29, 2012. How can we examine ourselves?

The Bible admonishes us to be humble, not thinking too highly of ourselves, not to be self-centered nor

have self-pity. Read the Bible daily and ask wisdom from God in order to understand His Word. Have a teachable and humble heart... ready to accept what the Bible teaches and apply them to our lives.

This is what using the Gospel truth as a measurement means. Sometimes, we think and see ourselves as “living

the life” according to the Bible. We try to be “perfect” or be “right”, not realizing that it has become a hindrance or a problem toward others. May God help us carefully examine ourselves with the Gospel truth!

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEAMBUILDING

Praise God for the 45 people who joined the Sunday School Teambuilding seminar at Mr. A. led by Rev. and Mrs. Philip Co last April 28, 2012. The topic or the theme was “COMMUNICATION”.

Sadly, proper communication is what we need not just in fellowships but in many





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aspects of our ministry and in our lives. Ministries won't succeed when communication is lacking. Things go wrong inside the church when there's no proper communication. Family

becomes dysfunctional because of lack of communication.

Good and proper communication lessens misunderstandings, wrong judgments, hurt and gossips. When

we have good and proper communication, big and small problems can be fixed.



LEADERSHIP TRAINING - MAY 12, 2012

BY: PTR. JEBO BANZUELO

A leader should be well equipped to be able to mold, to mend and be a good mentor. He or she must be spiritually matured. Spiritual maturity is NOT always measured by: age (both physically & spiritually), position, knowledge, giftedness, influence nor service.

Ptr. Jebo shared these three points: 1) *Level Up in Service*: level up in your spiritual life; 2) *Level Up in Your Perspective*: God gave us specific responsibilities, ministerial effectiveness; God ordained us to

work as a body and collectively but we will be accountable individually; and God alone owns the ministry; 3) *Level Up in the Quality of Your Work*: check your motive, work and progress.

Putting an immature Christian in a ministerial position in the church can cause problem. Christians still need to grow more spiritually and need to learn deeper truths, not just head knowledge.

A leader should have good ethics and discernment. A leader should be: "...

above reproach, sober minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not lovers of money..." A person should not become a leader simply because he has influence and knowledge. An older person doesn't also automatically mean that he is spiritually more mature. There are people who have been Christians for so long but are not yet ready for deeper things. Paul in his letter to the Corinthian church described them as still taking milk rather than solid food.



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CYF HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE OFFICERS & COUNSELORS BONDING



We thank the Lord for the blessings He had provided the CYF. The officers and counselors had the time to bond at Genesis Valley in Talamban last May 1, 2012.

Our BSOP interns this year, Bro. Justin Fung and Sis. Jovy Apostol led a short team building seminar for the officers and counselors. The main goal was to remind each and everyone about "TEAM WORK" or "COOPERATION", to work hand in hand in the ministry. This is one of the greatest lessons we need to learn.

A ministry or a church won't progress when there is no team work or cooperation among leaders. At times, we think that we can do it on our own or we are afraid to delegate the work to others cause they might go wrong. Well, there are also times that things can still go wrong even when we do it ourselves. One way or the other, things can go either very good or bad. But if we work together and cooperate with each other and things do go wrong, there will be no finger pointing.

There will always be differences in opinion but the majority will always be the basis of the decision. Learning to respect each other's opinion is beneficial to the growth of the ministry and the church.

All of us have flaws and weaknesses but we also have strengths. Let us focus on our strengths and supplement each other in areas that need improvement. This is how a ministry or a church should be.

MORE PHOTOS





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MANDARIN SUMMER CAMP BY: FAITH ALEXIS OH

In April 2012, Cebu Gospel Church Mandaue Branch launched a summer program that encouraged children and adults to learn how to speak Mandarin. The more than 40 students who enrolled were categorized according to their degree of education, i.e., elementary, high school and adult. Those who were from college and beyond were placed in the adult category. Since most of the students were from the grade school category and only a few were of the high school level, most were

taught the basic Chinese songs and rhymes. Adults were taught basic conversational Chinese. Teachers from the mainland China came to personally teach the students. New and modern materials were taught so the students could keep up with the changing language of China. The Chinese materials used in traditional Chinese schools were replaced by the more easy to read and understand reading materials.

All-in-all, one month may not be

enough to fully learn this difficult language, but this will serve as a catalyst for the students to pursue more and urge them to take every opportunity to study Mandarin further. On top of this and in the hope of perfecting their skill, they will also learn to appreciate their Chinese heritage.

May God bless us with the passion to continue nurturing our children to honour both our Filipino and Chinese heritage.



MGC DVBS





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