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Under One Lord: Cautiously Work Together as One Body in Christ

by: Pastor Angelo Gutierrez

I admit! I am guilty! I am such a geek!

The other night, I watched one of my favorite sci-fi comedy parody movies: *The Galaxy Quest*. The story is about a group of actors in a once-popular television space-drama series of the same title. The TV series was perceived as historical documentaries by an alien race and so they recruited the crew out of desperation – for an evil alien warlord has killed almost all of these aliens and they needed a savior against him. On the onset, the crew was not interested and divided (probably due to their falling popularity and the cancellation of their TV series). But because of a series of inescapable events and their interaction with their alien allies, they later on banded together and stood united to defeat the evil warlord.

Just like their pretend roles and scripted quests in the TV series, the success of their real mission was largely due to each person's use of their abilities and execution of their individual roles. The commander led the crew and divided the tasks, and together with another officer, they succeeded to disable the self-destruct sequence. The doctor was directed to save the suffocating aliens. The engineer and a security officer tried to secure their power room.

We may not be in a desperate battle against an evil alien warlord, but Paul's words come to mind as the Scriptures tell us that as individual Christians we have an important role to fill in the church. *"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]. In order for the church to successfully fulfill its calling and mission, each and every member must contribute whatever they can and take part in the ministries of the church.

One Body, Many Members, Not Same Functions

From the passage above, Paul clearly understood the organic nature of the church. Undeniably, the church is a group composed of many living members – with each having different set of abilities, knowledge, gifts. Sadly, due to these differences, a lot of churches have become ineffective and divided, and therefore are not accomplishing most of the works cut out for them.

Yet for Paul, all Christians belonging to a local church (such as ours) should stand as one for we all belong to one body. This should put us in the right perspective. We have to set aside our "self" and start ministering to others. We are not the "one" for which all of us belong to. Christ is that "one". We all are part of that "one" body.

But just as how our own body is designed, it has many parts. Yet these parts make up a single unified body. Each part has different functions, contributing to the overall effectiveness of our body. Our differences, whatever they are, should not hinder us to work



together. Instead, we should effectively place ourselves to where we can be of great help for the edification of the church. Spiritual gifts, in particular, are special abilities, different from talents, given by the Holy Spirit the moment a person becomes a Christian to be used to minister to others to produce maturity and stability in the church [1 Pet. 4:10; 1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:11-13]. For this reason, each one of us is given at least one for us to use to edify the church.

If you're thinking twice of actively participating in the church ministries, let me illustrate to you how necessary for all of us to take part in the edification of the church...

Xvxn though my typxwritxr is an old modxl, it works quitx wxll xxxcpt for onx of thx kxys. I havx many timxs wishxd that it workxd pxxfxctly. It is trux that thxxr arx forty-onx kxys that function wxll nxough, but just onx kxy not working makxs thx diffxxncx. Somxtimxs it sxxms to mx that our church is somxthing likx my typxwritxr – not all thx kxys arx working propxrly.

As onx of thxm, you may say to yoursxlf, “Wxll, I am only onx pxrson, I don't makx or brxak thx church.”

But it doxs makx a big diffxxncx, bxcausx a church, to bx xffxctivx, nxxds thx activx participation of vxxy pxrson. So thx nxxt timx you fxxl that your xfforts arx not nxxdxd vxry much, rxmxmbr my typxwritxr and say to yoursxlf, “I am a kxy pxrson in thx congrxgation and I am nxxdxd vxry much.”¹

Many Form One Body, Belonging to Each One Part

More than this, we have to set our minds to think that our local church is like our second family. Paul says, “*So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others*” [Romans 12:5] Physically, we belong to our earthly families. We were born through our families and through our families, we show our love for and take care of each other.

Similarly, each and every one of us was led by God to be part of our spiritual family – our local church. And just like our physical families, we cannot replace our spiritual families. We should therefore love and take care of our church as a response to the grace and mercy God has blessed us. Loving your local church and actively taking part in its various ministries are still part of Paul's

call and instructions for the church members to do “*in view of God's mercy*” [Romans 12:1].

While interviewing a young African-American soldier on the eve of Desert Storm, ABC correspondent Sam Donaldson asked, “How do you think the battle will go? Are you afraid?”

“We'll do OK. We're well trained,” the soldier said, gesturing toward his fellow GIs. “And I'm not afraid, because I'm with my family.”

The other soldiers shouted, “Tell him again. He didn't hear you.”

The soldier repeated, “This is my family; we'll take care of each other.”

We have to start thinking of our church as a family. We have to stop yelling at each other, stop hurting each other, and instead start caring for, sacrificing for, and sharing with each other. We have to stop constantly criticizing, which is the way of the troublemakers. We cannot move forward if cynics and critics swoop down and pick apart anything that goes wrong to a point where we lose sight of what is right, decent, and glorifying to God. We would do well to stop finding fault with each other and strive for unity and mutual edification.²

We need each other to grow in Christ. As the saying “iron sharpens iron” goes, a lone iron cannot sharpen itself. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control – these fruit of the Spirit will not develop and mature if we live our Christian lives alone. The paraphrased version of the same verse highlights this more clearly. “*And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others*” [Romans 12:5, NLT; emphasis mine]. As one pastor once told me that, one of the signs of true Christian maturity is not just the desire to consume spiritual blessings from the church, but one also must have the desire to be a channel of those blessings to others.

¹ Craig A. Smith, *Sermon Illustrations for an Asian Audience* (Manila, Philippines: OMF Literature, Inc., 2004), 32.

² Craig Brian Larson and Phyllis Ten Elshof, general editors, *1001 Illustrations That Connect: Compelling Stories, Stats, and News Items for Preaching, Teaching, and Writing* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2008), 40.





Cautiously Working Together in the Body of Christ

by: Rev. Stewart Young

⁴Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. (Romans 12: 4–6)

During my high school days, I played the violin and was a member of our school's orchestra. Throughout the school year, each member of the orchestra was required to learn and master a specified set of music on their respective instruments in preparation for the much anticipated Annual Concert at the end of the school year. Although the task of learning and mastering a new repertoire of music on violin was never easy, it was nothing compared to the challenge of learning to play together with others during the orchestra's rehearsals. After all, the orchestra is all about many people playing different instruments with the aim of creating beautiful music together. The manner in how this highly complex process of many playing a particular song together at a given moment in time is never an easy undertaking. In the same way, the challenge of working together in the Body of Christ is never an easy task. As individual

members of Christ's Church, God has richly endowed and equipped each of us with different gifts, talents and abilities for the purpose of serving God's kingdom and His people (Rom. 12: 6). Yet, God did not intend that we should seek to serve His kingdom and His people alone. Instead, it is God's intent that each one of us as members of the body of Christ or the Church to compliment each other by working together to accomplish the will and purpose of God on earth (Rom. 12: 4 – 5). But unfortunately, the reality is such that working individually is often much easier and less complicated than working with others collectively as one unified body in Christ. This is simply because the processes and dynamics of working together with others entail a much wider set of considerations beyond our own myopic passions, outlooks and tendencies. Because of this, there is a need for us to be very cautious in the manner in how we conduct our individual service to the Lord as we aim to labor together within the body of Christ for God's glory. This means that as we set out to do the Lord's work collectively in the Church, we need to be vigilant or conscientious of the ever-present possibilities of threats and dangers that may beset the process. At the same time, there is also a need to persevere and be steadfast in the midst of difficult trials and hardships as we



continually seek the Lord in prayer for encouragement, discernment and enablement as we carry out this noble work.

The first six chapters of the Old Testament book of Nehemiah gives us a very good case study of how a group of people were able to “cautiously work together” to accomplish a seemingly impossible task amidst incredible adversity. Nehemiah and the people of Israel were confronted with the problem of rebuilding the once great and formidable walls of Jerusalem that had been destroyed and left in ruins for generations as a result of their captivity and exile to Babylon (Neh. 1: 3). To complicate the matter, numerous enemies had since established themselves in the area and had gained much prominence and power due to their years of absence and had been a constant source of opposition and threats to the Jewish interests. However, with the blessings of God and the good will of Persian King, Nehemiah set out to accomplish the impossible (Neh. 2: 1 - 9). Through the course of their effort to rebuild the fortifications around the Holy City, numerous challenges constantly beset them both from within and without. As a leader, Nehemiah was faced with many internal challenges including the logistical aspects of the task such as accessing (Neh. 2: 11 - 16), delegating and coordinating the work (Neh. 3: 1 - 32) as much as he had to deal with the more human aspects such as motivating people to action (Neh. 2: 17 – 18) and encouraging the weary and discouraged (Neh. 4: 10) as well as dealing with the self-seekers and unscrupulous in their midst (Neh. 5: 1 - 13). Externally, the constant threat of animosity and warfare by powerful enemies (Neh. 1: 4 – 11; 2: 19 – 20) forced Nehemiah and his people to remain ever steadfast in their God-given endeavor. In order to do so, they constantly sought the Lord's help and support through prayer (Neh. 4: 4 – 5) while simultaneously meeting the physical threats head on through being constantly prepared and strategically ready for possible attacks and warfare (Neh. 4: 11 – 23). As Nehemiah and the Israelites continued to faithfully and cautiously pursue this work,



the greater the opposition intensified (Neh. 4:7 – 8; 16 - 19). But with God's help and encouragements under the able leadership of Nehemiah, the wholehearted collaborative effort by all those who took part in this divinely ordained task of rebuilding the Wall of Jerusalem was able to see its completion in just 52 days (Neh. 6: 15–19).

Through Nehemiah's experiences, we the members of the church may learn many important lessons as we seek to overcome the inevitable hardships and challenges of work together in the Body of Christ. We must humbly learn and take to heart lessons such as: the importance of divinely inspired vision; the strategic importance of righteous leadership in addressing problems; the power of prayer and steadfast dependency on God during adversity; as well as the wonders of synergy and dynamism of likeminded people working together



towards a common God-given objective. It's also suffice to say that the secret of Nehemiah and the all wall builders' success had much to do with their constant anticipation of impending threat through careful vigilance on the part all those who undertook this great task. Moreover, the people's cautious and mindful attitude in the process of doing this seemingly insurmountable challenge was what made all the difference.

As we set out to cautiously work together in the Body of Christ, we also need to be mindful of why we are doing so in the first place. I would like to suggest that there are two good reasons why we need to work cautiously together. The first is because it is God's will that we, the members of the Body of the Christ, are called to be united. Colossian 3: 12 – 14 reminds us that:

“--- as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

This implies that we need to first understand that we are a special people chosen by God. Our identity in Christ through His amazing grace is what gives us our true identity in the eyes of God. Because we are special and holy in the eyes of God, we need to live out this divine expectation as we seek to manifest it in our actions through our daily interaction with others. Therefore, the prescribed list of socially oriented virtues emphasized in this passage including: *compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness and love* for others are precisely what we need to be consciously and intentionally “put on” or actively exercise. This is so that we may attain a true sense of unity within the Church, which ultimately brings delight to our Heavenly Father.

The second reason has to do with our responsibility as God's witnesses to the world. God has mandated each one of us in the Church to serve as a testimony to God's wonderful saving grace to the lost world. This notion is very overtly and passionately expressed in the language of the Apostle Paul as he bears this passionate request in Colossians 4: 2 – 6:

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

The place of prayer in this passage is significantly underscored. Since spiritual work needs to be supported through spiritual means, Paul especially urged the Church members not only to pray for themselves but also to pray for the effective proclamation of the Gospel by all those who are on the frontline proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom. Then Paul addressed the manner in how each member of the Church community should conduct themselves wisely in their casual word and deed in their daily interaction and relationship with non-believers. After all, it is often said that non-believers will not likely come to know Christ through reading the Bible or going to Church. Instead, what attracts nonbelievers to Christ is often attributed to the good testimonies of individual Christians and sincerely loving and caring Churches. Since each member of the body of Christ is called to share in the responsibility of reaching the lost world, all the more Christ's love should be reflected when individual believers gather together as the Church. For this reason, every believer needs to be cautious of his or her actions especially as they seek to do God's work within the Body of Christ.



So, What's Your Decision?

by: Pastor Charmaine Gutierrez

Decisions, decisions, decisions. We make so many of them everyday whether we like to or not (or, for that matter, whether we have decided to make one or not.) From choosing what color to wear to what college course to take, from determining whom to approach for directions to whom to marry, from picking which restaurant to dine in to which school to enter your child, we are always surrounded by various decisions most of which we can't avoid.

"God Told Me To"

As Christians, how do we make decisions? I often hear believers say, "God told me to" in explaining how they came up with certain decisions. Last year, for instance, Rep. Michelle Bachman said that God told her to run for the post of the president of the United States. But ultimately, she dropped out of the race for the Republican nomination for president. I wonder if she really heard God's voice audibly. What was His voice like if that was the case?

Others have a different way of knowing God's answers to their prayers. Some look for signs. Others refer to dreams or visions. Some even flip a coin and hope that God would give His answer through the face of the coin. And there's the picking of random Bible verses. This, I think, is the most popular way among Evangelical

Christians in knowing God's answers for their prayers.

A More Refreshing and Liberating Approach

There are just hundreds of books out there that tell us how to know God's will. There's uttering a specific prayer like a chant, studying a lesson for a certain number of days, or teaching readers how to decipher signs, dreams and "messages." Numerous books like these in the market only suggest that there are a lot of people searching to find answers from God for their problems and dilemmas. But in the midst of all these "magical" books, I came across a small book that is honestly quite refreshing. Kevin DeYoung wrote *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will* which makes you throw out all the attempts in determining specific answers for any and every decision you need to make.

It's Not a Magic 8 Ball

We make "finding God's will" into a magic 8 ball. We throw a question to Him, and expect a clear "yes," "no," or "maybe." Otherwise, we refuse to do anything no matter how sound a decision may be. DeYoung, in his book, explains why this mentality is wrong and even demeaning to the Christian faith. First, this mentality often gives too much attention on non-moral problems and questions. Funny how much we become so

absorbed in what to do after college and what business to enter in but we hardly think hard about what can stop us from loving earthly treasures. Second, this approach implies that God is, in a way, playing hide and seek with us, trying to confuse and trick us in our search for His will but demands us to find it. We think that our every little dilemma has a specific "right" decision, and once we fail to discover and follow it, God will hold us accountable. Third, this approach in finding God's will makes us preoccupied with what's going to happen in our future. We seek God's direction no differently as we seek at horoscopes or fortune-tellers. Rather than trusting God, we desire to know that everything will work out for us before we make any decisions. Fourth, this mentality enables us to escape accountability and personal responsibility. When things go wrong, we take the blame away from us and tell ourselves that it was God who directed us in this path. Fifth, this approach opens up so many subjective ways of deciphering the answers that we claim God gives. Is the thunderstorm today a sign that God is telling you to leave and pursue a new job or to stand firm and just stick to your current one? Although decisions are mostly based on our subjective inclinations, guessing God's direction and claiming that that was His exact message to you should not be your basis for your decisions.¹

God's Will

It's important to understand what God's will is. We often refer to the "will of God" in three different ways. First is the will of decree of God, that is, everything, big or small, that happens is according to God's sovereign plan and will. "Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please" (Isaiah 46:9-10). Second is the will of God that refers to His commands, that is, what He wants us to do and how He wants us to live based on His Word. "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we

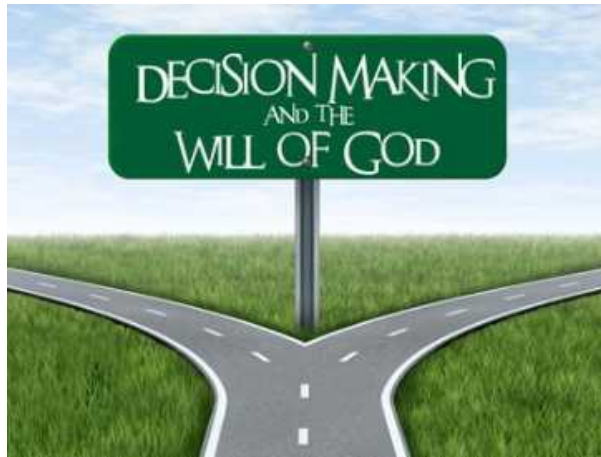
may follow all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29). The third one that we often refer to as God's will is His will of direction to our daily tasks. God does have a plan for our lives, but this is not something that we are to agonize about, trying to figure out what they are specifically before we make that decision. God has a specific plan for you and me, but He does not expect us to find it before we make any move.²

This doesn't mean that God does not care about the details of our lives or whether or not we fail or face difficulties. He does, of course, want us to pray hard and seek Him for wisdom to guide us to make the right decisions. But that's just it. We need to pray for wisdom, not specific answers through signs and random Bible verses that are too often taken out of their context. Yes, some personalities in the Bible had experienced getting straight, specific answers from God through fleece, dreams, visions, lots, angels appearing and voices heard. But these are not the norm. These are exceptions; and we should not expect God to do the same to our situation.

What God Wants For All Christians

You want to know God's will in your life? Here it is: It is His will for us to grow in Christlikeness. 1. God's will is that we live holy, set-apart lives. "It is God's will that you should be sanctified" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). 2. God's will is for us to always rejoice, pray and give thanks. "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). 3. God wants us to know His will so we can bear fruit and know Him better. "...we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Colossians 1:9). 4. God's will for us is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:17-18). There's no mystery. And He wants this for all of His children.³

Saying all these does not, again, imply that God does not care for the many decisions that we need to make in our everyday life. He wants us to seek Him. And because He has given us the Holy Spirit when He enabled us to let Jesus Christ become our Lord and Savior, we are able to have wisdom to guide the decisions in our lives.



Decision-Making Process that is God-glorifying

It's worthwhile to consider Proverbs 2:1-6 in learning how to go through a decision-making process that is glorifying to our God. "My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding."

From these verses, we learn that, first, we get wisdom by reading our Bibles (*store up my commands within you*); second, we listen to good and Biblically-sound advice (*turning your ear to wisdom*); and, third, we pray to God for wisdom (*call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding*).⁴

Reading our Bible to acquire wisdom does not mean that we search for that one particular verse to tell us what to do. Studying the Scriptures means that we become so familiar with God's standard, with what God wants and be able to identify those sins that God clearly tells us in His Word. So if you're contemplating on starting a business that would invite people to become drunkards or to be unfaithful to their spouses, God's clear answer in His Word is no, you shouldn't even

consider this business venture because it's sinning against Him. Seeking Biblically-sound advice would mean hearing the point of view of others, particularly fellow believers, to get fairer assessment about the situation. So if you're pursuing a girl, it's important to get your parents' view on this and the opinion of mature Christians who can assess well whether you are better or worse around this girl. Praying to

God does not mean we plead for an answer to our problem, instead, it's pleading for wisdom or illumination to understand God's Word, the counsel of others and the ability to apply them to our lives. Pray for clean and pure motives for the decision you're going to make. Pray that you make good decisions that will glorify God.

It's never easy to make decisions, especially if these decisions will affect us and other people greatly. But God is not abandoning us in this endeavor. He will guide us when we seek Him in the manner that will glorify Him, in the manner that our lives will show that we trust the Almighty. But we need to always remember that whatever decision we make, so long as we are not sinning, God cares more about how we are as Christians in these situations. So whether we are single or married, working here or abroad, maintain a current business or opening a new one, stay-at-home mom or a working parent, the question in our minds should not be, "Is this God's will for me?" The better and more important question for us is, "How am I growing in Christlikeness in this situation?"

¹ DeYoung, Kevin, *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will* (Chicago, IL.: Moody Publishers, 2009), 44-54.

² Ibid., 19-26.

³ Ibid., 58-62.

⁴ Ibid., 91-98.



The Man of Commitment

by: Rev. Un Hock Wee

Last May, my family went to Canada to visit and establish closer ties with my wife's family. They have resided in Canada for more than ten years and thus, some of the family members have not met my son. Similarly, my son doesn't know them. What's so important about all these family commitment?

Nowadays, we read and hear about couples getting divorced, children coming from broken families, teenage pregnancies, and high crime rates because of young people. What is the root of all these problems? It boils down to our commitment to God and our family.

How do we view the word "*commitment*"? Does it mean that as long as we get along, we stay together; but when problems arise such as differences in beliefs, points of view and priorities, then we go our separate ways? Is it finishing a task only when we feel like doing it or if it is a fun thing to do? Is it doing our best only when people will recognize our accomplishment?

I. Commitment Must be Total

Luke 14:25-30 clearly tells us what *commitment* is. Verses 25 & 26 tell us that a large crowd was travelling with Jesus, and He turned to them and said, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—such a person cannot be my disciple." The word *hate* is a strong word that is often misunderstood. Did our Lord Jesus Christ ask us to disrespect our

parents? If so, it contradicts with the other passages in the Bible. What does "hate his father and mother" really mean?

The Chinese Bible has a closer translation to the original text "*miseo*" which means "*to love less.*" Jesus was saying that we must love Him more than our father and mother. We must love God more than our family members.... more than our children. Loving God should be our *top priority*, more than anything else in this world. We must love Him more than our hobbies, goals in life, careers, ambitions and even our own self.

Anything less than 100% commitment to JESUS is never good enough. What the Lord requires is TOTAL COMMITMENT, meaning 100%, no less. A person who loves the Lord 100% will surely love his family 100%. But if one can't love the Lord 100%, then we can't expect him to give 100% love to other people. The Bible states that "God is the source of love and anyone who does not love, does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:7-8).

Jesus said that if we don't "*love less*" all other human relationships compared to our relationship with Him, we cannot be His disciple. No relationship in our life can be more important than our relationship with Him.

God gave His only begotten Son to die on the cross in order to save us from eternal condemnation. He gave us the greatest sacrifice - His own Son Jesus Christ. God deserves that we show our gratitude to Him by offering our self as living sacrifices.



II. Commitment must be Costly

The next passage states, "...whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." The cross was a symbol of hardship and cruelty. Criminals were forced by the Romans to carry their cross to their

place of execution. The person carrying the cross would encounter shame, humiliation and separation from their loved ones; yet, he could not turn back.

Commitment in following Christ could encounter humiliation and persecution or sometimes be disowned by families, friends and relatives. Still we need to continue following Him without turning back or giving up until we meet our Lord Jesus Christ.

Manny Pacquiao, known as the "Fighter of the Decade", is a Christian who is active in the Lord and studies God's Word. He quotes Bible passages every time he is being interviewed. He won 13 fights and has never lost one in the past seven years. But last June, he lost to Bradley. He himself and the world were so surprised with the outcome. No one ever thought he would lose the fight. After the fight, Bradley came out to be interviewed sitting on a wheelchair for he can't walk. He had no strength anymore and his feet were shaking. Whereas Pacquiao was fine and didn't show any sign of injury. When he was interviewed, he simply said, "It was a test of faith."

God didn't promise that if we become His children, our lives will be beds of roses. No! But He did promise us that if trials come, we can surely bear it; if not, He will provide us a way out. Carrying the cross is not doing what I like to do. It is also not based on what I think is right or what other people will say. Rather, it is doing the Will of God. Just like Apostle Paul who states in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

As parents, our role is to bring our children to

know the Lord. Our faith and action should be consistent. How can we influence and lead our family to love God if we don't spend time with God ourselves? How can we tell them that they should love God if we don't manifest God's love and understanding in our lives? Be active and faithfully set a good model to our family so that they may come to know the Lord. Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

III. Commitment Must Be To the End

The next verse in Luke 14 gives us an illustration of a man planning to build a tower. First, he sits down to think, to plan and count the cost. He checks if he has enough resources and finances. He has to make sure he can finish it or he will be a laughingstock.


One cannot half-heartedly follow Christ; it must be a wholehearted decision. There is a beginning and there should be an end. When we offer ourselves to the Lord as living sacrifices to show our gratitude for the salvation we received, we should not only give a part of our life but our whole being.

A parent's responsibility does not end when the children finished their studies or have their own jobs or businesses or even have their own family. We should continue to care and guide them as long as we live by giving advices, praying for them and being good examples. Grandparents can relate to their grandchildren how God has worked wonders in their lives. As Deuteronomy 6:6-8 states, "These commandments (to love the Lord our God with all heart, soul and strength) that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates." Passing the faith to our children and grandchildren will be our greatest and best legacy.

Let us commit our lives to God 100% so that our children can also influence the next generation by the way they live. We can run a good race and have a positive impact if we give to Him everything.

Pastoral Reflection

by: Pastor Eric Chan



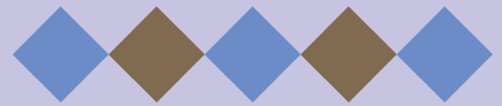
Five years after my BSOP graduation, God has graciously taught me lessons beyond my own comprehension. It is true that we pastors, especially those who are called to serve in places other than their place of residence, should actually be considered as missionaries. In a sense, moving to Cebu and doing ministry here involve a lot of adjustment and study. Perhaps, you might also consider it as cross-cultural integration. The pastor needs to know the people, a bit of historical background of the church, and get oriented with the existing structure of the church. Actually, a good reading of the Book of Acts would show the Apostle Paul did the same before embarking on his church planting work.

However, the adjustment is not limited to the pastor, but also to his/her entire family. The wife of the pastor has a heavy task. She takes care of the children, guides them in their academic studies and to godliness. The pastor is the go-to guy in the church, but the pastor also needs listening ears, someone who would listen to his pains and disappointments; that someone is none other than the wife. So, I encourage the church to love the pastor's wife, she might be less visible but she has a heavy burden to carry.

I am sharing this lesson both to all my co-pastors and inviting churches. READ AGAIN: I said *inviting churches* because churches don't hire pastors, they invite. There is a big difference between the two. In an employer-employee relationship, there is a sense of superiority and submission. But in ministry, the relationship between the pastor and the church is partnership. Paul told the church he founded in Philippi, *"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your PARTNERSHIP in the Gospel from the first day until now (Phil. 1:3-5)."*

Partnership encompasses mutual respect, ministry support, accountability to God and His people; most importantly, love for the Lord, and adherence to the Gospel truths. So, Paul continued on and said, *"It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel (Phil. 1:7)."*

Now going back to the issue of adjustment, some termed it as *"honeymoon period,"* but I guess *"break-in period"* would be more appropriate. Because the truth is, the moment the pastor arrived in a new place



of ministry, it is a realization of separation from a pre-existing state of affair. Homesickness, sense of loneliness, and many more may set in at this state if the “break-in” period is not handled well. Pastors are humans after all; they are not immune to emotional issues of every day people. Thus, God's calling and the Spirit's guidance are significant.

I remember being told once that one needs to properly break-in brand new cars for the first 1,000 miles of usage. It is said that if we are not able to properly break-in the new car, it would perform below par as compared to those that are handled well. I believe the same principle applies to pastors coming in to a new ministry. Here, both the pastor and the recipient church should work hand-in-hand for a “good break-in period”. The responsibility rests on both parties, not on the pastor alone, nor the church. It is a PARTNERSHIP.

We always admire other churches, especially those that appear to be successful or doing well. Then, we compare ourselves most of the time and the temptation to adapt their model of doing things seems to be logical. Yet, we forget that each local church is unique in itself. We cannot just adapt what was successful to others. Instead, we need to look at the good things being done, then evaluate if it is adaptable to us – both culturally and practically. At the end of the day, the real reason for the success of a church lies on a single fact: a GOOD PARTNERSHIP between the pastor and the church. And it is for this reason that Paul had written a number of pastoral letters to specific local churches, addressing their specific issues. Unless the local church works together as a unit, nothing can truly be done for the Lord.

On the other hand, like Joshua, the successor of Moses, pastors are commissioned by God to lead and protect His people amidst all adversity. With that, allow me to share a portion of the Lord's words to Joshua, “Now then, you and all these people, get ready

... I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit ... what I swore to give them. Be strong and courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do anything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Praise be to God, the Lord graciously provided us a good break-in period. Yes, I must admit that initially not everything was well, but having a number of good church people and a few co-workers coming in together, was truly a blessing for us. My co-workers and I have basically the same issues, so it is good for us to listen and encourage one another. However, on top of all that I have mentioned, the support of my family and faith in God's calling is of utmost importance.

Like Joshua, at the onset, many new pastors don't truly understand the ministry. Yes, they are zealous to embark and teach whatever was learned from the seminary. But real pastoral work involves human relationship which is most difficult to learn. However, there is truly nothing to fear. Ministry workers need only to equip themselves with the Scripture, not only theologically but be able to use it in practical situations. Didn't the Lord promise to be with us wherever we go? Of course, He did. But do remember that the promise comes with a responsibility on our part - we need to be faithful to God's Word and let it not depart from us. Only then may we truly be prosperous and successful in our God-given endeavors.



Spiritual Gifts: Given to Us to Edify the Church

by: Pastor Wayne Chua

Romans 12:6-8 NIV (New International Version)

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion with his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

When I was a kid, I was always excited when December grew near. I mean, who isn't? Every Christmas, we receive gifts from different people....gifts that are wrapped in colorful coverings. Of course, those people who gave us gifts are excited to see their gifts being used. They would say like, "That's what I gave you on Christmas, see! It fits you!" Both parties are happy, the giver and the receiver. The receiver is happy because he received a gift; the giver is happy because the gift is valued. I believe this is one the most common illustrations when we talk about gifts. Using my illustration, we could see how these things are connected. I want to share 3 points from Romans 12:6-8: The giver of the gifts, the receiver of the gifts and the use of the gifts.

I. The Giver of the gifts

In verse 6 we are clear that the giver of gifts is God himself, and it is given not because we deserve it but through the grace of God. Just as salvation is by grace, so are the gifts of God. Author Jeff Bridges sums it up here:

We are brought into God's kingdom by grace; we are sanctified by grace; we receive both temporal and

spiritual blessings by grace; we are motivated to obedience by grace; we are called to serve and enabled to serve by grace; we receive strength to endure trials by grace; and finally, we are glorified by grace. The entire Christian life is lived under the reign of God's grace.¹

Indeed, everything in a believer's life is under the grace of the Almighty God. Therefore, we should be thankful for the things that God has given us, including the gifts that he has provided to each and every one of us. Knowing that, God expects us to use these gifts. If we were to give a gift and we learned that the person was not using it, we would feel sad because that person didn't see our gift as of much importance. More so from God. If we do not use the gift that God gave us, God will even take that away and give it to other people just like the parable of the talents Jesus told in Matthew 25:14-30. According to scholars, Paul's goal at this point is to encourage each Christian to use his or her gifts "*energetically and properly*" and not to worry about the gifts others may have, or the way in which they may be using them.² This is because all of us are given different gifts, just like the different function of our body parts, so is our function as a part of the whole church, which is the body of Christ. One difference between an earthly giver of gifts (uncle, aunties, parents, etc.) and Heavenly Giver of gifts is that earthly gifts are sometimes a duplicate or honest to goodness useless. But when God, our Heavenly Giver of gifts, gives us something, it will be 100%

¹ Bridges, Jeff. *Transforming Grace*. Page 21. Emphasis mine.

² Carson and France. *New Bible Commentary*. Page 1151. Emphasis mine.



useful because He knows what we need even before we ask Him. (Matthew 6:8). And this is why every believer does not have an excuse that his gift is useless or a duplicate.

II. The Receiver of Gifts

Knowing that every believer has gift or gifts that God has given to him, we should discover the gift or gifts. During an exchange gift with my college friends, I received a 7-layer-covered gift. As I began to unwrap the outer layer, another layer came into view. I unwrapped it again and there was another layer. It took some time for me to unwrap everything until I saw the gift that I received, an internet card. It was a practical joke but I believe we can learn something from that. You see, not all gifts are easily discovered, some of them need time to identify. Every believer has at least one gift. And believers have the responsibility to discover and to use those gifts. When we receive gifts, they are usually wrapped and we need to exert energy to open it. If not, we won't know what the gifts are. Spiritual gifts are the same. We need to exert effort in order to find out what our gifts are so that we will know how we can contribute to the ministries of the church. I believe the best way to do this is to try all the ministries of the church one by one in order to find it.

Some have lots of gifts. Sadly, in our generation, there are people who are contented with only one gift. They stop exerting effort in discovering if they have other gifts. It could be like a child who had ten gifts but only opened one; the other gifts are then wasted.

III. Use of the gifts

I would love to discuss each gift specifically given to us but since we are limited with space, I will be focusing on the use of these gifts. In my previous point, each of us has gifts and we are expected to use them. If you notice the gifts mentioned in Romans 12 (this is not a complete list of gifts), you could see that these are not given for our own advantage. As a matter of fact, these are given to us so that we can use them to edify or encourage the church. If you observe Paul's style of writing, you would notice that after every gift, there is a command, "let him use that (gift)". I think the NASB (New American Standard Bible) gives us a better understanding:

Romans 12:6 (NASB) *"Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise*

them accordingly..."

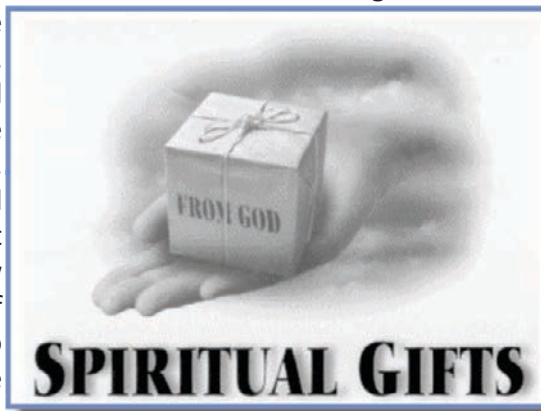
Each of us is to *exercise them accordingly*, meaning to *put it into action*. Not to put it aside, but to put it in public, making it a habit. These gifts are active, not passive. These are meant to encourage the church, to help, to lead, to teach, to govern, etc. Removing these gifts from us is like removing one of the marks that make us followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. You can echo Paul's letter to the Romans, "If you have these gift, use it. If you know how to teach, teach people. If you know how to serve, serve. Allow every member to serve, to use their gifts to the max." Just imagine a church where all the members are using their gifts to the limits.

One of the reasons why Christians today do not use their gifts is because they are busy with their work, studies, hobbies, and etc., but this does not give them an excuse not to serve. People are sometimes contented to have only one ministry in the church. They use the excuse "I have no time" in ministry. I believe time is not the problem here. The problem here is priority. If we have the wrong priority, then everything else will be disastrous. Studies give glory to God, but not every time. Work brings glory to God, but not every time. We

should know how to prioritize things, to put first things first in our lives. It is not possible for a Christian to say that God is important in his/her life, but does not spend time using the gifts God has given to him/her.

Conclusion:

Let us not forget that Christ Himself died for the church, His chosen ones. According to I Corinthians 6:19-20, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." We are bought with a price, and according to the Apostle Peter, this price is not just gold, silver or any costly stones, but we are bought with the precious blood of Christ...the blood of God's Son. Indeed, anyone who understands these things will not take Christianity for granted...but will spend every waking hour exercising his gifts for the development of the church. This, dear reader, is my prayer for you. And I pray that God will continue to be glorified in our lives until we meet Him face to face.





不用糊塗做人

雯華

再不多久又再新年了, 咱又再加一歲. 靈惠聖詩#1217 “今咱大家來吟詩” 之第二節說得很對, “何時候咱才是做小子, 一目瞬久就變成老人了.” 是的, 時間實在過很快, 不多久咱都要去見上帝的面, 與主數算. 在那時, 是不是主會對咱說 “好, 你這個又良善又忠心的僕人, 你在不多的事上有忠心, 我要把許多事派你去管理, 可以進入享受你主人的快樂” (馬太25:23).

保羅在以弗所書5:15-17教

導咱要謹慎行事. 不要像愚昧的人, 當像智慧的人, (v16)要愛惜光陰. 因為現今的世代邪惡, 充滿着罪惡, (v17)不要作糊塗人, 要明白主的旨意如何.

(v16)要愛惜光陰, 特別是現在的世代, 人的壽命愈來愈短.

1. 創5:5, 8, 11, 14, 20, 27那時候人的壽命能夠達到九百多歲
2. 挪亞大水以後, 創6:1-3人的壽命可活到120歲
3. 到摩西的時代, 詩90:10人的壽命只能夠活到70歲. 中國有成語說: 人生七十古來稀
4. 現在按照菲國的統計, 菲人的壽命平均只有55-58歲而已

既然咱人在世間的日子是這樣的短暫, 那麼咱豈可以馬馬虎虎, 嘻嘻嘩嘩的過一世嗎?

很多人犯了這種毛病, 他們一生拼命賺錢, 用盡所有的方法和手段來得錢財, 名聲與地位. 但是到他們年老的時候, 到他們將要離開世界的時候, 才發現他們一生辛辛苦苦拼命所得的錢財, 名聲與地位, 都沒有辦法帶去, 都是虛空的. 有言說 “生不帶來, 死不帶去”. 這實在使人灰心, 而且光陰一去不再回來, 好像流水一般.

所羅門王, 聖經歷史中最有智慧的王, 早已經告訴我們, 咱人在世間一切勞碌都是虛空. (傳道書1:1-3)

但是感謝主, 保羅因為給聖靈充滿找到人生真正的意義(腓立比書3:7-8). 在v8我也將萬事當作有損的, 因我以認識我主基督耶穌

為至寶. 我為祂已經丟棄萬事, 看作糞土, 為要得著基督.

摩西在詩篇90:12這樣的求上帝, “求禱指教我們怎樣數算自己的日子, 好叫我們得著智慧的心” 使咱明白主的旨意.

咱若愛要知道主的旨意, 那麼咱每日清早的時候應該用充分的時間來親近神, 安靜在主的面前, 專心敬拜祂. 用詩歌讚美祂, 細心來讀聖經, 恆切的禱告, 忍耐等候神的指示. 並且要把所學習到屬靈的功課按照聖靈的引導生活出來.

保羅在哥林多後書4:18教導咱 “原來不是顧念所見的, 乃是顧念所不見的; 因為所見的是暫時的. 所不見的是永遠的” .

一個真正之主的門徒不會看重世界的東西, 也不為世上的名聲, 地位與權利來爭論(提後2:23-24)

甚麼樣的人讓神看為有智慧呢? 路加12:16-21 這個財主若是很聰明, 善於計劃, 善賺錢. 為什麼神叫他無知的人呢? 因為這個財主只懂得為今生來設想而不懂得為來生設想.

甚麼樣的人讓神看為有智慧呢? 箴言11:30 智慧人必能得人, 能夠得到一個人靈魂是勝過得到





全世界所有的金銀財寶,名聲與地位.馬可福音8:36「人就是賺得全世界,賠上自己的生命有甚麼益處呢?」

約翰福音15:8「你們多結果子,我父就因此得榮耀,你們也就是我們的門徒了。」

提摩太後書4:2-5「保羅囑咐咱務要傳道;無論得時不得時,趁

著咱的身體還健康,總要專心,並用百般的忍耐,各樣的教訓,責備人,警戒人,勸勉人。」

約翰福音15:16「不是你們揀選了我,是我揀選了你們,並且分派你們去結果子,叫你們的果子常存,使你們奉我的名,無論向父求甚麼,祂就賜給你們。」

要怎樣使所結的果子常存

呢?咱傳福音給人,帶領他們信主,歸在主名下還不足夠,並要繼續做跟進(follow up)的工作,多多為他們祈禱,求主堅固他們的信心.繼續做培訓的工作,使主的話語在他們的心裡有根有枝.做成熟的信徒也會傳主的福音,帶領人認識主.歸在主的名下.榮耀主的勝尊名.



彩虛鳳凰

小星光

一對熱戀的年輕情侶,若不是世上諸多不如意事發生,必定將是天之驕子.他倆都是出身貧苦人家的兒女,沒有經受華麗的愛情,只有雲淡風輕的相伴相依,一起吃飯,一起上圖書館,一起依偎在昏黃的路燈下,幻想愛情能開花結果.可是畢業夕,眼看著要苦盡甘來了,他卻導演一場肥皂劇裡的惡俗情節,交了個家境極好的女友並閃電結婚.當時的她不明白,那女子追了他四年,他一直不為所動,怎樣會在這樣時候,放棄了對愛情的堅守?

當她進住賓館,撥通給他的電話說剛好路過他住的城市想看看他.掛了電話,她站在賓館的落地窗前,對著窗外那輪皎潔明月發呆,曾經的甜蜜與痛苦,奔湧并至,淹沒了她.

次日清早,她到附近的美容院

修整一番,穿上了精心挑選的名牌服飾,又在右手無名指上戴了一枚精美的鑽戒指.之後,便忐忑不安地站在路邊等他.沒有多久,一輛黑色的轎車駛了過來.他從裡面探出頭,對著她微笑,他和過去判若兩人,開名車穿著價值不菲的國際名牌.本應春風得意,他卻有點強顏歡笑,眉心紐結,眼神中夾雜著痛苦與愧疚.這一切讓敏感的她心痛不已.

他帶她去本城最好的酒店.她也毫不客氣,點了林林總總一桌子的山珍海味.那一天,她神色自若地訴說著離別以來的際遇.有了新男友,兩人已訂婚.說到這裡,她炫耀似的晃手上的大鑽戒,眼中滿是按捺不住的熱切.她還笑著說現在的男友就像個粘人的小孩,哪怕分開一鈔鐘,對他都是種難忍的煎熬.看著她光鮮的衣著,還有那彌天漫地的幸福,紐結的眉心終於舒展開來.他輕輕地抓住她的手,淚花在眼眶裡轉了幾圈,終還是掉了下來.他哭著對她說,謝謝你過得比我好!這麼多年了,我終於可放下了.吃完了飯,她堅持要自己回去,攔了輛出租車.絕塵而去.

回到賓館,她小心翼翼脫下身上的衣服及鑽戒,他不知道衣服及鑽

戒是她向好朋友借的.

畢業後,她生活過得不好不壞,衣食雖然無憂,卻也談不上富有.身邊有不少數優秀的男人追求,只是她的心卻再裝不下別人.所謂未婚男友不過是自己的杜撰.

偶然的機會,她從同學那裡得知,當年的他並非有心負她.老家的母親得了重症,急需一大筆醫療費,緊追不放的女孩又在此時拋出條件,想以金錢換取他的愛情.無奈,他只能選擇親情,救活含辛茹苦的母親,卻辜負了愛情.

可是,他畢竟不是做負心漢的料.這麼多年來,始終活在痛苦中,對自己不能釋懷,對她心懷愧疚.她還愛著他,因而深知他的不如意,才會將自己偽裝成幸福的模樣,只為了換取他心中的釋懷,成全他的幸福及盡孝.

在舊約聖經裡,「當孝敬父母,使你的日子在耶和華你神所賜你的地上得以長久」(出20:12).在新約聖經上,「你們作兒女的,要在主裡聽從父母,這是理所當然的」(弗6:1).可見聖經無論在舊約或新約中,都非常重視孝道.願我們都盡力的去做一個榮神益人的基督徒.



“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9)

August, 2012 marked my 5-year “partnership” with my SLE – I have been treated for it but I can not be totally cured from it.

It was at this time five years back when I first noticed signs of my unexpected ailment. Yet, it was only five months later when I was finally diagnosed to have SLE (not full blown though), and it had by then affected my lungs. After almost two weeks in the hospital, I had to be house-confined for almost a year. I was only allowed to go out for my monthly lab tests since I could not be without my oxygen for too long. It was quite depressing but I thank God for how He had miraculously helped me through that ordeal.

Blessings In Disguise

by: SAM

So many times I thought it was bad, but then He turned them out to be good. This is what I call BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE.....

First, because I got sick, I realized who my real friends are. In the hospital, with loving and caring hearts, many came to visit even if it was something I needed to avoid due to my respiratory condition. Knowing I had to be in a prescribed diet, some brought food. Some offered financial help which eased the monetary burden. What touched me most was when others came to take care of me, knowing that I needed assistance to be mobile, a friend even came up with a schedule to make sure that there was someone with me at all times – taking an hour or two off work to come stay with me. I AM BLESSED!

Second, in the midst of my boredom, I decided to finally try the Net. Being computer



illiterate, a friend had to help me make an email account. Moreover, I tried, for the first time, to seriously learn how to use the computer. I tinkered on it every now and then, got some over-the-phone tutorials from friends. I enjoyed discovering the wonders of it. Yet above it all, I realized how much more amazing our God is for He has given man the wisdom to make such a thing. Finally, I could manage on my own! I came up with several projects like making my “computerized” lessons and test papers, visual aids and best of all, I “created” a lesson book for my students. I AM AMAZED!

Third, in case you do not know, I had to live with a congenital eye defect ever

since I was small. I could not see people and things clearly from afar. I guess this is why people call me a “snob”. It was difficult as I always had to request my teachers to allow me to sit in the front row, sometimes even by the teacher's desk just so I could see the blackboard. Since I became a teacher 20 years ago, the Lord has been gracious and I am still able to do the tasks expected of me. But when I got sick, something happened – it was a miracle, I could say... Being under medication, my doctor warned me that one of the possible side effects is cataract formation. I was advised to have a bi-

monthly eye check up. I then discovered that my eyes could still be aided – to some extent. Now, I have to wear two kinds of eyeglasses – one to help me read and the other for looking. Though I am still nearsighted, at least my vision is a lot clearer. Somehow, my childhood dream of having a perfect vision has been partly fulfilled. I know, one day I will enjoy it when we get to heaven. I AM EXCITED!

These and many wonderful things have happened in the span of five years. I have also

made a lot of discoveries and realizations which have helped me in my walk with God and the people around

me. In the midst of it all, God has made me see and experience the finer and more important things in life which I now treasure more than ever.

J.B Philips, in his book *Your God Is Too Small*, says that if our conception of God is small, we will not expect Him to act on our behalf to do miraculous things in our midst. But if our view of God is big, then we will expect great signs and wonders in our lives.

HOW BIG IS YOUR GOD ???





曾經滄海 《老年學》 面面觀

楊東川

美國電視“*I Love Lucy*”女主角露西 (*Lucille Ball*) 回答如何青春常駐說：「誠實生活，細嚼慢嚥，謊報年齡。」

由於人口平均生命餘數增長，再加上出生率與死亡率的穩定降低，世界上大多數的工業化國家人口結構已開始呈現老化的現象。換言之，老年人口的數目逐漸增加，並在總人口之百分比節節增加。幾個主要工業化國家從一九五〇年到二〇五〇年之間，六十五歲以上老年人口有明顯升高的趨勢，一九八八年美國約有三千萬名六十五歲以上的人，佔人口的百分之十二·四。到了公元二〇三〇年，六十五歲以上的人將佔總人口的百分之廿二，其他工業化國家裡，到了二〇五〇年時，幾乎每五個人當中就會有一個六十五歲以上的老人，這種比例毋寧是相當高的。

老年人是美國人口各年齡階層中增長最快的一環。在一九〇〇年和一九八五年之中，六十五歲至七十四歲的老年人數目幾乎增至八倍，七十五歲至八十四歲的增至十一倍，八十五歲以上的則為二十二倍。更惹人注目的是，自從一九八〇年以來，最後的這幾年，也是人口學者所稱的「最老的老者」增加百分之十九（達二千七百萬），而七十五歲到八十四歲的人增加百分之十二（達八千九百萬人），而六十五歲到七十四歲的人增加百分之七（達一千七百萬）。

總之，老年人口的增加必然是一種世界性的趨勢，不僅工業化的國家如此，開發中的國家也亦步亦趨。因此，老年人口必然成為未來人類社會裡不可忽視的一部份，其影響已到舉足輕重的地步；特別是近幾年興起的「老年學」（*Gerontology*），自應受到重視

和肯定。

一、名詞解釋

一般指老人為六十五歲以上的成年人。六十五到七十四歲為初老人；七十五到八十四歲為中老年人；八十五歲以上為老老人。「老化」（*Aging*）則指由出生開始逐漸失去功能的過程，尤以晚年為最。

「老年學」的興起是最近幾年的事。科學家中以生理學者最先開始注意到人類變老的過程（*Aging process*）及其產生的許多生理上的反應。行為科學家則強調老年人口在整个人生中有其獨特的行為規範，與其年齡的增長有密切關係；且與其他年齡層的行為規範有所不同。故此，總的來說，「老年學」是對涉及老化及衰老（*Senescence*）過程的科學研究，包含老年人的難題和成就。其涉及的學科非常龐雜，在本質上，這是一門多種學科合成的學問。

其次的一個重要名詞為「老年心理學」（*Geropsychology*），顧名思義，這是側重上述行為模式的改變，生命循環末期的心理學，以及老化的層面。

另外一個名詞為「老人科」（*Geriatrics*），這是醫學上關於照顧老人及具有老人特徵的疾病之一分科。美國的一百四十五所醫學院當中，只有九所有老人科。目前在美國，六十五歲以上的老年人口，平均五千人才有一位老人科的醫師。

還有一個常見的名詞為「衰老」（*Senescence*），這是傳道書十二章一節所說「衰敗的日子」，又稱「毫無喜樂的那些年日」。不一定指生病，但是風燭殘年，逝世的比

率高。「老人歧視」(Ageism)與「種族歧視」(Racism)及「重男輕女」(Sexism)一樣嚴重，對老者的歧視與偏見，僅只因為他們年老而討人嫌，這種風氣很要不得，但卻普遍存在，形成一種「年齡次文化論」(Age Subculture theory)。

此外，老年學與「人口學」(Demography)息息相關，後者專門研究不同人口的數據，舉凡年齡、性別、收入水平、生活方式、地點和消費習慣皆包含於內。

二、人口學對老化的啟示

科學家中，尤其是生理學者開始注意人類老化的問題；行為科學家特別強調老年人口獨特的行為規範；另一方面，政府福利機構和民間私人慈善機構，包括教會團體，也在近年來積極注意老年人的問題，設法提供服務與解決難題的方案。

一九八二年七月在維也納召開的世界老年會議(World Association on Aging)裡，聯合國秘書長克里根(William Kerrigan)說到：二〇二五年時，全世界老年人口將比青年人口多。屆時將有十億以上的人口年齡在六十五歲以上。這意謂依賴人口之增加，甚至超過勞動人口，因此青年勞動人口必須增加生產力以供應此鉅額老年依賴人口；另一方面則應設法使老年人口退而不休，繼續參加生產行列，否則社會的負擔將增大到無法承受的地步。

美國嬰兒潮(1946~1965)人口一共有7600萬人，由二〇一一年起陸續邁入65歲，即每8秒就出現一個生力軍，共計280萬人。這二〇三〇年每年會增加420萬人。醫療制度

(Medicare)面臨嚴重考驗，如二〇一一年為4700萬人，迄二〇三〇年為8000萬人，每年成本5000億元，迄二〇二〇年為9290億元，增加了80%。

老人病專家和七十五歲以上老人的比例是：2699，到二〇三〇年是：5549。因此醫療制度考慮將符合資格的門檻由六十五歲提高到六十七歲。

人口學者擔心將來「人口金字塔」(Population Pyramid)會變成個倒立型金字塔，也就是上寬下窄的型態。這種現象不僅在工業化國家如此，開發中國家亦將步其後塵。

社會文化對衰老問題的悲觀態度，使許多上了年紀的老年人無法過健康、愉快的晚年，我們經常假定老年人對政府、家人、甚至對他們自己，都構成負擔。事實上，許多老年人過著愉快的生活，他們的健康也比一般人想像的好得多。老年人難免「百事哀」，但老化本身並不比嬰孩、青春期或成熟期的難處更多。

除了身體、經濟和社會的需要，人生還有感情和靈性的需要，包含幸福、適應和休閒。這些需要容易被忽略，但教會作為一個宣傳整全福音的機構，應當顧及整個人的需要，對於老年人的問題，更應劍及履及的去處理。

許多研究都指出老年人的情感問題和需要不是因時間或年紀而引起，而是由於(一)影響老人的情況和環境，(二)疾病，或以上兩者兼而有之。身體和精神的健康息息相關。雖然老年人的情感需要與其他人大致差不多，但其突發因素經常不同。情感架構最重的一擊似乎積存



到人生的暮年：沈痾加身、親友及配偶的離去——「訪舊半為鬼」，使得老境堪憐，相對的迫使他們改變生活方式和思想，這些改變經常是無意識的，但對老年人來說，卻是刻骨銘心的經歷。

有一研究指出老年的精神病患參加教會聚會比其他的老年人更加殷勤。研究員歸因於精神病患的恐懼焦慮情緒。他們不斷的尋找力量和安慰，許多人因此皈依宗教，有所寄託。另外一個最迫切的因素就是老年人迫近死期，「人之將死，其言也善」，生死的問題進到老人的心中，無論他們是否為精神病患。

教會是老年人最可能在晚年安身立命的地方，他們在那裡敬拜、服事、團契和學習。顯然許多教會的參與者為銀髮人，他們是教會生活的最大支持者。根據調查，多數的老年人有宗教信仰；只有不到百分之三的老年人說他們什麼都不信。以上述的調查結果看來，基督教會正面臨供應老年人靈性需要的黃金時機，這是聯邦機構和社區組織最忽略或最無力的一環。

Brave Heart

18th CCOWEF Young Professionals Camp



Last October 8 -12, 2012, eleven delegates from our church attended the CCOWEF Young Pro Camp held in Puerto Princesa, Palawan. It was my first time to join a CCOWEF Camp as I have busy work schedules and it is really hard to take a very long leave unlike the times when we were still in schools because camps were usually held in summer. But thanks be to God, despite the fact that we have a new manager at work, I was allowed to take a week's leave which was the longest leave I've ever made since I started working. Many obstacles came up before that week. One of them was the pain in my lower right pelvic usually caused by inflammation of the appendix. I was really afraid that I would be operated on and would therefore miss the camp. I prayed that God would take away the pain or if operation was needed, I could just postpone it after the camp. I went to the doctor and it turned out to be UTI and I was given some meds. It was such a relief that God did answer my prayer. Though I still feel a little pain right now, am still very thankful that God allowed me to attend my first

CCOWEF camp which gave me time to relax, reflect and rejoice in His goodness and wonders together with other believers.

Before the official camp started, seven of us went ahead to Palawan to explore more of the city and its wonderful islands. On the day of the camp, we met with the rest of the CGC members at the airport and drove two hours to get to Sheridan Beach Resort. It was a long and fast drive that most of the people got dizzy. But thank God I didn't feel carsick even if I was at the door side, where there was no handrail and I had to hold on to the ceiling or the door so I won't fall off.

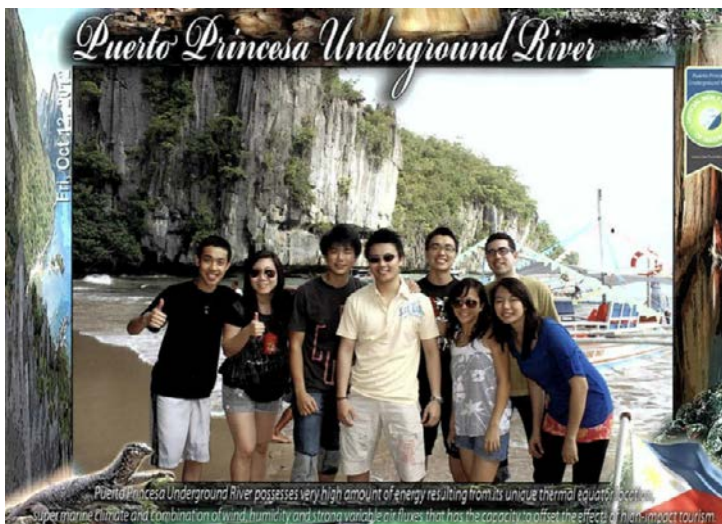
The Camp schedule was packed with messages, workshops, morning devotions and games, yet for

me, this was the most relaxed camp ever. Though it was tiring to wake up at 6.30 in the morning because my work schedule starts in the afternoon but we have to for our group devotion. Our devotion was about **DAVID – a true to life Brave Heart, DANIEL - a man of promise and not compromise, and JESUS - the greatest Brave Heart ever** . Though we might hear a lot about them from Sunday school, it made me asked myself if I have a brave heart just like them? We might know a lot about these people but are we applying it into our lives? Indeed, it is true that no matter how many times we read the BIBLE or the same passage, God would speak to us differently according to our present situations and we can learn something new if we just open up our hearts and allow God to speak to us. In this world and in our generation today, it's really hard to have a brave heart like DAVID who was not afraid to face the GIANT, which represents the trials or struggles in our lives, because naturally fear would creep into our minds first. It is hard to be just like DANIEL who didn't compromise his faith and had never bowed down to any other gods even if he knew that such action would mean death. He might not know how exactly but he believed that God would help him. The Man with the Bravest Heart written in the scripture is Jesus. Despite facing death, He said, "Thy

will be done." It is easier said than done most of the time. But let us hold on to the Theme Verse of the camp and my favorite verse, **"For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13)**

In one of our workshops, we answered the Spirituality Wheel - a spiritual type selector which I learned that I'm more of a Heart Spirituality where the walk with God and the love of God are more important. Through this, we learned that people have different spirituality types so it doesn't mean that one who knows a lot about the BIBLE or GOD is more spiritual than those who have more passion in praising God, in evangelism, in giving life testimonies and in their walk with GOD. It's just that we have different spiritual types working together as one body in the church. A church can't fulfill its mission with the just one spiritual type. Since I know I'm more of a Heart Spirituality, I understand now why I don't mind and I actually enjoy if we extend our schedules through singing praises as the Spirit leads the pastor.

Listening to how our awesome God marvelously worked in the life of Rev. Eugene Hao brought me to tears. He had everything in this world yet he felt empty. He experienced almost all the evil things in this world, went to prison and had few weeks left to



live due to a sickness. He almost killed his sister who in turn was the person who brought him to CHRIST. God filled his emptiness and insecurities with love and forgiveness. God healed and transformed him into a new creation.

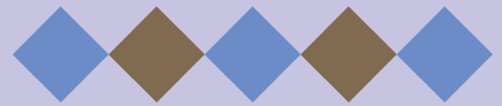
One of the unforgettable and memorable activities we did is the CYP Commitment Night because it was my first time to do that. They set up a tabernacle just like in ancient times and we were allowed to go in one by one and wrote the sins we want God to forgive, put it in the box, washed our hands in the basin as a symbol that God cleansed us from all wrongdoings if we confessed them, said a prayer, painted our hands which we would then press on to a wall as a seal of commitment to our GOD during that night. Some people might find it dragging since we had to wait for people to finish but then for me, it's really sacred, a true offering and worship to GOD. Almost every day, we had group games which were great since we had different groupings to make us mingle with other Christians through competition and fun. CGC was tasked to host the group dynamics which was a style of speed dating. Looking at the people, they enjoyed it and had the chance to know more people in the camp. CGC boys and together with Rev. Anthony Hao closed the night with a "Gangnam Style Dance".

During our free time, we rode the mangrove bangka, hiked through the mountain trails and ziplined over the sea. We were asked to bring soldier costumes for our night to remember. People came fully prepared and it was good to see Lord's army in action. Another competitive game that made me realized that we need to read our BIBLE again and again to be thoroughly equipped not just for BIBLE quizzes but more importantly for the real world.

On our extended stay, we went to Underground River and saw the one of the New 7 Wonders of Nature. We were amazed at God's creation with all the rock formation and the bats inside the cave. We hiked and climbed the UGONG cave in the afternoon. When we reached the top, we were all sweating because it was such a challenge to pull ourselves up in a rope and go through very small holes. The zipline afterwards was a great way to end the adventure.

During our message with Rev. Anthony Hao, he showed us short clips from the movie "Amazing Grace", a true to life story of William Wilberforce - a Brave Heart from history, a young member of Parliament that took on the British Government to help put an end to slavery. He believed that God created all men equal and he stood up for what was right. It might be hard especially when fear lies





ahead and we know that people would hate us or mock us for doing what is right. May we never give up our faith and hope so that someday our Master will say, **“Well done, my good and faithful servant”**. With **perseverance, commitment and faith, accompanied by God's amazing grace**, people of passionate convictions can indeed change the world.

The message and the verse of this camp might be very plain and simple but doing it is the hardest part especially without God's help. I really enjoyed this CCOWEF camp and looking forward to the next one. It's a great way to take a break off from work, learn more about God, rekindle the fire and worship God with our brothers and sisters in Christ all over the Philippines.

- by Adeline Lea Ong

Enjoying God amidst the splendor of His creation - this was how I felt during the entire duration of our stay in Palawan. At first, I was a bit hesitant on whether I would spend a week in the conference because this would mean sharing lesser time with my parents while they were still here. I would want to spend more time with them before they went back to US since I know that it would take years before I could see them again. Nonetheless, I decided to go. Prior to that, I had been longing for

God for quite some time since I felt that my life was becoming dull and routinary. Many things were running in my mind and admittedly, I had been very preoccupied with such things. It was my prayer that God would speak to me and bring me back to His arms again as I experience His goodness and His love. As expected, God never fails! He is always there as long as we earnestly call and seek Him in our lives. He reminded me over and again that He is God and that He will never leave us nor forsake us. That is His character! Nothing can ever change that. It is just a matter of our heart - on where we put our trust and allegiance to. I just felt so privileged to be handpicked as a child of my loving heavenly Father even though I am unworthy to be one. Moreover, as I marvelled at the magnificence of His creation, His faithfulness had dawned on me once again since He said in His word that we are much more valuable than these, why should we fret? It was indeed spectacular and you could just stand in awe at the wonders of His works. Isn't our God just amazing? Yet, after the camp, reality strikes again. We cannot continue to be in an environment where everything seems smooth sailing. At the end of the day, we have to face whatever life has to bring. However, we can always be rest assured that God is always there as our strength, our refuge, our friend and our Father.

- by Ann Louraine Chua



讚美和感恩

小山

在1561年, William Kethes將詩篇一百篇意釋為著名聖詩“Old Hundredth”的歌詞, 配上美妙的音樂. 這聖詩成為數世紀來很多教會在崇拜會中常常使用的詩歌. 當會眾吟這詩之時, 他們會預備身心而且明白敬拜的意義, 包括讚美和感恩.

詩篇一百篇是詩篇93, 95-100篇的總結和高潮. 這些詩篇是以耶和華作王為主的詩篇. 詩篇一百篇雖然是短短五節, 卻有耶和華的七個命令, 就是當向耶和華歡呼、當樂意事奉耶和華、當向祂歌唱、當曉得耶和華是上帝、當稱謝進入祂的門、當讚美進入祂的院、當感謝祂共七個命令.

一. 普天下當向耶和華歡呼

為什麼當向耶和華歡呼呢? 因為耶和華已經得勝了. 在耶穌道成肉身, 降世作人, 被釘在十字架死, 三天後復活, 得勝了罪惡、死亡和掌死權的魔鬼. 因為祂的得勝, 我們應當向耶和華歡呼. 普天下就是全世界, 但現在世界各國沒有向耶和華歡呼, 且敵擋耶和華. 聖經說有一天魔鬼作主的腳凳時, 普天下就會向耶和華歡呼.

二. 你們當樂意事奉耶和華, 當來向祂歌唱

樂意的意思是喜樂願意, 事奉主要專心致意, 不是馬馬虎虎. 有的事奉主又事奉瑪門. 這分心的事奉必不得到主的悅納.

崇拜會中的唱歌是很重要的, 因為我們若用心唱出, 必得到激勵受帶領預備身心敬拜上帝. 當主耶穌降生的時候, 一大隊天兵和天使頌讚說:「在至高之處榮耀歸與上帝, 在地上平安歸與祂所喜悅的人.」將來在天堂, 我們會晝夜聽到四活物在主的寶座前不住地說聖哉! 聖哉! 頌讚上帝.

三. 你們當曉得耶和華是神! 我們是祂造的, 也是屬祂的; 我們是祂的民, 也是祂草場的羊

曉得在原文的意思是經歷並確信. 這真理是實在的. 耶和華是上帝, 是獨一的真神. 在馬太22:37-38說:「主耶穌說:你要盡心、盡性、盡意愛主你的上帝. 這是誠命中的第一, 且是最大的.」申6:4-5說:「以色列阿, 你要聽. 耶和華我們的上帝是獨一的上帝. 你要盡心、盡性、盡力愛耶和華你們



的上帝。」

以色列的王是百姓的牧者，耶和華也是他們的牧者。這表示他們得到耶和華特別的保護看顧。路15:3-6說：「耶穌就用比喻說：你們中間誰有一百隻羊失去一隻，不把這九十九隻撇在曠野，去找那失去的羊，直到找著呢？找著了，就歡歡喜喜的扛在肩上，回到家裡，就請朋友鄰舍來，對他們說：我失去的羊已經找著了，你們和我一同歡喜罷！」主愛萬人得救，不願一人沉淪。正如以上的比喻一樣。主耶穌為教會信徒的牧者。約10:14-16主耶穌說：「我是好牧人；我認識我的羊，我的羊也認識我，正如父認識我，我也認識父一樣；並且我為羊捨命。我另外有羊，不是這圈裡的；我必須領他們來，他們也要聽我的聲音，並且要合成一群，歸一個牧人了。」

四. 當稱謝進入祂的門；當讚美進入祂的院。當感謝祂，稱頌祂的名

當時以色列人要在節期上聖殿朝聖。由祭司帶領吟上行的詩，上台階直到聖殿的門，入門要稱謝祂，進院要讚美祂

並且要感謝祂，稱頌祂的名。

今天我們能自由地出入教會，我們實在要稱謝進入主的門，讚美進入祂的院，領受這種自由的恩典。感謝主和稱頌祂的名。世界有很多國家禁止基督徒聚會，不可有聖經，有聖經不能讀。所以我們應當感謝主，讚美主！路17:11-18述說主耶穌治好十個長大痲瘋的故事。內中有一個見自己已經好了，就回來大聲歸榮耀與上帝，又俯伏在耶穌腳前感謝祂；這人是撒瑪利亞人。耶穌說：「潔淨不是十個人麼？那九個在那裡呢？除了這外族人，再沒有別人回來歸榮耀給上帝麼？」我們也是常常這樣，得到上帝

的恩典但沒有感恩，我們不但要知恩感恩而且應該報恩。

五. 因為耶和華本為善。祂的慈愛存到永遠；祂的信實直到萬代

這裡所說的本為善的意思是說主耶穌是一切良善的根源。祂也是良善最好的榜樣。而慈愛是上帝神聖的愛，永不改變的愛，永遠長存的。因此詩人說祂的慈愛是永遠長存。祂的「信實」是表示主話語的應允，無論是甚麼，是對甚麼人，應允的都一定實現。

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the Earth.

*Psalm 100
a psalm for giving grateful praise*

Worship the Lord with gladness:
come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people,
the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates
with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him
and praise his name.

For the Lord is good
and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues
through all generations



以斯帖

許郭錦繡

聖經中有兩本書記載了二個女人、一位是路得、另一位就是以斯帖。最特殊的是她們兩人有不同的背境、因為路得是一位外邦的女子出嫁於猶太人、後來她成為耶穌家譜之一員。而以斯帖是一位猶太人的女子出嫁於外邦人的王、她拯救了猶太人免受滅絕。她們兩人都有神所托負特

別重大的任務、也成了後代女人美好的榜樣。

現在我們要共同思想以斯帖是怎麼樣的女子、她有什麼優點值得我們效法？她怎樣會成了波士王的王后呢？

「亞哈隨魯作王、從印度直到古實、統管一百廿七省。他在書珊城的宮登基、在位第三年、為一切首領臣僕設備筵席、邀請了許多貴賓。亞哈隨魯王飲酒快樂、就命太監叫王后瓦實提到王面前、要使各臣民看她的美貌、但王后不肯遵太監所傳的王令而來、所以王就發怒、心如火燒、便詢問知例明法明哲人的意見、眾首領就建議應將王后的位、分賜給比她還好的人、並降旨傳遍通國所有的婦人、無論丈夫貴賤都必尊敬他、王就照他們的話去行。後來王就在國中的各省招聚美貌的處女到書珊城、給王揀選他喜愛的女子、立她為王后代替瓦實提。」(斯1、2：1-4)

「書珊城中有一個猶太人名叫末底改、末底改撫養他叔叔的女兒以斯帖、因為她沒有父母、所以末底改就收她為自己的女兒。以斯帖容貌俊美、也進入王宮、凡看見她的都喜悅她」、當她進去見王的時候、就蒙了王

的寵愛、便被立為波斯國的王后。(斯2：5-16)

以斯帖為什麼在眾女中被選出呢？她到底是個什麼樣的女子？她有何出眾優點值得我們來效法呢？

(一)外美內德(斯2：7、15)

以斯帖容貌俊美、她敬重末底改、遵照他的安排、順服他的吩咐。

(二)保守秘密(斯2：10)

以斯帖未曾將籍貫宗族告訴人、因為末底改囑咐她不可叫人知道。

(三)關懷親人(斯4：1-5)

以斯帖看見末底改穿麻衣、蒙灰塵、痛哭哀號、就差人送衣服給末底改穿、並吩咐他去問末底改、是甚麼事、甚麼緣故。

(四)信心禱告(斯4：15-17)

以斯帖吩咐人回報末底改、叫他去招聚書珊城所有的猶太人、為他禁食三晝三夜、不喫不喝、然後才進去見王。

(五)勇敢捨己(斯4：11、16)

「王有一個定例、若不蒙召擅入內院見王的、無論男女必被治死、除非王向他伸出金杖、不得存活。」但末底改告訴以斯帖不可閉口不言、一定要見王來解



脫拯救猶太人、以斯帖願意遵命違例去見王。她說：「我若死、就死罷」。

(六) 聰明智慧(斯 5 : 4)

以斯帖知道哈曼是要殺害猶太人的主腦、但她運用聰明智慧、思想計劃、以妙法邀請敵人同赴她所預備的筵席、吞氣忍怒在敵人面前安然自在。

(七) 忍耐等候(斯 7 : 3 - 6)

以斯帖忍耐等待、在適當的時間述哈曼之惡於王、按適當的時機向王求保存她本族的性命。

(八) 懂得報恩(斯 8 : 1 - 2)

以斯帖告訴王謂末底改是他的親屬、並派他管理哈曼的家產。

(九) 為眾廢惡謀(斯 8 : 3 - 17)

「以斯帖請王另下旨意廢除哈曼所傳的旨意、旨中王准各省城的猶太人在一日之間、十二月、就是亞達月、十三日、聚集保護性命、剪除殺戮滅絕那要攻擊猶太人的一切仇敵、和他們的妻子兒女、奪取他們的財為掠物」。

(十) 救民脫仇(斯 9 : 5)

「猶太人用刀擊殺一切仇敵、任意殺滅恨他們的人、將哈曼十個兒子都殺滅了、以後猶太人就得享平安。」

(十一) 守日感恩(斯 9 : 22 - 32)

「以斯帖命定這兩日為普珥日。各省各城、家家戶戶、世世代代、在每年要按時禁食呼求、遵守紀念、不可忘記、也永不廢掉。直到如今、猶太人以這兩日為脫離仇敵得平安、轉憂為喜、轉悲為樂的吉日、在這兩天設筵歡樂、彼此餽送禮物、賙濟窮人。」

以斯帖上面的優點、要怎樣應用在我們的日常的生活上呢？

(一) 外美內德

「美麗」是每一位女人所欣羨的。要保持「美麗」、身材應苗條、身體需健康、飲食該節制、衣冠常清潔。此外、也要舉止端莊、言語和氣、性格溫和、謙卑順服、殷勤理家、方可稱為「外美內德」令人敬佩的女子。

(二) 保守秘密

箴言 25 : 9 「不可洩漏人家的密事」。要懂得保守秘密、人家告訴我們的秘密、千萬不可轉告於他人、記得古人勸言：「家醜不可對外揚、婦道守口莫傷人」。

(三) 關懷親人

英文有句成語：「你可以選擇你的朋友、但你無可能選擇你的親人」。

既然親人是命定的、就應該學習接受。

約瑟被眾兄賣到埃及地、當飢荒臨到、眾兄到約瑟那裏購糧、約瑟不但寬恕了他們、而且又賜他們加倍的糧、並邀請他們搬到埃及地來居住(創 45)。

這就是關照親人美好的表現!

願我們學習與親屬能和睦相處、相敬如賓、禮上往來、互相包容、彼此推讓、以愛關照、使人認出我們是主的門徒。

(四) 信心禱告

「信是所忘之事的實底、未見之事的確據」(希 11 : 1)。「人非有信、就不能得神的喜悅」(希 11 : 6)。主要我們以堅信心禱告、將萬事交託祂、因為祂有應允我們：「你求告我、我就應允你、並將你所不知道、又大又難的事指示你」(耶 33 : 3)。

(五) 勇敢捨己





神所賜給我們的、不是胆怯的心、乃是剛強壯膽的心、因為他要我們在真道上站立得住、並且學習像以斯帖肯犧牲「小我」來完成「大我」的精神。

(六) 聰明智慧

「你們中間若有缺少智慧的、應當求那厚賜與眾人、也不斥責人的神、主就必賜給你的。」(雅各書 1:5)。願我們向賜智慧的主求智慧、使我們以智慧辦事、用智慧與外人交往(西 4:5)、並在智慧的溫柔上顯出善行來(雅 3:13)。

(七) 忍耐等候

「忍」是由「刀」與「心」這兩字綜合而成的、換句話說忍就是人用「刀」穿入吾「心」。古人言：「忍得一時氣、省得百日憂」。真的、很多時候、為了不能忍氣、說了錯話、做了錯事、以致後悔不及。

「等候」也是每一個信徒應學習的功課、我們往往為了不會

「等候」、就產生了許多不良之後果！

撒萊沒有等候神的時間、自己想出辦法、將夏甲給了亞伯拉罕、生出以實馬利、後來撒萊本身也生了以撒。結果、以實馬利的後裔-亞拉伯人,及以撒的後裔-以色列人、今天成了永遠的對敵。

掃羅王因為沒有等候先知撒母耳、自行獻祭、惹了神的忿怒、主就除掉他的王位給了大衛、可見、不會等候的後果是何等的可怕呀！

願我們學習忍耐等候、因為「主看一日如千年、千年如一日」(彼後 3:8)

(八) 懂得報恩

古人言：「施恩勿念、受施勿忘」、當你獲得人的恩情是否忘掉了？有否懂得感謝報答？

當主耶穌醫好十個大麻瘋後、只有一個撒瑪利亞人回來向他道謝。耶穌就問：「潔淨的不是十人麼？那些九個在那裏呢？」(路 17:17)。主的恩愛在我們身上是無窮無盡的、我們應該曉得謝恩、將時間、金錢、或才幹奉獻給主、以報厚恩、千萬不可做一個忘恩負義的信徒。

(九) 為眾廢惡謀

每個人在世上都有不同的職

份、無論我們在任何職份上、應該鼓起勇氣、不怕發言、說該說的話、做該做的事、持守正道、保留公義。

(十) 救民脫仇敵(斯 9:5)

主耶穌在世時、以教導來救人的靈魂、以醫治來救人的身體。同樣的、我們要將福音傳開、拯救世人脫離最大的仇敵-魔鬼、也要多多行善、幫補窮缺的人、因為經上說：「人若知道行善、卻不去行、這就是他的罪了」(雅 4:17)。

(十一) 守日感恩

中國人非常重視守節日、我們也需要記念一些重要的節日：例如：誕生日、父親節、母親節、情人節、感恩節、亡人節、受難節、復活節、聖誕節、結婚記念日等等、以供思念這些日子的意義。

願我們藉著以斯帖的美德、將它應用在我們日常的生活上、使我們成為一個賢慧的婦人。

「才德的婦人誰能得著呢？他的價值遠勝過珍珠、他的兒女起來、稱他有福、他的丈夫也稱讚他說、才德的女子很多、惟獨你超過一切、艷麗是虛假的、美容是虛浮的、惟敬畏耶和華的婦女必得稱讚。」(箴 31:10、28-30)



生命短促

遠觀

許多人都在感嘆說，人活在世上沒有甚麼意義，總是生苦病痛多勞碌，一年一年的飛去，一代又一代的過去。生活在世上真正的意義是甚麼呢？使人深深的體會到生命的短暫，猶如吐一口氣，又如天空的彩雲，一下子就無影無蹤，並且一去不返。含苞待放的青春年華曾經擁有過的也抵不過歲月的摧殘。雖然我們不能使時光倒流，草原欣欣向榮，花卉再吐芬芳。但不要感傷，要在殘留的一切中去尋找力量。生理上的老化是不可避免的自然狀態，只要心存愛及感恩，因這是上帝所賜的恩典，正是心理不老，歡樂永駐的祕訣吧！有錢，有權，有勢，身體強壯未必以此為可依靠。這些都是暫時的。誰能跟所羅門王比呢？到後來還是覺得虛空的虛空，萬事都是虛空的(傳道書 1:2)。惟獨主所賜給人的靈命才有永恆價值。

因此，在現今上帝所賜短暫生命中，應曉得享受生命的真諦。神給我們排在面前現實的生活，不論環境如何，都要以滿足的心盡量享受從天上來的福份。不要為短暫的生活憂慮及怨嘆。雖然有許多不如意的遭遇，或我們所料不到的不幸災難。因神有應許祂會與我們同在與看顧，不會放棄祂所愛的兒女。當到神面前領受平安和喜樂，感恩的心是一個委身基督徒的記號。在我們生命階段中的有限時間與體力，應該更快快的事奉，這是基督徒的本份與責任，才不辜負神對你我的愛。耶穌說：「你們若愛我，就必遵守我的命令」(約 14:15)。祈望我們能珍惜這永恆的生命，接受真神基督，讓今生有恩惠慈愛隨著我們，來生有永遠的福，感謝主，啊們。



An Irreverent Look at the History of
CHRISTIANITY
A SPECIAL SERIES BY THE IRREVERENT HISTORIAN

Part 6: The Hasmoneans and Beyond

In our last installment, conflict raged around the Jews as the pretenders to the throne of Alexander the Great waged their wars of succession. Finally, Jerusalem came under the control of Antiochus of Syria, who brutally repressed the practice of Judaism. But one family dares to resist...

MATTATHIAS

Mattathias was a simple man. He is a priest who was descended from the Levites, tracing his ancestry to **Phineas**, son of Aaron and the third High Priest of Israel. Like those before him, he served in the Temple of Jerusalem before deciding to go back to his home in Modim (a town halfway between Jerusalem and the modern capital Tel Aviv.)

But three things happened. First, his country was taken over a tyrant – Antiochus IV Epiphanes the Seleucid, who banned the practice of Judaism (and essentially firing him). Second, Antiochus ordered pigs to be sacrificed to Zeus in the temple altars – a sacrilege that caused him and his sons to put on mourning clothes and weep.

Finally, Antiochus sent an official to his town in 167 BCE to order the sacrifice of burnt offerings to an idol of Zeus. Since Mattathias the priest was the most influential guy in town, the official told him to do it in public first. He refused, but someone else in town stepped forward to do it for him.

Losing his temper, Mattathias killed the Jew volunteer, and murdered the Seleucid official. When he realized what he had done, Mattathias gathered up his sons: John, Simon, Judas, Eliezer, and Jonathan. He may be a hothead, but he wasn't stupid. Once word got back to the king, the punishment would be severe for him, his family, and his town. He had to run for the hills.

Before escaping, the defiant Mattathias turned to the people who were assembled to watch the offering, and gave a call to arms:

Let everyone who has zeal for the Torah and who stands by the covenant follow me!

(1 Maccabees 2:27)

THE HASMONEAN REVOLT

The townsfolk were not stupid either. Their town was as good as destroyed once the king learned of the murder. They joined Mattathias and escaped into the wilderness of Judea. There, the **Hasmoneans** (so called because Mattathias had a great-grandfather called Asmoneus) were reinforced by other Jews who resisted Antiochus' efforts to convert them into Greek culture.

Mattathias died in 166 BCE, a year after his act of rebellion. He exhorted his sons to soldier on, appointing **Judas** as leader and Simon as chief adviser. Judas was a fierce fighter, and his nickname *Maccabeus* ("Battle hammer") became synonymous with the family as a whole – Maccabees and Hasmoneans are interchangeable.

Initially, the rebels kept to the strict letter of the Torah. That means they do not work on the Sabbath, even in self-defense. They rethought that strategy when over a thousand men, women and children refused to defend themselves on a Sabbath day, and were massacred by Seleucid troops.

Initially, the Maccabees had a rag-tag army that staged lightning attacks on Seleucid army patrols. They targeted *hellenized* Jews (those who adopted Greek customs and traditions). The rebels raided villages, destroyed pagan altars, circumcised boys, and forced Jews to join their army.

Although history painted the rebels as religious freedom fighters, some of their actions may be disturbing to modern audiences today. We wonder: if the Maccabees do this today, would they be considered as heroes, or terrorists like the Taliban?

CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

Under Judas' leadership, the rebels became a feared fighting force. Having crushed a larger army led by the governor of Samaria the year before, the Maccabees again defeated a numerically-superior army led by Seron, in the Battle of Beth-Horon.

Antiochus was not able to use the full might of the Seleucid army on the pesky Jews. When Mattathias started his revolt, the Parthian empire (northeast Iran) had captured Herat (Afghanistan), a very important trade city of the Seleucid empire. Antiochus and the main army fought against the Parthians, while his best general Lysias was dispatched to deal with the Maccabees once and for all.

The armies of Lysias and Judas fought twice: the Battle of Emmaus in 166 BCE resulted in a decisive Jewish victory, and the pivotal Battle of Beth Zur in 164 BCE, won again by the Maccabees, left Jerusalem unguarded by the Seleucids.

The same year, Antiochus died of disease, and Jerusalem was liberated by the Maccabees. On December of 164 BCE, Judas fulfilled his father's dying wish. He cleansed the Temple in Jerusalem, and rededicated it to the God of Israel.

The historic event is celebrated today by Jews on **Hanukkah** (Festival of Lights), held between mid-November and mid-December. Hanukkah, which is the fourth of four Jewish festivals we will mention^A, is celebrated for eight days, because according to legend, when they went to light the Temple candle, there was only enough oil for one day. But the candle burned for eight days straight.

TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

Although Antiochus was dead and Jerusalem was theirs, the Maccabees still had to deal with Lysias. Fortunately for them, he was distracted by succession politics in Syria, and had to go back home. He signed a peace deal with the Maccabees in 163 BCE, promising them full religious freedom.

This did not last; eager to reassert control, **Demetrius**, the eventual Seleucid King, sent a large army to forcefully install his choice of High Priest in Jerusalem. The Maccabees could not hold the city, so they escaped and went back to guerilla warfare.

They were initially successful, and killed the Syrian general Nicanor. This only made Demetrius angrier. He sent an even larger army, led by General **Bacchides**, to pacify the Jews. Most of Judas' men deserted, leaving Judas and his remaining troops to be massacred in 160 BCE. His youngest brother **Jonathan** became leader after his death.

Jonathan did not engage Bacchides directly – he used guerilla war tactics against the Syrians. The attacks grew bothersome enough that Bacchides gave up in exasperation. He signed a peace treaty never to attack the Maccabees again, and completely withdrew his troops from Judea.

This time, the peace lasted longer – in addition to being a fierce fighter, Jonathan was a shrewd negotiator. He sided with Demetrius' cousin, **Alexander Balas**, when he made a claim to the throne. In exchange, he was declared the High Priest of Jerusalem in 153 BCE.

Upon Demetrius' death in 150 BCE, Balas became king, and richly rewarded Jonathan's loyalty. He declared Jonathan the ruler of Judea, and

A. Observant readers may recall we covered three festivals in earlier installments. The **Passover** commemorates the tenth plague, when the angel of death passed over the Israelite firstborn. **Shavuot** commemorates Moses' receipt of the Ten Commandments. **Purim** celebrates Haman's downfall due to Esther's courage. The most important Jewish festival is **Yom Kippur**. Considered the Sabbath of Sabbaths, Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) was mandated in *Leviticus 16:29* as a day when Jews look inward and repent for all their sins. It's probably similar to our New Years Day celebration, although much more prayerful and solemn.

recognized him as an equal. For the first time in Israel's history, the religious and military leader was the same person.

Time and time again, Jonathan proved his loyalty to the Seleucids, and was rewarded with additional land. His political savvy helped him survive multiple chaotic changes in Seleucid administrations. But eventually, he was trapped by a Seleucid usurper. Under the pretext of a peace summit, Jonathan was captured and executed.

Simon, Jonathan's older brother, became leader in 142 BCE. He declared the establishment of the **Hasmonean Dynasty** a year later. In a free election that ironically was copied from the Greeks, Simon was declared the prince and High Priest "forever." The dynasty received recognition from the Roman Senate, and the Jews became semi-independent from the Seleucids.

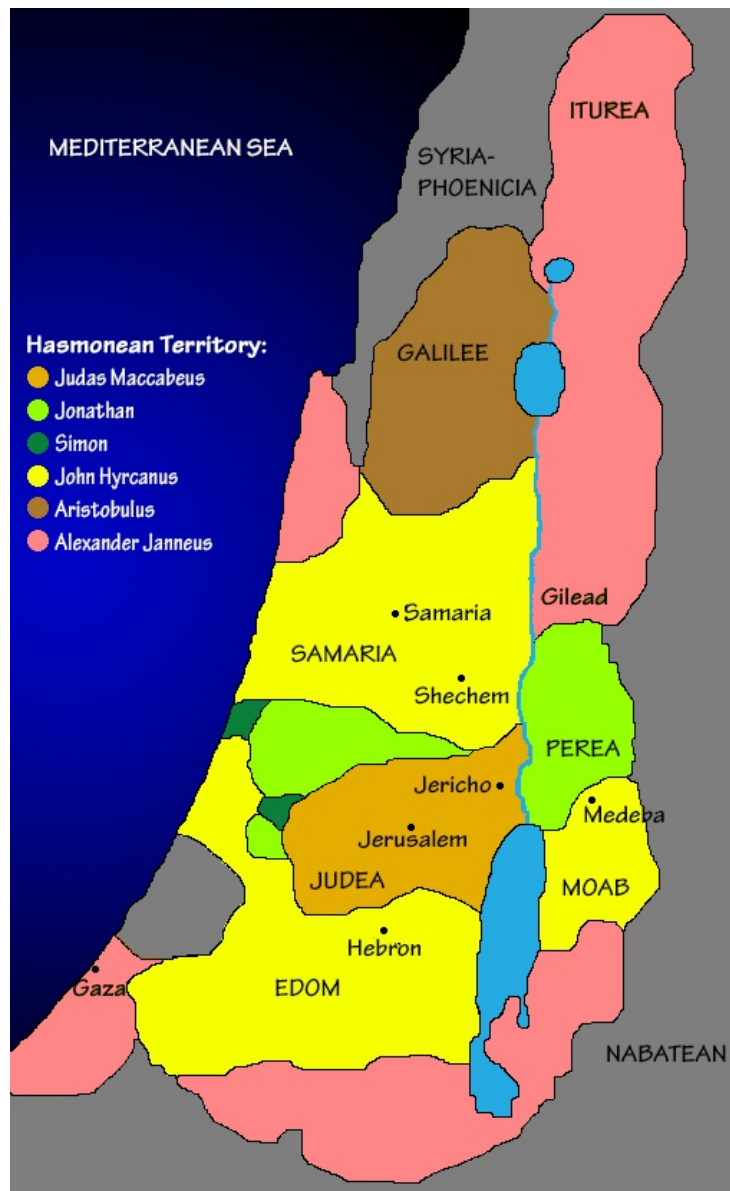
THE HASMONEAN DYNASTY

Simon led Israel for seven more years before an assassin killed him. His son, **John Hyrcanus**, succeeded in 135 BCE. As you may have noticed from his second (Greek) name, John was a hellenized Jew. Ironically, he had become the very thing his grandfather, father and uncles fought.

During John's relatively long reign, the Seleucid empire collapsed due to civil wars, and war with Parthia. He took the opportunity to expand his territory by invading Samaria, Moab, and Edom. He even forced the Edomites to convert to Judaism or face exile. Because of the weakness of the Seleucid empire, the Hasmonean dynasty reached its greatest size during the reign of John's son, **Alexander Janneus** (see map).

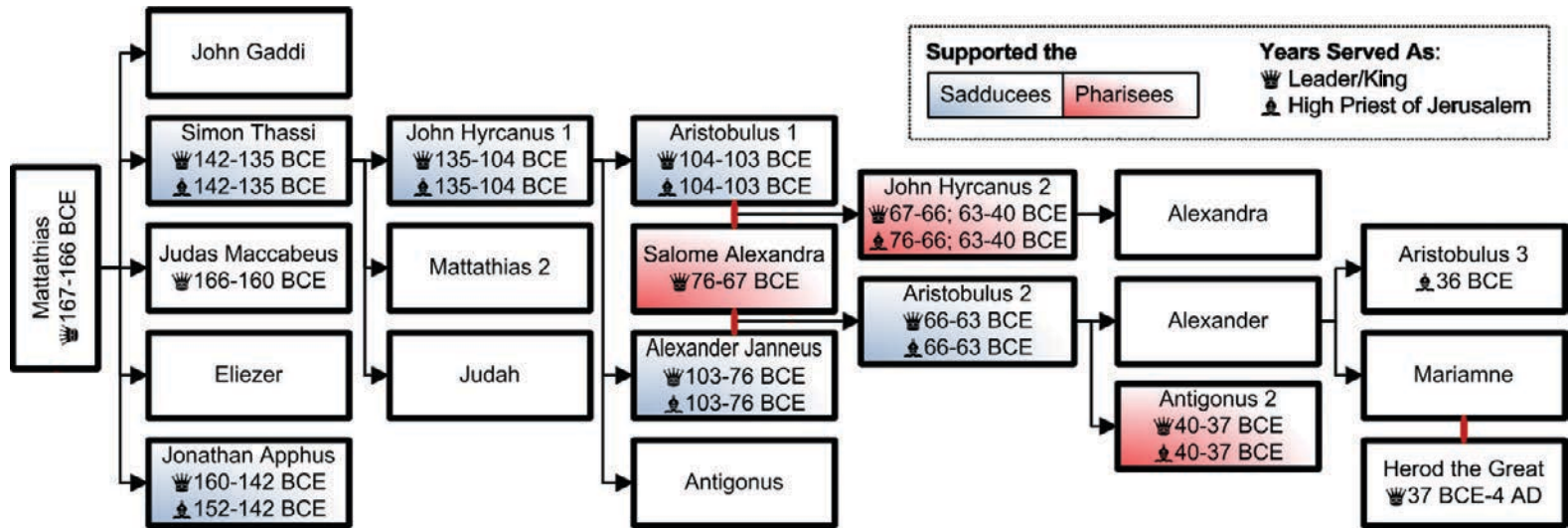
This was a very chaotic period in Jewish history, as brother plotted against brother on who would succeed the previous ruler. And although the lineage of Mattathias remained, all subsequent Hasmonean rulers fully embraced Greek culture.

The conflict was not limited to politics. Traditionally, the Maccabees supported the Sadducees. This changed after the death of Janneus in 76 BCE. His wife, **Salome Alexandra**, supported



the Pharisees. Her son with Aristobulus, **John Hyrcanus 2**, took her view. but her son with Janneus, **Aristobulus 2**, took his father's view, and supported the Sadducees.

After Salome died, Hyrcanus was the rightful king, but his half-brother Aristobulus ousted him in a coup d'état. Stung, he appealed to the Romans (who by this time have conquered the Seleucids) to get his position back. **Pompey**, one Rome's three consuls, agreed – he thought the weaker Hyrcanus could be more easily controlled. So he imprisoned Aristobulus in Rome and reinstated Hyrcanus.



Hyrcanus got his position back, but at a great cost. Pompey greatly limited his power, and Judea essentially became a vassal of Rome. Little did Hyrcanus realize that he had been manipulated into this by his friend and trusted advisor, **Antipater**.

ANTIPATER

Antipater was an Edomite, and his family was among those who was circumcised when John Hyrcanus 1 annexed Edom. He climbed the ranks of Hyrcanus 2's court. When Aristobulus dethroned him, Hyrcanus initially agreed to live the rest of his life quietly in Aristobulus' house. Antipater was afraid of Aristobulus, and convinced Hyrcanus to appeal to Pompey.

Antipater displayed extreme loyalty to Rome, and was richly rewarded for it. He was appointed as administrator of Judea, in charge of peace and order, and tax collection. While Hyrcanus was the titular ruler, Antipater actually called the shots.

When Pompey was deposed by **Julius Caesar**, Antipater quickly changed alliances. When Caesar was trapped in Alexandria and surrounded by enemies, Antipater raised an army and personally came to Caesar's aid. For this act, a grateful Caesar declared Antipater a Roman citizen, showered him with expensive gifts, and publicly praised him as a true friend. Antipater was later promoted into the first Roman Procurator of Judea (essentially becoming its chief financial officer).

Antipater changed sides again when Caesar was assassinated. He sided with Cassius, one of the chief planners of the assassination, against Marc Antony. Antipater was assassinated in 42 BCE, lucky in that he never had to give Marc Antony (who had beaten Cassius) an explanation.

Before he died, Antipater placed his children in key positions. When Hyrcanus was deposed by his nephew **Antigonus 2**, the Romans chose Antipater's second son as the successor. In 37 BCE, after three years of war, Antigonus was gone, and **Herod the Great** was in. Granted rule over Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, Herod administered the newly-formed Roman province of Judaea.

THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

We now draw close to the start of the New Testament; the Gospel narrative begin in the closing days of Herod's reign. In order to appreciate the New Testament more fully, it is helpful to briefly cover the current environment of Judaea.

Rome is the world power of the day – it conquered the entirety of Western Europe, and extended its influence to the Middle East, Egypt, and the old territories of the Seleucid empire. Because people enjoyed a respite from war under Rome, this period is known as *Pax Romana* (Roman peace).

Although Rome is ruled by an Emperor (Augustus Caesar during this time), it administers its annexed territory through governors. Jerusalem

falls under Roman province of Judaea, and is administered by King Herod, the governor. If the Jews paid their taxes faithfully (it's around 2% to 5% of gross income for individuals, plus various consumption taxes that pushes this to 30%) and stayed obedient, the Romans would let them worship as they please.

Although Latin is the official language of Rome, Greek culture is so strong that Greek is the language spoken by the well-educated elite. Upper-class and hellenized Jews might have learned to speak Greek, but the normal everyday man still talked in Aramaic, the lingua franca of the region since the Assyrians and Babylonians.

The Second Temple was intact, so this meant the Sadducees still had some authority, although the Pharisees have become more popular and powerful after the reign of Salome. Both factions are represented at the **Sanhedrin**, a religious council that basically has the combined powers of the Supreme Court and Congress within Judaea.

Jerusalem is the largest city in Judaea, with the Temple occupying over one-fourth the walled city area. Perhaps about 700,000 Jews lived in Israel, with three million more scattered across the land. **Alexandria** (Egypt) and **Antioch** (Turkey) are non-Jewish cities with large Jewish populations.

The Romans invest heavily in infrastructure, and maintain roads throughout the empire. The roads are in good condition, so it would take approximately 3 days for a healthy person to walk from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The major roads are safe, although thieves and bandits do attack travelers who use less-traveled roads.

Up to 70% of the population are subsistence farmers, fishermen, or laborers, earning the minimum wage of one denarius, a small silver coin. In today's dollars, a denarius can buy approximately \$24 worth of bread. A denarius is worth around 10 copper coins, while 25 denarii is worth one gold coin.

Taxation is heavy: the Jewish triple tithe (**23 1/3%**) plus Roman sales taxes, duties and tributes (up to **30%**) means some Jews kept less than half of what they earned. Small wonder why the ordinary people really hated the tax collectors!

Jewish boys were sent to school (usually a synagogue if available) from age 5 to 13. The education is exclusively religious in nature, with rote memorization as the main teaching technique. After age 13, boys learn a trade, usually from their fathers, although some were apprenticed to other men. Girls, on the other hand, generally don't have access to this kind of education.

Jewish men were regularly married by 18, Romans by 25, and the Greeks, often not until 30. For women, it's a different story. They're usually married off – for all three cultures – shortly after puberty. It's entirely possible that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a teenage bride.

God had kept largely silent for four hundred years. The last time he spoke through prophets was during Persian rule. The Jews have lived through a turbulent period of shifting allegiances, the rise and fall of a dynasty, and plenty of war. It is now in this environment that God began to speak again – very loudly. Next, in the 7th installment of *An Irreverent Look at the History of Christianity – The First Noel!*

IRREVERENT FEEDBACK

This is the sixth installment of *An Irreverent Look at the History of Christianity*. I have continually solicited for feedback – be it bouquets or brickbats. Heck, if you've got any comments, please send them my way, at history@cbugospelchurch.com! Alas, the first comment ever received is a rather withering brickbat! Ah, c'est la vie.

Carol Lewis writes: *Dear Irreverent Historian, you should balance your article! It's so irreverent that someone we have been proselytizing to has just declared themselves as agnostic. I do not know specifically what caused this, but I know we gave him copies of Gospel Light before he became agnostic. I suspect it's your article because the word irreverent is in the title. I cannot name a specific instance where you have written something unbalanced, but it's somewhere pertaining to the New Testament!*

Dear **Carol Lewis**,

That's a really good question. Finally, after six installments, we finally have the chance to properly explain our chosen title *and* nom-de-guerre.

What is **irreverence**? Simply put, it is "not reverent" – the complete opposite of reverence, the absence of, or not showing veneration or piety. Like many words (think of "love" or "hate"), there are many degrees of irreverence. Because of this, you will see many different definitions when you look in the dictionary. At its worst, irreverence means utter contempt and disregard of respect. At the lighter end of the gamut, it means something that is characterized by a "lightly pert and exuberant quality". Simply put, it is something that is said in a light tone.

The light-hearted aspect of irreverence is what we hope to capture in our jaunt in the history of Christianity. As you may know, Christianity has very dark days in its past, especially when you look into the period of the Crusades and the Counter-Reformation. Under the guise of holiness and salvation of souls, many religious figures affiliated with the Christian Church have done despicable things.

In six installments, we have gone through the Old Testament, and are now ready to enter the New Testament. So far, it has been relatively light. There's a lot of killing, of course, but since that's done by the "Gentiles", the impact is not quite the same. We are trying to achieve a comprehensive coverage of the history – so we cannot ignore the bad stuff. And trust us, the bad stuff is still ahead.

We don't want to constrain ourselves into writing a sanitized or bowdlerized version of events. Hence, we reserve the right to write flippantly, sometimes in a chiding tone. A Flippant/Chiding Look at the History of Christianity does not quite sound as catchy, hence our use of the word "Irreverent". It is never our intent to destroy anybody's Christian beliefs. Nor can we really do so if we wanted to. This series appears in a Christian publication, and has been curated by Christian editors. Any attempt to introduce beliefs contrary to Christian thinking will quickly be swatted down, don't you think?

As for the issue of balance, we hope you won't let the denotation of "irreverent" cloud your reading of the text. We like to think that we look at the event through multiple lenses, and endeavor to produce a balanced recounting of events. If you feel that a particular section of our work is imbalanced, we are open to dialogue, and would gladly produce an erratum should this be truly the case.

Finally, regarding the agnostic, it seems quite incredible that a simple recounting of Old Testament history can make someone conclude that, although God exists, He is unknowable. We understand your dismay at having your attempted convert conclude that he is agnostic, but we think there should certainly be deeper reasons than having "Irreverent" as part of an article title! Perhaps he was taking the Bible too literally – which is typically not a good idea. Some passages are clearly meant to be taken figuratively, or perhaps even as an allegory.

For example, a careful tally of the genealogy in the book of Genesis will lead us to conclude that the Earth is only six thousand years old. However, the scientific evidence against six thousand years is overwhelming. The fossil records prove that dinosaurs exist millions of years ago, yet nothing in the Bible would indicate that gigantic reptiles ever walked the Earth.

He is not lost however. He has not completely closed his heart to the existence of God. After all is said and done, what remains for the aspiring believer is the issue of faith. And like many things, there are many degrees of faith. There are some – we suspect your agnostic is one – who find comfort in science. With the right push and a prodigious amount of prayer, there's no reason to believe that he won't turn back into the light.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to clear the air, and we hope you enjoy this issue's "irreverent" article!

Your friendly neighborhood Irreverent Historian



CGC BUZZ...ZZ

“Cautiously Work Together As One Body In Christ”

2nd Theme Seminar by: Dr. Stewart Young



Last August 26, Dr. Stewart Young shared on how to “Cautiously Work Together as One body in Christ”. He cited some possible reasons on why we can’t work together. Some of these could be: being preoccupied with ourselves and our own concerns and not seeing God’s greater purpose. At times, we can’t or don’t recognize the values of others; or, there is the fear of serving due to past painful experiences.

Dr. Young also shared some guidelines on how to cautiously work together with each other as one body in Christ. We must have the same vision to see God’s greater intention and purpose for the church; know our unique roles and responsibilities as members of the body of Christ; recognize, utilize and appreciate each others’ strengths and abilities; and be steadfast amidst all hardship, threats and adversaries.

Nehemiah was used as an example for such a situation. He came before the Lord and asked for forgiveness, humbled himself, prayed for mercy and for the people.

As one body in Christ, this is how it should be: to look after each other, not pounce at each other. When things go wrong, we should encourage, pray, help one another and be pillars of each other’s weaknesses. We should not be blinded by our own desires or the it-should-be-perfect image. Rather, we should strive to be the strength of other’s weaknesses and learn to appreciate the skills or talent others have.

With a vision affirmed by God, let us motivate and pray for one another and recognize the advantage of collective efforts done by God’s power. Let us focus on the needs of others instead of self; be a help not a hindrance; encourage not discourage; be transparent not pretentious.



Vacation Bible School

Last May 28 to June 1, 2012, our Christian Education Committee held its DVBS spearheaded by Ptr. Wayne Chua. Around 120 children joined the event. The theme was "Building Up God's House". It talked about different roles in expanding the kingdom of God. Whatever profession you are in, be it a doctor, engineer, musician, artist, nurse, businessman and etc... we all play unique roles in the church and it's our job to fulfill the work God has entrusted to us. May we give all our best to Him and give back all the glory due Him. Let us work together in building God's house with the right reasons and right vision.



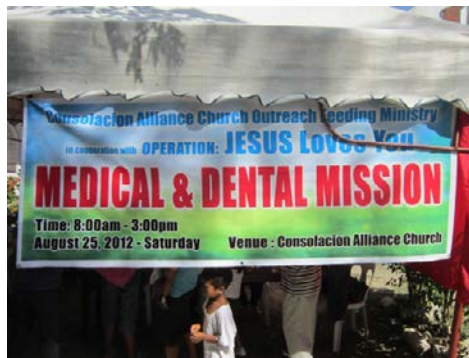


Medical Missions

The Jesus Loves You (JLY) group organized a medical mission at Jugan, Consolacion last August 25, 2012. Three hundred people consisting of senior citizens, adults and children came.

Another one was held in Nangka, Consolacion on November 24, 2012 in support of Ptr. Vergel Salangasang's community outreach. Four hundred three patients benefited, among which 274 accepted Christ and 127 expressed willingness to join Bible studies.

Let us continue serving God and spread His Word through various mission work. Here's hoping that we would not just satisfy people's physical needs through these medical missions, but more importantly, people would be able to know and accept Jesus as the Healer of their spiritual lives. May the people who have heard the Word truly accept Christ and share it with their fellow friends and family.







Mission Week (September 13-16, 2012)

According to our Mission Week speaker, Rev. Lalano Bađoy, "Mission – a Mandate not an Option" is what we Christians are called to work for.

Being a member of God's family is a package deal. With the privilege comes the responsibility to fulfill the command of the Great Commission. Telling others about Christ is our obligation whether we do it through evangelistic meeting, worship service, Bible study, mission work such as medical mission, feeding program or visiting orphanage, a one-on-one sharing, Sunday school and etc....

God gave us many opportunities in this country to share His Words. It is our duty to continue the work of Christ that we may expand His kingdom to the ends of the earth.

May we continue to do what has been entrusted to us as we fulfill the "the Great Commission" and may we continue to give our financial and prayer supports to our missionaries.



"The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed"
- Hudson Taylor -



Youth Leadership Training (September 22, 2012)

by: Ptr. Jay Banzuelo

Being a youth and a leader in a church is not easy. There is so much to deal with and different people to face with. Encountering different kinds of personalities, characters as well as handling various opinions is quite a challenging task.

According to Ptr. Jay, the secret to our success is found in our daily agenda. If one continually invest in leadership development, letting the "assets" compound, the inevitable result is growth over time. One will need : respect, experience, emotional strength, people skills, discipline, vision, momentum and timing.

To become a great leader, one must go through three things: time to mature, trials to strengthen and God to bless. To be a leader takes time. Trials can hone our leadership skills. They can also strengthen us mentally, emotionally & best of all, spiritually. However, the most important part is God's blessing and guidance.

We should remember "Leadership is action not position"

As E.M. Kelly quoted "Remember the difference between a boss and a leader, the boss says -go, but the leader says let's go".





Senior Citizen Week

The Membership Committee celebrated Senior Citizen Week from September 30 to October 7, 2012. The week long affair included a variety of activities such as free medical examination, medical consultation and special message by Dr. Benson Lim on diabetes, its danger & prevention. They also had Mooncake Festival celebration, library hours, and two afternoons of special sermons on the Epitaph of Life and Gerontology by Rev. William Young.





**Understanding
Spiritual
Warfare
(October 27, 2012)
by: Dr. Edilberto Banzuelo**

Dr. Banzuelo used Ephesians 6:10-20 as his main passage when sharing about Understanding Spiritual Warfare. He said the Christian's conflict is against—flesh, world and the Devil.

A. Warriors (vv.10-11) sinners made saints by "redemption through the blood of Christ" (saved through faith in Christ, sealed by the Holy Spirit, seated with Christ at God's right hand);

B. Warfare (v.12) be self-controlled and alert (not against flesh-and-blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil; our enemies are powerful spiritual beings—invisible & seemingly invincible, cosmic war

between God and Satan);

C. Weapons (vv.13-20) resist Satan, stand firm in the faith; spiritual battle needs spiritual weapons - full

armor of God. Christ is the Victor, Satan is the defeated foe; and in Christ, we are more than conquerors).



"It is imperative that we learn to pray against these forces of darkness in order to gain victory in our lives."





Father's Day ↑
June 17, 2012



Youth Sunday ←
July 29, 2012



Thanksgiving 2012



Presider Dea. Lily Young



我在列邦中要讚美禰 by CGC Choir



萬國萬民都快樂歡呼
by Sister's Fellowship Praise Dance



"Grace" Dance Number by Sunday School Department

Thanksgiving 2012



Thanks Praise by MGC Adult & Youth Choir



A Sacrifice of Praise by MGC Adult Choir



Church Council Representative
Elder Valentin Uy



將你最好的獻給主 by Brother's Fellowship



Thanksgiving 2012



He's Worthy, Great is the Lord &
Ancient of Days by
Monday & Saturday Bible Study



Testimony by
Sis. Ma. Dolores Chan
of Carmel Fellowship



Testimony by
Dea. Lili Gothong



"More Coke"
by Young
Professional
Fellowship





Thanksgiving 2012



"Masks" by Christian Youth Fellowship



Joybells & Soul Searchers
during Nov 25, 2012
Thanksgiving Sunday



Special speaker
Rev. Anthony Hao
of BSOP





Thanksgiving 2012



November 25, 2012 Baptismal Service

Abigail Lim Yaplito, Jessamine Cristy Kater Go, Jan Alyson Go, Pete Mitchel Suarez,
Christina Angela Dy, Tommy Tan, Makarios Joash Wee, Rose Marie Gu, Bienvenida Ty
(Not in photo: Robert Lim & Lydia Uy baptized last October 14, 2012)





The Meaning Of The Christmas Wreath

Devotional for Saturday, December 6, 2008 by Julie Bowles

As we go into the Christmas season, I have been challenged to consider how we go about sharing the holidays in a Christ-like manner with unsaved family.

I have become more aware of the way we celebrate the birth of Jesus. I recently came across some background information on the Christmas wreath. I even found a reference to a wreath in the Scriptures.

1 Kings 7:29 - Both the panels and the crossbars were decorated with carved lions, oxen and cherubim. Above and below the lions and oxen were wreath decorations. (NLT)

The circle of a Christmas wreath is a never-ending ring, a reminder of everlasting love from our Lord and King. The Christmas wreath can be seen on many doors in our neighbourhood as a sign of welcome, inviting all to enter. This can serve as a

reminder of Christ's invitation for all to come to Him. The middle of the wreath is bare and empty space -- a reminder of what life would be without Christ's love and grace. The materials that wreaths are made from are usually evergreens -- representing eternal life.

Each time we see a Christmas wreath hanging on a door, let us rejoice in the One the celebration of Christmas is truly for.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, we never want to lose sight of the importance of Your birth. Help us to keep You in our sights amid our celebrations with family and friends. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Julie Bowles <julieanni@rogers.com>
Barrie, Ontario, Canada

<http://daily.presbycan.ca/devotions/2008/08-12-06.html>





My Encounter as a Sunday Schooler

by: Judge Jocelyn Uy Po

I grew up in a small island where we only had the pleasure of electricity from 6pm to 10pm at that time. We never had any Chinese school even to this time. It is a dominantly catholic place with all sorts of traditional healing as part of our way of life. Others call it traditional healing, others call it otherwise. So when I was about four years old, my mom (I know it was her idea) had to leave me with the famous Siao Sisters in R.R Landon St. and there, together with 70 other students of different ages and speaking different dialects, my world began. It was one of the toughest times (if not the toughest) in my life and I would wait and sit in that long dark stairs leading to that small door hoping for the silhouette of my mom to appear one day. Moreover, it was my wish that this door where I was introduced to this world would bring me back to the old world where I came from, the old world where I was most comfortable, in the arms of my mom and dad, not knowing how to read nor write or speak other languages other than the bisaya dialect. My mom never came to pick me up. She was tougher than a bull or maybe she knew I was tougher than a bull. She knew that the door should be my exit to a better world. It was tough and I cried a lot.. a lot.. a lot.. day after day. Tears

dried, heart toughened and at the age of four, I decided to end this waiting game. I decided to let go and move on.. and then my real world began.

When things are so dark, there will always be a spark somewhere and from that spark, a Light! Yes, one thing great about staying there was the fact that at a very young age, even before school ever began for me, I was introduced to Sunday School. It happened that Sian Si Peleng was sort of in charge of me. Anywhere she went, I tagged along. And where did she go? Of course to the School (PCGS). It was then Cebu Christian School. Why go to school? The school was also the church. The church was in the school. She was one of the earliest Sunday School teachers of our church. After World War II together with Pek Eng Sian and other young people at that time, they started Sunday school. She was big, tough and was full of love. She would hold my hands when we crossed the streets and would teach me how to sing Christian songs, of course, Chinese Songs. Did I understand them? Of course not, but only for a short while ...

At that time the Sunday School was preparing a song for the inauguration of our Church Sanctuary. I was fortunate to be one of the singers. In fact I was the youngest singer at the time. (Got evidence of this, yep!) Gi Bin Sian was the chi huy (conductor), he was so slim and tall and I would get scared if he would scold us. He told us to put our hands together and lock them in front of our chest. Then he would point his two long forefingers to signal us to be ready and using those two long forefingers (they look real long to me at that time), he would lead us to sing together. I also remember his assistants were Kwan Kwan Chi, Bee Bong Sian, and other young people of the church (they were young at that time) Linda was there, yes I remembered her because Peter was there too. He was courting her. I remembered Peter carrying me in his arms and gave me an apple, a whole apple not the usual slices I used to get. It was a wonderful Sunday School experience in that there were real people out here who spoke a language I didn't understand but showed love and even gave me an apple. Singing, caring, friendship and discipline were the first things I learned in Sunday school. Why not God, why not Jesus?... Well, sorry, I didn't speak Chinese so I did not get to know His name then. But is not God all that....love, care, friendship, discipline? Anyway, I didn't know all their names, so I just called them "sian si....sian si....hoy, sian si.." Later, I dropped the "hoy" because they said it's "bo le so" like seedless grapes maybe and we would giggle...and when I talked with my friends, we would just say sian si small, sian si big, sian si old, and we practically got names for everybody.

Then came the real Sunday School. First person we encountered was this teacher with long brown hair and she could sing high pitch in a very loud voice. Whoa! Of course the famous Beng Ha sian. She would flip our song sheets made of Manila paper with her long stick. Yes,



they got stuck that time and you better not mess up with Sian Si or whack you go. But I never got that chance to see her used that stick upon us. Never. If she was absent, there was this bespectacled stout lady who was all smiles, cute and spoke so fast.... Kim Eng Sian and she would lead the singing or tell story. And I remember her to be so loving and caring. Another assistant was this small lady in school, stout, and old looking. She spoke softly and her hands were plump and she could clasp them together to lead in prayers. She was So Sian. I don't remember much because I didn't understand Chinese or I didn't understand what was going on. I remember some verses though like the story about this person when Jesus said, "Sakay, di lo lay; kinadit gua be kao di e Kilay." Whoa! That's tough Chinese. I knew what's Sakay and I know what's Kilay. Sakay is to ride and Kilay is eyebrow. But I memorized that until now. At that time, it didn't make sense. How could one ride on one's eyebrow? However, from the picture, I knew it was this small man on top of a tree and Jesus was passing by and calling him with these Chinese words. To top this, we had picture card of the story that day with memory verse at the back given to us every Sunday. It's a source of collection for us. Then came the end of the year... YES! We got our prizes. I was always present and I remembered I got a very big pencil for a prize. I didn't



care if that pencil was difficult to write because that pencil was kind of a trophy for me. It was wonderful!!!

To date, our Sunday School is still trying to preserve its conservative Chinese style of teaching Christ to little children. Little did I know that one day I myself would be one of the teachers and would continue to teach the “same old story of Jesus and His love”. It was truly frustrating to listen to stories in a dialect I had difficulty in understanding and more frustrating to teach in a dialect that your pupils or students have difficulty in understanding. But I remember that after four months of choosing and trying to understand Chinese, something in my head just opened. I could understand what Sian Si was talking about but had difficulty in speaking the language. I thank my Sian Si for not giving up on teaching what may seemed difficult. They helped me make the choice when I was too young to choose. They led me to what I am and now, I try to give back to their children and even grandchildren. The path we choose are either narrow or broad. Our church through the Sunday School has taught me to choose the narrow path. This narrow path of ministering to the Chinese was

what God impressed on our forefathers. This is the reason why our church was founded. We were then in a Filipino church but some things just won't work. Our ministry is so unique and yet sometimes misunderstood. In my opinion, the narrow path that Jesus talked about is not only the trials we encounter but the little challenges we face in our daily lives. Not to back out when the going is tough because we know that Jesus is riding (sakay) with us. He is the one we salute (Kilay) and report to every moment of every day of our lives and we are not afraid because the great God will enable us. As my friend said, “Judge, God does not call on the qualified; He qualifies whom He called”. So to all my dear Sunday School teachers and colleagues, keep up the good work. Never give up because Jesus is riding (sakay) with us. We will also get our big pencil, a trophy for a work well done and a life well lived. I salute you all with all my Kilay...

To all Sunday schoolers, make yourself ready as we slowly pass on the torch to you. You too will have a chance to encounter a Sunday schooler who will write about you one day





A Life-Changing Year

by: Mona Li

The cool breeze of 'BER' months signifies the coming to an end of yet another year. While 2011 was an epic year for me, this year has definitely been life-changing - not only for me but also for my family.

On March 22, 2012, my youngest daughter Kitty and I left for Canada. While my trip was for a short visit, Kitty decided to stay there for good. Having her in Cebu the past six years, I recall with fondness her claim to be an 'only child' as her siblings were both happily married. These days, Boss and I don't have to work our schedules around her schedule anymore, and neither do I have to share my car with her. We may be 'freer' in a sense but we miss her so much. Reading Kitty's thoughts and feelings on facebook (no I am not a stalker but a friend, he!he!he!), I sense her having moments of loneliness especially in the first few months after her resettling in Canada. People would ask me why we did not let her go to the States, her land of birth, where she could immediately work as a nurse? Why allow her to leave Cebu when she could work as an ERUF paramedic and even help us in our businesses? Our answer will always be that it is not our decision to make but hers alone. As parents, the most we can do is to give her guidance, support and, best of all, offer unlimited prayers to our heavenly Father. Personally, I believe that Canada has the best of everything. She has her bff Achi Lala, Chi Tew

Miah and other relatives and friends there. After finishing the one-year LPN supplemental course she is now taking, Kitty will hopefully be able to work in the profession she loves. The best thing about Canada is that Kitty has become actively involved in church activities and ministries again. We couldn't be happier for her.

A month after Kitty left, my daughter-in-law Kiam received her Canadian permanent resident visa. For her to fulfill the required residency for Canadian citizenship, she must reside in Canada the next few years and where she is, there my apo Kenzie will be also. My son Bonuy will have to travel between two continents more frequently in the near future. On the month of July, Lala





and Miah told us the wonderful news that they were expecting and surely this was the icing on the cake for our family! We all look forward to the birth of Baby Boy Jao come March, 2013. Looking back, all these life-changing events didn't just happen. It took months of prayers and careful planning, and we are ever so grateful for God's grace in answering our prayers.

Month of August was marked with the celebration of two grand reunions. First was the 40th jubilee year of CCS class '72 from August 2-5, 2012 in Palawan. I believe our class holds the distinction of having the most number of 'married couples' among classmates, 6 out of 58 of which Boss and I are one of the 3 couples. Frankly speaking, Boss and I were the most unlikely pair in our class when we graduated high school. I was always considered as 'one of the guys' and both of us were part of a 'barkada' composed of 7 men and a lady who took up engineering at USC-TC. The basic Christian education of CCS was deeply rooted in my mind and in my heart. I fervently prayed for a Christian life-partner and then Boss and I became a couple. Our Jubilee trip to Palawan was the first out-of-town reunion and boy, what a wonderful time we had!!! An evening of fun and laughter culminated with our 'Ruby Anniversary' celebration here in Cebu on the night we arrived from Palawan to accommodate those who couldn't join the trip. That evening, it was

decided that we needed more 'happy hours' together and the next gathering was set on December 8, 2012.

The second reunion was the 35th jubilee year of USC-TC Chemical Engineering Batch '77. Again, our batch was special as many graduated with honors and our batch holds the record of having the most number of top board placers in a Ch.E. Board Exam - 8 out of 10! The grand reunion was held from August 24-25, 2012 here in Cebu, and we enjoyed reminiscing the past and celebrating the present. I am glad that the yardstick of success is not measured by professional attainments alone but rather by our whole beings. It warmed my heart to note that whatever we all had become, God's name was praised over and over. Looking at fellow engineers, I wondered where I would be right now had I earnestly pursued and practiced my profession? Immediately after graduation, I worked for Cenapro Chemical Corporation for 2 years prior to my marriage and afterwards, I have worked for my Boss' family business. Not that I have any regrets for I always bear in mind what our professor once told me: The most important thing you need to learn in school is to hone the use of your analytical mind and the knowledge learned will then be of great use and advantage in whatever you do. The past 3 decades we have been trading construction materials. By God's grace, opportunity came 2 decades ago and we went into





manufacturing business of fiberglass products. There were many 'ups and downs' in both businesses but through it all, we have been greatly blessed for whenever a door closes, God opens up windows of opportunities. Early this year, I was asked to take on the financial aspects of the Chang's businesses in food industry. Much as I wanted to commit fulltime to this life-changing endeavor, there were obligations to meet and to fulfill. We prayed earnestly as we had the past years for guidance and enlightenment. Again, we are ever so thankful of God's tender mercies in answering our prayers.

Aside from my personal and professional undertakings, I strive to give back a part of myself to God and to society. Not wanting to spread myself too thin, I limit my involvement to my Alma Mater, to a non-government organization called ERUF and to Cebu Gospel Church. It has been 11 years since I was given the privilege to serve PCGS as a Board of Trustee. Under the stewardship of Dr. Wanda Po and members of the BOT, PCGS has become an institution of distinction. On February 16, 2013, we will be celebrating our Alma Mater's 65th founding year and let us join hands as we give thanks to God the Almighty for His faithfulness. It has been 26 years since ERUF first came to existence. Armed with only the spirit of volunteerism and a dilapidated Sakbayan vehicle, we

lived by the motto 'to serve so that others may live'. Through the years, God has always provided for us in one way or another. We dream of having a paramedic institute and a trauma center we can call our own. Lord willing, that dream will finally become a reality. It has been 18 years since I became a member of our church's literature committee. Years of practice have somehow improved my literary skills under the mentorship of my sister, Reverend Anna Wright. In this life-changing year, members of the literature committee have taken a more active role in their areas of assignments and responsibilities. There are more contributors to our Gospel Light publication; a website has been set-up to enable fellow Christians far and wide to access digital copies of GL and thereby help 'save the earth'; mini book sales are held and a big one is slated a few weeks from now. Finally, a special project is set to encourage members to walk through the Bible in a year's time. All these wonderful events and experiences are the results of months, years and even decades of fervent and earnest prayers.

The most important virtue I have learned about prayers is patience. For as long as we pray in accordance to God's will, prayers will be answered in God's own time. Our Lord's timing is perfect, never a second too early and neither is it ever a second too late. At times in the past, I would find myself inside a long dark tunnel, and I was anxious that the glimmer of light I saw ahead might be an oncoming train but now, after years of patiently waiting, I am confident that the glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel is the Lord's lamp to my path for a brighter future. I have fought and won some fights but the battle is still raging on, I have overcome obstacles and reached pit stops but the finish line of the race is still miles away. I have learned to keep my faith no matter what happens for I know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose (Roman 8:28). All glory and honor to God's name!!! Amen and amen.



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