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Striving for the Goal

Rev. Un Hock Wee

Psalm 78 was written by Asaph, a Levite who worked in the court of King David. He was in charge of the music and he was also a teacher.

This is a very long Psalm which records the history of Israel from Egypt to the reign of David. Psalm 78 talks about and emphasizes two things: First, the repeated disobedience; and second, the ingratitude of the Israelites. The author of Psalm 78 said that he himself had not fallen into the sins of Israel because of what his father had taught him. Psalm 78:3 says, *“What we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us.”*

This is what the author was trying to say in the PRESENT TIME: I became a priest working in the church because of what my parents have taught me. Levites are the descendants of one of the tribes of Israel, the children of Jacob (Genesis 29:34).

We can see here the significance of teaching our children and the next generation. We should make our home a little church by bringing our children and family members to know the Lord, love the lord and serve the Lord.

I. TIME FOR INSTRUCTION

Praise God for His Attributes – Verses 2-4 state, *“.....I will utter hidden things, things from of old— what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.”* This

shows that NOW is the best time to let our next generation know the Lord.

If you have a difficult time praising God, here are some of His ATTRIBUTES we need to remember:

1. God is Love

Human love is totally different from the love of God. Human love can be expressed in words and actions. One can say it with flowers or chocolates or by showing how much one cares. God's love is much more than that. It is much deeper than what we can comprehend.

God's love is SACRIFICIAL – *“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.* (1 John 3:16). If God did not show us what love is, we cannot know what love is. What did God have to gain by sending His son to die for us? If you were God, would you intentionally allow your son or daughter to die for someone else? When we talk about sacrifice, it refers to PAIN as well.

God gave and we did nothing but simply receive. He gave His son as a sacrifice for the benefit of others. It is His nature to give Himself up. It is difficult to comprehend God's love. Even King David in Psalm 8 says, *“What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?”* Therefore, we should not take His love for granted.

2. The Wrath of God

The Bible also talks about His wrath. If God is love, how can He get angry? When does God get angry? When people *sin* against God and do the opposite of what He commands. John 3:36 says, *“Whoever believes*

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in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remain on him."

How can we praise God when we know so little of him? Let us study His Word and know His attributes in order to have a better understanding of who God is and give Him the honor due Him.

Praise God for His Power and Strength are Beyond Compare (vs 4c). How powerful is our God? In the Old Testament, God is called "ELOHIM," meaning strength or might.

Human beings are limited by time and space. But God is not. He is in control and holds time and space. God's power is infinite and unlimited. The word *omnipotent* is defined by the biblical word, "*Almighty*," which occurs 2500 times in the Bible. In Genesis chapter 1, His name ELOHIM appeared 32 times and is never used of anyone but God. "He alone is Almighty" as recorded in Psalm 89:8. *God can do with all the power anything that power can do* because He has the strength to do all He wills to do. He has all the resources and the ability to work His will in every circumstance in the universe. I love how A.W. Tozer puts it: "God possesses what no creature can: an incomprehensible plenitude of power, a potency that is absolute."

Here's an easier definition to remember: "*Nothing is too difficult for God.*" This is a familiar song. God is able to do everything He needs to do or wants to do. Nothing is impossible with Him. The song entitled *He will carry you* has the lyrics: "*There is no problem too big, God cannot solve it. There is no mountain too tall, He cannot move it. There is no storm too dark, God cannot calm it. There is no sorrow too deep, He cannot soothe it.*" This shows that we have an Omnipotent God. Nothing is easy nor hard in the eyes of God because God has all the answers.

Praise God for His Greatness. Psalm 147:5 states, "Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit."

When God created the world, the world was nothing, empty and without anything. When God said,

"Let there be light", there was light. God created the universe from nothing. He created the world completely and beautifully by simply using His Words. This just show how wonderful our God

and Creator is.

Another wonder of His work is the salvation He Himself provided us. We are already dead in sin but he brought us back to God. As sinners, there is no way for us to reach out to God, instead, God sought us out. We are separated from God but He brought us back to Him. "He saved us not because of the righteous things we have done, but because of His mercy," Titus 3:5. When God looks at us, He sees sinners who need His grace, forgiveness and salvation.

The following story of *The Pearl of Greatest Price* illustrates the wonderful work of our God: A Christian missionary in India had befriended a devoted Hindu and had explained that salvation is a gift. One day, the Hindu told the missionary that he was going to crawl many miles on his knees to Delhi as a means of earning salvation. But before he left, he gave the missionary a small, heavy box. "I have had this box for years," said the Hindu. "I kept one thing inside it. Now I will tell you about it. I once had a son."

"A son?" the missionary responded. "Why, you never told me you had a son."

"My son was an excellent pearl diver. One day, he found the most beautiful pearl, one of the largest ever found off the coast of India. But because he stayed under the water for too long, he died soon after he took possession of the pearl. I have kept the pearl since and now, I want to give it to you."

"This is an amazing pearl", the missionary said, "Let me buy it. I'll give you \$10,000 for it, or if it takes more, I will work for it."

"Friend", the Hindu said, "this pearl is beyond all prices. No man in all the world has the money enough to pay for what the pearl is worth to me. I will give it to you. You may have it as a gift." "No, I cannot accept that. As much as I want the pearl, I cannot accept it that way. I must pay for it or work for it," said the missionary.

The old diver was stunned. "You don't



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understand. Don't you see? My only son gave his life to get this pearl and I would not sell it for any money. Its worth is in the life-blood of my son. I cannot sell this, but I can give it to you. Just accept it as token of the love I bear you," said the Hindu.

The missionary could not speak for a moment. Then he gripped the hand of the old man. "Don't you see," the missionary said in a low voice, "that is just what you have been saying to God." The Hindu looked searchingly at the missionary and slowly, slowly he began to understand.

"God is offering you heaven as a free gift. It is so great that no man on earth could own it. No man on earth could earn it. No man is good enough to deserve it. It costs God the lifeblood of His only son to make open the gates of heaven for you. In a million years, in a hundred pilgrimages, you cannot earn the right to enter that gate. All you need to do is graciously accept it as a token of God's love for you. Of course, I will accept the pearl in great humility, praying to God that I may be worthy of your love. Won't you accept God's gift of heaven, too, in deep humility, knowing it cost Him the death of His son to offer it to you?"

"Friend, I see now. I have believed in the doctrine of Jesus Christ for years, but I could not believe that this salvation was free. Now I understand, some things are too priceless to be bought or earned. Friend, I will accept His salvation."

II. TIME FOR TESTIMONY

The best way to share our faith is through our good testimony so that our family members and other people will see God's greatness in us. What is a testimony? Testimony refers to personal experience.

1. Personal Experience

The Jewish people taught their children how they were delivered from slavery in Egypt, how they crossed the Red Sea, how God provided for them in the desert, how they received the 10 commandments, among others. Every year, they also have a special

celebration called the PURIM commemorating how God delivered the Jewish people in the Persian Empire from destruction.

Share our personal testimony so that others will be able to see God's greatness. Tell our children the lessons we have learned so they will be able to see and understand.

2. Living Proof

To make an impact to others on what we believe in, not only do we need to let them know but we need to let them see as well. We need to let our children see how much we love them. Let us start showing our zeal and desire in knowing & loving God by starting a family devotion. This will enable us to create the desire to have deeper knowledge of God.

Psalm 78 gives us two important truths: First, while human beings are weak, yet, the other truth is that of God's amazing grace to mankind. This is why we need to be reminded again and again how weak we are apart from God. Let us strengthen our generations with Christians who love God and influence the next generation to follow Christ's footsteps.

Allow me to tell you another story that I have read: a pastor who was driving on a highway and saw a church that was already closed for many years. The building was dilapidated. The windows were broken and the grasses uncut.

One day, while driving on the same highway and passing by the old church, the pastor asked his ten year old son, "Why do you think is this church closed? The pastor's son replied, "Dad, have you noticed the cemetery beside the church? I think all of them died. They did not reach out to their next generation."

Indeed, as we strive for the goal, let us make sure we teach our children well and steadily pass the baton to the next generation.



Him We Proclaim

Colossians 1:24-28

Pastor Angelo Gutierrez

INTRODUCTION

Careless drivers often push their automobiles beyond their designated capabilities, and their poor vehicles cough and puff until the motor finally dies. Daring and foolish engineers will put too much pressure on their boilers, or try to force more power from an engine than it can provide. But our Master guarantees that tasks shall be balanced with the precise strength He gives us. He knows the exact pressure we can stand, for He has made us; He knows the utmost load we can lift, and will not allow us to suffer to be tried and tested, above what we are able. He is truly faithful, because He is an abiding Sustainer.

This might be one of the lingering ideas in Paul's mind as he continued to minister and spread the good news of Christ to the world. No matter what kind of situation Paul faces, he presses on, running the race and fighting the good fight; because he believes that his God is the ever present help and his Lord Jesus Christ has empowered him to accomplish what was commissioned to him.

At this point in his letter, Paul talked about his work as a minister of the gospel of Christ. Therefore, Colossians 1:24-28 is valuable both to preachers and the common Christians of our present time. Preachers or pastors are given insight as to how they should view themselves and the work they are to perform. All Christians, meanwhile, are not only given a better understanding of the work of their minister and what to expect from them, but are also called to imitate the example of Paul. All of us must cultivate the mindset that we are to proclaim Christ even if it involves

suffering.

Paul's Responsibility

With that in mind, we notice first of all that Paul took great joy in suffering for his fellow Christians. As an apostle to the Gentiles or non-Jews, Paul had the responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ beyond Jerusalem. The Lord told Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name" (Acts 9:15-16).

True enough, Paul suffered a lot for the spreading of the Gospel. 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 tell us that he was thrown into prison many times, he received punishment from the Jews even to the point of death, even some of the Gentiles tried to kill him, he encountered shipwrecks, and many other things.

Paul endured these hardships for the advancement of the Gospel! And even when in prison, Paul proclaimed the Gospel up to the very end! Yet Paul tells us that he is happy. He rejoices in what he has suffered for the believers (v.24). On behalf of his brethren, Paul willingly undergoes the worldly suffering that all Christians should face as part of belonging to Jesus Christ. And that same worldly suffering is mentioned in John 15:18-20.

Second, we can notice that Paul considered himself a servant and a steward. The apostle Paul here tells his readers the task that was entrusted to him. He is a servant who answers to a higher authority. It was God who commissioned him to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. He made a similar declaration in 1 Corinthians

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9:16-17, where he said, “Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.”

Paul was commissioned to present a mystery. This mystery is the one promised by God through Israel. Throughout the Old Testament it seemed like a mystery how God would bless both Jews and non-Jews. Yet through the New Testament books, it was revealed to us that all prophecies were fulfilled by Christ. Soon after, the promised blessing to all nations was given not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles whom God has chosen for His glory. Ephesians 3:6 says, “*This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.*” Paul understood that his task was to reveal this mystery to all. It is God's message for His people.

Paul understood that the message of Christ needs to be spread to the people even in the midst of persecution and suffering. He knew the importance of proclaiming Christ. It is not at all for political survival, but it is for the salvation of many.

And third, we can see that Paul had this as the goal of his preaching: to present every man perfect in Christ. In writing his many letters to the churches, Paul was not merely saying his hellos to the Christians he knew or heard of. One of the goals of his ministry is to present every man perfect in Christ. Christians may not attain perfection in this sinful world. But Paul aims to help Christians become mature in Christ. And how does he do it? It is through the preaching of the Scriptures. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*”

Paul believes that in order for Christians to become mature, he must only preach one thing, or one person – Christ (v.28)! His aim is not merely to convey information. Rather, his purpose is to be an instrument

as God radically transforms the hearts, lives, and relationships of those who hear his preaching.

My Responsibility

Now what are these to us? What is the significance of Paul's sufferings and ministries to our life now? For the preachers of the gospel, we are entrusted with the task to be servants of God and stewards of the gospel. As servants of God, we are answerable only to God and we must fear Him above all else. And as servants of God, our lives are His and we are accountable to Him. In all the things that we do – whether in preaching every Sunday, visitations, or leading Bible studies – **our aim should be to please and glorify God and Him alone.** We must continue to preach and teach Christ and the gospel no matter what challenges we face or how great the hardships we have to endure. And just like Paul, we have to endure them with joy.

As stewards of the gospel, we are commissioned to preach and teach Christ and the gospel to the people whom God has called us to minister to. As pastors of a local church, it is our responsibility to regularly preach and teach our congregation and not rely too much on outside sources. If we do not do these, then we are committing a sin against God who has called us to become ministers of His church. This is the same charge Paul gave to Timothy before he was martyred (2 Timothy 4:1-5). While Timothy was serving in Ephesus back then, Paul told him to “*keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*”

A Christian author named Dennis E. Johnson wrote something about the preacher's role. “As the servant of (God), entrusted with a most precious treasure, (the preacher) must be prepared to answer to his Master as one found faithful in administering his stewardship, both preserving and propagating the message of life without modifying its content.” Our goal is to please God in everything we do. It makes no difference whether anyone applauds our actions or not. We're called to be faithful, not famous.

The story is told of three people who went into a



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church. The first was a business man who had failed and was contemplating suicide. The second was a prodigal youth, deep in sin, who was planning a robbery. The third was a young woman who was tempted to depart from the path of virtue. The service started. The choir arose and sang an anthem about building the walls of Zion. The minister addressed an eloquent prayer to the Lord and then preached on the theme, "How to Become a Better Person". Afterward, the businessman committed suicide, the boy stole and landed in jail, and the young woman began a life of moral shame. What might have happened if only the gospel of Christ had been preached!

Our Responsibility

Now the beauty of this passage is that it's not just applicable to pastors. These principles should also relate to each and every Christian – all of us! Remember that when Paul wrote this letter of Colossians, he was writing to the saints in Colossae, not to Timothy, not to Titus, not to another pastor, but to a congregation like this. The saints in Colossae are ordinary members of the church just like the rest of us. He made a similar appeal to the Corinthians when he said, "*Therefore I urge you to imitate me; and follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ* (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1)."

The truth is, we too were slaves under Christ and were commissioned to share the gospel to all people. Slaves before were sold and bought. When a slave was bought for a price, the buyer has redeemed that slave and his former owner will no longer be his master. He must now obey and follow his new master. In the same way, we were bought for a price, the price being the blood of Jesus Christ. As servants of Christ, we are all accountable to Him and Him alone. We are to obey the commands of the Master and please Him in every way, for we were redeemed from sin so that we can serve and honor Christ, even if it would mean suffering for our Master.

We are also called to become stewards of the gospel. Spreading the gospel of Christ is not only a ministry commissioned to the pastors. Remember what

happened after the first martyr Stephen was stoned? Christians were persecuted so they eventually moved outside Jerusalem. But in the process, they proclaimed Christ as the Messiah wherever they went. Ordinary people doing exactly what Christ told them to do (see Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

The last application that we can draw from this passage is that the work of a preacher is not finished when he ends his sermon. His labor will not be over until his hearers do something to apply the message to their lives.

A woman with a cold in her head went to see a doctor. After she was checked and diagnosed, the doctor poured out some medicine from his store and told her how often to take it. A few days later he was called to her home, for in those days doctors made house calls. The cold had settled in her chest. More medicine was prescribed, but the woman died. The doctor was puzzled because he had prescribed the right medicine. Nonetheless, he mourned for her death.

A short time after the funeral, the doctor happened to meet the patient's sister. By accident, he learned that the sick woman had not taken a drop of his prescribed medicine, but instead poured it down the sink. The doctor then realized he was not responsible for her death, because the patient had not followed orders.

The preacher is responsible to prescribe the right medicine. But all of us are responsible in taking the message to heart. Only those who listen and follow what is prescribed can expect to find spiritual health.

Another story was told about two churchgoers during a Sunday service. One church member asked his friend "Is the sermon done?" To which his friend replied, "No, the preacher is done, but the sermon has to be worked out in our lives."

May the Lord grant all of us the grace to do our part in proclaiming the gospel of Christ. Amen.



Another Journey with the Lord

Pastor Eric Chan

I am writing this personal reflection upon being reminded of the deadline for submission. People say, "There is always a first time for everything". But there is really no excuse for being late in your commitment. Though late, I must comply with my commitment to contribute for our biannual Gospel Light publication. Few months back, I might have opted not to write due to circumstances beyond my control. *But God is faithful; indeed He will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear. Rather, when we are tempted, the Lord will also provide a way out so that we can endure it.* These are the words of Paul from 1Corinthians 10:13, NIV. And it proves true, because all it takes is to believe in God's promises.

One of the fundamental virtues of a Christian should be about "faith". The Bible defines *faith* as the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Heb. 11:1, ESV). However, it is wrong to define *faith* as something based on our personal and subjective understanding of God. In other words, faith should be centered on correct theology – the understanding about God, which only comes from the Scripture, the Word of God. Therefore, the subject of our faith rests on the person of the Trinity God, His promises and workings throughout the

Scripture. Faith is never on the premise of "claim and belief," which oftentimes is based on whatever that comes to a person's mind.

Abraham was credited as the Father of Faith, but he appeared to have wavered from time to time. He lied about Sarah, his wife, a couple of times. He gave in to the gesture of Sarah to have a child through Hagar, Sarah's maidservant. Now, how can we then say Abraham was indeed a man of faith?

The Lord Jesus Christ likened the Christian *faith* to a mustard seed, one of the smallest of seedlings. As Christians, we know that the Lord uses the imagery of the mustard seed to teach us that, like the mustard seed that grows into a large tree, the Christian faith also starts small but should grow into maturity.

Abraham exemplified real faith in God when he responded to the Lord's call to leave his comfort zone and moved to a strange and faraway place. Yes, he might have fumbled a couple of times; yet doubtless, he never rejected God. Actually, if you examine the accounts of *Genesis* from chapters 12 to 22, Abraham's faith grew by leaps and bounds.

Abraham's walk of faith with God began in Genesis 12 with nothing to hold on to and yet, he



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still responded to God's call to leave his former way of life. In the succeeding chapters, Abraham's faith was tested. No, he never considered going back to his comfort zone (his place of origin), but he had clearly fallen into timidity. Sometimes, fear has a way of overcoming our faith. So, he was tentative quite a few times in the earlier chapters, i.e., chapters 12 to 20. But definitely, there was an obvious transformation starting from chapters 21 and onward. What then was the clincher?

After several reiteration of God's promise of a son through Sarah, Isaac was finally born to them at a very old age. The promise was not fulfilled until things appeared to be impossible humanly speaking. I would say, even medically impossible. Truly, God is never too early but He is never late. Yet, God's perfect timing prepared Abraham for that one last "test of faith" - the Lord asked that Isaac be offered for burnt offering. Surprisingly, Abraham did not offer any challenge but responded in faith. Truly, Abraham passed the test with flying colors. On the other hand, when Isaac inquired about the lamb for a burnt offering, with sincere faith in the Lord, Abraham replied, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." Indeed, the Good Lord did exactly what Abraham had said.

God, our Creator, the Giver of Life and the Master Architect of our life, knows exactly when to make that one important booster we need, when the human heart seems no longer able to continue in faith. I believe that should be an important "faith lesson" for all of us. Similarly, in the midst of darkness, I saw light. The Lord reminded me how He had faithfully worked out all things for the glory of His name from the moment of my son's death

until today.

At God's own mysterious working, sometimes He does allow challenging things to come our way.

A good example would be that of Job: he lost everything except his life and wife. So, sometimes although unwarranted, life would seem unfair. Perhaps, circumstance could lead us to be confused but should never make us doubt God. Remember, the Scripture did say, "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28, NIV).*"

By the way, "all things" are not limited to things we like or things favorable to us. Rather, it includes the hurts, the pains and even injustices that one may encounter. However, at the end of the day, whatever God allows to come our way, is always for the best to us. The Potter molds us so that we may be useful to Him and in turn, be prepared to minister to others who are hurting or who are in need of comfort.

I thank God for allowing me to walk in dust of the Rabbi, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Years ago, a deacon back in Manila told me, we are letting go a co-worker, but by God's masterful orchestration, perhaps a better and more mature pastor would be returned to us someday. Though life can sometimes be painful and hard, yet those are actually precious moments that allow us to have another fruitful journey with the Master. It has been granted to us on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but to suffer for Him ... (Phil. 1:29, NIV).

Christian Ministry: Priority or a Hobby?

Mark 12:30 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

Pastor Wayne Vincent U. Chua

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.”

Will you agree if I told you that there are times when studying the Bible *does not* bring glory to God? Your eyebrow might raise or you might think that this is one rebellious person writing this article. But walk with me and finish the article so that you will know what I mean.

We live in a generation where ministry has already become a hobby. According to dictionary.com, hobby is an activity or interest pursued for pleasure or relaxation but not as a main occupation.¹ A lot of times, we treat Christian Ministry as a hobby, something that we love to do but only if we have an extra time. We don't put ministry as our priority. My prayer is that this article will open your spiritual eyes and make you realize that if we confess that we believe in God, then Christian Ministry is our priority.

I'm busy: the most acceptable excuse

This phrase “I'm busy” is one of the most powerful answers that Christians usually give. It's difficult to argue with people who say it. Let us study this phrase by asking a question: Which is more important? God or _____ (you can put

anything here like work, school, friends, etc.). Let's say you put work. So which is more important? God or work? If you say work, then it's wrong. If you say God, sorry, but this is also wrong. The answer should be “both” (if you answered none, I think you need to check your life again...just kidding!). God is important just as work is important as well. If you say God is important and work is less important...my question is this, “Why would we spend more time on doing something that is of less importance?” The Bible also teaches us that work is important. According to the apostle Paul in 2 Thess. 3:10, “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.” God and work are both important. Since God gave us things that we should do, then it should also be important. When we say we are too busy to be doing something, it means that we regard that as of less importance...no one rejects something if it is important. People are usually busy with things that are important to them...why would anyone be busy for something that is not important to them? God is important, work and other things that we do are also important. How do we balance it? Another thing we could see is this: When we reply to other people that we are busy, we are actually saying that it is not important. That is why people still eat food even when they are

¹ www.dictionary .com, IPAD application.

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busy, because food is important. Is God's work important to us? Then, I believe we should spend time on it also.

All, everything, 100%, complete, entire, full, total

Jesus Christ tells us to love God with "all" your heart, "all" your soul, "all" your mind and with "all" your strength. One common factor is the word "all". Meaning, not even a single thing to be left alone. It should be everything. We are created not for the sole purpose of working, studying, etc. But we are created to glorify God. Westminster Shorter Catechism question number 1 asks: "What is the chief end of man?" The answer: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."² It is the Glory of God that is our priority. It does not mean that we should all be in the church doing God's work but rather, in everything that we do, it should honor God. Whether it is in school, workplace, in our different vocations, even during our hobbies, it should bring glory to God. According to the author of the Old Testament book Ecclesiastes, everything is meaningless "under the sun". This "under the sun" does not give us a geographical understanding but rather a spiritual understanding. This term refers to everything apart from God. The author tells us that everything apart from God is meaningless. There is no meaning in life if we do these things apart from the Creator who made all these things. Everything should be done with God in our mind, heart, soul and strength.

Balance: The key to glorifying God in every aspect of our lives

So how do we exactly do it? It's another thing to think about it and another thing to put it

² The Westminster Shorter Catechism by G. I. Williamson, page 1

into action. Let me share to you what I believe is the most effective way. It can be summarized in this: "Doing the right thing at the right time in the right place and with the right motive".

This will guide us so that everything that we do will surely bring glory to God. In these four aspects: thing, time, place and motive, only one of them is limited. That is time. Since time is limited, then we revolve on it. Let me give you some examples. A student studying the Bible during Science class where the teacher is giving a lecture. Does that bring glory to God? I don't think so (by the way, this answers the introduction I gave earlier). The same thing with work and ministry. If it is time to work, then we work, and it brings glory to God. But if it is time to do ministries, then we should do our ministries, that will then bring Glory to the Creator. It is sad when I see a lot of Christians trade their ministry so that they can earn more money, or for the students, that they can acquire better grades. Work, school and other activities (given that they are good in God's eyes) bring glory to God when we do it at the proper time, in proper place and with the proper motivation. If not, then I believe it will not bring glory to God.

Conclusion:

When Adam and Eve rebelled against the Lord, sin started to destroy the whole creation and no one in the entire history of the human race could reverse this effect except one, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is both God and man, who through His death on the cross and resurrection, reverse the effect of sin. Christians who truly understand this will eventually spend time forwarding the kingdom of God through different ministries. Dear reader, if you are reminded by this article's message to serve God, then organize your schedule and make Church



The Abracadabra in the Church

Pastor Charmaine Yu-Gutierrez

My daughter recently discovered the amazing side of magic tricks after recently watching a cartoon show that featured disappearing acts. She now says the famous word “abracadabra” to indicate magic and “make something or someone disappear.” Of course, when my husband and I play with her, we deliberately go to the next room in the house when she yells “abracadabra” so that we can disappear from her sight after she drops her makeshift curtain. When we hear the magic word for the second time, we would reappear in front of her. Hearing her uncontrollable laugh, it's no doubt that her pretend power gives her much excitement, (never mind the fact that once we start, she would ask us to do the trick with her again and again and again).

There is also some “abracadabra” going on in the church setting. And I'm not talking about magic tricks presented to kids to entertain them during a special occasion. No, this disappearing act is quite real and there is nothing in this that the church would be excited about. Sadly, this “abracadabra” is about the church members who are leaving the church altogether.

I recently stumbled upon a blog of a youth pastor in the U.S. that talked about the issue of youth leaving

the church. Now that scenario may not necessarily reflect our situation in the Philippine Chinese churches. But we are certainly not doing any better. Sadly, we have a number of people leaving the church from all ages, mostly for the reason of looking for something else outside.

The blog gave 10 reasons as to why the church is losing the youth, which I find true even in our setting and even extending to the not-so-youth population. After interviewing several 20-somethings on why they left the church, this youth pastor summed up this list based on their honest conversation. I have taken the liberty to expound on these 10 reasons according to our own church's situation and direction, hoping that we would all learn from the failure of pragmatic methods that have been infiltrating the church.

1. The Church is “Relevant.”

We try so hard to make the church “relevant” or cool to the world that we invest so much money, time and effort in bringing what's attractive outside to the church setting. That's why we see coffee shops and stadium-like worship halls inside the church buildings. There are also musicals and film viewings done inside the church that have nothing to do with our Christian belief. How does this

“modernizing our church” help us? We assume that this would attract people to come and stay in our church because of the entertainment, but what really happens is we train our members to search and thirst for the fun and entertaining things alone. That's why attendees easily get bored and irritated when the sermon lasts more than 30 minutes. That's why several people do not join the Sunday worship when their children are not performing on stage.

And to top it off, despite all these effort to look attractive to the outside world, the church does not look cool at all. We only end up being ridiculed as fake or trying hard but failing miserably. Why? Because in the midst of all the modernization, the church has already lost its own identity.

2. They Never Attended Church to Begin With.

For most youth, they were never really brought to the worship hall, asked to sit in a pew and join the Sunday service. They are either expected to go home or spend that hour and a half playing in another room. They end up not being used to listening to sermons, and not knowing how the gospel encompasses every aspect of their young lives. I know how difficult it is to bring a child to join the worship service with the parents. It's a weekly struggle for me as well to concentrate on worshipping God through songs and the sermon and disciplining my child at the same time. But I believe it's going to be a worthwhile training, one that follows God's design of worshipping Him as a family.

Sadly, our church does not only have youth who do not know how to worship together in the church. We have those members who are used to staying in

an extended smaller room where they end up chatting or busying themselves with other matters rather than listening to the sermon.

These people, including the youth, end up leaving the church not because it's inconvenient to stay in the worship hall, but because they were never really taught how to attend church to begin with.

3. They get smart.

This does not mean to say that the members of our church start becoming smart when they leave the church. Rather, what this means is that they are treated as intelligent by those from the outside. Atheists, agnostics and even intellectual Muslims and Roman Catholics provide strong arguments that challenge the mind of even Christians, as if this is the only logical perspective that is available in the world of religion.

Sadly, the church trains its members to get used to shallow messages, sermons that simply talk about the ways to be successful in this life. When preachers explain Bible passages in great detail, members automatically complain, judging that the message is boring and unrelated to their lives. When theology is discussed in the fellowships or at the pulpit, leaders quickly react by inviting popular speakers or suggesting more modern topics. We end up failing to address the many questions that Christians have about their faith. Because of the preferred watered-down messages, the church fails to teach Christians to know what, who and why they believe. Unwittingly, the church advocates blind believing among its members when all the while, we have God's own Word to make us knowledgeable about our Christian faith.

4. *The church sends them out unarmed.*

The logical result, of course, is that the church people become ignorant Christians once they are exposed outside. They would easily get swayed by the many intellectual arguments directed against Christianity simply because they never learned the Biblical answers to these. But even if the answers have been discussed in great detail for centuries now, the church never bothers teaching these to its members. All it's concerned about is pushing members to participate in "doing" ministry. Are they helping out in the children's ministry? Are they part of the choir or church band? Do they join in mission outreach? The church is so fixated on the output of its members that they neglect the input of God's teaching. How often has the church asked how we can further teach God's doctrine to the people? Almost never.

5. *The church gives them hand-me-downs.*

Instead of providing the people with objective faith, the church passes along "feelings" or subjective reasons as to why they are in the church. These are exactly what they are, subjective. We cannot pass along what we feel towards our faith to others. And we are not called to do that. We are, on the other hand, commanded to preach Christ, who He is and what He did for us. But again, once pastors talk about atonement, sanctification and other Biblical teachings, we ask them to change the topic to a simpler, more interesting theme. Or worse, to shorten the message so that we can add a play or singing presentation. But by doing this, the church transfers only good and happy feelings, making the church people rely on their subjective emotions when it comes to their faith. And sadly,

since feelings often change, in the long run, they find better "feelings" from the outside world. Without learning the firm and objective foundation of their faith, they easily drop what the church offers because, after all, if it's just good feelings, they can get more appealing ones from the world.

6. *Community*

Wanting to be more relatable with the outside lingo, the church adapts the word "community" or "family" to almost every committee and activity of the church. We want to look solid and united, even if it means that hypocrisy lingers among the members. And when big problems arise, we fail to remember the words "forgiveness," "love," "honesty" and "integrity." And just like in the battlefield, the party with the least comrades and back-up support is alienated. Eventually, the church people would discover that the "community" that the church offers is inauthentic, thus, the more appealing and more accepting communities in the outside world become hard to resist.

7. *They found better feelings.*

With the many options available in the world on how to feel better with oneself, church members seek the self-improvement talk and the succeed-in-life seminars over Biblical messages without even thinking twice. It's because that's what the church taught them to long for, messages that teaches step-by-step life lessons which only aim to make people feel good about themselves. The worse thing is, they don't even realize the difference. Church people equate life improvement talks to Bible teachings since the former "nourishes the

heart and spirit” as much as the latter. That's why it becomes easy for them to replace the church with any life-coaching seminars or televised prosperity sermons.

8. They got tired of pretending.

Because the church insists on “feel good” messages as opposed to Biblical teachings, church members often do not know what to do when they are faced with personal difficulties. God's promises in the Bible and the hope we have because of Jesus' death on the cross are never learned, much less recalled in these trying times. All we are taught is to be happy, to put a smile on our faces on Sundays no matter what. But this front soon fades once the member gets tired of pretending to be okay when everything inside him feels alone, depressed and confused.

9. They know the truth.

When church people get tired of putting a nice front as they fail miserably in achieving a better life, the church doesn't seem to be the place they want to be in. It's because the church had concentrated on the do's and don'ts, for kids: *Good boy/girl do this and don't do that*; for adults: *Do this to have a successful life*. But this concept is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Far from it! The message of the gospel is that Jesus already did it for us. The law tells us to do, do, do. But the gospel says “it's done.” Jesus fully obeyed the law. He lived a perfect life for us because we couldn't. No matter how hard we try, we, sinners, can never satisfy the demands of the law. Apart from understanding this, we will always be fooled into thinking that God would only be pleased with us if we try harder to live a good life. And sooner or later, as the church people realize

the tiring and hopeless task of fulfilling all the do's and don'ts, they have a hard time finding a reason to stay in the church.

10. They don't need the church.

Men and women, young and old leave the church simply because they don't see its need in their lives anymore. As the church tries hard to offer similar attractions as those available in the world and as it gives self-help messages instead of the holistic gospel week in and week out, church people realize that they can live life without the church. The failure to strongly focus and impart the sinfulness of man, and the powerful forgiveness and reconciliation offered through the cross, the church does not show its members the authentic message that every man needs. Ironically, as the church makes every effort to be appealing to the world, it loses its direction as it loses its sole message.

May this article serve as an eye-opener to all of us, especially to those who are in the position to make decisions for the church. How often do we raise questions when there's a drop in the number of attendees in our church activity? But how often do we ask if the message in that activity is Biblical? Do we even notice if a sermon mentioned Jesus Christ and the cross? The church loses its members because it wants to embrace the world, and in the process, have neglected THE message. There's a quote that accurately summarizes the warning for us: *When the ship is in the ocean, everything's fine. When the ocean gets into the ship, you're in trouble.*

* The 10 reasons are written by Pastor Marc with the title “Top 10 Reasons our Kids Leave Church.” This is posted in his blog www.marc5solas.com. (<http://marc5solas.com/2013/02/08/top-10-reasons-our-kids-leave-church/>)

真可惜

雯華

以弗所書1:13-14. 咱因為聽到福音, 認識了上帝. 上帝就開咱屬靈的眼睛, 使咱認識自己是罪人. 咱就要認罪, 悔改, 求主憐憫施恩, 赦免咱的罪惡, 洗清咱一切的污穢. 求主進入咱的心裡做主做王, 使咱歸在主的名下得救, 成為新造的人.

上帝就賜所應許的聖靈作印記. 這聖靈是咱得基業的憑據, 祂要引導咱行世上的道路.

既然咱是新造的人, 就應該有新的習慣. 主喜愛咱每早晨用充分的時間來親近祂: 讚美, 感謝, 頌讚祂. 仔細讀祂的話, 又要謹守. 儆醒祈禱, 免得入了迷惑. 不再自作聰明行自己路, 給魔鬼留地步, 再去犯罪, 再做魔鬼的奴隸, 受它控制. 但願咱能順從聖靈的引導, 就能夠做得勝者. (加拉太書5:16-18)

彼得前書1:3-4. 咱在世間免不了會遇著很多試煉與試探, 但咱能夠靠著聖靈克勝魔鬼一切的鬼計. 咱知道世上一切的苦難都是暫時而已, 巴不得咱會忍耐一點, 因為不多久咱就能夠進入天堂與主一同享受永遠的快樂. (羅馬書8:18). 現在的苦難如果與將來上帝要向咱顯出的榮耀, 是無法相比的.

新約聖經有記載一個人名叫猶大, 他是耶穌所挑選十二個門徒其中的一位. 他得到主耶穌的疼愛, 他整日與耶穌在一起, 一同吃飯, 一同出去傳福音. 猶大有親耳聽過主講解很多篇的道理, 也有親眼看見主行出許多神蹟奇事, 又得到權柄能夠趕鬼和醫治各種疾病(馬太10:1). 甚至主叫拉撒路從死裡復活, 他有親眼看見. 這些事, 本來會使猶大的信心更剛強, 使他更相信主耶穌是上帝的兒子.

但是因為猶大貪愛錢財, 他給魔鬼留地步. (馬太26:14-16), (提摩太前書6:9-10). 他既然給魔鬼留地步, 魔鬼就不客氣, 不管他是主的門徒, 它大大的激動猶大, 使他很大膽以三十塊銀出賣他的主(三

十塊銀是等於工人一個月的薪金而已).

後來, 當猶大知道耶穌已經給人定了罪, 他被良心責備, 非常懊悔自己所做的惡事, 他就拿著三十塊銀去還給祭司和長老們說, “我出賣了無辜人的血, 我有罪了.” 但是祭司和長老們不理他. 結果猶大就把三十塊銀丟在殿裡, 出去弔死了.

真可惜! 照說猶大應該早就可得救了. 現在應該在天堂與主同坐祂的寶座(啟3:21). 但是他不曉得惜福, 貪愛錢財. 明知故犯, 偏偏去犯罪(希10:26-27). 最後, 他不但失去那三十塊銀, 也失去自己的生命, 走上了永遠滅亡的路.

同樣的, 一個“基督徒”雖然經常來教會作禮拜, 參加教會的團契和種種的活動, 並且曾洗禮. 但是如果他來教會有別的動機, 或是不遵行神的旨意, 上帝都知道(詩139:1-4)

當審判的時候, 主必要對他說, “我從來不認識你, 你這個作惡的人. 離開我去吧(馬太7:21-23). 那就真可惜!

那麼上帝的旨意是甚麼呢? 下面有列八項最基本的上帝旨意.

1. 咱要盡心, 盡性, 盡意, 盡力的愛主你的神 (馬可12:30)
2. 咱要愛人如己(馬可12:31)
3. 咱要過著聖潔的生活(彼得後書3:8-13)
4. 咱不要愛世界(約翰一書2:15-17)
5. 咱要多結屬靈的果子(約翰15:5-8)
6. 咱要追求良善, 常常喜樂, 不住祈禱, 凡事謝恩, 順從聖靈的引導(帖前5:15-23)
7. 咱要赦免人的過失(馬太6:14-15)
8. 咱無論作甚麼, 都要為榮耀神而行(哥前10:31)

Who Wrote the Books of the Bible?

A Series by The Irreverent Historian

In our previous installment, we examined the authorship of the first five books of the Torah, known to us as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Traditionally, Moses was said to have written all five of them. However, an alternate theory called the “documentary hypothesis” proposes that what we currently have is an eclectic mix from four main texts: a Southern Israel source (**J**), a Northern Israel source (**E**), a priestly source (**P**), and the source for Deuteronomy (**D**).

In this installment, we continue examining the Bible’s authors, by examining the books of History.

Historicity of the History Books

The history books are much easier to date than the other books of the Old Testament. Because they deal with kings and campaigns, archaeology can often provide a glimpse of how other cultures viewed the same events. Having corroborating accounts greatly enhances the reliability and historical value of the Biblical accounts.

For example, 2 Kings 18-19 recount King Sennacherib’s invasion of Judea, during the reign of King Hezekiah. Carvings found in Sennacherib’s palace in Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, confirmed that the invasion did take place. The Judeans were forced to bribe Sennacherib to leave them alone.

In fact, the Assyrian carvings explicitly named Hezekiah, saying he was shut like a caged bird in Jerusalem. Of course, the carvings don’t say anything about the plague mentioned in Kings. But if you were Sennacherib, would you put it there?

How to Read the History Books

The Biblical histories aren’t “history” per se. They try to describe the story of Israel within a moral or religious view. Unlike the goal of modern historians, the aim was not to have a balanced view, but to illustrate a point by using selective accounts. So to modern readers, the history books aren’t “history”, but they aren’t fictional either. They are simply a product of the time period they are written in, and its specific customs and moralities.

The books of History can be split into two series based on style, point of view, and scope. The first series, Joshua through Kings (except Ruth), is called the Deuteronomistic History. These books share common themes with the book of Deuteronomy. The second series, which include Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, are compiled by the editor known as the *Chronicler*. Ruth and Esther, both novellas about women, round up the Bible’s history books.

So without further ado, we dive into the first series: a span of some 800 years of Israel’s history, from Joshua to Zedekiah!

THE BOOK OF *Joshua*

THE BOOKS OF HISTORY

What's the Book About?

After wandering the desert for forty years, the Israelites were finally ready to enter the Promised Land. Under the command of Joshua, Moses' chosen successor, the Israelites rampaged through Canaan, bringing death and destruction to the cities unfortunate enough to be in their way.

Famous events depicted in Joshua include the crossing of the Jordan river, the Battle of Jericho, and the battle against the Amorite kings, when God caused the sun to stand still at Gibeon.

The book ends with the death and interment of Joshua. By this time, the Israelites have captured enough land for the twelve tribes to have permanent living spaces assigned to them.

Total War, Israelite Style

- In their conquest of Canaan, the Israelites waged a war of extermination against the Canaanites. Everyone was killed: man, woman, and child. All property, crops, and animals are completely destroyed.
- Modern readers would consider this as genocide—a crime against humanity. But this practice (called **herem**), is not uncommon in the Middle East during the time.
- The main purpose of herem was to ensure that the Israelites would not adopt the lifestyles, culture, or belief systems of the Canaanites. This is why God was so harsh on Achan, and punished the Israelites in the battle of Ai.
- Note that this type of warfare is an exception in Judaism. It is definitely **not** the general rule!

Who Wrote It?

Hebrew tradition states that the main character in the book, Joshua himself, wrote most of the book of Joshua. Of course, someone else wrote the few verses following his death. Based on Biblical chronology, Joshua lived around 1,500-1,390 BCE.

As we stated earlier, Joshua is part of the Deuteronomistic History. It shares common theological themes with Deuteronomy, which include faithfulness to God, the covenant, and God's mercy to the Israelites.

According to the "dual redaction model" proposed by Frank Cross, the Deuteronomistic History was originally assembled as part of King Josiah's reform program (around 620 BCE). When Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians two decades later, it was further edited by a second redactor.

Some scholars do not accept the concept of multiple redactors; For example, Richard Friedman, the author of *Who Wrote the Bible?*, argued that there was only one redactor.

Ultimately, we are not sure who was the exact author of Joshua. If the dual redaction model is correct, the initial redactor probably edited the books between 640-580 BCE.



THE BOOK OF *Judges*

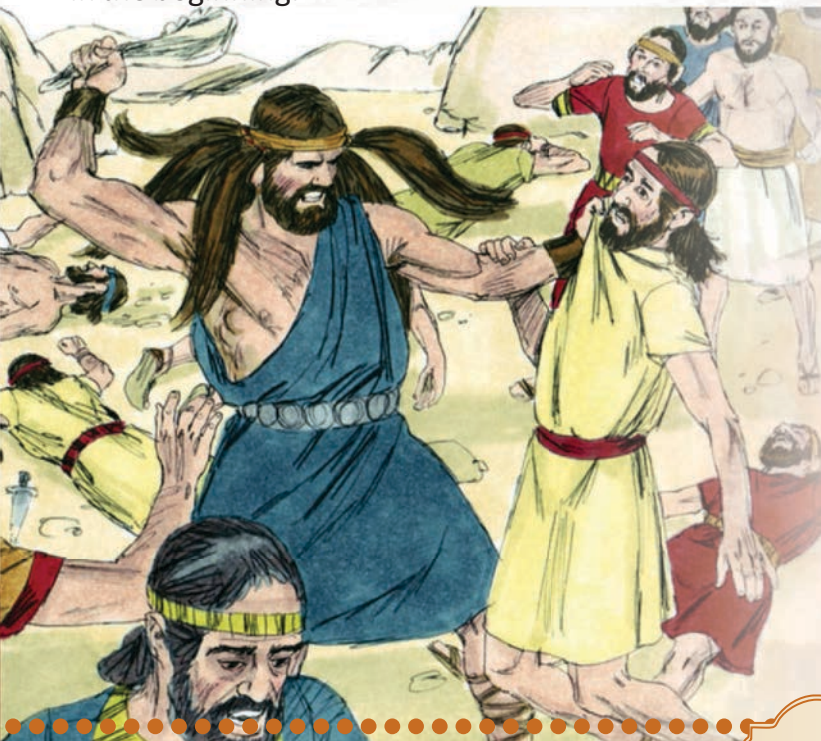
THE BOOKS OF HISTORY

What's the Book About?

After Joshua died, the Israelites lost momentum. The Canaanites fought back fiercely, and often oppressed the Israelites many, many times.

The account in Judges is cyclical. First, the Israelites abandon God. God then sends enemies to oppress them. They beg for deliverance. God sends help in the form of a "Judge"—a leader who would defeat the enemies. The grateful Israelites return to God. But once the Judge dies, the Israelites forget God, and the cycle begins again.

Famous Judges include Gideon (who fought the Midianites with only 300 men), and Samson (a super-strong man who fought the Philistines). Despite the Judges' efforts, the Israelites are in a worse position by the end of Judges than they were in the beginning.



Who Wrote It?

Tradition holds that the book of Judges was mostly written by the prophet **Samuel**, who was also the last Judge, in 1,000 BCE.

However, the scholarly view is that many stories in Judges are older than that. The book is actually a compilation of stories written at the same time the events occurred. For example, the Song of Deborah (Judges 5:2-31) is considered one of the oldest parts of the Bible, and is dated to around 1,200 BCE.

Judges is widely considered to form part of the Deuteronomistic History, together with Joshua, Samuel, and Kings. It shares a common theology with the book of Deuteronomy, and has a very familiar formulaic phrase ("the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord").

The likely compiler of the book of Judges would be the Deuteronomist source ("D"), the same editor who wrote the book of Deuteronomy.

Did You Know?

- Deborah, who fought against King Jabin of Canaan, is the only female Judge in the Bible.
- The Philistines, one of the "Sea Peoples", fight the Israelites for the first time in Judges. They first appeared in Genesis 20, when Abraham went to Gerar and lied that Sarah was his wife.
- The events of Judges occurred during the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Although bronze was stronger than iron, it was more rare. The Philistines were able to smelt iron, and this technological advantage made them dangerous enemies of the Israelites.

THE BOOKS OF *Samuel*

THE BOOKS OF HISTORY

What's the Book About?

The Books of Samuel follow three main characters in sequence: first, we are given the biography of Samuel, the last judge of Israel, from the circumstances of his birth until his death.

We are then introduced to **Saul**, who was reluctantly anointed by Samuel to be Israel's first king. After Saul lost favor with God, the story shifts to **David**. 1 Samuel ends with the death of Saul and his sons after fighting the Philistines.

The second book focuses squarely on David, who succeeded Saul as king of Israel. We follow David through his victories and failings as he fights enemies external (Philistines), internal (his own son Absalom), and inside him (his own murder of Uriah). The book ends near the end of David's life, with his kingship and legacy firmly established in Israel.

Who Wrote It?

According to tradition, the prophet **Samuel** wrote much of the first book. After his death, the remaining parts were filled in by **Gad** the seer, and **Nathan** the prophet.

Just like Joshua and Judges, modern scholars believe that the books of Samuel belongs to the Deuteronomistic History, and have thus have multiple authors, and a post-Exile redactor.

Since the sections on David's life and career as king are very detailed, the author of that part at least lived during the reign of David's son, Solomon. Other parts were probably written during the divided monarchy before the fall of Samaria (capital of the Northern Kingdom), since the book makes a distinction between the men of "Israel" and "Judah".

The various works were eventually combined to form a uniform narrative, by an editor who probably lived during the post-exile period (4th Century BCE).

Did You Know?

- Originally, Samuel was just one book. It was split into two when the book was translated into the Greek **Septuagint**. It's still one book for the Jews.
- There are big differences between the Hebrew **Masoretic Text** and the Greek Septuagint when it comes to Samuel. Scholars still disagree whether the Masoretic Text is incomplete, or if the Greek translators have added extra sections.
- The author of Samuel portrays David as someone who was reluctant to be king. At times, the book seems to go out of its way to emphasize that David cannot be blamed for Saul's death.



THE BOOKS OF THE *Kings*

THE BOOKS OF HISTORY

What's the Book About?

Fittingly enough, the books of Kings talk about kings: what they did, how they ruled, and how they died. First Kings recounts the passing of the baton from David to Solomon. We then follow the career of Solomon, who was Israel's most powerful king. After he was succeeded by his son Rehoboam, the nation fractured into Israel and Judah.

The focus of Kings then alternates between the kings of Israel and Judah. We temporarily shift focus to the actions of Elijah the prophet, and Elisha, his successor. Elisha gradually fades to the background, and the alternating stories about kings resume.

Eventually, Israel fell to the Assyrians, and Judah was defeated by the Babylonians. Kings end on a very sad note, with the Temple of Solomon destroyed and the Judeans exiled to Babylon.

Did You Know?

- The book of Kings is judgmental on which king is considered good and wicked. The main criteria seems to be who the king worships. If he allows the people to worship only **Yahweh**, then he is good. If not, then he is wicked.
- Using this criteria, *all* of the Northern kings were *evil*; there were a handful of Southern kings who were *good*. The book implies that this is why the Southern kingdom was more politically stable (all kings were descendants of David) and existed as an independent nation for a longer period.
- Just like Samuel, Kings was originally one book, and split during translation to Greek. Some Catholic Bibles renamed Samuel as 1 & 2 Kings, and Kings as 3 & 4 Kings.

Who Wrote It?

Traditional Judaism considers the prophet **Jeremiah** as the author of Kings. He lived through the final years of the Southern kingdom (which fell in 586 BCE), and lived through the history himself.

Modern scholarship agrees that the author of Kings was alive when Jerusalem fell, but did not live to see the exile end. The writer of Kings compiled information from various sources—he even invited readers to read them, if they wished to know more about a particular king's exploits.

The author is quite religious, since he judged kings based on their piety to God. The book also explains to the dispirited Judeans why God allowed the Temple to fall—they were unfaithful to him.

Based on this and stylistic similarities of Kings to the book of Jeremiah, many scholars believe the priestly source, the Deuteronomist, is none other than **Jeremiah!** Funny how that works, right?





CGC 12th Junior Camp

S.A.M.



Thank God for the opportunity to serve Him again in the kids' ministry. This year, we had our 12th Junior Camp held in our very own Cebu Gospel Church.

We did not have much problem gathering the kids to join because after we presented our 1st teaser promotional ad, we already had thirty-two registrants and the rest came by later on. We had a total of thirty-seven campers – eleven boys and twenty-six girls from ages 7–12.

Thank God also for a great working staff -- the planning team, the counselors and the volunteers. The CYF Praise Band took charge of the singspiration. We also had an in-house cooking staff who prepared the daily meals.

Our theme for this year was FOLLOWING JESUS with theme verse taken from Luke 10:27 which says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself."

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Practically, half of the campers were first-timers. But they all enjoyed their 4day-3night stay at the church. We had a variety of activities like dancercise early 6am, devotion, group dynamics, arts, outing and of course, the campfire.

During our dedication night, six kids received Jesus Christ into their lives for the 1st time. Seventeen expressed their willingness to serve the Lord and almost everyone of them dedicated themselves to follow Jesus.

Here are some of the testimonies of the campers

“This is my first time to join Junior Camp. During the last two peaceful nights and three fruitful days, I got a personal talk with my counselor and I had lots of fun with friends and relatives and of course the activities. As I remember, I have done so many bad things. But here, I learned to really control myself. . . My goal, thanks to this camp, is to be someone who will do everything for God's glory and to be a better daughter and achie. Thank You Lord for this camp.”

- CJ Tan

“I thank the Lord for letting me come to this camp and protecting me these days. I learned about Jesus – He is our Good Shepherd. We had a plant tour at Gardenia. Thank you Lord for letting me know more about You. Thank you for the movie we watched “The Red Wagon”. Thank you for letting my dad come here and be a part of this camp. I also learned that we must never give up and we must help the needy and that we must be self-sacrificing.”

- Marc Suarez

“I learned a lot of things in this camp like the 10 Commandments. I learned that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life and that He is the Light of the world. We need to love Jesus for He is our one and only Savior. We must follow Jesus and serve Him. We must help the needy.”

- Kurt Yu

“The lesson I learned in this camp is not to misuse the name of the Lord. I also learned the 10 Commandments. I saw how to make bread in Gardenia.”

- Dannah Key

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“This is my first time to join the camp. At first I was afraid to join but I was encouraged and so I joined. I came late because I had a class. I also met my classmate and cousin here. I learned a lot about God. I also learned the Gospel in a Nutshell – Jesus is God. He came from Heaven to Earth. He lived a perfect life. He died on the cross to pay for our sins. He was buried and rose from the dead on the 3rd day. He is now in Heaven offering us a free gift of eternal life.”

- Jamie Tan

“I thank the Lord for the opportunity to join this camp. Here, I learned about following Jesus and the Ten Commandments. I also learned about honoring God and our parents. I thank the Lord for letting me know Him more. I thank the Lord for the fun time and the chance to get to know new people. I thank the Lord for CGC.”

- JR Tio

“Junior Camp is fun. It was my first time to join. I thank my parents for encouraging me to join. At first, I did not want to but when they told me

what it was like, I said “yes”. I met and knew a lot of friends. My counselor also taught me important things. I learned that we should let our light shine. We have to repent from our sins. I also learned that Jesus is our Good Shepherd. I learned a lot of things here and I am going to apply them in my life. If I did not join this camp, I will never experience things like these. Camping is not just about fun, but it is knowing more about God.”

- Leeian Yap

Before I go, let me share this to all of you . . .

The 5 signs of true conversion:

1. a growing love and need for Jesus and the Gospel
2. a growing understanding of the truths in the Bible
3. a growing kindness and selflessness towards siblings
4. a greater awareness and distaste for sin
5. a noticeable desire to obey parents

Praise God for this camp. We hope that you will continue to support the children's ministry because we know that these kids will one day



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become the future leaders of our church. Let us help nurture and equip them to become what God has created them to be.

This camp has indeed been a great learning experience for all of us and we thank our Almighty God for making this event possible through your loving support. May God bless us all.





The Amazing Race

Mona Li

Our church theme for year 2013 is: 'Striving for the Goal' found in 2 Timothy 3:14-15, 4:1-2, 4:6-8 (NIV). What are we striving for and what is our goal? As a Christian, one of the most important goals in my life is to fulfill God's great commission and that is to spread His teachings and His truth to the whole world. Our theme has three subtitles namely: 1. Pass the Baton; 2. Finish the Race and 3. Obtain the Reward. This obviously has the anatomy of a race and yet, it is a race like no other. It is amazingly unique and we shall name it The Amazing Race of Christians for Christ (ARCC).

Pass the Baton – Unlike most races in which participants compete against each other to reach the finish line first to win, ARCC is a group race where members of our church are all co-participants. Here, winning is not how soon we reach the finish line but how many batons we have passed on. Cebu Gospel Church has been running this race for 97 years. Although none of us was at the starting line, somehow and in some way, somebody has passed on a baton to each of us. Personally, I've been running this particular race for over 40 years and let me share some lessons I have learned of His teachings. The racetrack of ARCC is composed of many kinds of surface and terrain.

There are varying degrees of smoothness and roughness of surface, different levels of easy-to-difficult terrain. The rougher the surface and the more challenging the terrain, the stronger and sturdier I have become. James 1:3 states: 'For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.' A rough diamond has to go through honing processes like cutting, grinding and polishing to bring its finest qualities to the surface. This quote comes from Facebook: 'A smooth sea never made a skillful sailor.' Moreover, since we are running this race as one body and one church, help abounds when we need it. We either humbly ask for it or graciously extend it to fellow racers. There were times when I climbed over seemingly insurmountable obstacles and the way down looked treacherous, all I had to do was to reach out so others could bring me safely back down to the ground. At times when I fell into a seemingly bottomless pit, I had to raise my arms so others could pull me up on solid ground. Keep in mind that it is always easier to extend help than to ask for it. Let us therefore be keenly aware of our co-racers' needs. Be ready to extend helping hands when they stumble and be mindful not to use those hands to push them further down to the ground. Willingly offer our arms to guide them safely down when

they have ascended too high and not to use those arms to lift ourselves up in the process. As we try to pass on the batons to others, we rejoice and praise God when those are warmly received. However, we need to examine ourselves carefully when batons are politely declined or worse, coldly rejected. After all, our lives are the most powerful testimonies in proclaiming God's great commission. Remember the saying: 'If it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck, then it must be a duck.' Similarly, if one professes to be a Christian and acts like a Christian, then that person must be a Christian. As such, passing on the batons will surely be a joyful and fulfilling experience. So, how many batons have we passed on all these years? Human as we are, there will be times when we become weary of running. Yet, take heart, for it is all right to take a breather and rest at certain pit stops. The important thing is not to quit the race completely. As a proverbial saying goes: 'A quitter never wins, and a winner never quits.' We are here to win the race, aren't we? So onward to the finish line we go!

Finish the Race – Unlike most relay races in which each person's participation ends right after passing on the baton, ARCC requires everyone to carry on until the finish line is crossed. Our finish lines vary from one individual to another depending on our Master's timetable. We only cross it when we leave this world to enter our heavenly home. There may come a time when we can no longer actively run this race for our church because of physical disabilities or physical absence. When this happens, it doesn't mean the end of the race for us. We can still carry on by fully utilizing our

spiritual capabilities. I've read countless of testimonies of people passing on more batons not while running on their feet but on bended knees and lying on their backs. How? People at this stage find time to maximize the use of one of the most powerful tools in finishing the race with flying colors, and that tool is prayer. So Christian sisters and brothers, after passing on the batons, let us continue to run this race until we reach our designated finish lines. Then, with great joy and anticipation, we can move forward to obtain our rewards - the Crown of Righteousness.

Obtain the Reward – Unlike most races in which only those who come first get the grand prizes, ARCC is amazing in that everyone who finishes the race is a grand prize winner. Every participant gets to wear his or her Crown of Righteousness. At times, I wonder how soon after crossing the finish line could we obtain our prizes? My excitement stems not from the promise of rewards but from the knowledge that I will finally stand in His glorious presence. Like a child who has tried to give her very best to pass the tests of faith and is now eagerly looking forward to tell her Almighty God the Father in the words of Paul: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race and I have kept my faith (2 Timothy 4: 6-7).' Can anything be more wonderful than to hear Him say: 'Well done, my good and faithful servant (Matthew 25:21)?' All glory and honor unto His name. Amen and amen.



MGC Holds Its Annual DVBS

Heir of the King

Today began just like any other day. As I got up from my bed, a verse came upon me, "This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it." Little did I know that this verse would sum up to what I am about to face this entire DVBS week. An hour later, I found myself standing in front of our church door, feeling



both excited and apprehensive for the day that I had been waiting for since our classes at school ended, was going to begin. We had our devotion time and a short meeting about our plans for the whole week. Yet, in the course of these all, a surge of negative thoughts entered my mind. Thoughts that included insecurity, inadequateness, doubts, and most of all, I felt extremely anxious. The students were few; the DVBS Teachers/Assistant Teachers/Staffs combined were even fewer. No meeting was called until the first day of DVBS. Simply put, we had no idea how the events would turn out to be. All we had was the knowledge that "The Lord is my strength." So we just gave ourselves fully to the work of the Lord, prayed for His guidance and trusted Him for strength.

The theme for this year's DVBS was "Christian Fire Fighters." The theme verse was taken from Jude v23, "Snatch others from the fire and save them...." Each day started with singing songs of praise to God. For most of us, this may seemed like one of the least

important activities in DVBS because after all, the kids just needed to memorize the lyrics of the songs and to learn the actions that went with it. But after five days of listening to their singing, the lyrics of the songs comforted my heart, knowing that our God never forsakes us and He will hear the pleas we say silently in our

hearts. Seeing the children enjoyed singing the songs also warmed my heart. I hope the songs will someday touch their hearts just like how they did to mine.

Next to singspiration was storytelling time excellently handled by the DVBS Teachers. They used very good materials to illustrate biblical truths and stories from the Bible. Being an Asst. Teacher, we helped the Teachers watched over the kids, helped the kids clean up during snack time and assisted them with their activities during craft time. At the same time, the Teachers also served as our trainers and role models for us to be like them someday, as DVBS or Sunday School Teachers. I also realized that my role as an Asst. Teacher is not only to help the kids inside the classroom but also to build lasting relationship with them. Through many interactions, we showed them God's love by caring for them and showing them that they can put their trust in God by being a trustworthy friend to them.

I guess one of the most anticipated parts of the day was snack time. Everyone was all smiles. ☺ The activity next

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to snack time was the craft time. The students would sit on their small chairs, each ready to unleash their creative juices as soon as they understood the instructions given to them about their crafts and they worked as if there were no tomorrow. The crafts this year were quite colourful starting with the Firemen's Hats, the Firemen's Placemats, Firemen's Fingerprint Folders, and the Firemen's Table Organizer. These were all very useful and this activity taught the students how to be creative and the use of various materials thru recycling. After all, the finished crafts aptly represented the kids themselves - the colours, the designs, the patterns, they all reflected the individuals who painstakingly made them. It was amazing to see how God made us all unique. How one thumbprint differs from the rest of the human race in the world. Knowing that our Creator fearfully and wonderfully made us all for His purpose brings joy to my heart. With gratefulness, I counted it my privilege to be able to serve the King of Kings. Equally amazing is the thought that I'm an heir of His salvation and a child of the KING. On the last day, we scheduled an outreach for the children in the nearby City of Consolacion. It was great seeing other children wanting to learn about God. The sensation hit me like strong waves that some children, at a very young age, are orphaned and not as fortunate as we are. They are now being taken cared of and are taught about the love of God by local missionaries supported by our church. I delight in the knowledge that there are people who go the extra mile to reach out

to these children. Furthermore, the gospel was presented well that day. It was as if I heard the gospel for the first time. It touched my heart like it did years

back.

Though five days were short and passed by so quickly, I'm confident that the stories told and the verses memorized will impact the lives of the children who joined the MGC-DVBS. The experience I had during that week made me never to look at children the same way again. Like a bud unfolding to be a flower, the children need us to be the water to help them grow and through our constant encouragements, they can bloom into lovely flowers, useful for God's service. It is also vital that we extend our love to other people just as Jesus extended His arms on the cross for us. I consider all people involved in the DVBS ministry fortunate as they were able to witness these annual events setting aside their busy schedules and offering their humble service to the Lord God Almighty. I believe that this was not an accident but a step forward to fulfil God's plan of salvation for His creation. Most of all, I understand that since life is as uncertain as the morning mist, we should spend our lives telling others about God specially to the little ones in our midst.

Jesus said in Matthew 19:14, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."



基督徒追求的目標

小山

一位在軍中服役的基督徒休假返家，他忽忽忙忙地趕搭火車；不料推倒了一個水果攤，一大堆的蘋果立刻散落在地上。那時深表歉意的士兵放下行李；同時將地上的蘋果一個一個撿起來，還用自己的手巾擦淨放回原位。排攤的小男孩很感激地問：「你是耶穌嗎？」士兵笑著回答道，「不，我不是；但努力要像祂。」基督徒追求的目標就是主耶穌基督。

一. 竭力追求

在腓立比書3:12-14，使徒保羅用一個賽跑者來形容基督徒屬靈的增長。每個信徒雖未達到更像主耶穌的目標，但好像賽跑者繼續不斷地向前直跑，才能達到終點來得到獎賞。

第十二節 要追求好像基督，應有誠實和不自滿的態度，好像賽跑者要竭力的跑，不停的跑。保羅用盡他屬靈的力量來完成主交託他的使命，就是作外邦人的使徒。

第十三節 保羅將他追求好像主的工作，簡化為只有一件事，就是忘記背後努力面前。信徒不要將過去的成就記住；也不要將過去的失敗，罪過和軟弱來妨礙我們屬靈的追求。

第十四節 「向著標竿直跑，要得上帝在基督耶穌內從上面召我來得的獎賞。」標竿就是要努力追求好像基督，正如賽跑者直跑，為要得到獎賞。

但信徒要得的獎賞是在主再來的時候，在基督台前受工作的審判。公義的主必按每個人的工作成績賞賜他。

二. 效法基督

在林前11:1，保羅說：「你們要效法我，像我效法基督。」保羅怎樣效法基督呢？提後4:7，他說：「那美好的仗，我已打過了；當跑的路，我已跑盡了；所信的道，我已守住了。」保羅回顧他三十年的事奉主，他可以說藉著主的大能完成上帝召他做的工作。他用上面的三句話來形容他的事奉。

第一句，他說自己是精兵。提後2:3-4他勉勵提摩太怎樣作基督的精兵。他說：「你要和我同受苦難，好像基督耶穌的精兵。凡在軍中當兵的不將世務纏身，好叫那招他當兵的喜悅。」我們信徒要做精兵，也是這樣。

在第二句，保羅說他是賽跑者。林前9:24

說：「豈不知在場上賽跑的都跑，但得獎賞的只有一人？你們也當這樣跑，好叫你們得著獎賞。」保羅說他的事奉是向前直跑，沒有半途而廢。

第三句說，他是守著真道的人。提後1:13-14說：「你從我聽的那純正話語的規模，要用在基督耶穌裡的信心和愛心，常常守著。從前所交託你的善道，你要靠著那住在我們裡面的聖靈牢牢地守著。」這裡保羅勉勵提摩太要守住所信的真道；靠著聖靈牢牢地守著。總而言之，信徒要顧守真道，作真道的好管家。不要被假教師的花言巧語所講那些似是而非的道理，使我們受迷惑。所以要讀經祈禱，養成好的靈修習慣。記住上帝的話就不會受迷惑了。

第八節說：「從此以後，有公義的冠冕為我存留，就是按著公義審判的主到了那日要賜給我的；不但賜給我，也賜給凡愛慕祂顯現的人。」冠冕就是將花圈掛在尊貴的人、得勝的將軍和得錦標的運動員的頸項上。因此公義的冠冕是主賜給在事奉上有公義的態度和行為的人；也是在形容冠冕的本質。正如使徒保羅所得的一樣。

信徒得救後，基督的公義歸在他的身上，才能在上帝面前稱義。以後他一生要靠著聖靈的能力過著一個與罪惡鬥爭的生活，叫做成聖的生活。主再來時，基督徒要在天上與主耶穌在永世內同得榮耀。

在1915年第一次世界大戰中，EDITH CAVELL在英國軍中做護士；她被德軍擄去，快要

被槍決時，她說：「我很歡喜為我的國家來死；但我體會到愛國是不夠的。」然後她為主耶穌基督做見證，而從容被槍決了。

三. 忠心到底

提後4:6說：「我現在被澆奠，我離世的時候到了。」在舊約的獻祭儀式中，奠祭是在燔祭，平安祭，和素祭之後。

這裡澆奠代表保羅的信心，而離世指他的信靠順服。這時保羅看自己為主殉道的時間近了，但他並沒有為這件事來驚慌；卻是情願離世與基督同在，因這是好得無比。

保羅自得救以後，就將自己的生命和事奉當作活祭獻給主。以後，保羅更將自己的生命和事奉當作奠祭獻給主。

離世有很多的意義，就像船拔錨開航。保羅看自己的死，好像從世界中被釋放。正如船拔錨開航要到天堂的永世。

另一個意思是好像軍隊折下帳棚拔營前進。保羅看自己的死好像折下地上的帳棚，而得到在天上榮耀的身體。

也好像耕田的牛；農夫趕牛犁田，犁後累了要休息，就解開牛的軛使牛休息。保羅看自己的死是天上的主解開他的軛，息了他為主受苦；多年奔跑冒險而到天上與主同享天堂的榮華富貴！

親愛的弟兄們，今天如果有人問你是耶穌嗎？你是否能誠誠實實地說：「我不是，但要努力追求像祂。」



保羅禱告感恩的事項

許郭錦繡

當耶穌往耶路撒冷經過撒瑪利亞和加利利進村時、看見十個長痲瘋、就醫治了他們、其中只有一個撒瑪利亞人回來大聲歸榮耀與神、又俯伏在耶穌腳前感謝祂。耶穌說：「潔淨的不是十個人麼、那九個在那裡呢？」(路17:11-17)。由此可見、耶穌不但重視感恩、在帖撒路尼迦後書5:18也教導我們要凡事感謝。

每逢感恩節來臨時、我們往往只為從神所領受到的恩典來感恩、但感恩的範圍非常的廣闊、在保羅的書信中、有許多值得感恩的事項可供我們學習：

(一) 信德傳遍(羅1:8)

保羅為羅馬教會信德傳遍了天下來感謝神、因他們的信心和品德、影響了許多人歸入主的名下。

同樣的、我們也要有堅固的信心、良好的品德、無可指摘的名聲、美好的見證、方能感動人認識基督。

(二) 罪得釋放(羅6:17-18)

保羅感謝神、因為羅馬教友從前雖然作罪的奴僕、現今卻從心裡順服了所傳給他們道理的模範、他們從罪裡得釋放、就作了義的奴僕。

當我們尚未認識上帝之前、肉體軟弱、常

沉於罪中、但如今我們既然接受主、被蒙恩稱義、就該遠離罪惡、追求公義。

(三) 順服神律(羅7:18-25)

保羅說：「在我肉體之中沒有良善、因為立志為善由得我、只是行出來由不得我。故此、我所願意的善我反不作、我所不願意的惡我倒去作」(羅7:18-19)。保羅喜歡神的律、但在他肢體中另有個律與神律交戰、他靠着主耶穌基督、便脫離了罪律、因此他獻上感謝。

如果我們希望能夠順服神律、便應該每天與主交通、吸收靈糧、將神的話藏在心中、謹守祂的誠命、方能過着聖潔的生活。

(四) 恩惠充足(林前1:4-5)

保羅為哥林多教會感謝神、因為基督耶穌賜他們恩惠、使他們凡事富足、口才知識都全備。

同樣的、當神使我們凡事富足、口才知識都全備時、我們就應該：運用財富來幫助賙濟人、支技神的聖工。運用才幹來事奉主、服事人。運用口才鼓勵、造就、安慰人。運用智識來教導、勸勉、指引人、給主名得榮耀！

(五) 藉主得勝(林前15:55-58)

「死的毒鈎就是罪、罪的權勢就是律法」

務 Gospel Light 光

(哥後15:56)、保羅感謝神、因為他藉着主耶穌基督得勝了罪惡。

自從亞當夏娃犯罪後、世界充滿了罪惡、如果沒有神的同在、就很容易受迷惑被引誘、走上了錯路。所以我們需要與主結連、讓祂掌管一生的道路、靠主獲得勝利、並有堅固不動搖的心、竭力多作主工。

(六) 恩賜不盡(林後9:10-15)

保羅感謝神、因為哥林多信徒從主得到不盡的恩賜後、便多多施捨、幫補缺乏、供給聖徒、樂意施捐、結了仁義的果子。

賞賜萬物的神、充充足足賜我們數不盡的恩典、願我們多多行善、將主的愛彰顯在行為上。

(七) 興旺福音(腓1:3-5)

保羅感謝神、因為腓立比教會從頭一天直到如今都是同心合意的興旺福音。

希望我們繼續將福音傳開、趁着白日、齊心努力搶救失喪的靈魂、盡力支持宣道的工作、使我們不會空手見主面。

(八) 領受神道(帖前2:13)

當保羅將神的道傳出時、他們不以為是人的道、乃以為是神的道、保羅就不住的感謝神、因為這道運行在信主的人心中。

每次有人接受了救恩、悔改歸正、信奉了耶穌時、我們也應該大大的歡喜、獻上感謝!

(九) 堅守真道(帖後2:13-15)

保羅為帖撒羅尼迦弟兄們能夠信服真道、成為聖潔、堅守教訓、站立得穩來大大感謝神。

願主幫助、使我們同樣能夠堅守所領受的真道、無論在任何環境中、能夠堅固不移、忍受苦難、在一切善行及善言上高舉基督。

(十) 忠心服事(提前1:12-14)

保羅得主的力量、蒙神派他服事、獻上了感謝。他本來是敵基督的、但自從在大馬色路上被神光照後、便認識救主耶穌、悔改認罪、獻身事主、忠心服事至死。

約書亞說:「至於我和我的家、我們必定事奉耶和華」(書24:15)。願我們也委身、以忠誠樂意的心、繼續不倦的來事奉祂。

(十一) 基督信心, 聖徒愛心, 忍耐盼望

保羅為歌羅西的聖徒所存的信心、愛心及盼望感謝神(西1:3-5)。他們不但結果增長、並且作了基督忠心的執事。

保羅也為帖撒羅尼迦的教友感謝神、因他們信心所作的工夫、愛心所受的勞苦、盼望所存的忍耐、使福音傳開而且在大難中、蒙聖靈賜下喜樂、在真道上效法主、作了馬其頓和亞該亞所有信主的人的榜樣(帖前1:2-8)。

如今常存的有信、望、愛(哥前13:3)。願我們擁有

信 – 堅固不移的信心
望 – 永生福樂的希望
愛 – 真誠無偽的愛心

上述保羅感恩的事項可成為我們的指南、以效法眾教會的榜樣、使我們完成:

對上帝 – 委身忠心事奉、遵主命令而行
對教會 – 福音對外宣揚、肢體人數增長
對聖徒 – 互相幫助補缺、彼此相愛關照
對自己 – 追求靈性長進、美好生活見證。

Summer Mandarin Camp

The Summer Mandarin Camp was held from April 15, 2013 to May 10, 2013 at Cebu Gospel Church – Mandaue Center. This year's theme was 愛、生活、學習 (Love, Live and Learn). A month of learning Mandarin and living together for 4 hours a day and 5 days a week wasn't easy without learning to love each other, not to mention the different personalities, points of view, beliefs, and races (some were pure Chinese, pure Filipinos, pure Korean and mixed race). And so, without telling them the source of love which is God, there would surely have fights and disagreements. Thank God that the 30 students entrusted to us showed that they have learned and enjoyed this camp. Our teachers were both students of Biblical Seminary of the Philippines and were from the People's

Republic of China. The students from pre-school, grade school, high school and special class had great fun at learning. To God be the Glory! Below are some experiences written by some students of the Camp:

Learning a foreign language is quite difficult but with the help of our teacher, we learned so fast because she made it easier and taught us with patience. She taught us many things about learning Mandarin like how to write the Chinese characters with pin-yin. We didn't just learn by writing the words in our notebooks, but we also learned how to speak the words correctly. We made sentences out of the words we learned. This year, we had activities to test if we really did learn something. We had the "buy and sell" activity



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wherein we asked each other questions like "What do you want to buy?" (nǐ xiǎng mǎi shénme?) "How many do you want?" (Nǐ xiǎng duōshǎo?) and "How much does the item cost?" (nàgè dōngxi chéngběn shì duōshǎo?). We learned some words which we can use when buying school supplies like folders (wénjiàn jiā), envelope (xìnfēng), paper (zhǐ), book (shū) and etc. The second activity was going to Cebu Zoo in Lahug. We applied what we learned about the names of the animals and how to describe them. We saw the monkeys (hóuzi), the python (mǎngshé), the big crocodile (dà èyú) and the talkative parrot (yīngwǔ). We didn't just learn the Mandarin language but we also learned how we should treat each other. Our teacher told us to respect each other's feelings and to control our temper no matter how angry we are. We also learned how to sing songs like Yē Sū ài wǒ, wǒ zài zhè lǐ zàn měi and qín dú shèng jīng. We learned how the Lord loves us so much. We learned so many things not just mentally but also spiritually. We, the students, would like to thank everybody who supported us in this Mandarin Camp, i.e., our teachers, our parents and the Lord Almighty.

- Jessa Mae Castillon (Special Class)

在华语夏令营我学到了很多。老师不仅教

我们用中文交流,还帮助我们认识上帝。老师说以后即使我们做生意,中文也非常有用。我很赞同老师的话。老师教我们用中文买卖东西。教我们说各种学习用品,如铅笔。教我们说各种不同的动物。教我们用“比”这个字在国和国,人和人之间做比较。老师还教了我们许多其它的知识。这是我一生中很难忘的一段经历,我觉得很幸运,我很感恩。谢谢!

- 黃美麗(中学学生)

Learning mandarin can be quite difficult but we were blessed to have an understanding and patient teacher. She taught us essential words that we can use in our daily lives and we were asked to form sentences out of them. We were also taught fun games, interesting songs and valuable lessons from the stories she read us. She even encouraged us to use Chinese language in conversing with each other and we ended up forgetting about it. But we may be able to use it in the future because I believe that every student has big dreams and this knowledge will be a great help. To all the people who supported us, teachers and of course our parents who allowed us to join this camp, thank you!!





True Freedom

(FCCF- 35th Nationwide Youth Conference in Davao City on May 20 to 24, 2013)
Heir of the King

Since summer began, I couldn't keep the thought of the upcoming youth conference steady at the back of my mind. I always think about what it would be like to attend a conference outside my comfort zone and to meet new people who share the same faith with me. Nonetheless, there is always a first time for everyone. Well, in my case, it was my first time to ride a plane without my family, my first time to attend a conference outside Cebu and my first time to step in Mindanao soil. The days blended one into the other. Before I knew it, I was already on board the plane departing for the Orchid Capital of the Philippines or better known as the City of Durian, **Davao**. Excitement was filling up my chest, making it hard to breathe while the reality played over in my mind again and again. Although I admit that there were some anxieties in my heart but

when I committed my whole being in God's hands, I began to believe that there was nothing to fear. Gradually, my heart felt a wave of peace as I silently voiced my concerns to God.

I thanked God the minute I stepped on the tarmac. I breathed deeply and stared out at the wide expanse of landscape, the endless bouts of clouds stretched across the blue sky. The way the greenness of the grass complemented the sun shining so brightly was a picture that will forever hang on the wall of my heart. Despite what other people say about how dangerous Mindanao is, I'll always remember that on the week I was there, it was perfectly peaceful. Together with my fellow CGC delegates, we rode on the bus that brought us to the venue.



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This year's theme was **True Freedom**. The speakers were Rev. Chris Chia of Adam Road Presbyterian Church, Singapore and Rev. Arnel Tan of Davao Chinese Baptist Church. They shared with us what True Freedom is from the scriptures. The camp taught me a lot of things but there were three things I'll never forget. Allow me to share them with you. First and foremost, I learned that if Jesus is not LORD over our moments, He is not LORD at all. This made me realize that in whatever moment we're in; whether sad, envious, happy, excited, angry, or fearful, we must commit it all to God because when we make Him ruler over us, His power becomes available to us and that's when He can work through us and bring about transformation in every aspect of our lives.

Second, I am once again reminded that our identity is in Christ. When we take away Christ, then Christianity is just about teaching rules and following church traditions. Hence, rules should only nourish our relationship with Christ but they should not restrict us from obeying His word. True Freedom is not doing what we want all the time but yielding to the leading of the Holy Spirit to please

God in every way.

Third, I learned that even when bad things happen to us, God is there too. You see, He never gives us trials that He knows we cannot handle. The triumphs and tragedies in our lives are but reminders for us to fully trust in Him and hold on to Him. They should not be reasons for us to drift away from Him.

Furthermore, True Freedom is found when we have a true relationship with the LORD Jesus Christ. Because when we have Christ in our lives, we live a life of prayer. We constantly want to talk to Him. He loves us so much that our prayers are basically connecting us to Him each day. A life of prayer is powerful because God is the one moving in the lives of His people. A life of prayer is a life that is dependent on Christ. When our church knows how to come before Christ on its knees and seek Him and His will, miracles happen.

On our last night, as I climbed beneath the covers of my blanket, I thought about the entirety of the messages I heard and I thanked God for giving me this rare opportunity to learn old things with new realizations.



Happiness lingers in my heart up until now, knowing that I'm truly His heir.



ECHOES *from Davao*

S.A.M.

Once again, I thank our good Lord for giving me the opportunity to join a camp last summer. It was a youth camp. Yes, you read it right....as in the FCCF Youth Camp. When I saw the poster in Bethany last December, I was excited to know that they would allow campers 27 years old and above to join. Then, I checked on the speakers and the venue. 'Twas just perfect. I love to listen to Rev. Chris Chia and Arnel Tan speak. Plus, it was gonna be held in Davao, a place where I had not been to and had always wanted to visit.

Without delay, I registered myself along with five other young people. For the first time, I was going with a group with the same status as I was – simply a camper!

Finally, May 20 came. We took an early flight thinking we would arrive early to get some rest before the camp could start. But it did not turn out quite as expected. The rooms were not yet ready

and it was already late afternoon when we checked in.

Well, it was okay since the group was big – 430 delegates from all over the Philippines. As I looked at the faces, I could hardly find anyone I could recognize. Finally, when everyone had settled in the session hall, I began to see familiar faces. It felt good to see many from our generation faithfully serving the Lord until now.

Our theme in this camp is TRUE FREEDOM based on the text found in Galatians 5 : 1 .

With this, I wish to echo some important points the Lord has taught us through the speakers like :

1. True freedom is found in Jesus Christ alone. We begin with Christ, continue with Christ and finish with Christ.
2. Jesus gives us freedom from SIN.
3. The highest duty and delight of a Christian is not



simply to believe in Jesus but to be more like Jesus.

4. Jesus gives us the freedom to choose to OBEY and LOVE Him.
5. If Jesus is not Lord of our moments, He is not Lord at all. He must be the ruler in our hearts so we will be free to obey Him.
6. Jesus gives us freedom so we could LOVE OTHERS.
7. If we say we are free, we have to prove it by being responsible, making sure that our words and actions do not cause others to stumble.
8. Law and tradition create outward compulsion but LOVE for Jesus brings inward compassion. If you love Him, just do it for HIM.
9. We are FREE in Christ - enjoy your FREEDOM to be what God wants you to be.

Another beautiful echo is from our break out groups wherein we talked about Serving God.. We must :

1. Submit fully to the will of the Lord. Do not complain, doubt or bargain with God about anything.
2. Be a faithful steward of the Lord. Make good use of whatever He gave you – money, time and ability.
3. Prioritize the interest of the Lord. Life is about God , not you.

4. Give all the praise and honor to the Lord. Never get credit for any accomplishment we have made.

Our job is simply to point people to God, not to us.

5. Seek to please the Lord above all. Do not give God our leftover. Always give Him the best.

It was indeed a great time to relax and listen to God's Word. When we came back on the 24th, I felt so inspired to continue serving the Lord.

I hope you have also learned from these echoes. Let us exercise our freedom in Christ with responsibility. More so, show our love for Him by obeying Him and serving Him.

To God be all the glory !





34th Youth Camp Testimonies

Erwina Chan

The message that hit me the most was the second theme message. In that message, the speaker shared to us, "You cannot be in love with God and remain unchanged." This made me look back into my life to evaluate if I have really changed. I realized that I have not changed much in my Christian life. Everything seemed stagnant, unmoving and not growing. My spiritual life was not making God happy. This message taught me that without any tension in my life, I would not be growing in the Lord. We should either be hot or cold, and not complacent. We should make our lives useful to God. I plan to recommit myself to glorifying God with my life. I want to go back to God. I have to learn more about Him – know more, worship more. I pray that God will give me the zeal and hunger for Him.

Josiah Yap

Before I joined the camp, I kept on sinning against God and disobeying Him. God was not the center of my life. I thank God I came to this camp because the messages made me realize that I was already corrupt and needed a revival. I needed God to be at the center of my life and be my top priority, above all else. If I'm a true Christian then I must put God at

the center of my life instead of always seeking fun and going to parties. From now on, I will start reading my Bible everyday and pray more frequently, not just for me but for others as well, including my enemies.

Pete Mitchel "PJ" Suarez

Some of the things that impacted me in this camp were the theme messages and the devotional materials. When I first came to this camp, the thing that I was most excited about was having fun and spending time with friends. However, throughout my stay here, I learned and realized a lot more than that. This camp was made with the purpose of reconnecting us with Christ. The theme messages really touched me and led me to see what Christ wants whenever I reach a crossroad in life. The devotional materials made a great impact on me as well. My plan is to keep all these at heart and pray to make the right decision when the time comes. Overall, I really learned a lot of things through this camp, and as a bonus, I even made some new friends. I'm looking forward to the next camp!

Jacqueline Mae Tan

I've learned a lot of lessons in this camp but in this testimony, I'll be highlighting two of them. First is

about intimacy with God. I believe that I myself have been struggling with my relationship with the Lord because of a lot of factors like school, computer, and friends. I thank God that I was able to learn that I have to focus on Him, give Him more time, and have an intimate relationship with Him. Second is about bridging the gap. The gap between my parents and me is quite wide. Because of this topic, I would want to initiate bridging the gap for a closer family relationship. When I get home, I will try to spend more time with my parents – stop, look, listen, and talk.

Winona Ella Chan

We all know that no one is perfect and everyone makes mistakes – but that should not stop us from getting intimate with God. The talk about having intimacy with God had the most impact on me. Even as a pastor's kid, I make mistakes and sometimes I get distracted. I guess I had this complacency in me. Yes, I do devotion, I attend CYF, I join activities in the church, but it feels like it's not enough. It feels like I'm not giving my 100% just yet and I want to be able to reach that 100%. It will definitely be hard because of our sinful nature and my mind is admittedly full of thoughts bouncing around so I'll inevitably get distracted – but I want to reach a higher percentage, to be more and more intimate with God.

Charlene Grace Tan

For the past few months, I've honestly been very complacent in my daily walk with God. In fact, I think the last time I had proper devotion was last January. My action plan therefore, would be having my own quiet time. For the week after this, I will make sure to review as much as I can, using my

notes from the camp and maybe even my old devotional materials. I have to be with God, ALONE. For the next seven days, I will have an hour of devotion, something like my own personal revival routine. And because of my complacency, I can see that it's affecting the other aspects of my life, so I really need help. I'd like to ask for your prayers.

Catherine Mae Chua

After a year of not being able to join the CBDTI camp, I was really looking forward to our church camp this year. I prayed earnestly to God to revive me and keep me on track. As a college student, the very first problem that I face are the requirements that need so much time to accomplish. For the past two months, my spiritual life had been very rough and bumpy. My New Year's resolution to read the whole Bible twice this year was totally destroyed due to stress from school. I guess poor time management was also one of the reasons that really worsened things. Short prayers were uttered daily but I felt that God deserves more. It came to a point where I knew that I had to do my devotions but I felt tired of doing it, so I played with my phone or watched different movies. As the camp was approaching, I asked God to really open my heart and renew my mind. Throughout the camp, the first theme message struck me the most. The speaker said, "Availability is not an issue of time but an issue of priority." True enough, I thought I loved God and I thought that what I was doing was a bit okay, but saying that I was too busy and had no time for devotion just proved that God wasn't my topmost priority. After the first theme message, I looked into my life on how I prioritized God in my life. I decided to slowly get back to God and put

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Him at the center of my life again. Aside from this, I really enjoyed the camp because the schedule of the sessions was not that heavy and the topics were really relevant. The workshops during the camp on how to handle emotions and peer counseling were really helpful and I learned things that I never knew before. The fellowship with friends and counselors were very enjoyable. The laughter and the tears were memorable. Not only did God revive me during the camp, but it was also stress relieving. I thank God for giving me this opportunity to join the camp despite my busy schedule. Indeed, He is faithful and would never give up on you.

Samuel Uy

I have been serving in the youth band ministry for a

few years now while also joining the choir, the Soul Searchers, and attending Sunday School. Recently, these had somewhat burned me out. I felt that my life and spirit had been a straight line. I had lost the passion burning inside me years ago when I first accepted Jesus Christ. Sometimes, I wanted to try to have that feeling come back, but when I tried, it felt just like a straight line. When the church called me to serve, I would serve but deep inside, I felt like it's just a straight line. Joining the youth camp had been stressful and I couldn't enjoy the fullness of the messages. But what was shared had really helped me. The theme was "Taking the Cross-Road", and the camp had challenged me to get in touch with the Lord more. It had helped me to see the fullness of the Lord's grace and to improve my walk with the Lord. I've learned that we are who we are because of God's grace on us.





Church Events

Compiled by Ptr. Rosaline Lim

Emmanuel

"EMMANUEL" the title of 2012's Christmas cantata meaning "God with Us". It has been a tradition for Cebu Gospel Church to give a memorable Christmas Cantata and last year was another buzz especially to the youths who participated. Surely, the choir sang beautiful songs about our Savior but one of the unforgettable highlights was the dance number by some of our young pros, youths and our very own Pastor Wayne. The dance was choreographed by our Young Pro's Erwinson and Kenly. Another God given talent had been discovered. Praise God for such blessings He has given to this church. May we learn how to appreciate and encourage each other's talents and gifts.

Church Celebrates its 97th Anniversary

Another year had gone by and our church just celebrated her 97th anniversary last March 10, 2013. May the hands of our Sovereign Father continue to be with us: to guide, protect, teach and revive us in our daily Christian walk with Him. May we allow the Holy Spirit to change us for the betterment of God's kingdom, and help us set good examples to both believers and non-believers. Let us continue to encourage one another so that our church will continue to grow and glorify God as we move towards our 100th year.

Child Dedication



Last February 3, 2013, four tots were dedicated to God: Douglas Alexander Gothong, Deandra Athena Gothong, Dawn Jasmine Gothong and Julia Madisson Teyu. Children are precious blessings from God. We hope and pray that these children will grow and come to know our Saviour. To the parents, may we be reminded that it is the parents' duty to bring up our kids in God's way and with the knowledge of His Words.





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Baptismal on Resurrection Sunday

Last Resurrection Sunday, March 31, 2013, three young people were baptized. They were John Michael Gu, Charlotte Tan and Chelsea Un. Let us welcome them into our family and let us continue to include them in our prayers that they will continue to grow and serve God.



1st Theme Seminar by: Dr. Florentino Lim

Our church's first theme seminar was held on April 14, 2013. Dr. Florentino Lim shared about how we, as church leaders, should pass the baton to the next generation. He illustrated this using some Bible characters like Moses to Joshua, Elijah to Elisha and etc... In order for us to pass the baton to the next generation, we should set ourselves as good examples as spiritual leaders. A leader should possess the following characteristics: humility, maturity, and a teachable heart. Most of all, a leader should know how to fear God.

Youth Camp "Crossroads"

Pastor Jebo Banzuelo was the theme and revival speaker in the youth camp at El Salvador Beach Resort held in Danao last April 1-5, 2013.

Developing biblical relationships with God and with our neighbors was the main goal for this camp. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbors as you love yourself." Mark 12:30-31.



Junior Camp "Follow Jesus"

Last April 24-27, CYF Elementary held its yearly kid's camp at CGC. There were 11 boys and 26 girls who joined. Praise God 7 kids accepted Jesus, 20 were willing to be used by God in the future and the rest followed Jesus.

We thank our special speaker Ptr. Catherine Tan of UECP for sharing her precious time with us. She worked as head of children's ministry for more than 20 years. The children were very responsive in all of the activities.

To the rest of the speakers, thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Let us continue to remember the children in our prayers so that they too will learn to love and serve God.



Mother's Day

In every corner of the globe, Mother's Day was celebrated last May 12, 2013. We praise God for giving us mothers to take care of us, guide us, nurture us and love us despite all the crazy things we do in life. Our church celebrated an unforgettable Mother's Day with the children and grandchildren giving flowers to their mom and grandma. We know that most Chinese find it easy to show feelings of sadness or anger but are in a dilemma in expressing love towards their loved ones. Hoping that through this special activity, we can learn to be more open and can express feelings of love towards each other. Happy Mother's Day!



Congregational Outing

The church held a congregational outing last May 1, 2013 at Tambuli Beach Resort. Around 205 came to join this activity. Everyone enjoyed the time spent together and bonded with each other at the same time. Such gathering is one of many ways to meet new friends and to create good relationships with fellow Christians.



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DVBS "Christian Firefighter - SAVING People from FIRE"

A very nice material and topic for the kids. The following topics were tackled : SIN, PERSEVERANCE, BECOMING A TRUE CHRISTIAN AND EVANGELISM-DISCPLESHIP.

Through this vacation bible school, we hope that the kids will gain more knowledge about God's word, have the heart to serve God, live their lives as God's children and share the gospel to their friends.





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