

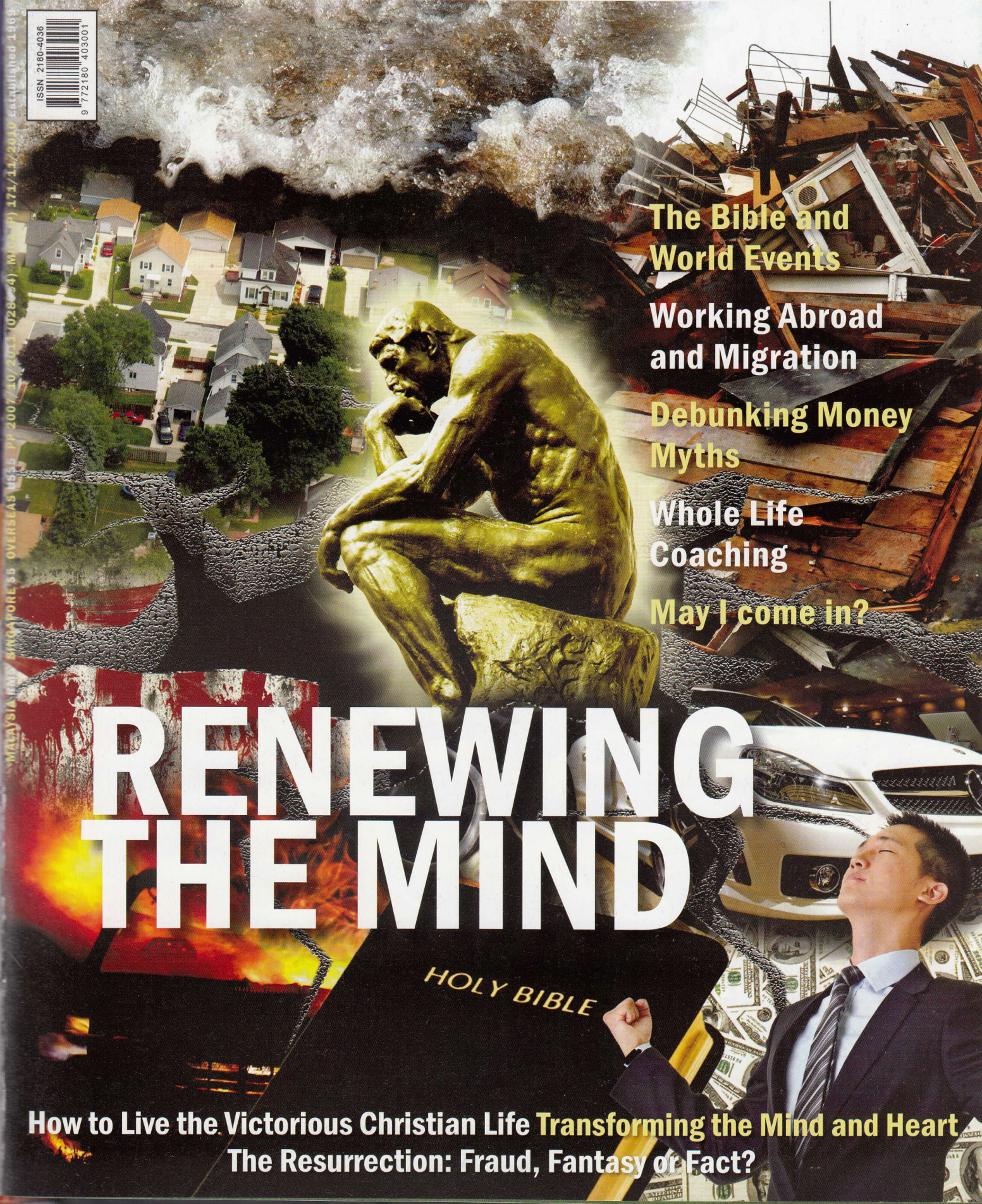
ASIAN BEACON

Asian Beacon

YOUR CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE



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The Bible and World Events

Working Abroad and Migration

Debunking Money Myths

Whole Life Coaching

May I come in?

RENEWING THE MIND

HOLY BIBLE

How to Live the Victorious Christian Life Transforming the Mind and Heart
The Resurrection: Fraud, Fantasy or Fact?

Of Grasshoppers and Giants

Conquering the giants in our life requires a renewed mind. Are we controlled by fear or led by faith?

BEFORE THE ISRAELITES WERE ABLE TO POSSESS THE Promised Land and enjoy its blessings, they had to conquer their own fears.

Ten of the spies reported that the land flowed with milk and honey. But they also saw the obstacles — the fortified cities and giants who were descendants of Anak. “We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes and we looked the same to them.” So they cringed in fear and defeat (Numbers 13).

But the other spies, Caleb and Joshua, belonged to the “we can do it” category. Not that they were great themselves. They rested in God’s promises that He will give them the Promised Land and had the faith that He will empower them.

In this issue we have lined up a potpourri of articles on the theme **RENEWING THE MIND**.

Thought determines our character, destiny and worldview. That is why *Renewing the Mind* with God’s Word is essential.

Bishop Hwa Yung shares his views on theology and education as well as the trends and challenges facing the Malaysian Church in *Transforming the Mind and Heart*.

The Bible and World Events shows us how Bible prophecies help us understand world events.

In *Empowering through Literacy*, a young lady — going against popular culture — heads to Africa to teach people how to read and write.

To lead *The Victorious Christian Life*, we need to renew our minds by aligning our thoughts with God’s Word.

A doctor who spent many years overseas training to be a specialist shares his views on *Working Abroad and Migration*.

In *A Reunion to Cherish*, alumni of a seminary share memories of student days and how the training has impacted their lives.

As believers celebrate Easter, we examine an issue that has been hotly debated for centuries — *The Resurrection: Fraud, Fantasy or Fact?*

Just as Christ rose again in newness of life, may you experience afresh His presence, leading and power this Easter.

Lim Poh Ann

COVER MONTAGE: TWENTYFIVECENTS CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

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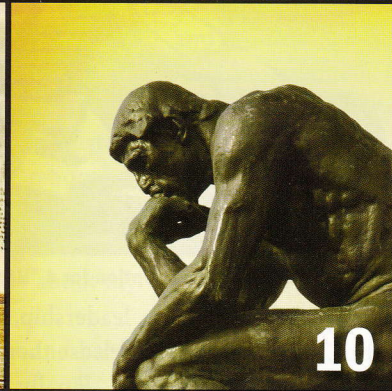
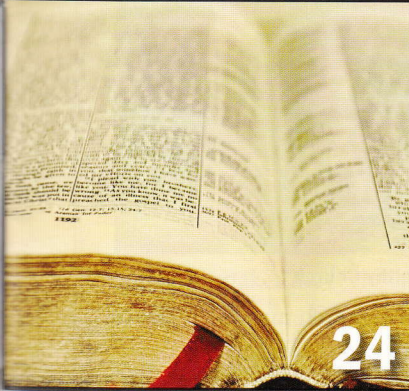
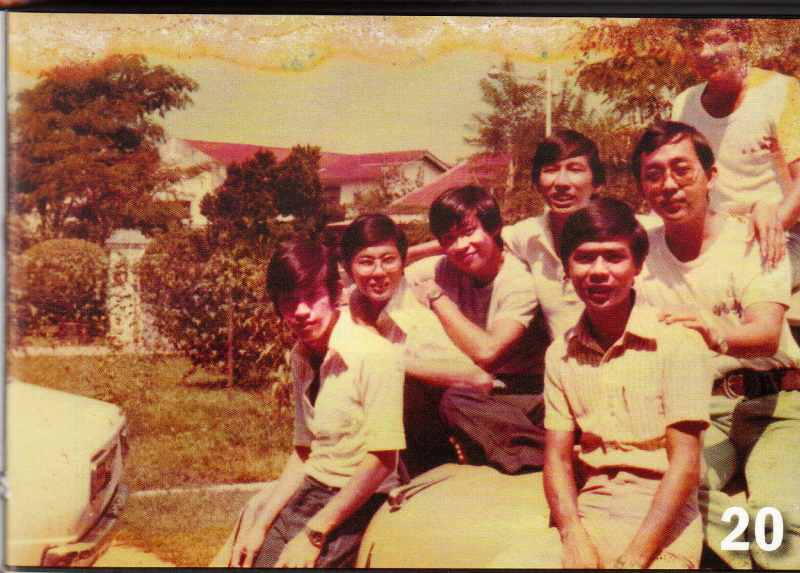
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MISSION

- To help readers understand contemporary issues in the light of God’s word and to apply it to life’s challenges.
- To testify to God’s love and power in transforming lives, families and communities.
- To contextualise biblical principles within the Asian culture.
- To be an agent of change in making our world a better place.

VISION

Your Beacon of Hope



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Renewing the Mind

Thoughts determine our character, destiny and worldview. That's why it's important to renew our minds with God's Word.

BY DR LIM POH ANN

“WHY NOT? Everyone is doing it.”
 “If you don't harm others, it's alright.”
 “If you're not caught, it's OK.”

We seem to be bombarded by the world's ideology at almost every turn, whether at work or play. We may even succumb to its influence. That's why Romans 12:2 warns us: “Do not let the world squeeze you into its mould, but instead let yourself be transformed by the *renewing* of your mind” (J B Phillips).

But how do we renew our minds to face this onslaught of lies?

For many, it's a staple diet of five-minute devotional time amid the weekday morning rush with the pulpit message on Sunday as a “supplement”. An annual church camp and a mission exposure trip help to boost flagging spirits.

But we need more than that. We need to study God's Word in its depth and breadth, meditate on it, and pray for the strength to obey. Scripture memory really helps when the Word is needed during temptations and challenging times.

Renewal of the mind starts with hunger. The problem is not a lack of time to engage in serious Bible study but one of attitude. The stock excuse is “I don't have time”. But if we really search deep within, the real reason is more like “I have not really sorted out my priorities”.

CHARACTER

A man is literally the product of his thinking. Based upon this important truth, author James Allen wrote his acclaimed self-help book, “As A Man Thinketh”.

“Men imagine that thought can be kept secret but it cannot. It rapidly crystallises into habit, and habit solidifies into circumstances,” writes Allen. For example, evil thoughts give rise to sensuality and drunkenness and later result in poverty and disease.

“A man cannot directly choose his circumstances, but he can choose his thoughts and so indirectly, yet surely, shape his circumstances,” he adds.

This view concurs with what the Bible says in Proverbs 23:7: “As a man thinks in his heart, so does he become”.

If we sincerely desire to see change in our inner man, this can only come through continual sipping at the springs of Living Water, God's Word. Only then can we embrace the *mind* of Christ — one of humility and humble service (Philippians 2: 5-8). And be filled with heavenly *wisdom*, which is characterised by purity, peace, gentleness and good fruits (James 3:17).

DESTINY

Apart from shaping our character, a renewed mind empowers us to fulfil our destiny — that we may come into the fullness of what God has in store for us and enter the Promised Land.

God's plan for our lives dates back to the time we're in our mother's womb (Jeremiah 1:5) but all remains dormant until God gives us a revelation of who we are in Him — not just the *logos* but the *rhema* word.

Gideon saw himself as defeated, bereft of hope, as the Midianites invaded his homeland. Offering no resistance to the enemy, he was threshing wheat when God spoke to him through the angel, “The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valour ... Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?” (Judges 6:12, 14).

Earlier he had thought he was incapable of leading Israel against their enemies — coming from the weakest clan and being the most insignificant in his family. All that changed when God called him and gave his self-image a boost.

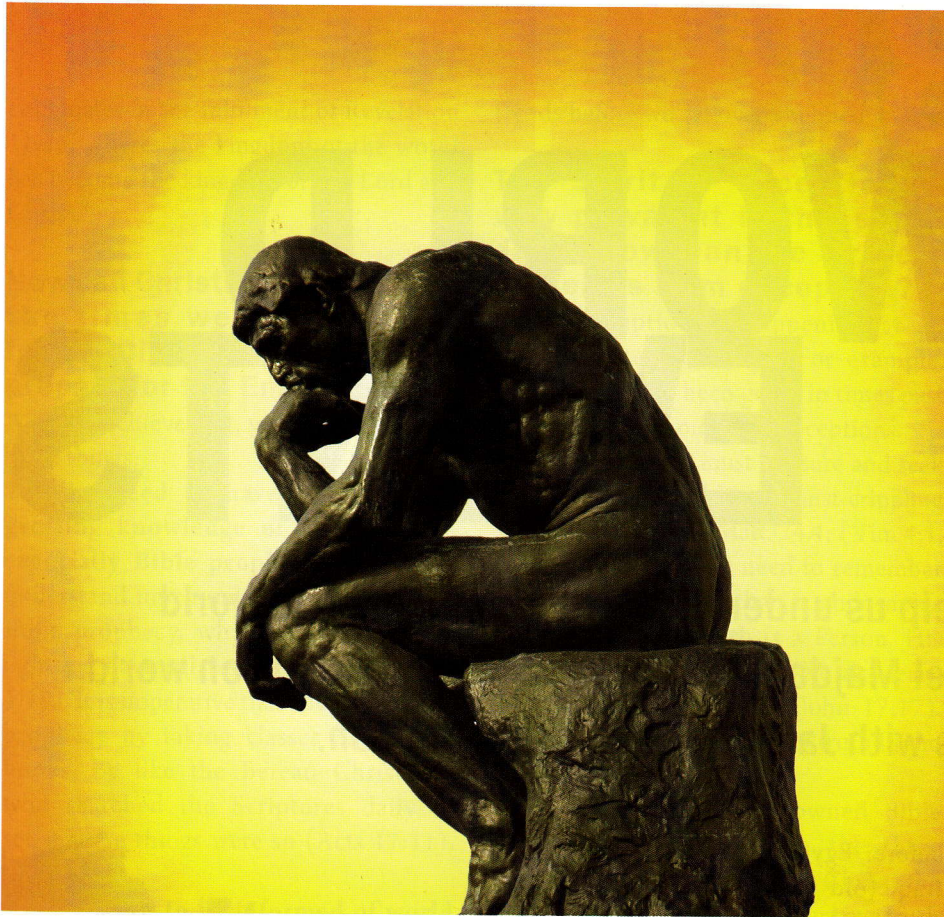
One can see a cup as half-empty or half-full and, in both instances, one is right. Gideon saw himself as “empty” when he was threshing wheat. But when God called him, his mind was renewed. He then saw himself anew, and was filled with courage and boldness. And, as they say, the rest is history.

BALANCE

Whilst renewing the mind is an important key to spiritual transformation, we must not put intellectual pursuit on a pedestal and neglect other key areas like love, obedience and the role of the Holy Spirit.

George Verwer of Operation Mobilisation recalled the time when he went with someone to the office of Billy Graham. None of the office staff noticed them except the receptionist. They were too pre-occupied with an evangelistic campaign to pay attention to outsiders. Then Graham walked in and started shaking hands with everybody. He went over to greet both Verwer and his friend. Though much busier than the office staff, he had time to spare for others. He was full of warmth and love. Similarly, ministers and theologians must remain down-to-earth and be able to connect with ordinary folks.

For all his scholarship (he wrote most of the books in the New Testament), Paul was neither cold nor aloof. He demonstrated



unconditional love for the believers at Corinth: “I will gladly spend myself and all I have for you, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me” (2 Corinthians 12:15).

Jesus was equally at home whether he was preaching, attending a wedding, dining with sinners or blessing the children — equally spiritual and human.

Recognising the role of the Holy Spirit and being able to sense His leading are just as important as renewing our minds with the Word. Someone rightly puts it: “Too much Word and you dry up; too much Spirit, and you blow up; the Word and the Spirit and you grow up”.

We need to check ourselves if we have been long on doctrine and short on practice. At the end of the day, head knowledge must grow in tandem with loving acts and practical ministry.

WORLDVIEW

Once our minds have been renewed by the Word, we realise how important it is to live in light of eternity, not just for the “here and now”. And in these tumultuous end times — when biblical prophecies are being fulfilled with startling accuracy — a

focus on the *eternal* is all the more cogent and relevant.

The political upheavals in North Africa and the Arab states, earthquakes in Haiti and Christchurch and the recent catastrophe which hit Japan (earthquake, tsunami and nuclear fallout) clearly reinforce what Jesus predicted as signs of the beginning of the end: “wars and rumours of wars ... earthquakes in various places ... all these are the beginning of birth pains” (Matthew 24:6-8).

The earth is like a spaceship hurtling into outer space at breakneck speed towards the day when Christ returns. The difference from *Star Trek* is that all the Captain Spocks (world leaders) cannot seem to fix a rocking craft that is out of control.

Clearly, God is shaking the earth as never before (Hebrews 12:26). How then shall we live?

Peter exhorts us to be alert and sober that we may pray, to love one another and utilise whatever gifts or resources God has given us to glorify Him (1 Peter 4:7-11).

Paul instructs us to live circumspectly, make the most of every opportunity, seek to understand God’s will for our lives and

be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:15-18).

And in order that the Gospel may reach every nation (Matthew 24:14), we have to play our part in the Great Commission, whether it’s to go, pray or give financial support to those who go (Matthew 28:18-20).

The parable of the ten virgins warns us to be numbered among the wise virgins who, ever watchful of the bridegroom’s return, had oil for their lamps.

Being *watchful* is not quite easy to figure out. You might say, “Bills have to be paid, food has to be laid on the table, children have to be educated. How can I just watch?” But we’re told not only to *watch* but to *occupy* ourselves productively until He returns, whether it is serving Him or engaging in whatever trade we’re called to. Won’t there be two men working in the field when Christ returns and one is taken, one is left (Matthew 24:40)?

Watching does not imply twiddling our thumbs as we gaze towards the heavens. It implies a God-consciousness in our lives, not just doing our own thing. The ones who were eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage in the days of Noah (before the flood) had clearly excluded God in their lives. They were swept away when the great deluge came. And Jesus warns us not to have that same spirit of reckless abandon so that we won’t be caught off guard when He returns.

Someone has said, “Live as if Christ can come any moment. Plan as if Christ will come in a thousand years. For to God one day is as a thousand years.” No one can accurately predict the future. We can only get a sense of the times and seasons we’re living in.

Everyone has to seek God as to what He wants him or her to do. As we continually renew our minds, the Holy Spirit will guide us and even show us the things which are to come (John 16:13). **ab**



A medical doctor, Dr Lim has keen interest in communication and writing. He and his wife, Sow Yoong, have three children, aged 28, 26 and 23.

THE BIBLE AND WORLD EVENTS

“Prophecies in the Bible help us understand the significance of world events,” says Rev Dr Kameel Majdali, a Bible teacher and expert on world trends. He shares his views with *Janice Soh* of *Asian Beacon*.

What are the significant world events that fulfill Bible prophecies regarding the End Times?

DR KAMEEL MAJDALI (KM): The four significant events happening are:

1. The unification of Europe. Before Jesus returns, everything will be restored as the holy prophets said (Acts 3:20-21). Restoration means to bring something back to its original condition. Nations are uniting and merging as regional blocs. Currently, 27 countries belong to the European Union. United Europe could represent the ancient Roman Empire. Just like the old Roman Empire, which comprised Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, the EU could be heading in the same direction. The countries of North Africa and the Middle East, which belong to the ENP (European Neighborhood Programme), might be joining the EU later. Read Daniel chapters 2 and 7 concerning King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a statue (representing the kingdoms of this world). Watch what happens in Europe as we may see the fulfilment of Daniel chapter 2.

2. Restored nations in the Middle East. The culmination of this age will also see the reappearance of certain nations that existed

before: Egypt, Israel, Iran (old Persia), Iraq (old Mesopotamia/ Babylonia/ Assyria/Nineveh/Shinar). This is in line with the restoration of all things spoken of by the prophets since the world began.

3. Outpouring of the Holy Spirit and world revival. The move of the Holy Spirit that has been chronicled by the secular media over the past few decades has end-time implications (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18). This spiritual revival worldwide has been in operation for over 100 years.

4. The great universal shaking. The Hebrew prophets predicted long ago a great shaking in the last days (Haggai 2:6-7; Hebrews 12:25-29). I don’t believe that any group or nation is orchestrating the turmoil in the world these days, be it economic, geo-political, spiritual, or even natural disasters. The turmoil is beyond anybody’s control (for example, the earthquake in New Zealand, extensive floods in Australia, and the massive earthquake and tsunami that hit north eastern Japan). It is like a heavenly shaking. Anything that is man-made, man-centred, material and secular will be shaken. The great universal shaking, rightly called “the birth pangs of the coming Kingdom”,



**BE LIKE THE MEN FROM
ISSACHAR WHO UNDERSTOOD
THE TIMES AND KNEW WHAT
SHOULD BE DONE**

1 CHRONICLES 12:32

culminates in the fulfilment of Revelation 11:15, where “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and Christ.”

How can Christians understand the times we are living in from a Biblical worldview and prepare for the End Times?

KM: To achieve that, you will need these three things:

1. You need to have a sound and growing knowledge of God’s Word, especially Bible prophecy. You won’t understand much unless you understand Bible prophecy, which is the brightest light we have till Jesus returns (2 Peter 1:19). It is imperative that you study Bible prophecy by taking classes or reading books. Be like the Berean Christians, who searched the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so (Acts 17:11).

2. You need to be informed of world events. The Great Commission instructs us to go into the world. Therefore we need to know something about the world to which we have been called. In other words, Christians should have the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other so that we have an understanding of the times. Those with an Issachar mindset will know exactly how to navigate through these turbulent times. So be like the men from Issachar who understood the times and knew what should be done (1 Chronicles 12:32).

3. You need to have a flourishing spiritual life. Your own personal relationship with God is very important. If you have a flourishing spiritual life, then the Holy Spirit will teach you all things; He will show you things to come (John 16:13). This is not an optional extra.

If we neglect one or more of the above, we will be caught unaware when world events start impacting us directly. We might have been spared before, but now that we are in a globalised world, things are happening too quickly and intensely. It’s time to get serious about God and world

trends before we get overwhelmed.

The Spirit of deception is very prevalent in these last days. How can we protect ourselves from deception?

KM: Deception is happening at an alarming rate these days. For example, nations that have been godly in times past are now spewing out great deceptions.

That is why we must treasure and seek after truth. The antidote against crippling end-time deception (Matt. 24.4; I Tim 4:1, 16) is truth. What we need to remember is that truth is more than a philosophy, ideology or idea. Truth is a Person. His Name is Jesus (John 14:6). We also learn that God’s Word is truth (John 17:17). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 16:13).

Derek Prince, the renowned Bible teacher, asserts that when the three coordinates of truth line up – Christ, the Spirit, and the Word – then you have truth indeed.

We need a holistic approach to our Christian life – be strong in the Word and the Holy Spirit, and be in right relationship to the body of Christ. Only then can we remain pure, strong, solid and unshakeable.

How did you get called into this ministry?

KM: It was more of a process than an event. After two decades of full-time ministry, the Lord led us to commence the ministry of Teach All Nations Inc (TAN) in 2004. I am an Arab-American who grew up in Los Angeles, California and came to the faith as a teenager.

After graduating with a BA at 20, I went to the Middle East to do postgraduate studies (MA). I was there for five years, and then my wife and I did a two-year round-the-world tour. We were then called to Australia in February 1987 where I was part of a pastoral team for three-and-a-half years. In 1990, I went to Harvest Bible College in Melbourne for 13 years, where I served as principal for more than 8 years before we began TAN.

What are you passionate about?

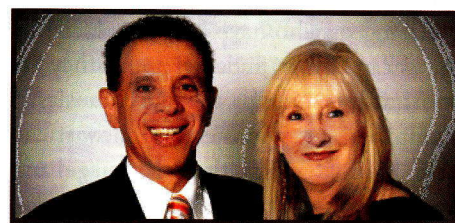
KM: My greatest passion is to equip people worldwide to know God better and grow in Him. Second, I’d like to encourage believers to embrace a global Christian worldview. Third, I have a passion for “World Trends” – to engage the world to which God has called us to reach out. Like John Wesley, I believe the world is my parish.

How does your teaching help people?

KM: It will inspire you to live for God and teach you how to survive and succeed in the days ahead – by “hearing” and “doing” the words of Jesus (Matt.7:24-27). It will help you to make the necessary adjustments with your life in these turbulent times.

What is your parting exhortation for believers?

KM: I urge all true believers, that in light of these tumultuous times, it is more important than ever to make God number one in your lives. “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you (Matthew 6:33). And all the things the world seeks after (food, shelter, provision, clothing), He will give to you as a bonus. **fb**



Rev Dr Kameel Majdali, the Director of Teach All Nations (TAN) Inc., is a world trends watcher. He helps believers understand the times and seasons we are living in and how to be prepared for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. He is married to Leanne, who serves as Associate Director of TAN. They have two adult children.

A dynamic preacher, Bible teacher, writer and futurist, Kameel now travels all over the world speaking at Bible colleges and churches. He has published five books and hosts two radio programmes in Australia.

Books by Rev Dr Kameel Majdali are available from Canaanland bookstores. His website, www.tan.org.au, has a wealth of information for believers who want to practise “double listening” – one ear open to the Word (Proverbs 4:20-22) and the other ear open to the world (1 Chronicles 12:32).

EMPOWERING THROUGH

It takes a renewed mind to run counter to popular culture. While many choose to work in advanced countries, Eunice Kua's mission is to help the people of Chad, Africa, to read and write. **BY EMILY FOO**

WHY WOULD A CITY girl leave the comforts of home to serve in Africa if it is not out of a sense of calling and purpose? Such is the case of Eunice Kua, who believes that living in a multicultural society like Malaysia has helped her to adapt to cross-cultural ministry.

Kua, who hails from Petaling Jaya, completed her tertiary education in Singapore and the United States before returning home to work as a librarian. After further training in linguistics and literacy, she joined Wycliffe and went to work in Chad, Africa.

Since February 2009, she has been teaching the Massalit people of Eastern Chad how to read and write in their own mother tongue. Working with SIL, an NGO specialising in linguistics, translation and literacy, she works primarily among the refugees who have been displaced by the war in Darfur, Sudan. Though they are poor and live in camps, they are enthusiastic about the literacy project and how it can help them develop their language and preserve their culture.

Asian Beacon catches up with her to find out more about her life in Chad:

Asian Beacon (AB): What is your daily life like?

Eunice Kua (EK): In the mornings, I have breakfast, read my Bible and fill my black container for the sun to heat up the water for my evening bath. Around 8am, I go to the office to answer emails, write reports, and plan for literacy activities and language-learning sessions. We may need to entertain visitors. After lunch, it is siesta time until about 3pm. Siesta is important as it is often 40 degrees Celsius in the



Literacy students receiving their certificates

shade during the hot season. We have daily prayer meetings at 3.30pm, and then we are back to our office work till 5pm. Most of my work involves training the local literacy committees, teachers, trainers, class supervisors, writers and editors. Part of my weekly schedule includes work meetings, visiting classes at the refugee camps, conducting training workshops and attending ad hoc NGO meetings or events. So life in Chad is never boring; every day is different.

AB: What is the objective of your work in Chad? And how do you plan to achieve it?

EK: My objective in Chad is to do my part in God's plan for this people group. Currently our objective is to develop a sustainable literacy programme owned and run entirely by the Massalit people. We stress that this is *their* programme, not ours. Decisions are made by the locals rather than by us, though we give advice. We do everything together with them, be it teacher training, planning or editing books, so that they can learn through experience and hopefully be able to do them independently later.

We do not employ people; we sell

books at cost rather than subsidised prices. This means that the pace is slower than if we had run the programme based on our schedule. We hope that by empowering the people to do the project themselves, the fate of so many development projects – which stop once the outsiders leave and the funding dries up – can be averted. We work at their pace and try to avoid creating unhealthy dependencies. We try to be the “guide on the side” rather than the “sage on the stage”.

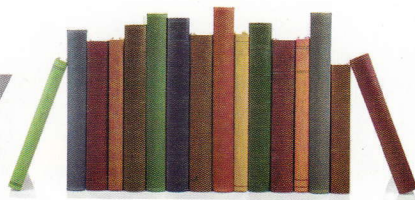
AB: What has been your greatest challenge?

EK: The challenge is to be disciplined enough to pray and spend time with the Lord. The good thing here is that we realise how much we need God. Many factors are out of our control so we really need to rely on God. On the other hand, it is so easy to focus on human planning and fail to sit at His feet.

AB: Has anything turned out different from your expectations?

EK: The accommodation and lifestyle. Being a single woman, I had expected that I would be staying with a local family. In that

LITERACY



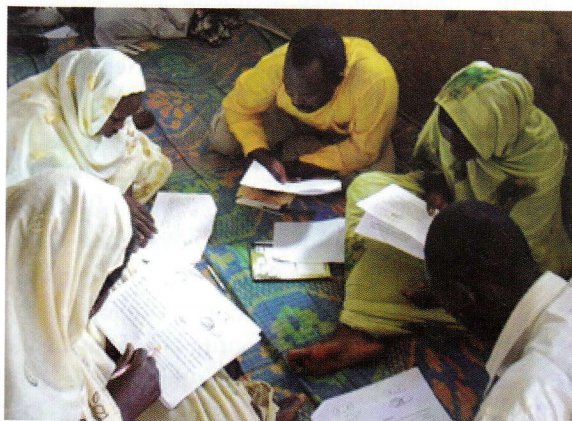
AB: What advice would you give to someone who is contemplating missions?

EK: Pray and ask the Lord to show you the way, and affirm that you will obey. Take steps forward to see whether He opens or closes doors. Learn as much as you can – remember that “the field” is a wide variety of places, cultures and settings. Ask people who are there or have been there to get a better idea. Go for a short-term stint if possible. Make an informed choice. Speak to people from different organisations that can use your skills and share the burden God has placed in your heart. Talk to your pastor and Christian friends and pray with them.

When I’m looking for direction, I ask myself three questions: What am I good at? What am I interested in? What will bring me closer to God? We do not go because of the need; we go because we are sent. How you find out where God wants you to be varies from person to person. You need not have a “burning bush” experience. For me, it was the sum effect of little things that led me, step by step, to where I am today. In my experience, God doesn’t show me the next step until I’ve taken the one that is right in front of me. So take a step forward and see where it leads – whether across the sea or across the street.

God’s timing is not our own. People often end up “arriving on the field” much later than their expectations. He needs to do as much in us as in the people He sends us to serve. **ab**

For further information about Kua’s work and ministry, kindly email her at eunice_kua@sil.org.



Clockwise from left bottom:
Practising reading during a workshop. At the village market. Children at a refugee camp.

Our work and skills make us more like the local men, but our social sphere is with the women. Because of our unique status, we are able to move around in both worlds, and that is both blessing and a challenge.

AB: What are some of your extraordinary experiences?

EK: One thing that strikes me as extraordinary is their sacrificial hospitality. I have been frequently embarrassed by the generosity of my Chadian and Sudanese hosts. Though they are poor, they spare no expense, even killing a chicken or going to the market to buy meat, when I visit them at home. Once I visited a friend during the fasting month; I thought it would be “safe”. Instead, they bought snacks and insisted that I have some and take the rest home. I’ve often been given gifts by ladies selling fruits in the market.

AB: What is the greatest need at the moment?

EK: The greatest need is prayer. Most things here are beyond our control, both materially and spiritually. We also need people who are willing to serve, whether in literacy work or administration.

way I could learn their culture and integrate with the community. For various reasons, there was no suitable family for me to live with. So our team rented a compound where we live and have our office as well.

We try to live as simply as possible like the people, but there are some obvious differences in lifestyle. Because of our work, we have solar power to run our computers, charge our mobile phones and lights so we can read in our huts at night. (On the other hand, some local people have small generators and satellite TV, which we don’t!) Though we have local-style huts with thatched roofs, they are “improved” with cement floors and screens on the windows and doors (these keep the flies out, but not the spiders!).

The local women would be spending almost all their time doing unending housework. But we, the foreign women, especially singles, are a strange breed.

The Victorious

JESUS PROMISED US AN abundant and victorious life in Him, but often these biblical truths seem like an elusive dream. Life's challenges and our own weaknesses seem to get the better of us, despite our best intentions and efforts. How do we take hold of those promises and walk in the newness of life that Jesus died to give us?

In her bestseller, *Battlefield of the Mind: Winning the Battle in your mind*, author Joyce Meyer shares how the key to victorious Christian living lies in the renewal of your mind – aligning and submitting your thoughts to God's. There are many insightful truths in the book that would be helpful for anyone seeking to experience God's power and good plan in their lives.

God's truths never change. However, Satan, the father of lies, is on a mission to make us doubt all that God has said and to keep us in bondage with his bombardment of lies. And this attack primarily takes place in the mind, the battlefield.

Proverbs 23:7 tells us that "As a man thinks in his heart, so does he become" – our thoughts result in our actions. In Romans 8:5, we also see that those who set their minds on things of the flesh are controlled by unholy desires, whereas those who set their minds on things of the Spirit are controlled by the Spirit.

MIND CONDITIONS

When we accept Jesus, we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16). The Holy Spirit dwells in us and reveals God's wisdom to us. According to Meyer, the normal

Renew your minds by aligning your thoughts with God's Word and see Him transform your life.

By JOANNA SZE

Christian mind – the mind of Christ – should be calm, peaceful and alert at all times, regardless of circumstances.

However, years of life without Christ have conditioned our carnal minds to

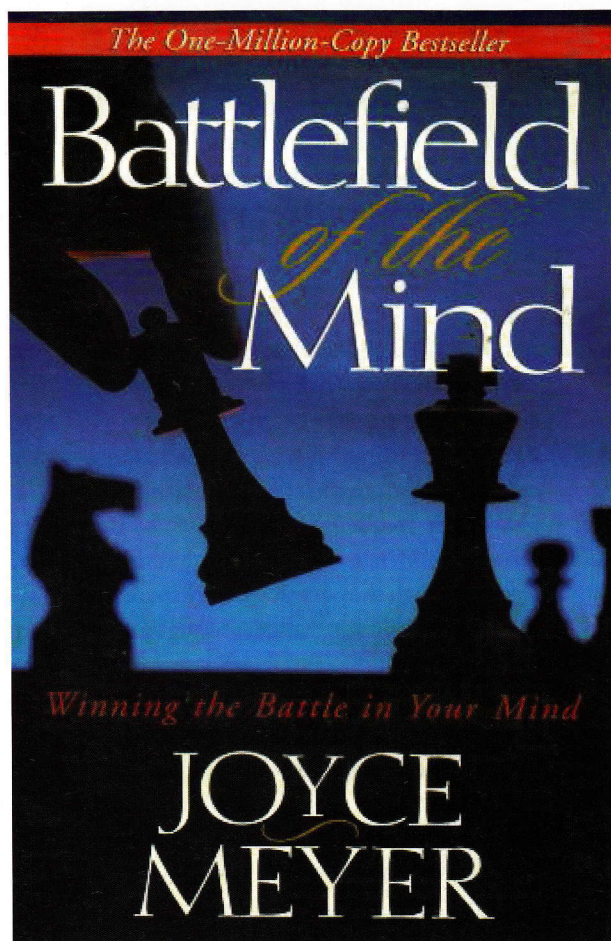
mind that asks the "what ifs"; the confused mind that tries to reason everything out; the doubtful mind that wavers with every lie; the anxious and worried mind; the judgemental and critical mind; and the passive mind.

Meyer also highlights what she calls "wilderness mentalities" that hinder us from experiencing the victorious life God has given us. We blame our condition on everything – our past, our upbringing, our inadequacies – instead of moving forward into the Promised Land. Some of these mentalities include: "My future is determined by my past and my present," "Don't make me wait for anything; I deserve everything immediately," "I feel sorry for myself because my life is so wretched," "I don't deserve God's blessings because I am not worthy," and "I'm going to do it my way, or not at all."

STEPS TO VICTORY

The good news is that God is on our side in this battle; His Holy Spirit is there to help us, and all we need is found in Jesus, who defeated sin and the devil at the cross. The fiery darts of the devil are helpless against the shield of faith. As our minds are renewed into God's way of thinking, our lives will be transformed (Romans 12:2).

When we can use our weapon – the Word of God – in praise and prayer, we tear down the devil's strongholds. Throughout her book, Meyer gives helpful ways to help us align our thoughts to God's:



think wrong thoughts. Meyer lists several mind conditions that are "abnormal" for a believer. There's the busy mind that misses the still small voice of God; the wandering mind that lacks discipline; the wondering

Christian Life

MEDITATE ON THE WORD OF GOD

“Meditate on it day and night, that you may observe and do according to all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall deal wisely and have good success.” (Joshua 1:8)

Meyer says that the more time we spend meditating (reflecting, thinking, pondering) on the Word, the more we can harness the wealth and power in it and counter the devil’s lies.

MEDITATE ON THE WORKS OF GOD

When faced with challenges, David the psalmist didn’t meditate on the problem. Instead he would break into song, pondering the work of God’s hands (Psalm 77:12, Psalm 143:5). He’d remember what God had promised and look back at all He had done. Praising God according to His Word and goodness defeats the devil quicker than any other battle plan, Meyer says.

MEDITATE ON GOD’S LOVE FOR YOU

Meyer says we need to be “God-loves-me”- minded – to meditate on His love for us, experience it for ourselves and renew our mind concerning our right standing with God through Jesus. When we know how much He loves us and His unconditional acceptance, we no longer fear or beat ourselves up with guilt and condemnation.

MEDITATE ON “THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8 tells us to think about whatever is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, of virtue and praiseworthy. Our thoughts affect our attitudes and moods. If we fill our minds with negative and critical thoughts, we will act and react negatively and critically – the smallest hiccup is magnified into a catastrophe of end-of-the-world proportions. Likewise when we think of good and praiseworthy

things, it overflows into our actions and attitudes.

SPEAK LIFE

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they who indulge in it shall eat the fruit of it.” (Prov 18:21)

Many never see the answer to their prayers because they negate what they have asked for with their own thought and words before God gets a chance to work in their behalf, Meyer says. She gives the example of parents who pray for a child with behaviour problems and then entertain all kinds of negative thoughts and say, “This kid will never change.” We are called to encourage and build one another up in love (Eph 4:29). Trusting in God should enable us to say, “We believe God is working in this child, and we will see him change from glory to glory.”

Meyer is quick to note that positive thinking and speaking is not about twisting God’s arm. Rather, it’s about voicing our agreement with God’s will and plan for us. It’s also not about denying reality, but it’s about verbalising God’s truths about a situation. For example, if we are sick, we can declare God’s word on healing instead of worrying about the worst possible scenarios (“I’m going to get worse and die”).

DEVELOP A THANKFUL MIND

A complainer finds fault in every good thing, while a thankful person finds good in the worst of situations. The more we find things to be thankful for each day, the more we fill our hearts with life and love. Ephesians 5:20 reminds us that at all times and for everything, we can give thanks to God.

When we see others who seem more favoured than us, rejoice with them. We don’t have to compare and compete with them. Look to God and trust Him for He loves us and will do whatever is best for us.

HOPE AND TRUST

People often do not like to hope for fear of being disappointed. But biblical hope is the anchor of the soul (Heb 6:19). We are called to believe and follow what God says even when we don’t understand why, when or how it will come to pass. Just like Abraham continued to trust God for His promises despite the unpromising facts – hundred-year-old body, dead womb, no son (Romans 4:18-20).

While we believe for many “things”, we are actually believing in Someone – Jesus. So if “things” do not materialise the way we want them to, know that Jesus never changes and He always works everything out for good, better and the best. So don’t be afraid to hope and expect good things in your life.

LITTLE BY LITTLE

The renewal of our minds is not an overnight process, hence Meyer encourages readers not to give up in the face of setbacks or failures. When you find yourself slipping into the pit of wrong thoughts and actions, just get back up, dust yourself off and start again. Declare out loud, “Things are going slow but thank God I’m making some progress. You love me, Lord. I refuse to be discouraged or condemned. You sent Jesus to die for me. You help me choose right thoughts today.”

While the world may promote its own new age “positive-thinking” philosophies such as “the law of attraction”, the anchor or cornerstone of our faith is the truth of God’s Word in the person of Jesus. He is the one who came to bring good news, to set captives free, to give sight to the blind, to deliver those who are oppressed and to proclaim the favour of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19). And, whatever your problem may be, He wants to lead you to victory today! **ab**

WORKING ABROAD AND MIGRATION

Dr Daniel Wong, a doctor who spent many years overseas training to be a specialist, shares his views on migration.

MALAYSIA IS A multi-racial society largely because our forefathers immigrated to our shores over the past few centuries. Many made the journey for economic reasons, others due to social and political concerns. Whatever the reasons, it was always to seek a better and brighter future. So working abroad or migration is not an exclusive feature of the modern, savvy lifestyle.

Closer to home, my wife and I have spent most of the past two decades abroad, completing our tertiary education in Australia before spending a further eight years in England, where I underwent my post-graduate medical training. Prior to that, I did my pre-university studies at a junior college in Singapore.

Having lived abroad, studying and later working among people from many different cultures, I feel that my life has been enriched by the experience. I miss the four seasons with all their unique features. I can certainly appreciate the perceived advantages of living somewhere else. My wife and I were sorely tempted to live long term in the UK because we were so well adjusted to life there. It was a struggle for us when we were considering our "options" at the end of my specialist training.

I have a hypothesis. Although evangelical Christians make up less than 5% of the country's population, I have a sneaking suspicion that they make up more than 5% of those who leave our country.

It's instructive to see that God "calls" Christians (mostly mobile, middle and upper class professionals) to emigrate



Family relations were an important reason for Wong and his family to return to Malaysia

principally to developed countries. Developing countries, where earning capacity, the comforts of life and educational opportunities are likely to be curtailed, seem to somehow escape God's notice when He leads people abroad. It is also interesting that many of those who choose to go have not spent more than three to four years at their intended destination.

May I suggest a few things we might like to do or consider before we make the move.

Take a step back and think about the big picture. What does the better and brighter future mean for Christians? What should be the Christian's purpose and motivation when deciding where to settle down? Surely our theology should influence this

area of life in the 21st century. God's will is for all Christians to grow in Christ-likeness, that God might be glorified in our lives. The Christian's primary concern in life is therefore to know Christ and to make him known in our world. How does your going abroad promote this ultimate mission? It is essential that your thoughts on this matter are covered by prayer.

Honestly assess your own reasons for desiring to go. Is it because you have been offered a higher paying or higher profile job? Is it because the exchange rate is very favourable? Is it because premium quality education is available without having to pay the exorbitant overseas students tuition fee? Are you looking for a life of greater comfort? Are you running away from someone or something back home?



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Jesus came into our world to suffer and die for us and He calls us to follow in His steps. Think of what Jesus might say to you as He looks into your heart. There is no need to justify emigration on special spiritual grounds. The whole world belongs to God. The only difference is, with Air Asia “now everyone can fly”. Nowhere in Scripture do we learn that God’s will is a single track and that straying away from that path spells disaster.

A word for parents whose children are studying or working overseas – please do not counsel your children to remain abroad because of the perceived political instability, racial bias and dim future of our country. Encourage them instead to return and serve God in Malaysia, despite the many challenges that may lie ahead for Christians here.

There’s also the “greener pasture syndrome”. Is life at our intended destination truly better? Better for whom? Each country has its own troubles. Some of these are very serious. Religious freedom is gradually being eroded in the UK. The

past decade has seen the ascendancy of Islam and secularism. Strange bedfellows I know, but the reality is that the UK is in a confused state. The UK has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in Europe. In many schools, more than half of the children are born out of wedlock. The police are struggling to contain increasingly pervasive gun-crime and drug culture. The prevailing (and often decadent) culture and values of society elsewhere may eventually creep into your family and return to haunt you.

No man is an island. We do not exist in a vacuum. The decision to emigrate is not one that simply affects one man and his immediate family. How about those who are left behind? It is true that we cannot live our lives for others, but we need to seriously consider the impact of our decisions. In our own deliberations, we felt that family relationships were an excellent reason to return. We have not regretted it.

Some of you may be involved in productive and fruitful Christian ministry at home. Whilst it is true that no one is

indispensable in the kingdom of God, the church in Malaysia desperately needs faithful disciples who will stand up and be counted in the long term. It is challenging enough thinking of strategies to support local churches in smaller towns, whose youths migrate to the Klang Valley, let alone replacing folks who move abroad.

The Word of God tells us that a lifespan of three score and 10 years is to be considered a blessing from God. The better and brighter future of Christians is not to be found in this world, in our earthly lives or in a country of equal opportunities. Our ultimate destination is heaven, where Christ is. It is necessary therefore that our minds be set on things above when making all of life’s decisions. **ab**

Dr Daniel Wong is an oncologist based at Pantai Hospital Ayer Keroh, Melaka. Together with his wife Chee Chee and four children, they worship at Melaka Gospel Chapel.

The above article was first published in the *Diakonia* magazine (Special Souvenir Edition 2010/2011). Used with permission.



A Reunion to Ch

The Malaysia Bible Seminary English Department started as PLKM (Pusat Latihan Kristian Melaka) 35 years ago. Recently, at a reunion, some of the alumni shared memories of student days with PLKM pioneers, Tek and Goldie Chong.

HALF OF THE STUDENTS WERE LATE ON THE first day of the first semester. Paul George Ponniah was pushing his punctured motorbike on the then hilly trunk road from Seremban to Melaka, praying to find a repair shop. Yes, Pusat Latihan Kristian Melaka (PLKM) started with only two students!

But we must not despise the day of small beginnings. In January 2011, 35 years on, about 50 alumni gathered at the sprawling 10-acre campus of the Malaysia Bible Seminary (MBS) in Kuang, Selangor, to share memories of student days. The reunion was a time of rejoicing. Many testified how hundreds of alumni have gone on to touch thousands of lives.

Before PLKM began, Singapore already had the Singapore Bible College and Trinity Theological College. Many in Malaysia dreamed of the day when the Malaysian church would start its own Bible training centre. Though the odds were stacked against this idea, a few people took a step of faith, trembling at the implications but excited and awed by the challenges of the venture. Finally in March 1976, PLKM opened its doors.

Two students, two lecturers

Jeanette Hui, who had just returned home from London Bible College with a BD (Hons), was prepared to give up teaching in school to join the venture in Melaka. But why locate the Bible school in Melaka and not KL? Because we did not want the smaller towns to be left out in God's work. As Melaka was midway between KL and Singapore, we could draw upon resources from both cities. Cost of living in Melaka was cheaper. It was less hectic,

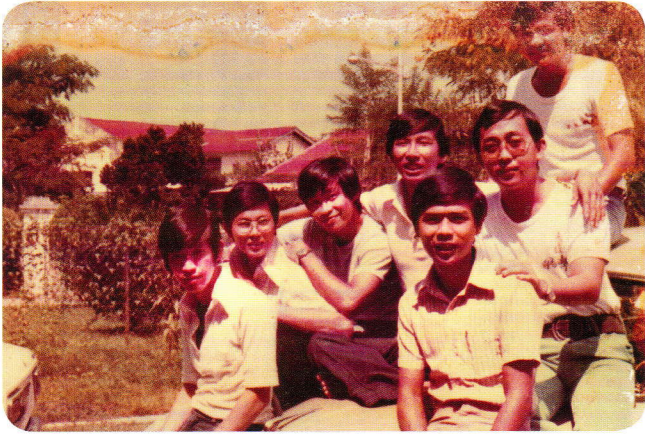
had a supportive network ready to welcome this new work and, being a historic town, had a good mix of the races.

"I purchased a terrace house in Bukit Baru that served as my residence as well as housed the library and the lecture room," Hui recalls. "Next door was the rented house for student accommodation. We wanted to follow the community-oriented ethos of the Discipleship Training Centre in Singapore, where Christian character and ministry gifts were developed in a community setting. The homely environment of Bukit Baru seemed like the perfect venue." The late Rev Peter Warner, seconded by Overseas Missionary Fellowship to be the first Dean, also warmed to this idea. He and his wife, Ronald, and family lived in another rented house within walking distance. Donations from evangelical Christians helped in the finances.

The Warners, who had ministered for some years in Batu Pahat, were familiar with the development of small-town churches. They had a vision for the small-town folks to be trained for ministry in small-town churches. Not discouraged by the small number of students, we prayed that God would touch a few committed ones. We were prepared to welcome these "rough diamonds". When the Warners left Malaysia after their visa had run its full term, Loh Soon Choy took over as Dean. His wife, Giok Lan, an Indonesian Chinese, was roped in to become the first Bahasa Malaysia teacher.

When Hui left for Wheaton College in the US on a scholarship, Jack Mock from Australia came to take her place. It was at this time that discussions for PLKM to join the Chinese Seminary entered the final stages. Thus PLKM became part of MBS in Kuala Lumpur.

Here are some of the stories of God's faithfulness in the graduates' lives:



erish

Life-changing encounter

MY ASSOCIATION WITH PLKM BEGAN WITH A BOLD HITCHHIKE from my hometown Teluk Intan to Melaka in 1975 to visit Goldie Chong, whom I had never met! I got to know her from the “Dear Goldie” column of *Asian Beacon*, which a Christian teacher at school had given me.

I arrived in Melaka in the evening with only a few dollars in my pocket. The driver who gave me a ride dropped me in front of Dr Chong’s clinic. Amazed by my appetite for adventure, Dr Chong took me home to meet his wife Goldie. So our friendship began. They introduced me to the PLKM Waiters’ course, a theological course for Form 5 students waiting for their MCE (SPM) results. After completing the Waiters’ course, I took a full-time diploma course in MBS.

We had not much money as students so we tried using humour to diminish our hunger pangs. When we had little or nothing to eat, we called it “fasting”. When we shared the little we had, we called it the “Lord’s Supper”. I remember how two hungry students, Andrew Tan and Chin Kaw, shared “communion” over a piece of *roti canai*! At the recent reunion, we recalled how, by enduring hunger, we were prepared for greater affliction that lay ahead in ministry. — *Goh Lay Hua*



Trained & equipped

I WAS THE ONLY INDIAN LADY AMONG A GROUP OF CHINESE brothers and sisters, but I was treated with so much love and respect, which I cherish to this day. God showed me that my calling was to minister to female drug addicts, who were mostly Chinese. I’ll never forget how two of my fellow students, Moses Tan and Silas Jugdip, prayed for me as I was preparing to work among women addicts in Malaysian Care.

Once I had the joy of witnessing a girl being delivered from

a spiritual problem in my dorm. Years later, I could conduct deliverance ministry for those girls who came under my care. How grateful I am for the teaching I received at MBS and for my lecturers and fellow students, who encouraged and equipped me. I had a fear of street witnessing but learnt to overcome it. By being part of a team, I learnt boldness. Later, in Malaysian Care, I had the courage to lead my staff into street ministry.” — *Nesam Ebenezer*

From Drug Addict To Pastor

WHEN I FINISHED MY TWO YEARS OF REHABILITATION with Grace Home (which was run by Pastor John Khoo), I was so intent on going to Bible school that I refused to consider other options. But things did not work out. Once, after preaching from Genesis 32 about God breaking Jacob, I felt “broken” too — to the extent I told God it didn’t matter if I didn’t go to Bible school. Surprisingly, after I made that decision, the church told me to apply.

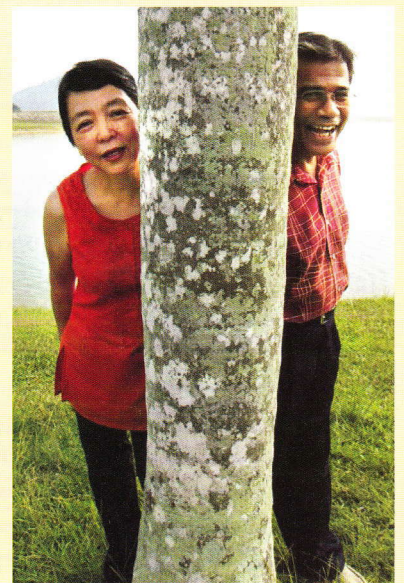
When the letter of acceptance came, I was still doubtful, so I put it off. Four months later, I received another letter from MBS. Still unsure, I brought this to the Lord. He gave me Isaiah 6:8 in my devotions, “Who shall go for us? Whom shall I send?” Though this was not directed at Isaiah, he overheard it and seized the opportunity. It struck me that the letter of offer was an opportunity I should seize. That’s how I entered MBS in 1982.

One of my lecturers was my Primary 6 classmate. We used to walk to school together. He became “Sir”, and I was his student. Once in a while when he took me out for a meal, I would thank him, and without fail, he would reply, “It’s my pleasure!” I think that whenever God does something nice for me and I say “Thank you,” He would reply, “It’s my pleasure.”

I want to say “Thank you” to Him for enabling me to be trained at MBS. There I met my wife, Josephine, who is such a blessing. I can sense God’s reply: “It’s my pleasure.” — *Silas Jugdip*

One benefactor, two benefits

I HAD NO IDEA HOW I could sustain myself in MBS without any financial support. After several months there, I considered quitting. During her quiet time, a Christian teacher from Sarawak heard God telling her to give me a specific sum monthly. Thus she enabled me to complete my course. She even paid my return air ticket. God even fulfilled my heart’s desire to be a pastor’s wife for it was in MBS that I found my soul mate. God is so good. — *Josephine Silas ab*



Dr Tek Chong was the first chairman of the PLKM Board, and Goldie taught music.

YOUR MIND MATTERS

What has something as 'dry' as Christian doctrine to do with day-to-day practical Christian living? Everything, so says Jack Mock.

OFTEN CHRISTIANS tend to emphasise practical living and neglect doctrine. When I first meet people and they learn that I teach Christian Doctrine and Ethics in a Bible seminary, they often give me a dumbfounded look which seems to imply, "What do these courses have to do with practical Christian living?" "Everything," I would reply. Our behaviour is tied to our thinking. That being so, how a Christian behaves has much to do with the degree he has assimilated biblical truths.

Christianity is based on divine propositional truth. It is either true or false. For example, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then Christianity degenerates into a religion centred on doing good works. When Jesus claims, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life", He not only speaks the truth but embodies the truth. In fact, He is truth incarnate. Simply put, there is no contradiction between truth and life, doctrine and ethics!

The apostle Paul exhorts, "Do not be conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12: 2). Our Lord commands, "Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, strength and mind" (Luke 10:27). We might separate head knowledge from heart knowledge. But for both our Lord and Paul, the mind was an integral part of a person.

Indeed Paul prays that we might have "the mind of Christ". If we think thoughts after God, then we will see the world as

God sees it and thereby live the way He wants us. When we view the world through the lens of the Bible, we will not conform to its pattern.

As believers, do our thought life and lifestyle reflect Christ? Do we respond to life situations the way Christ would have done? Some of us, who may have been Christians for years, still embrace the values inherited from our non-Christian parents. For example, our parenting style might still be based on non-Christian values. Similarly, have we placed the way we run our business, our attitudes towards money and the future under the scrutiny of the Bible? If not, we are no different from our non-Christian friends.

We may long for positive change in our nation. But nation transformation often begins with the transformation of the church – and this begins with *our* transformation. In Ephesians 4: 23, Paul encourages us "to be made new in the attitude of your minds." Any change in our life begins with the mind. Indeed God instructs us to love Him with our mind as well with our hearts. It is not all emotional, neither is it all cerebral. It involves both parts of our personhood.

Christianity is not anti-intellectual. The educated Christians in the UK during the 1900s were Renaissance people

who studied the Bible, the Arts, and the Sciences. They tried to live as God's people in the world He created. They did not withdraw from the world to some mountain – top monastery to live cloistered lives for fear they might be contaminated by the world's immorality. On the contrary, they endeavoured to live out the ideal of being the "salt and light" to the world. And to do that, they had to be radically transformed by the renewing of their minds.

In my view, we should read both the Bible and the newspaper. If we read only the Bible, we can become so heavenly-minded that we are of no earthly use. On the other hand, if we read only the newspaper, we can become pessimistic and cynical about life. We will question whether there is a god amid a world that is in such a mess. We need the mind of Christ so that we have a realistic view of the world from God's perspective. Then we will understand that He is mysteriously working out His sovereign will and purpose even in all this turmoil. **▀**



Jack Mock teaches at the Malaysia Bible Seminary and worships at Petaling Jaya Evangelical Free Church



The Resurrection: Fraud, Fantasy or Fact?

There will be no Easter celebration if Christ had not been raised from the dead.

THAT JESUS CHRIST died and was raised from the dead is the foundational belief of the Christian faith. Many learned tomes are devoted to prove that the resurrection did happen. We cannot do justice to all the arguments in this column. The following is merely one approach in dealing with this issue.

The Church has been celebrating the resurrection for the last 2000 years. We can postulate three possibilities. It is either a *fraud* perpetrated by the early disciples; a *fantasy* created by the followers; or a simple historical *fact*. Which of these three hypotheses is best supported by the evidence?

Fraud is the characteristic of the conspiracy hypothesis, which is often associated with political theorising of events. Blaise Pascal, French mathematician and physicist, explains why this is unthinkable:

"The apostles were either deceived or deceivers. Either supposition is difficult, for it is not possible to imagine that a man has risen from the dead. While Jesus was with them, he could sustain them; but afterwards, if he did not appear to them, who did make them act? The hypothesis that the Apostles were knaves is quite absurd. Follow it out to the end, and imagine these 12 men meeting after Jesus' death and conspiring to say that he has risen from the dead. This means attacking all the powers that be. The human heart is singularly susceptible to fickleness, to change, to promises, to bribery. One of them had only to deny his story under

BY ARISTARCHUS

these inducements, or still more because of possible imprisonment, tortures and death, and they would all have been lost. Follow that out." (Pascal, *Pensees*)

Fantasy is found in the legend hypothesis. Usually, it takes considerable time for a legend to develop. Bibliographical studies of New Testament texts have shown that the accounts of Jesus' resurrection appearances are within 15-35 years after the events. This is far too short a time for any legend to develop.

C. S. Lewis, one of the great literary experts on ancient myths, while commenting on the Gospels, writes, "I have been reading poems, romances, vision literature, legends, myths, all my life. I know that not one of them is like this." ("Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism" in *Christian Reflections*).

The best explanation for the phenomenon is the fact of the empty tomb. Most scholars recognise the credibility of the historical record. Joseph of Arimathea, the member of the ruling Jewish Sanhedrin, donated his own prepared tomb for Jesus' burial. This makes it very unlikely for the lie *not* to be exposed by him if, in fact, the tomb was not empty. In any case, the body could have been easily exhumed and exhibited by the authorities to disprove the claims of the disciples.

Indeed, the growth of the Christian movement is not sustainable apart from having as its very foundation the fact of the resurrection.

William Lane Craig writes: "The Gospels were written in such a temporal and geographical proximity to the events they record that it would have been almost impossible to fabricate events ...

The fact that the disciples were able to proclaim the resurrection in Jerusalem in the face of their enemies a few weeks after the crucifixion shows that what they proclaimed was true, for they could never have proclaimed the resurrection (and been believed) under such circumstances had it not occurred." (Knowing the Truth about the Resurrection)

"But the most telling testimony of all," notes Josh McDowell, a contemporary apologist, "must be the lives of those early Christians. We must ask ourselves: What caused them to go everywhere telling the message of the risen Christ? Had there been any visible benefits accrued to them from their efforts – prestige, wealth, increased social status or material benefits – we might logically attempt to account for their actions, for their whole hearted and total allegiance to this 'risen Christ.' As a reward for their efforts, however, those early Christians were beaten, stoned to death, thrown to the lions, tortured and crucified. Every conceivable method was used to stop them from talking. Yet they laid down their lives as the ultimate proof of their complete confidence of the truth of their message." (*Leadership U*).

Christianity was birthed by this radical belief in the resurrected Jesus. Something extremely extraordinary must have happened to create this belief. Where did it come from? There must be an adequate cause. Since fraud or legend is not tenable, we can only conclude that the resurrection did indeed happen. **ab**

Our original columnist Dr. William Wan is on leave to undertake a new assignment. In his place, we welcome our guest columnist Aristarchus, a multi-vocational writer who has contributed his thoughts on several disciplines.

Transforming the Mind and Heart

Bishop Hwa Yung shares with Jack Mock his views on theology and education, as well as the trends and challenges facing the Malaysian Church.

The Methodist Church's commitment to education has been very strong, but Methodist schools are now part of our national education system. How can the Methodist Church continue to contribute in this area of education?

Higher education is a minefield because it involves huge financial outlay. The Methodist Church does not have such deep pockets to compete with the big boys. We do have two tertiary colleges but, for the moment, we do not have any major expansion plans.

We believe the real need, for the moment, is not in higher education but the primary and secondary school system, into which we need to inject quality. Inappropriate policies have led to a decline in educational standards in our country. Our focus now is on three things. Firstly, for Methodist schools that are government schools, we will work with the government to rejuvenate them as best as we can. But we are handicapped by prevailing government policies. So, secondly, we are planning to set up a string of first-rate private schools in the country. The hope is that such

schools will raise and set the standard of education in our nation. With private schools, we have much more freedom to do what we believe is best for the training of the young as well as for the nation. Thirdly, Methodist education began with the church going to where the needs were great and unmet. We therefore hope to set up over the next generation a number of schools and institutions to help poor children or those with special needs, such as autism and other disabilities. The church is also working in some rural areas where there are no government schools at all.

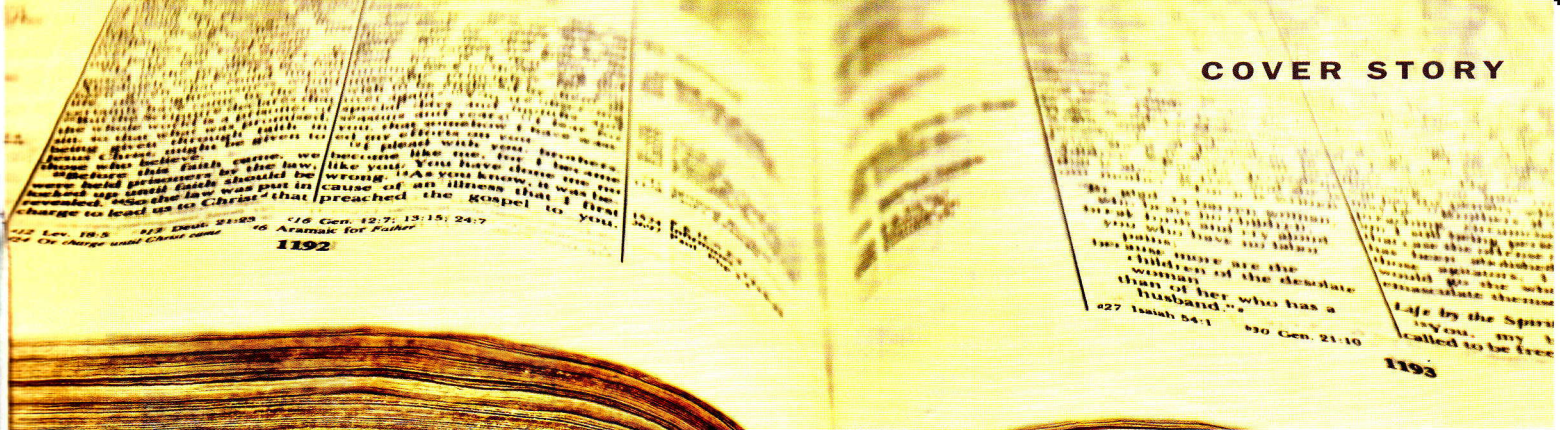
Vincent Donovan in Christianity Rediscovered (1978) concluded that any theology that is not based on previous experience is just empty words. You believe that theology must be both mission-minded and pastoral. How do you think Asian theologians fare in this regard?

I think many Asian theologians have bought into the Western model of a theologian being a university professor. With PhDs from some well-known seminaries or universities in the West, these theologians

function as if intellectual knowledge is all that is needed. Even evangelical theologians often fall into the same trap. On the other hand, Pentecostal and charismatic teachers tend to be more practical and pastoral in their approaches. But many of them are generally weaker in their understanding of the Bible and theology – for example, their uncritical acceptance of the Prosperity Gospel and extreme teachings on spiritual warfare. What is desperately needed in the Asian church today are teachers who have mastered the Word and have been mastered by it, and who know through prayer and practice how to apply the Word to the daily life, ministry and mission of the church. Paul, Augustine, Martin Luther, Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley are not only great theologians but great preachers and pastors!

“Truth and practice are not separable. Neither can there be knowledge without personal commitment.” How are Christians in Malaysia faring in this aspect? Are we lacking in truth or practice or both?

Perhaps the best way to answer this is to



go back to the tension between Word and Spirit. Some evangelicals are so strong in the Word (truth) and its authority that they neglect the role of the Holy Spirit. Others are so strong in experience (practice) that the Word becomes secondary. And as the question suggests, many others are neglecting both the Word and Spirit! Surely the great challenge today is for us to recover both emphases at one and the same time. Such a recovery is needed not just for revival in the church, but also for its long-term sustainability as well. Truth in the biblical sense cannot be separated from its practice.

You mentioned in an article – “A 21st Century Reformation: Recovering the Supernatural” – that evangelicals fought tooth and nail to defend the miraculous in the Bible. Such a reformation today will mean that the supernatural be incorporated back into the heart of Christianity. How can this be achieved in the Asian context?

I will go back to what the Bible teaches about the work of the Holy Spirit and the supernatural power of God in healing, prophecy, miracles and deliverance ministries. Drawing from the Bible and elements found in Asian cultures and religious practices, I will also show that many people are still living in bondage to demonic supernatural powers. I will then go on to show that Christ has given us victory over demonic powers. Church growth in Asia over the past hundred years has resulted, more often than not, from the demonstration of the supernatural power of Christ through healing, prophecy, and deliverance of men and women from demonic spirits. This is indeed true also of the life and ministries of the great Asian

Christian leaders such as Bakht Singh, John Sung and Cho Yong-gi.

As Chair of the Participant Selection Committee of the 2010 Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation, you were in charge of selecting participants to represent a certain region of the world. What do the Asian representatives need to implement after learning so much at the Lausanne Congress?

The leadership of the 2010 Congress in Cape Town recognised that the centre of gravity of the global church has shifted. For the first time in modern times, Christians in the non-western world outnumber those in the western world. The Congress leadership’s primary concern was that the churches in the non-western world would be adequately represented. (More than 60% of the participants came from Africa, Asia and Latin America). The other concern was that the churches in the non-western world would begin to take on their share of responsibility for world missions. In the past generation, Asian churches have begun to take world missions seriously. Korea has sent out close to 20,000 missionaries overseas. The Indian Missions Association, an umbrella body for some 130 agencies, sent out more than 30,000 cross-cultural missionaries, most of them working within India itself.

But the challenge is more than that. World missions today are no longer about Western missionaries being sent to the “dark” continents of Africa, Asia and Latin America. It is about missionaries being sent from everywhere to everywhere. Indeed some of the spiritually darkest places today are in the West where secularism and unbelief reign supreme. Sensitive Christian leaders are telling us that the West needs to

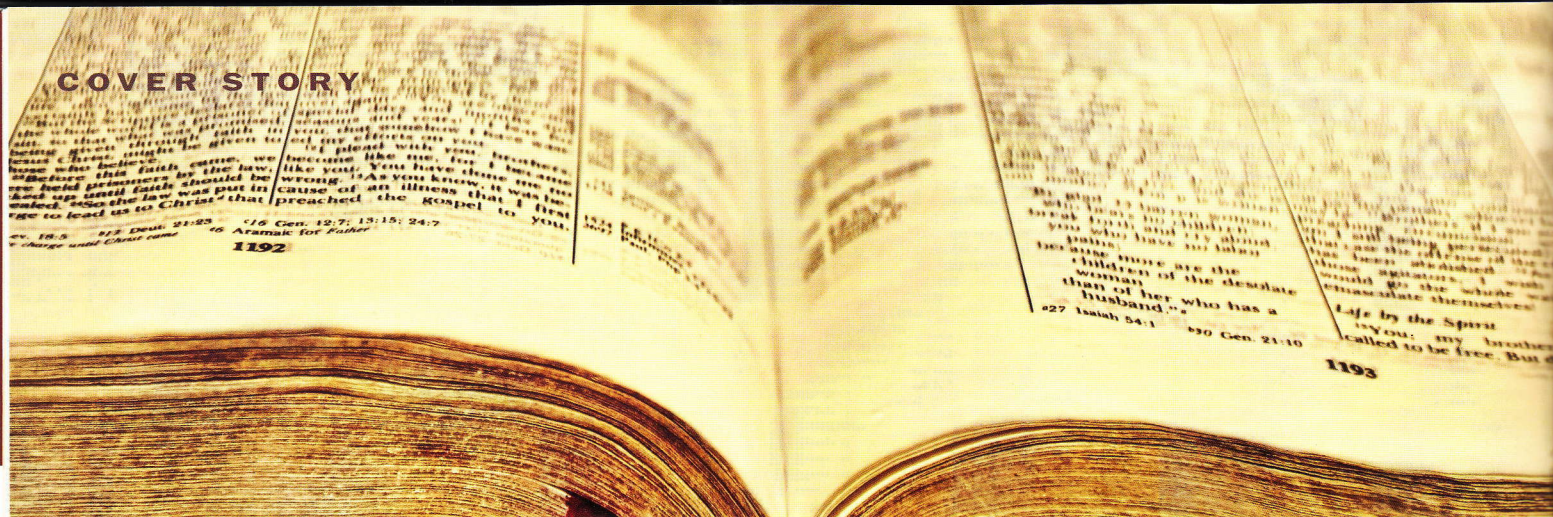
be re-evangelised! The primary challenge of Cape Town 2010 to Asian Christians is that we have to do our part to fulfill Christ’s command in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

Concerning the Methodist Church in Malaysia, what are the challenges faced in the areas of leadership development and building up of the church?

These challenges are no different from those facing the Malaysian Church in general. The fundamental challenge for us is to grow in understanding of our faith, in holy living, and in love and unity as a community of God’s people. We also need to grow in our understanding of the Word on the one hand and in the life and power of the Spirit on the other. For this to happen, we need pastors and lay leaders who, having been transformed by the study and meditation of the Bible and by the deep work of the Holy Spirit, can be models of faith for the members. Moreover, we need those who serve humbly and are not afraid to pay the cost of discipleship. This may well be the greatest need of the Malaysian Church today.

How does servant leadership found in the Bible compare with the CEO model (currently adopted by some churches in Malaysia)?

I have pointed out elsewhere that even a magazine like *The Economist* has noted that the CEO model of a pastor is a product of the teaching of Peter Drucker, the management guru of the 20th century. It is an example of how much the world has seeped into the church of our generation. The term that is also popularly used by many today, including John Maxwell, is *servant leadership*. But, as some have rightly pointed out, there are problems with that



term also. The question is what is our bottom line? What is our ultimate goal? Is it to be a servant or a leader?

It is strange that we blatantly ignore the plain teaching of the Bible, which most Christians claim to live by. Nowhere does the New Testament encourage us to strive for leadership. Yes, in 1 Timothy and Titus, and elsewhere, the qualities of church leaders are stressed. But to strive for leadership – never! Rather, we are to strive to be a servant or slave. This is absolutely plain in the passage in Mark 10:35-45. At the end of that story, Jesus said: “Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.” Yet how often do we mention this verse in our so-called leadership seminars in church?

The New Testament emphasises that we are to strive, first and foremost, to be servants. Whether we become leaders is absolutely secondary. This turns the values of the world upside down. It does not mean there is no need for great leadership in the church. Leadership is not something we strive after – that will only feed our own egos, as can be seen in many churches today, even in Malaysia. Rather, leadership is exemplified in the lives of true servants of God who faithfully do whatever God puts into their hearts and hands to do. Or to put it in another way, great spiritual leadership is always the product of true biblical servanthood!

You wrote a book called “Bribery and Corruption”. Do think that the church has a ministry to its members who are politicians, government servants and CEOs of companies?

The church is called to be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world”. How can we be “salt” and “light” unless our witness is also clearly seen in the public arena of business and politics? But sadly, much of the Malaysian church still lives a “ghetto existence”, without realising that the “salt” has lost its saltiness (Matthew 5:13)! I hope that Christ will not have to threaten us, “I will come and remove your lamp stand,” like He did to the church at Ephesus if there is no repentance (Revelation 2:5).

After graduating from the University of Tasmania in Organic Chemistry, how did you end up serving in the Methodist Church?

I suppose you have to say that God’s ways are not our ways. I had wanted to pursue a career in scientific research but God told me He had other plans. So you come to the point where you decide whether you want things your way or God’s way. I can’t say that obeying His call was easy. But I have never regretted it.

As the shepherd of the flock, what do you think are the major issues the Methodist Church and the wider Malaysian Church need to address?

I would like to sum up my answer in three words: holiness, unity and revival.

Holiness because this should be the hallmark of the church, which is to be “a holy nation”, for God is a holy God. But the signs are evident that the world has infiltrated the church. Can unbelievers see Christians live out a distinctively different lifestyle from the rest of the world?

Unity because the church is still deeply

divided. I attended a prayer conference recently, and I met an intercessor whom I have never met before. As we started talking, he said, “I go around helping intercessors to pray together. But the problem is getting the pastors to pray together!” We need to ask ourselves: “To what extent are we driven by our own agenda or our church’s agenda as opposed to a far larger concern – the growth of the whole Malaysian Church?”

This brings us to the final concern – revival. The Holy Spirit has visited the church in our country many times before. Think of John Sung’s ministry (1930s), the evangelical growth in the 1950s and 60s, the SIB revivals (1970s and 1980s), the charismatic movement (1970s) and so forth. These events bear the marks of genuine revival. But why has revival not been sustained? I think it is because the Holy Spirit has been grieved (Ephesians 4:30). He is indeed a very sensitive Spirit. And among the things which grieve Him most must be sin and disunity. I believe that if we truly repent of our unholy lives and disunity, and humbly plead with God to send His Spirit amongst us again, a sustained revival may yet come to the church. I believe that the Spirit is calling us to deep-seated repentance and humble, persistent prayer that Christ may be truly Lord of the Malaysian Church and our nation! **ab**



Rev Hwa Yung is the Bishop of the Methodist Church in Malaysia. Apart from his local ministry, he is heavily involved in the work of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies and the Lausanne Movement.

MY STRUGGLE WITH SUICIDE

BY GIDEON KIM*



THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE are common among sufferers of depression. Over the last few years, depression has filled me with suicidal thoughts many a time when the pain seemed too much to bear. When Hong Kong film star Leslie Cheung committed suicide, my suicidal thoughts became more intense. To prevent myself from taking my own life, I wrote down a list of reasons why I shouldn't commit suicide and sent the article to the newspapers to be published.

I wasn't alone in my battle. Many sufferers of depression confided in me that they too intended to commit suicide. Not long ago, I contributed an article to a local English daily on how to get rid of suicidal thoughts. As a result of this, I received a call from a reader, pleading with me to help her depressed friend who had landed up in hospital due to an overdose of drug. When I visited her in hospital, I found that her situation was critical. Not long after that, she passed away. According to my analysis, she had already planned to commit suicide by taking an overdose of drugs.

For more than ten years, I had teetered on the brink of suicide. Recently though, I had this impression that I will not die, but instead I will live. I was reminded of

Psalms 118:17: "I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done." However, the meaning of this verse was still unclear to me as suicidal thoughts kept on flashing in my mind.

I can still recall crafting out a detailed plan for taking my own life – the suicide note, how I would jump off the Penang bridge, where I would place the note. Everything was perfectly planned. But my wife heard me sobbing in the middle of the night, and my plans were exposed and foiled.

After a while, as suicidal thoughts continued to surface, my mind suddenly turned to an incident which gave me strength to overcome suicidal tendencies. A few years ago, my uncle gave me a shirt with his company logo on it. I wore it for a day before realising that the garment was unsuitable for me. I then told my uncle that I would like to use it to wipe my feet. He was so horrified that I could think of using the shirt with his company logo as a rag that he demanded I return it to him.

Suddenly it occurred to me that if I belong to God, then two things must be true. Firstly, I am created in God's image. Secondly, Jesus died on the cross for my sins and rescued my soul from condemnation. My life is not my own; it belongs to God. If I could not misuse my uncle's company shirt, how could I abuse or take away the life God has given me? If I refused to use

the shirt for its intended purpose, I had to return it to its owner. Likewise, if I did not value my life, I should return it to the owner of Life – God.

I told God that I would return my life back to Him, because I am not my own and He had every right to manage my life. No matter how painful life may be, I had no right to destroy it. I will live!

Strangely, after that prayer, my suicidal thoughts vanished and I felt much more relaxed. Since then, whenever the thought of suicide rears its ugly head, I will think of how I have already handed my life back to God. Upon this thought, the suicidal tendencies would diminish and no longer pose a threat to my life.

What's even more amazing is that after "handing over" my life to God, I have discovered the meaning of life. God has revealed to me that I am to declare His works and spread the Good News of His love. Having experienced God's comfort in times of struggle, I am now inspired to spread His comfort to those who are hurting. Even though I have walked through the valley of the shadow of suicide, I have no fear, because God is with me. I would like to encourage all who walk on the same path to take heart and find hope in God. ■

* Name has been altered to protect identity.

May I come in?



To enter the world of the autistic is a challenge. But teachers and volunteers at the Calvary Victory Centre in Johor Bahru are undaunted. Goh Bee Lee treads gingerly into that world and makes some mind-changing discoveries.

A FRUSTRATED LITTLE boy runs down the supermarket aisle, dislodging cans of food from the shelves. When his mother tries to stop him, he bangs his head on the shelf and then sits on the floor, rocking himself back and forth. "Tut-tut ... such misbehaviour," bystanders say to themselves.

A young man with his head lowered tip-toes down the rows of books in the store. He focuses attentively and then reaches out to align some books. He draws out "Peranakan Delights" from the Fiction shelf and returns it to the Cookery section. No, he is not a store hand. Browsers around stare, amused at his quirky actions.

THEIR SECRET PLACE

This "naughty" boy and the "somewhat weird" young man are autistic. Their world is lonely, little-understood and frustrating. Developmental disorders leave them with an impaired ability to communicate and little social interaction. Many hardly speak as they go through life.

What the medical world describes as ASD (autism spectrum disorders) and PDD (pervasive developmental disorders) afflict as many as 1 in 150 children or 1 in 70 males. If severely afflicted, they are lost to most of us. Mildly autistic people get by

in life perceived as slightly strange.

The 12-year-old Calvary Victory Centre (CVC) in Johor Bahru is a refuge for these special ones. Here, trained personnel and educators reach gently into their sphere and help them adjust to the real world.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

CVC Chairman Wong Chee Kin, an architect, and his wife, Poh Lai, a lawyer, began their journey into this strange world when their second son, Jonathan, was diagnosed with autism in 1998. They joined a small group of parents who were starting to collaborate to look for help for their autistic children.

The Wongs' church pastor, Rev Benedict Rajan, offered to adopt the autism

ministry as part of Pusat Kebajikan Kalvari Johor, a church-led social outreach NGO, which currently runs 22 welfare service centres in the state.

CVC began as Calvary Autistic Centre with five children and two teachers. Amongst the founding parents still there are administrator Annie Kana and teacher Allison Heng. To date, more than 500 children have benefited from this labour of love. There are now 115 children with some 30 teachers and helpers.

TRAINING - A KEY FACTOR

But how does one reach out to such children? Without doubt, the first task is to train the personnel.

From the very start, CVC has benefited



With training and guidance, autistic children can learn many useful skills

from the expertise of autism schools in Singapore, such as Horizon School, WeCan and the Autism Resource Centre, in the form of conferences, workshops and accredited teacher training courses.

"Apart from God's faithfulness and special favour, this is a key factor behind the phenomenal growth of Calvary Victory Centre," Wong testifies.

Last year, in the spirit of "freely you have received, freely give", a team of six CVC teachers conducted a workshop in Sarawak, sharing their expertise with upcoming Pusat Autistik Miri.

CVC PROGRAMMES AND TEACHING METHODS

CVC's programme comprises SIT or Sensory Integration Therapy (ages 2-6), Early Intervention Programme (ages 3-6), Primary Special Education (ages 7-12) and Pre-Vocational Class (ages 13-21). All the programmes train the children to be independent so that they can integrate into society.

SIT consists of simple physical activities that not only regulate the child's sensory responses but also improve his social interaction and emotional balance. It is humbling to watch how much effort it takes for a child to obey his teacher's or parent's instructions on how to hoop a ball.

Teaching autistic children early on in life how to communicate is essential in helping them reach their full potential. Hence early diagnosis and intervention are emphasised.

PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), one of the tools used at CVC, uses pictures to convey thoughts. Children are trained to perform a spectrum of basic communication functions (such as requesting or initiating interaction), and to appreciate social actions like praise, joy, and hugs. All these simple functions, often taken for granted in normal children, may take years for an autistic child to learn.

CVC also employs another tool called **TEACCH** (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children), developed by the University of North Carolina. Through structured teaching, teachers capitalise

on the child's strong visual skills to help them focus on important information in their environment. This method relies heavily on routine. Repetition makes such information more orderly and predictable – and therefore familiar – to the child.

Senior teacher Parvathy Suppiah explains, "By using TEACCH, PECS and lots of visual and teaching aids, we have helped many children improve physically, socially and mentally."

"Being highly rigid in behaviour, most autistic children rely on routine for security," adds Bernice Chan, another passionate teacher at CVC.

A key to success with these children is that each activity is tailored according to the individual's age group, strengths



Trainees sell food products at a stall at the Sutera Mall every Friday

and weaknesses. Whatever the activity – be it working one-on-one with a teacher, small group activities, independent work, computer training, playing or singing – a high teacher-student ratio ensures detailed, ongoing analysis and evaluation of a child's progress.

PATIENCE AND PASSION

But even the most specialised curriculum or know-how is only part of the picture. Without boundless patience, love and passion for them, a deep sensitivity to their needs and a natural rapport with the children, tools will be just tools. Imagine waiting for a snail to venture from its shell and then touching it. Even that barely describes how shy, detached and sensitive autistic children can be.

It can be frustrating when progress is slow. Edward Dass, a teacher of three years, opines, "We need patience. And I mean *unlimited* patience." Dass confesses his strength and motivation come from knowing that God has placed him there for a divine purpose. And when the kids finally show improvement, it gives him unspeakable joy.

Chan adds, "Sometimes we feel helpless when a child throws a tantrum and we don't know what he wants."

SUCCESS AND JOY

So how do we gauge success with these children?

Dass replies, "When my children are able to perform the skills they have learnt

in the school in a different social setting, that is success! The fact that children at CVC are also enrolled in mainstream schools shows that they have been successfully trained."

To Parvathy, even getting one word out of a speech-challenged child is a huge success. "Our greatest joy is to see a child become independent," she enthuses.

Pioneer teacher Heng, now CVC's work skills trainer in the vocational class, is realistic in her expectations of the students. As one of her teenage protégés chops garlic, Heng stoops to tie his shoe-laces while chiding him for getting his trousers wet

in the toilet. She does this because he is completely focussed on finishing his kitchen task!

Her trainees now sell their products at a stall at the Sutera Mall every Friday. A well thought-out system for taking orders ensures that fruit juices, cheese tarts, "pai tee" and other favourites get sold out quickly!

CHALLENGES

Chairman Wong shares that their biggest challenges continue to be human resource development, lukewarm parental participation and financial constraints.

At a glance, today, CVC requires continued financial support for its operational subsidy (RM180,000 per annum) and its "cafeteria" renovation



Proper Attitudes Towards the Autistic

It's not easy knowing what to do or how to respond to the quirks (or outbursts) of an autistic child but here are some suggestions:

DO

- Respect them as special
- Be patient and sensitive
- Listen well and wait for their response
- Show them the same love and encouragement as you would to normal children
- Acknowledge their achievement no matter how small it may seem
- Be mindful of their needs and be ready to help in unexpected ways
- Call them by name and maintain eye contact even though they avoid this
- Show sympathy to a parent with an autistic child and, if necessary, offer help
- Remain calm if an unusually "friendly" child gets close to you without reason
- Show understanding if an autistic child makes an odd or rude comment about you

DON'T

(In public)

- Stare at an autistic child
- Ask inappropriate questions
- Judge, make unkind, unhelpful comments or rude gestures if you see a child's tantrum
- Show disgust in public toilets if you see them in the "wrong" place (Many autistic kids need their parents' help in the bathroom)
- Be too upset in a restaurant if your meal is disrupted by that kid acting oddly at the next table or booth
- Tease or bully the child

(At home)

- Overlook bad behaviour just because they are different
- Sideline them in activities
- Talk negatively about them - they listen to everything
- React negatively if they do not respond or reciprocate emotions

(RM200,000). This "cafeteria" is, in fact, a sheltered employment centre for older pupils, which will be completed by June 2011.

Administrator Kana confides that fund-raising has to be regular as each child is heavily subsidised. Managing the centre is like "work without borders", and she could do with help from an assistant. At present, the very helpful head teacher Lily Tng and her hardworking assistant head Christine Chai have to chip in.

PROVIDENCE

Thankfully, CVC has been blessed with support from the local community, a few churches and some corporate donors. Close supporter Tanah Sutura Development Sdn Bhd, a sterling example of corporate responsibility, has leased them the one-acre plot of converted institution land where the CVC school building now stands. The complex was built in 2008, with the services of dedicated building professionals at not-for-profit rates. On the same land just next door is the Kiwanis Careheart Centre for the intellectually disabled. This is probably a first in Malaysia - two NGO special education and training centres purposefully built side-by-side.

Wong is thankful that through sheer necessity and a labour of love, a group of

parents has been able to redefine education for special children in Johor to benefit the needy.

Autism is for life. No one knows the cause. There is no medical cure. But there is hope. As the song goes: "God, work a miracle of love in gift and giving, that the world might know that there is hope alive where holy faith is living."

Jesus' invitation for little children to come to Him must surely include these special ones. How then can we enter their world to show them His love?

We cannot hope to change their minds easily. But we can change *ours*. Perhaps, for a start, we can begin by getting to know more about them. Why not make your next online search "autism"? Who knows when we may be able to lend a hand to some desperate parent or child close to us? **ab**

If you think you can contribute to this wonderful ministry in any way, please contact Annie Kana (07-556 3311 or 016-721 7725) or email autism_cvc@yahoo.com. Donations to CVC, which are tax-exempted, should be made in favour of "Pusat Kebajikan Kalvari Johor Bahru".

The Church-Community Connection

Has the community become better because of your church? If it were to disappear, would the community miss it?

By ED DELPH

TO EXPERIENCE community impact and transformation, we have to understand that the church and the community are intricately connected. The church is here for the benefit of the community, while the community is where the raw material of the church comes from.

In Jeremiah 29:4-7, God describes what I call the church-community connection. The inhabitants of Jerusalem had been taken captive to Babylon – a city considered to be very unholy, very sinful and very anti-God. The tendency for the Jews would be to disengage from such a city.

However, God tells those in exile to be engaged in the community life of Babylon. His exhortation through the prophet Jeremiah was to “build houses, live in them, plant gardens, eat their produce, take wives, have families, have grandchildren ... multiply there ... do not decrease.”

In other words, God was saying, “Get involved in commerce and the city.” God wanted them to become responsible citizens, to start housing companies, become agricultural entrepreneurs, mayors, magistrates, teachers, businessmen and educators. They were to multiply, have families and extended families.

The perspective the Jewish exiles needed was one of contribution. While they were in Babylon, they might as well be a blessing to Babylon, the salt and light in the community. How else would the Babylonians come to know God? They certainly weren't going to the synagogues! Therefore, the “synagogues” had to go to

them through those involved in commerce. One Jewish exile, Daniel, gave God a face in Babylon. Through his exemplary life and position of influence, he redefined God and the people of God to the Babylonians.

God's strategy then is still applicable today. He wants His people to be involved in all spheres of influence in the community – business, government, education and media/entertainment sectors – and bring Christian core values into them. Just like the Israelites, the church today needs to be *for* the community, not *against* the community. It's possible, and even normal, for today's church to be for the city and for God at the same time.

SEEK THE WELFARE OF THE CITY

Most of the Israelites had been taught that Babylon was evil. But Jeremiah told them, “Seek the welfare of the city ...” Today, it would be the same as saying to us, “Seek the welfare of Kuala Lumpur (or wherever).”

God's people were to pray to God on Babylon's behalf. Why? The Bible says, “For in its welfare you will have welfare!” In other words, the welfare, peace or prosperity (*shalom*) of Babylon directly affected the people of God. The exiles were to act as intercessors for Babylon; they were to overcome evil with good.

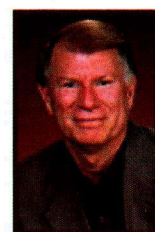
We, as the people of God, are to act as priests or intercessors, praying on our cities' behalf. If you live in Malaysia, the economy of Malaysia directly affects you. In Malaysia's welfare, we will have welfare. In Malaysia's peace, we will have peace. In Malaysia's prosperity, we will have prosperity. If we want to be blessed, bless the community we are living in.

This is God's strategy for communities

“If we do not shine, then who will be the light?”

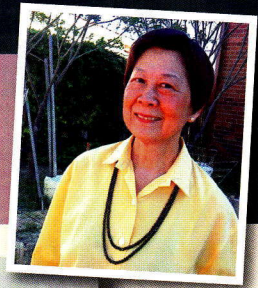
If we do not shine,
then who will be the light?
If we do not have influence,
then who will be the influencers?
If we do not speak,
then who will be the voice?
If we do not lead,
then who will be the leaders?
If we do not stay in unity,
then who will be the united?
If we do not go to the community,
to whom will the community go?
If we do not impart life,
then who will be the life imparters?
If we do not show the way,
then which way will they go?
If we do not lead against injustice,
then who will the downtrodden go to?
If we are not the salt,
then who will flavour our community?
If we do not offer salvation,
then where will they go to be saved?
If we do not forgive,
then where will they go for forgiveness?
If we do not act wisely,
then where will they go for wisdom?
If we do not hear the community,
then who will hear the community?
If we do not incarnate good citizenship,
then who will be the citizens?
If we do not make Jesus known,
then who will they go to for a hero?

and cities. Please don't *react* to this strategy; *act on* it. Seeking the welfare of the community starts in prayer but ends in community involvement. The real problem is that we don't have enough Christians holding government positions or influencing the government for the betterment of the community. ■



A noted speaker, pastor, author, Ed Delph is the President of Nationstrategy, an organisation that unleashes the potential of communities through the strategic alliance of the church, business, government, education and media for the benefit of the community.

Dear Goldie



Dear Goldie,

I have been asked by my pastor to form a committee to take care of a particular ministry. We have many talented members, but each has his own mind and methods. We have a hard time agreeing on anything. Can you suggest how we can work together?

Disunity

Dear Disunity,

A team is a group of individuals with different personalities, talents, needs, ways of doing things, but they must pursue a common unifying goal. Make sure your people not only **know** what your goal is but **agree** on it so that everyone will aim in one direction. Communication must be clear and specific to keep everyone in the loop about what you are trying to achieve. Good communication will prevent confusion, misunderstanding, duplication of roles and offense.

A "team" is different from a "group". A team with members having complementary strengths outperforms a group of talented individuals who are each competing to be the "star". A good illustration of this is the Chicago Bulls that had Michael Jordan, the greatest player in the history of basketball. Until Coach Phil Jackson taught them to cooperate as team mates, they didn't win many games. The group was dominated by one star, Jordan, whom everyone depended on to win in a match. Coach Jackson turned the "I" mentality into "we". He made sure everyone knew the importance of his role and drove home the point that winning depended on each playing his role well.

Another organisation where the leader focused on letting the "I" become servant of the "we" is Disney. Michael Eisner made his top executives go through the experience of working as a team. They played the Disney characters in Disney World, made beds in the hotels, watched 100,000 meals being

cooked, cleaned bathrooms, cut hedges and checked out guests, working in 100 degrees heat and humidity from 7 am to 11 pm for a week. By the end of the eighth day, they had bonded, built trust and become friends. Starting out as individuals working together in this project gelled them into a team that willingly, even enthusiastically, sacrificed individual ego for the common goal.

So get your members working together on a common project. As the leader, you should model selfless giving of your energy and resources to encourage others to follow. This is what King David did. He had already provided large amounts of gold, silver and precious stones from the national treasury to build the temple. He then donated even more gold and silver from his personal wealth. This encouraged his leaders to follow suit, and "the people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders for they had given freely and wholeheartedly," eventually motivating them to do the same (1 Chronicles 29).

Another way to develop team spirit is to have a retreat where you play and fellowship together. This breaks down barriers by letting everyone get to know one another in a relaxed environment, thus strengthening relationships. Analysing each one's strengths and weaknesses honestly calls for humility and brings about transparency. Create lots of opportunities to pray together for each other and for the ministry.

Expect resistance along the way as developing a team can be a challenging, messy and daunting process. Moses was challenged in the wilderness by the rebellious Israelites who questioned his taking them out of the "security" of Egypt. People may pay lip service to unity, but many will balk when they need to submit. They don't like to lose control or power. Guarding their turf and maintaining the hierarchy are mindsets you need to change. Overcome them with verbal encouragement and actions that confirm your commitment to the team approach.

Don't be threatened by strong team members. Acknowledge their unique talents and delegate work to them according to their strengths but point out in a loving way any arrogance, evident in their tone of speaking, body language or choice of vocabulary, which may irk others. Actively praise and reward them for team-oriented attitudes and actions. Undergird everything with prayer, which brings in God's presence, help and resources. **Ab**

Goldie

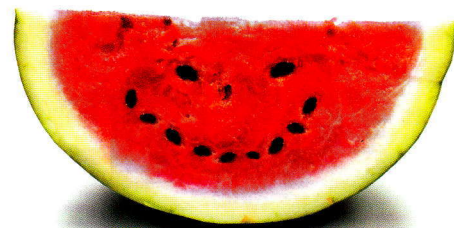
Do you have an issue you need advice on? Write to Asian Beacon's Goldie Chong at aboffice@asianbeacon.org for her godly counsel.

Selected questions may be featured in this column.

True Prosperity

Despite several failed business ventures, this couple has found lasting wealth.

BY MICHELLE MY CHAN



WHEN LEE AND HIS wife Xiu (not their real names) set their eyes on the banks of the Danube in Budapest, one thing was paramount in their thoughts – making money. Like many nationals from China hoping to make their fortune abroad, Lee and Xiu left their young children with their parents and set out on an overseas government assignment in 1992.

As an official in the department of international trade, Lee was sent to Budapest to ensure that distribution channels were set up to supply cotton towels throughout Europe. Soon their wealth enabled them to go into a flourishing restaurant business. They even had two Chinese restaurants in the Austrian border.

The restaurants were frequented by the Chinese community there, including some Christians. One of them, a missionary, often spoke to Lee about Jesus. “At first, I was polite and receptive,” says Lee, “but later I found his sharing offensive.”

Lee rejected the missionary’s message and started avoiding Christians. “I believed that Jesus was real, but he is not for Chinese businessmen ... we have our own prosperity gods.” Besides, Lee’s business was making good profit.

By 2001, the Lees decided to return to China to set up their own business – a Western-styled restaurant in the southeastern city of Nanchang. Just before leaving Budapest, Lee bumped into the missionary again. He told him, “You must believe in Jesus. Only He can prosper your business!”

Out of curiosity, Lee asked, “How do I

communicate with God?” The missionary wrote him a note on a piece of paper that Lee kept.

Back in China, Lee dived headlong into a newfound venture. After nine months of hard work in a restaurant business, it folded up. Lee was distraught because it was a major investment. He realised he had worshipped the prosperity god to no avail. He suddenly remembered the missionary’s note and took it out. It was the Lord’s Prayer. “I did not know what it meant at that time. Except for two flight tickets for Budapest, I was penniless.”

The Lees returned to Budapest with a heavy heart. They met the missionary again, who inquired about their business. When they told him what happened, he invited the Lees to church. “Why don’t you come to the Easter celebration in church tomorrow?” Lee agreed. On April 2002, Lee entered a church for the first time in his life.

Depressed over his business collapse, Lee had become withdrawn. But that day in church, he remembered singing three songs. “When the second song, *What a Friend we have in Jesus*, was sung, I broke into tears.” That moment seemed to be a turning point in his life. “Xiu and I have finally found a home and God.” Miracles then began to happen in Xiu’s life. She was healed of many ailments – deafness, myopia, throat infections and hemorrhoids – through prayer.

On fire for God then, the couple remembered dropping everything they were doing to go to church. “We spent five days a week in church,” Lee laughs, adding that they lived on the sale of excess inventory from their failed business.

Things also began to change in Lee’s

life. “God gave me joy and peace,” he says. “My face, which was like a ‘bitter gourd’, became like a ‘watermelon’. I used to hate those who cheated us, but when God came into my heart, I found myself forgiving and blessing them. I could even love an unlovable person.”

The Lees were baptised in Budapest in 2002 and went on to be equipped for ministry. During this period, they received numerous indications encouraging them to return to China. “God brought different servants to tell us that our path will lead us back to China.”

In 2005, a business opportunity opened up for them. “We were eyeing the prospect of a product distributorship, which required moving to Beijing,” explains Lee. While working on the business deal, the Lees got involved in a family church. They started witnessing to a couple and soon started a fellowship of eight people.

By 2007, the fellowship grew to 160 people. Three different families took turns to lead. The congregation is still growing. However, the product distributorship did not materialise. Not that Lee minded. He realised it was part of God’s guidance. “We kept on trying to trade, but the opportunities never came. As I surrendered my agenda to God, He opened doors for ministry instead.”

In their quest for wealth and success, the Lees ended up with something even far more valuable – an abundant life that glorifies God. ■

The Lees are ordained ministers and now run a centre to equip locals for ministry. They have two grown-up children.

Reaching Out to Freshmen

Besides helping foreign students to settle down, OCF's mission is to "build and send". **BY CHARMAIN SIM**

AS THE PLANE TOUCHES down, you are filled with apprehension. A strange small room will now be your home. Prices of groceries are in dollars, but when you mentally convert them into ringgit, you're shocked. The weather can be extremely cold or a scorching 40 degrees Celsius, so different from the rain and humidity you're used to. A thousand miles away from home, a different way of life to adjust to ... and you're alone. Welcome to the world of international students in Australia.

Australia is a hotspot for Asian students because of its proximity and high educational standards. In 2009, for instance, some 200,000 international students enrolled in higher education Down Under, with those from China, India, Thailand, South Korea and Malaysia topping the list.

Going overseas for studies can be daunting. While it's possible to adapt to a new environment and lifestyle quickly, it can be a struggle to find a community to fit into. That's where the Overseas Christian



Fellowship (OCF) comes in.

In the 1950s, many of the foreign students who arrived in Australia were lost and lonely. Initially, the Christian students met independently in their own cities. Later, out of a common interest in supporting new arrivals, these fellowships were consolidated. In 1959, OCF Australia was inaugurated. Since then, its growth has been remarkable. Now there are officially 20 centres throughout Australia.

One of these centres is OCF Clayton in Melbourne. Its chairperson Isaac Yip, treasurer Cheng Jing Wen and advisor Chan Chee Kai echo OCF Australia's tagline: **"Reach out. Build up. Send back."**

REACH OUT

Through pre-departure meetings, OCF reaches out to students even before they leave home. "The newcomers can feel lost and lonely during the first two months and so we help them to settle down," Yip explains.

An orientation session and a welcome party await them on their arrival. Rapport is maintained through weekly meetings. "We meet on Fridays at 7pm. There's the usual worship, announcements, and sermon," says Yip. "After that we go out for meals. Food is important for building relationships."

There are also weekly badminton and tennis sessions, evangelistic nights and potluck dinners. Coffee and biscuits are



CONTINUES ON PAGE 41

Building Character First

Skills and high self-esteem will bring your children only so far. Build their character first! That's what will gear them for life-long achievement, according to parent coach Joseph Tan and his wife Debra Yeoh.

THE DESPERATE CRY OF most parents today is this: Why can't my kid be more obedient?" says Joseph Tan, a certified corporate trainer and parent coach. "It's rare to hear someone say, 'Why can't my kid be smarter?'"

Your 12-year-old might resolve a problem on your iPhone faster than you. Yet this may be the same guy who chucks his schoolbag at the door and leaves a daily trail of dirty clothes and socks.

"Most parents want their children to excel in school, sports, music and many other fields. At the same time, they want well-behaved kids," says Tan. "That's reasonable enough, but the irony is many parents invest so much in skills training but so little in character-building for their kids. Their intentions and actions just don't jive. Do you want children with solid, godly character or merely 'successful' in the eyes of the world?"

Tan's wife, Debra Yeoh, adds, "Parenting is not just about wanting well-behaved children, but helping them gain control over their selfish tendencies."

From his years of experience through conducting leadership training, Tan shares this gem: "A person with a good attitude can quickly pick up the right skills and go far. However, you can't do much for someone who has the right skills but a lousy attitude."

Many of the executives who attended Tan's training found the leadership principles they learnt helpful for their role as parents too. That's how Tan eventually moved into becoming a parenting trainer and coach as well.

He and his wife share some common mistakes parents make in bringing up their children.

By JUSTIN OOI T Y

THE MYTH OF HIGH SELF-ESTEEM

Executives often ask, "Why are some employees whiny and obsessed with benefits and entitlements? Why do others find ways to improve themselves and help others?" (Guess who's more likely to be promoted?) Further discussions reveal that the latter value self-respect above high self-esteem. They usually have parents who train them to respect and serve others, rather than pander to their ever-increasing "need" for high self-esteem.

"A modern myth prevails today: For a child to be successful, he should have high self-esteem; if he feels good about himself, he'll be able to perform his best," says Yeoh. "Consequently, many children today are heaped with praise upon praise. Chastisement is a 'no no'."

"In fact, the most effective character-building word in the English Language is 'No'," adds Tan. "Learning to take 'No' is valuable training for facing the world out there that is not obliged to say 'Yes' to your every desire. This is the antidote to today's prevalent attitude of self-entitlement."

Is it wrong, then, to praise your child? "Not at all," says Tan. "Praise is to be given for the demonstration of good character and not to stroke their ego, or else it is flattery."

THE MYTH OF REASONING

"Some parents are frustrated when, even after repeated reasoning, the child still does not see the 'light' and refuses to listen," Yeoh says. "This sense of frustration can never be overcome because the child's moral conscience is still developing during his first 12 years."

"During this period, the parent's vital role is to train him to obey first and

understand later," adds Tan.

The myth of reasoning stems from a humanistic worldview that exalts the power of inherent human goodness while ignoring the Biblical perspective of original sin. This pervasive but flawed ideology has even crept into the Christian community. A child is not born an angel. He needs training and discipline to become one!

Many parents of adolescents moan, "Why has my little angel become a fallen angel?" Teenagers do not automatically become caring, mature young adults. Parents do their children a great disservice by meeting their fleshly desires rather than training their spirit.

OBEY ME, PLEASE ...

"Much of today's parenting stress results from protecting children from the consequences of their misbehaviour," says Yeoh. "Although children have a free will, we ought to teach them that choices equal consequences and that God has given us parents the authority to administer consistent leadership and love at home."

"Our parents' generation raised kids using the 'Because I said so!' leadership style," Tan recalls. "Today, we've swung dangerously to the other extreme with 'buddy parenting.'" There is a need to restore the right balance of both love and leadership. Truth that is out of balance always leads to error.

"Parents think they're being nice when they plead, 'Will you please eat your vegetables?'" That dilutes their authority," he adds. "You can give kids the reason why they should obey, but don't reason with them. No child has ever been won over by reason alone."

Obedience conditions a child's heart for discernment and understanding, just as Abraham unquestioningly obeyed the Lord when he was told to set out for the



Tan and Yeoh aspire to make parenting the straightforward task that it should be

Promised Land (Genesis 12:1).

"You can explain and reason things to teenagers because they should be mature enough to listen," says Tan. "That's when a rewarding relationship can grow. It's a matter of balance and timing. Just remember our Father is both righteous and merciful. That's the perfect model of love and leadership."

WHAT NEXT?

Tan and Yeoh clarify that they're not here to find fault with parents. Their goal is to make parenting the straightforward task that it should be. Here are some tips and principles they have for parents:

A Parent-Centred Family

Couples ought to think of themselves first

as husbands and wives, then as parents. Put your marriage first by:

- Make dates
Find someone to babysit for a few hours so you both can spend time alone at least once a week.
- Talk with each other about non-parenting issues.
- Rekindle the romance. Study each other's needs. Find time to discuss matters such as personal growth and long-term goals.

Discipline

Many parents fail to discipline the child for the sake of high self-esteem. One of the toughest challenges teachers in private schools face is not dealing with the kids but parents. The teachers get blamed for being

too harsh or too lenient. Such parents need to know that discipline cannot be outsourced – it should begin at home. Proverbs 19:18 says, "Discipline your children while there is hope. If you don't, you will ruin their lives."

Say No

Learn to say "No" when your child is out of line. That roughly equates to three "No's" for every "Yes".

Kids who've never taken "No" for an answer will eventually run into a brick wall called the real world. As teenagers or youths, they'll get very stressed and overwhelmed when things don't go their way. Getting more "No's" during childhood will positively benefit them in the long run.

VALUES VS SUCCESS

Tan and Yeoh acknowledge that, despite their mistakes, most parents only want the best for their offspring. However, in the stress of modern parenting and the chase for success, values and character building get lost along the way. "It is maturity or character that determines authentic success," says Tan. "Intelligence alone leads to arrogance and pride."

Thousands of years ago, Joshua challenged his countrymen to "choose today whom you will serve." Jesus also warned the double-minded, "No one can serve two masters." So let's not cop out in our role as parents for fear of losing out materially. Instead, let's exercise our God-given authority to instruct our children lovingly but firmly.

"Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older they will remain upon it" (Proverbs 22:6). ab

For more info on character-wise parenting, email joseph@goodmonday.com or check out www.goodmonday.com.

The Fatherhood Journey

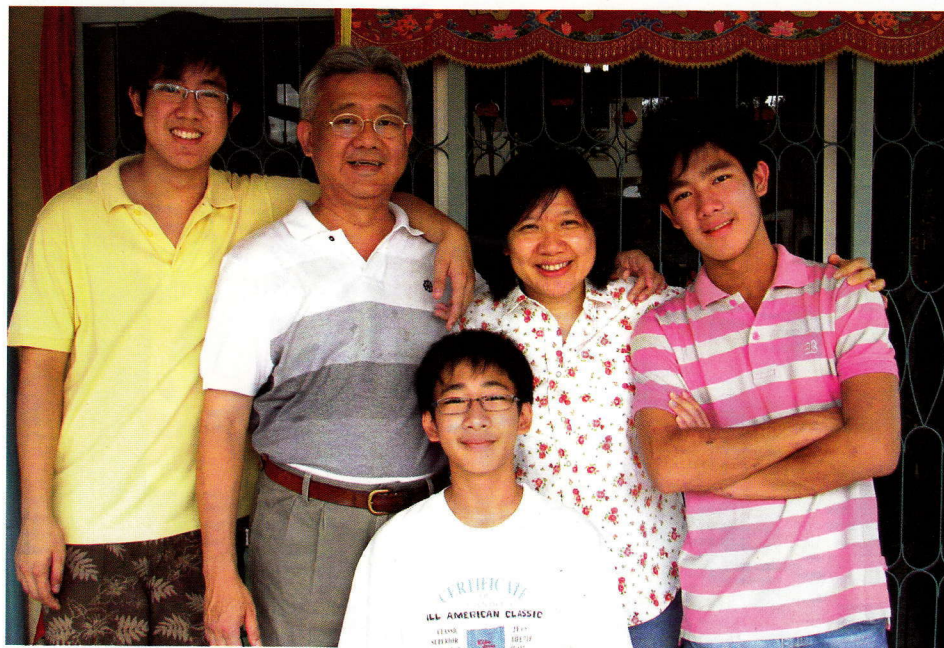
Pastor Chris Kam shares from experience the importance of building strong ties between father and son.

LAST YEAR ON FATHERS' DAY, I WAS elated to hear Ian, my 20-year-old son, share on our church's stage the fruits of our relationship and how I have been his hero, friend and teacher through the years. Judging by the way he kept the congregation engaged through his three-point mini "sermon", I believe one day he will be a better preacher than me. The funny thing about being a father is this: We'll never be envious when our children do better than us. In fact, we'll rejoice when that happens as we see the multiplying effect of our lives through our children.

I can still remember the awesome sight as Ian emerged from the womb into this world. My life from that moment was changed forever. I was entrusted then with someone's life, and I had no idea how he would turn out. While we may be confident about taking on a new assignment at our workplace based on our training and experience, fathering is something else. How I wish I was more prepared then.

The toughest thing about being a father is that we'll not know how well we fare in our role until years later when our children are on their own. Often, in their growing years, we are more concerned about their behaviour; our interventions tend to be reactive. For many, proactive parenting is not the norm. We focus on what is urgent rather than what is important. Urgent matters require our immediate attention, while important matters are often relegated to another occasion, which may not arise.

We have not achieved our goal in parenting when our children behave themselves in our presence. The goal is that they live righteous lives even in our absence. It is also about inculcating the fear of God in their lives so that they make wise decisions. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts have good understanding" (Psalms 111:10).



Pastor Chris Kam (second from left) with Ian (first from left) and the rest of the family

We train our children's minds because we believe that the higher their IQ, the better will be their future. But this emphasis on intellectual advancement is often at the expense of spiritual development, which comes only through much personal interaction and coaching from fathers.

When we put high price tags on low price items, the consequences of our mistake will only be seen much later. Many of the fathers who had sought my counsel shared about the pain of making bad decisions. How I wish they had some basic guiding principles from the Bible and someone to counsel them before making those decisions.

Fathers play a crucial role in the lives of their children. They build their confidence, prepare them for the real world and give them insights into the world of men. Our children are longing to hear from us what our Heavenly Father said to His Son Jesus, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11).

In the pre-adolescent years of the child, the mother's input is vital. Then, at adolescence, the father takes over as the most important influence. Before the

industrial revolution of the 18th century, fathers passed on their trade skills to their adolescent sons, guiding them through apprenticeship into manhood. Adolescent daughters also need their fathers' affirmation that they are beautiful and loved. Their choice of future partners and satisfaction in marriage often hinges on their relationship with their fathers.

Children are viewed as blessings (arrows in the hands of a warrior) in Psalms 127:3-5. These arrows, which carry an important legacy, are to be released to bless the family, city and nation. Let's pray they will hit their targets. The family preserves the best of the past and invests its legacy for the future. Every baby born is God's affirmative vote for the future of man and an opportunity for us to make a difference.

In the fatherhood journey, we need not walk alone. Many who have gone ahead before us can offer us counsel. For more information, please check out this site: dumcfathersclub.blogspot.com. **ab**

The above article was first published in Floodgates (July-Aug 2010), a publication of Damansara Utama Methodist Church. Used with permission.

Debunking Money Myths

Many believers have an accurate understanding of important biblical doctrines but are still trapped by money myths. *Asian Beacon* approaches financial planner Rajen Devadason for his views on 5 prevalent money myths:

Money is the root of all evil.

THIS IS PERHAPS THE BIGGEST MONEY myth because countless Christians believe that's what the Bible says! This misconception has also led countless non-Christians to think that's what the Bible says. But let's go to the source (1 Timothy 6:10), and read for ourselves Paul's words:

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

Bottomline: The Bible doesn't say money is the root of all evil. What it clearly states is that the *love* of money is the root of all evil. An important point to consider, therefore, is the difference between “money” and “the love of money”.

It makes no difference whether you're rich, poor or middle class. Your economic status has nothing to do with whether you harbour that insidious root of devilish malevolence.

A rich man, consumed by a desire to acquire wealth at all costs, may turn his back on Jesus. Similarly, an impoverished woman can be consumed by her desire for money. And someone who has neither too much nor too little can also be so consumed by a passion for money that he joins their evil company.

BY RAJEN DEVADASON

Similarly, there are people who populate all socioeconomic levels who aren't led astray by an uncontrolled love of money. The possession or lack of money is not the problem. The *attitude* rooted in our hearts is!

I believe God expects us to trust, love and serve Him. If we do so with all our heart, mind and strength, we won't fall prey to the condition Paul warned Timothy about.

God helps those who help themselves.

I LIKE THIS PHILOSOPHY BUT, CONTRARY to popular opinion, that line is not found anywhere in the Bible!

A belief like that turns toxic when it's applied to the process of salvation. The truth is Jesus came to die for fallen humanity because we're not able to save ourselves. It's vital for Christians to understand that we're saved solely by God's grace through the cleansing blood of Jesus. There is nothing we can do to earn our salvation. All the “helping ourselves” cannot bridge the gap between a fallen world and a perfect God.

However, those who want God's free gift of salvation must do one thing — ask

Jesus to come into their hearts and take away their sins.

Financial planning and buying insurance are not for me. I trust in God and live day-by-day. Does not Jesus say God looks after the needs of the lilies and sparrows?

YES, JESUS INDEED SAID THAT IN MATTHEW 6:28 and Matthew 10:29. And, yes, God is the Source of all bounty and He is our Provider. Yet there is a place for human responsibility in the exercising of wisdom. This is borne out by references like Luke 14:28 (counting the cost before starting to build a tower) and Proverbs 30:25 (ants storing up food in summer).

It is irrational to believe we can work till our last breath. Human bodies weaken and our mental acuity fades. Long before these events happen, sound financial planning helps us prepare well for our future.

If Jesus tarries and does not return to Earth during our lifetime, we have a responsibility to ourselves, our families and our churches to plan intelligently for the three dimensions of financial planning: Wealth protection, wealth accumulation and wealth distribution. Matthew 24:36 tells us no one but the Father knows when

the Son will return. So, commonsense dictates we should plan for the future as wisely as we know how.

My EPF and savings are enough to see me through retirement. Otherwise, there will always be my children!

MAYBE ... BUT NOT LIKELY!

On average, Malaysians upon reaching 55 will use up all their EPF savings within three to five years (based on two independent studies).

Your personal savings might be sufficient to pick up the slack, but most people will not be able to save enough or earn enough on their savings. That's why it's important for us to also learn how to invest profitably. Unfortunately, investing is rife with different forms of risk. To learn about 15 types of investment risk, read my article *Investment Risk – Understanding and Profiting from it* at www.freecoolarticles.com/FP15.htm.

If you've raised your children well, they might *want* to support you when you retire. But "wanting to" and "being able to" are two different things. The future will be tougher than the past because of escalating food, fuel and medical costs. How can parents be certain their children will support them if it's unclear whether they can even take care of themselves and *their* own children?

Plan so early for retirement? I've just started working!

THE TIME VALUE OF MONEY IS A FINANCIAL planning concept based on the power of compound interest. The sooner you start saving and investing, the better your financial future will be.

But no law says you must start your personal retirement funding programme as early as possible or even begin at all. It's a free world.

Those wise enough to start earlier rather than later, though, should enjoy a better quality of life in retirement and

develop invaluable cash flow management and investment skills that enrich their families and churches.

Those who start later may draw comfort from the "better late than never" truism. While for those who never start, there's always the prospect of spending their twilight years toiling at low-wage jobs to make up for decades of neglect and lost opportunity. **ab**



Rajen Devadason, CFP, is a Securities Commission-licensed financial planner, professional speaker and author. Read his free articles at www.FreeCoolArticles.com; he may be contacted at rajend@RajenDevadason.com.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 34

are served to bless and encourage students during exam periods. Camps for the centre are held during the winter break, whereas statewide ones are held during the Easter break.

Though OCF is a parachurch interdenominational organisation, it recognises the importance of connecting with the church community. As such, members and advisors encourage Christian freshmen to be part of a local church. Each OCF centre is affiliated to a designated church. In the case of Clayton, it is CityLife Church.

BUILD UP

OCF's paramount goal is to encourage students to know God and have a relationship with Him. "We have Bible studies in our small groups," Yip says. "This year we are focusing on Romans."

A unique aspect of OCF Clayton is its small groups for pre-believers called Discovery Groups (DG), of which Cheng is the coordinator. "Sometimes, non-Christians find it difficult to understand



Christian jargon and topics," she explains. "So we try to bridge the gap. We meet in common ground like suffering and love, allowing them to discover God by themselves."

The OCF is led by students with the help of advisors. Due to the high turnover of international students, there's always a need for leaders. Potential leaders are trained in advance for the coming year, while talents of existing leaders are honed to widen the scope of their responsibilities.

SEND BACK

An important aspect of OCF's ministry lies in its "sending back" of students to their home country upon graduation.

"There is a missionary purpose in

what we do," enthuses Chan. "God has brought these international students to our doorstep. So we have to ask ourselves, 'What are we going to do about it?'"

Under the care of OCF, the students grow spiritually and are prepared to go back home to minister to others. "We send them back as mature believers so that they can be a blessing when they return," Chan adds.

The OCF is different from other Christian clubs on campus because they cater to a particular group of people. Although local students are welcome to join the club and be part of the committees, they cannot hold the post of chairperson. "We need people who have experienced what the other members have gone through," Yip says. In this way, the organisation fulfils its original goal – to reach out, disciple, and send home overseas students for the glory of God. **ab**

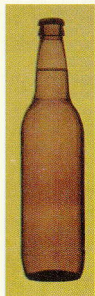
If you, your friends or relatives are coming to Melbourne for further studies and would like to be part of the OCF, or visit www.ocfclayton.blogspot.com or www.ocfaustralia.org.



From Alcoholic

to Pastor

A life transformed by Jesus finds his calling in a ministry to the underprivileged. **BY JOHNSON A. RAJASER**



WAS LEAVING FOR MY USUAL drinking rounds with my friends when the phone rang. It was from a long-lost friend, Brother PC. It had been 23 years since we last met. Then a student counsellor, he managed the Christian Fellowship in campus. He had come for a conference

and wanted to stay at my house.

That visit, on June 30, 1996, changed my life.

It all began when I was a credit officer at a bank. I started socialising with clients who sought me for loans. Soon I got into trouble. I became an alcoholic. Worse, I began to smoke four packets of cigarettes a day instead of my usual two. My throat would swell from excessive smoking and drinking. It's incredible that I was never charged with drink driving despite seven motorcycle and four car accidents. I could have died – or worse, killed someone. But

this didn't bother me.

I was confident I could lick the problem. I would listen to no one; even pleas from my family were useless. Later, when I left my job, things took a turn for the worse. My day began with drinks as early as 8 am. After lunch, I would drink from evening till late into the night.

Once a year, on Dec 31, I would attend church and try to make New Year resolutions to quit my bad habits but to no avail. I was foolish not to realise that I needed God's power to change.

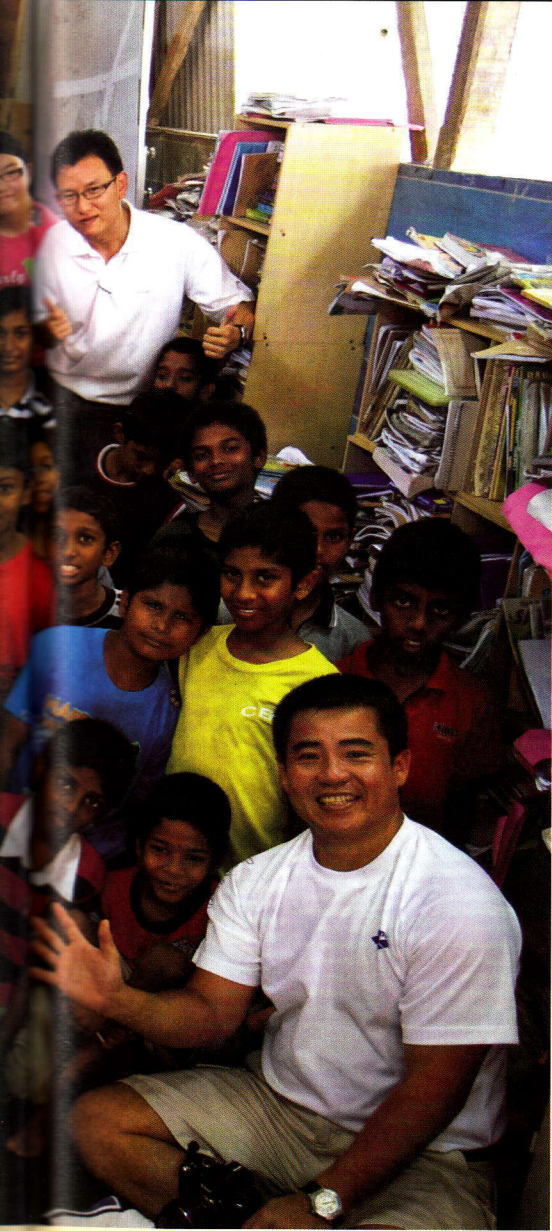
When Brother PC met me, he must

have sensed something was wrong. He said, "Can I pray for you, Johnson?" I saw tears in his eyes.

I said "Yes" and immediately felt very light. It was a simple confession. As I knelt before PC, he prayed earnestly, pleading with Jesus on my behalf. Before this, I had never acknowledged my need before others.

I cried out, "Jesus! Forgive me! I need you!" Suddenly a warm feeling enveloped me, and I saw ugly flashbacks of my drunken stupor and past accidents.

"Jesus! You've blessed me with



DESTINY'S CALLING

It had been a long while since I last attended church. We accompanied PC to the Tamil Methodist Church, Kuala Lumpur, as he was speaking there. When a call was made for Sunday school teachers, I responded. But they wanted only experienced teachers. Nonetheless, Nina encouraged me to pray that God's will be done in my life.

As we were discussing the possibility of running a free tuition centre for squatter children in the Seputih area, the phone rang, informing us that three whiteboards and 22 tables and chairs were available. What an amazing God! He answers prayer. I felt a chill running through my body. A month later, the Seputih tuition centre, with its first batch of 22 children, started at our single-storey terrace house.

Encouraged by pastors and friends, I joined the Malaysia Bible Seminary (MBS) in 1997. I realised that pastors are always needed, and I'd better be well-prepared to serve God. Through Rev Loh Soon Choy, the principal of MBS then, I learned many things apart from theology. His knowledge of the Word, perseverance and humility had great impact on my life. His passion for service inspired me. When the time allocated for practical ministry came, I visited my friends and shared my testimony.

One day, we went to pray for a widow. Though she had many needs (poor health, unpaid house rental, educational needs of her four children), she started to pray for us instead. I was deeply grieved to learn that her church did not help her, nor did any church member visit her. But the Holy Spirit comforted me through Psalm 46:10: "Be still and know that I am God." I couldn't concentrate on my studies in seminary, being troubled by the needs of the poor. Instead of becoming a pastor who preached powerful sermons, I wanted to make a difference in the lives of the underprivileged.

After my exams, I went to a tea stall in Taman Seputih. There I prayed earnestly, telling God that I wanted to listen only to His voice. A strong prompting from the Lord came. I looked across the road and saw an abandoned house. When the prompting became stronger, I could not remain seated. I got up and walked towards the bungalow.

everything. You've protected me from harm and yet I still remained in sin," I blurted. As tears of repentance flowed, my burdens were lifted away. I knew for sure God loved me!

"Thank you Jesus for saving me! I want to be *your* child. I do not want anything in this world. I only want you, Jesus!" Amid sobs, I was filled with a great sense of joy. I told PC, "Thank you, Brother. God has a purpose for you here even after 23 years."

"Now what have you to say to Jesus?" PC asked.

"For the remaining years of my life I want to serve Jesus, the One who saved my life. I don't need a salary. I just want to give my life to Him."

Only Jesus can change one's destiny. I realised that only God can change our lives ... that miracles are possible and prayer changes things. My wife, Nina, was jubilant that Jesus changed me; she hugged me and thanked Jesus. Great peace flooded our home that day.

As I prayed in tears, the Holy Spirit prompted me to clean up the place, clear it of rats and snakes and start repairs, even when I had no money. With God's help, the house was spruced up after eight weeks.

Soon news went round that Johnson had gone "cuckoo". My drinking mates came to enquire about the abandoned house. When I replied that "I am working for God," they ridiculed me.

The social concern committee of the Tamil Methodist Church, Ulu Klang, provided us with some furnishings. They invited us to come under their purview. Thus, in November 1998, the Stepping Stones Home, a haven for the underprivileged (fatherless, neglected, rejected, abused and those from dysfunctional homes) was established. The widow's children were the first occupants.

In December 2006, we became independent. Soon after, Stepping Stones Living Centre Sdn Bhd was incorporated in January 2007. It has now expanded to house 100 children, 15 mothers and five abandoned old folks. There are hostels for boys and girls, one for the senior citizens and one for younger children as well.

I continue to cling on to God's promise in Psalm 46:10, the verse that spoke to me when I visited the widow. To me, it means that I do not need to manipulate or act smart but just allow God to do His part. Every month, He provides the RM20,000 that is needed to run the home. My faith has been challenged and strengthened over the past 13 years as I learn to trust in Him.

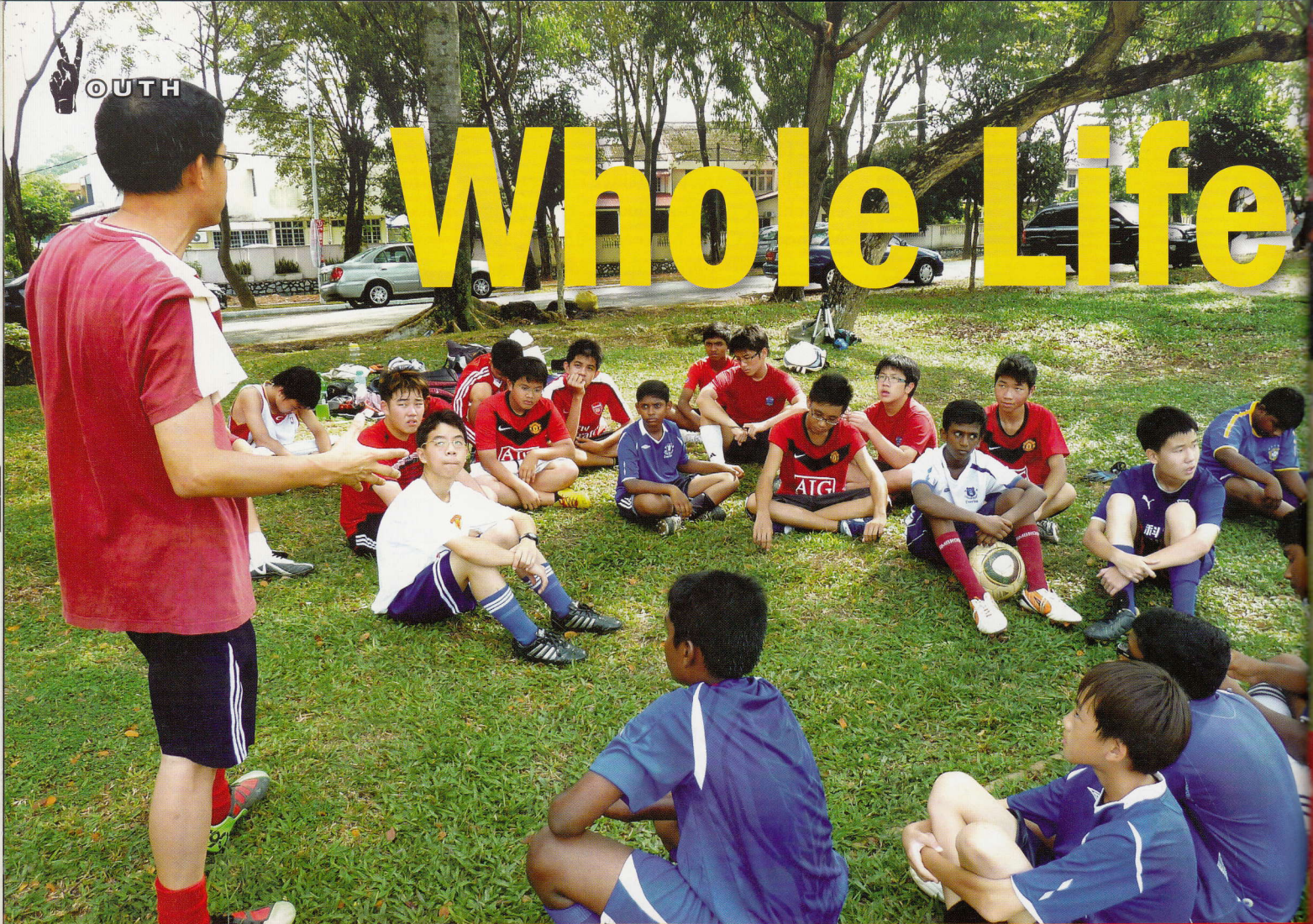
I believe in miracles. My changed life is a miracle. The birth of Stepping Stones Living Centre is a miracle. And so is its continued provision and supply. **ab**

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:26)

"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27)

The Stepping Stones Ministry is managed by Pastor Johnson A.Rajahser and Pastor Rev Dr Nina Aarons Rajahser.

Whole Life



FOOTBALL, OR SOCCER, is undeniably a beautiful game that is internationally played and loved. It is representative of the power of sports to break down social barriers and unite people. Here in Malaysia, a group of sports enthusiasts have recognised the potential of using sports techniques and skills to impart life values. They call it *whole life coaching*.

PARTNERS IN FOOTBALL

Sports Partnership Malaysia (SPM) was founded by Chris Leong, of Mosaic Community Studio, and Philip Devadas, a certified international trainer. The non-governmental organisation is affiliated with the International Sports Coalition (ISC) to “impact this nation and beyond through community transformation with the gospel through sports.” For Leong and Devadas, their task is to partner with various organisations and agencies to minister through sports. This partnership

Sports can be used as a platform to impart values and build character

BY CHARMAIN SIM

has a dual role — vision casting and equipping of leaders.

In July 2010, SPM launched a one-year project in whole life coaching through football, called Football Max. The concept originated in South Africa, during the preparation for the FIFA World Cup 2010, in response to the question, “How can Africa benefit in hosting the World Cup, not just economically, but spiritually?” It then became a means to alleviate poverty and crime, as well as empower youth, with the goal of bringing about transformation to the continent. The movement has since spread, impacting hundreds of thousands of youths in more than 85 countries.

The first thing SPM aims for in Football Max is the equipping of qualified coaches. Coaches are trained in two areas, the first being life coaching. Coaches learn the how-to, lesson plans, and pitfalls. Awareness of pitfalls is important because coaches can

get over-anxious and move too fast in coaching.

The second area is obviously football skills. “If the coach is not well-trained, the players will not respect him and listen to what he has to say,” explains Leong. “Hence, we work to help the coaches upgrade their football skills.”

“But in all these, the coach must have passion, not just for the game, but for the players themselves. If there is no heart, the coaching will fail”, said a trained life coach, Pastor Eric Tan.

The coaches then lead weekly training sessions, during which a 15 to 20-minute lesson plan is delivered using the inductive approach. “We ask questions and get the players to brainstorm,” Leong says. “This helps them to break out from their closed mindset.”

Football Max not only runs training sessions but organises football tournaments

Coaching



as well. Tournaments help players focus and provide them with an incentive to train. They also attract newcomers to the project.

WHOLE LIFE COACHING

In a typical training session, football techniques become the platform to impart life values and build character, helping youths develop into mature adults.

“Take heading for example,” says Leong. “It teaches a lot about courage because you have to use your head, which is a very risky thing to do. In the same way, there are some things in life where you need courage to ‘head’ into the goal.”

Short-pass techniques, on the other hand, teach the importance of communication and connection in teamwork. “Connection is really important in passing,” Leong says. “If there’s no connection, you can pass the ball, but the other player won’t be able to receive it if he is not aware.”

Lessons in connection and communication can be applied on a larger scale. “When there’s no connectedness, players tend to stay in cliques of their own, not passing to those they don’t know. We work hard to break the cliques up,” says Tan.

“We teach them to see how this applies in real life — that it is crucial to connect with parents, teachers, and siblings,” Leong adds.

COACHING BEYOND THE FIELD

As its name suggests, whole life coaching is not limited by the boundaries of the football field. Tan is in contact with his 70 players through Facebook and email. “In Facebook, we open up our lives to them with our updates on church and family. It’s not only a profile to promote whole life coaching but to really get to know them personally. We also get the occasional email from players, letting us know what’s happening in their lives.”

Coaches also try to get the parents involved in their children’s lives. “Behind every boy is his father and mother,” says Tan. “We meet their parents and often ask them about their well-being and how the boys are coping with their studies. We make it a point to get to know them and find out what’s going on at home. As such, we are able to know how we can help them.”

Parents are usually responsive and enthusiastic about the programme, and sports have also become a great avenue for fathers to bond with their children.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE WHOLE

In less than a year, the programme has grown to include 30 coaches in four states, with approximately 500 youths under training. Coaches are now reaping the benefits of their investment in young people’s lives.

On one occasion, Tan congratulated a boy named Jordan when he announced on Facebook that he had made it into his school team. “Surprisingly, he replied, ‘It was through your coaching that I improved. Thank you.’” says Tan. “It is very encouraging to know you have impacted someone’s life.”

But of course, it’s not just game skills that coaches are interested in. It is the transformation of the player and his environment, which is the higher calling.

“Many of the players are

underprivileged,” Leong says. “Through sports, we want to give them a purpose and meaning in life and encourage self-confidence.”

Lessons on unity and acceptance are also imparted as the players come from different backgrounds, faiths and races. “They learn to play and work together,” Leong says. “It’s a real *muhibbah*. In fact, there have been few struggles over racism, but more on competitiveness. Another lesson they have to learn is that winning is not everything.”

In Malaysia, Football Max, which is funded by World Vision Malaysia and Global Day of Prayer (GDOP), will officially end in May this year. That does not mean, however, that the coaching stops. Coaches will continue to build networks and support one another. Initiatives have also been started to bring whole life coaching into other team sports, such as basketball and volleyball.

Leong and Tan believe that 1 Corinthians 9:22 — “I have become all things to all men so that by all means I might save some” — is one of the ways the church can be relevant to society.

“The church needs to get out of her comfort zone,” says Leong. “Jesus is often found ministering outside the four walls of the synagogue. He met people on their own turf, as He did with Zacchaeus.”

“Now sports, the universal language, has become the common turf,” he adds. “We need to go where the people are, and the playing field is where a lot of people gather.”

Whole life coaching adds a new dimension to the role of sports in life. After all, “physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (1 Timothy 4:8). **ab**