

Saltshaker

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CHRISTIAN FAITH AND CHINESE CULTURE - CAN MIX MEH?



Claire Lowe

As an (over-)zealous Christian teenager, I had a love-hate relationship with Chinese New Year.

Hate - it's probably too strong a word to use - because I dreaded travelling to Segamat, Johor, to reunite with my "pagan" relatives.

I loathed even being a non-participating observer of their superstitious practices. I felt it to be spiritually dark to sit at the dining table where the religious and family altars were. Every Chinese New Year, my mother would prepare a picnic basket of sandwiches and biscuits as I absolutely refused to eat the food that had been offered to idols and deceased ancestors. Like St Paul in Acts 17:16, I found all their ungodly customs revolting to my soul.

Love - because I got to collect *ang pows* (red packets). Somehow, I rationalised away the *ang pows*' underlying symbolism of luck, longevity and chasing away of bad spirits.

Three decades on, my sentiment about Chinese New Year is changing. I'm learning now to re-connect with and even love my cultural roots and customs – in praise of who God has made me to be and also for the sake of witnessing for Christ.

The change in my attitude towards Chinese New Year was precipitated by a change in mindset - in how I view "culture". In Gen 1:28 and 2:15, which are often referred to as the cultural mandate, God gave humans the prerogative to rule and organise life on earth. The Hebrew word *avad* in Gen 2:15 literally means to cultivate, from which we get the word "culture".

Culture-making is a gift from God. And because humans are made in the image of God, every culture

reflects something that is good and godly, and this is what we need to look out for – the fingerprints of God.

However, every culture is also corrupt in some way because of sin, and so every culture needs to be 'redeemed' and transformed by Christ.

So how might earnest Christians engage with traditional customs? How can we be Christian *and* culturally Chinese?

In missions, some practitioners employ an "R&R" approach in trying to "redeem" culture, to retain what is good and agreeable with Scripture, and replace what is not agreeable with Scripture with an appropriate substitute.

The important thing is not to simply say "no" and leave a cultural void. Sure, there will be certain acts that we as Christians may not be convicted to do; but what we can do, we should express those generously and wholeheartedly.

Missions history and studies have shown over the decades that a total rejection of culture in places where Christianity has taken root has contributed to the notion that Christianity is a western religion, and this has served to inhibit the spread of the Gospel.

We need to engage with our Chinese culture for the sake of the Gospel. Like Paul, we should "become like a Jew to the Jew so as to win the Jews ... become all things to all people, so that by all possible means [we] might save some" (1 Cor 9:22).

For the last three years, my family brought back a family traditional custom of *jing cha* (敬茶). The juniors offer the elders tea and oranges and wish them in Chinese idioms; the elders, in return, gift the juniors *ang pows* and bestow blessings upon them.



Left: Claire's parents receiving tea from Claire's brother and sister-in-law

Right: Claire and her husband, Kevin, receiving tea from their children





Invite a friend to

Discovering God in Chinese Characters

A talk in Mandarin by Eddie Goh

Sat 16 Feb | 10.00 – 11:30am

Register at the iSunday Counter or with claire@tmc.org.sg

xiang

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Divine + Lamb = Blessed

Blessed

尽管献祭可以换取赦免，但仍不能除掉罪。上帝必须派遣祂的儿子耶稣基督，那是神的羔羊。

第二天，约翰见耶稣迎面而来，就说：“看哪，神的羔羊，是除去世人的罪孽的！”

——约翰福音1章29节

神赦免了我们的一切过犯，使你们与基督一同活过来，涂抹了那写在规条上反对我们、与我们为敌的字句，并且把这字句从我们中间拿去钉在十字架上。”

——歌罗西书2章13-14节

汉字的“祥”也符合圣经的说法：借圣洁的羔羊，我们可以拥有有福的生命。

Although they received forgiveness through sacrifices, they could not take away the sins. God had to send His own Son, Jesus Christ—the Lamb of God.

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him. John said, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" - John 1:29

"He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross."
- Colossians 2:13-14

The Chinese character supports the Bible's claim that only through the Divine lamb, can we have a blessed life.

Wishing you God-given blessings. May it go smoothly for you.



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To discover more connections between God and Chinese characters, you can collect a tract from the iSunday Counter, or visit <http://thetruevine.tripod.com/id17.html>.

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Image credit: <http://www.freepik.com>



I'Ching Thomas

JESUS: THE PATH TO HUMAN FLOURISHING

*I'Ching Thomas is a Malaysian Chinese whose present sojourn is in Singapore. She's an aspiring Sinologist who wears three hats: Operation Mobilisation's International Director of Leadership Development, wife to a New Testament professor, and mom to a third-grader. She moonlights as an apologist and a writer in all things related. Her first book *Jesus: The Path to Human Flourishing: The Gospel for the Cultural Chinese* was published in 2018.*

Anyone who has ever interacted with Cultural Chinese on spiritual or religious matters would have come across the objection that Christianity is a Western religion and hence unsuited for Asians. "Christianity is a religion for Westerners. We Asians have our own religions," they may insist.

However, this is a misperception because Christianity is a divine plan of salvation for all mankind regardless of heritage or ethnicity.

In fact, to be historically accurate, the Christian faith had its early setting in the East rather than the West! Though as a result of historical development, Christianity did come to us from the West, it is a known fact that the Christian faith actually originated in Asia.

In view of this misperception of the Christian faith among the Cultural Chinese, one persuasive way to present the Gospel is by addressing what resonates with their aspirations and values—especially with regards to human flourishing and prosperity as defined by the ideals of Confucianism.

Though Confucianism is not the formal ideology of many Cultural Chinese, its influence on their worldview, culture, and social life remains powerful and undeniable due to its historical significance. For example, the value placed on education and filial piety can all be traced to Confucius's teachings about how life ought to be ordered.

In examining aspects of both Confucius's ideal of a Utopian society and the Shalomic vision of the biblical faith, what is apparent are the various aspects that are similar between them.

First of all, both are concerned with humanity's existential crisis and see human flourishing as part of our destiny. Both believe moral transformation and harmonious relationships are crucial towards the realisation of our humanity – they are what it

means to be human.

However, what has fallen short in Confucius' solution was his optimism in the very nature of humanity to achieve human flourishing on our own.

When we take a realistic and honest consideration of human nature, we know that we will never be able to achieve human flourishing on our own merit and ability. If the root cause of the human dilemma lies within humanity itself, then we will need external non-human intervention to help us root out the source of our plight.

And this is where the Good News for the Cultural Chinese comes in. The aspiration of human flourishing may be unattainable on our own, but we do not have to do it on our own. The path towards that hope is open to us in Christ.

Hence, this book – "Jesus: The Path to Human Flourishing : The Gospel for the Cultural Chinese" - seeks to present the Gospel in a way that seamlessly corresponds with Confucius's ideals for humanity but with a realistic solution that is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This means a Cultural Chinese can be a follower of Christ without having to shed his ethnic identity.

In fact, by choosing the path of Jesus, the uniqueness of one's culture and ethnicity is affirmed, as the Lord of Heaven is the Creator of all. There will be no identity dilemma – one can be a Chinese and a Christian with honor.



"Jesus: The Path to Human Flourishing: The Gospel for the Cultural Chinese"
published by
Graceworks, is
available in TMC's
Resource Centre.

Communicating **CHRIST** in Asian Cultures and Families

*"Asian cultures share a common culture,
we can be Christian and Asian."*

和 Harmony

禾 hé Grain 口 kǒu Mouth

SAT, 9 MAR 2019
9.30am-1.00pm
Faith Methodist Church
Sanctuary, Level 1

SESSION 1

Does Christ Speak
Through Our Cultures?
An Overview Of Asian
Cultures And Religions



SPEAKER
Rev Malcom Tan,
Pastor-In-Charge of Covenant
Community Methodist Church

SESSION 2

Communicating Christ
In Asian Families:
"HARMONY"



SPEAKER
I'Ching Thomas,
International Director of Leadership
Development at Operation Mobilization

SESSION 3

Q&A Forum



FORUM PANELIST
Rev Dr Aaron Tay,
Pastor-In-Charge of Living Waters
Methodist Church

Venue: Faith Methodist Church, 400 Commonwealth Drive, Singapore 149604
For registration and more details, please go to <https://tinyurl.com/harmony9mar>
Please sign up by 3 Mar 2019 for catering purposes.
For further enquiries, contact Pastor Poh Zhi Hui at zhihui.poh@tpmc.org.sg



Lunar New Year

B.L.E.S.S



your family, friends and the community

ABOUT

The B.L.E.S.S initiative was started in 2015 to provide simple steps on how we may be a witness for Christ within our various spheres of influence. The acronym stands for Begin in prayer, Listen to a friend, Eat with a friend, Serve (with) a friend, Share your story.

Head over to www.tmc.org.sg/cny2019.html and see how you can meaningfully engage with your family, friends and the wider community this Lunar New Year.

A summary of the activities are listed below.

Please direct all enquiries to Kim (kimwoon@gmail.com) or Claire (claire@tmc.org.sg), or leave your enquiry, name and contact details at the iSunday Counter.

1. Bless someone with a CNY shopping spree | 22 Jan | 9am-5pm | TMC

Join the Glowing Years Ministry on a trip to Woodlands Loop to shop for dried foodstuff followed by a lunch (at own cost) at Kampung Admiralty, then to William Koo Sea Product Factory.

Participants are to meet in the TMC Plaza. Please sign up at the GYM board (Plaza) and pay \$6/pax to Tan Poh Ling.

2. CNY bless my neighbour | 26 Jan | 10am-1pm | Toa Payoh Estate

This ministry reaches out to the residents of one-room flats in Toa Payoh.

This Lunar New Year, volunteer with them to bless the residents with goodies, songs and prayers. Contact **Adalena at 9006 1701**.

3. A-Totful Morning Lunar New Year Celebration | 31 Jan | 9-10.30am | TMC

A Tot-ful Morning is a weekly Thursday gathering for children 3 years and younger, as well as, their caregivers, where activities, like the Lunar New Year Celebration, are planned to foster learning and bonding. For queries, please go to www.tmc.org.sg/highlights.html#atm or atotfulmorning@gmail.com

Lunar New Year B.L.E.S.S



your family, friends and the community

4 Bless our church family members | 10 Feb | Afternoon | Various homes

This Lunar New Year, visit the homes of senior church members in the Mandarin Service who have not been able to attend service in church. Contact **Norman Ng at 9229 0175**.

5. Discovering the Gospel in Chinese Characters | 16 Feb | 10-11.30am | TMC

Invite your family and friends interested in Chinese culture and who do not know Jesus Christ to learn and discover God through the Chinese language. Contact **Claire Lowe at claire@tmc.org.sg**.

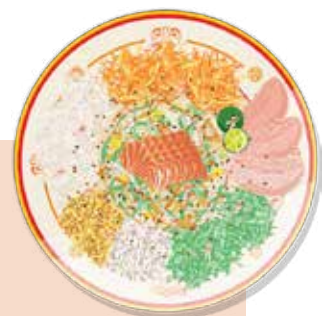
6. Youth Avenue steamboat lunch | 23 Feb | 1-3pm | Youth Avenue

Youth Avenue was established as a gathering place for youths in the Serangoon North area, to reach out and impact these young lives through the provision of programmes and services. Youth Avenue is located at Blk 123 Serangoon North Avenue 4. Contact **Wong Ting Ling at 9662 9850**.

LO-HEI BLESSING

English and Mandarin Lo-Hei Blessing Cards can be found on **www.tmc.org.sg/cny2019.html**

The lo-hei blessing can take place anywhere and anytime over this Lunar New Year season in homes, restaurants and office gatherings.



LO-HEI!

THE CHRISTIAN WAY

基督徒! 让我们捞起!

Lo-Hei (Cantonese dialect for 捞起, laoqi, meaning “to raise”) is the toss of salad items popularly practised by the Chinese in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia during the Lunar New Year.

Yusheng is a Teochew-style raw fish salad. It usually consists of strips of raw fish (most commonly salmon), mixed with shredded vegetables and a variety of sauces and condiments, among other ingredients. Yusheng literally means “raw fish” but since “fish (鱼)” is commonly conflated with its homophone “abundance (余)”, yúshēng (鱼生) is interpreted as a homophone* for yúshēng (余升) meaning an increase in abundance. Therefore, Yusheng is considered a symbol of abundance, prosperity and vigour.*

*[*A homophone is a word that is pronounced the same as another word but differs in meaning. They may also differ in spelling]*

捞起(广东话指“升起”), 是本地, 马来西亚和印尼华人在农历新年捞取沙拉的一种习俗。

鱼生是潮州式的生鱼沙拉, 一般有生鱼片(常用三文鱼), 拌入搅碎的蔬菜和不同的酱料以及一些其他的佐料。鱼生既是生鱼片, 因“鱼”的发音与“余”同音, 华人取“余升”的好喻意期望来年能够丰衣足食, 因此, 鱼生象征丰盛、欣欣向荣与活力。

POSSIBLE CHRISTIAN PRACTICE 基督徒的实践

Although the Lo-Hei is a popular practice of the Chinese, Chinese Christians can join in too, and observe it in a way that will NOT:

- give the impression that we can make 'luck' come to us by a 'magic ritual' since we believe God is the Lord of our lives and our fortunes;
- have financial prosperity as the main focus of our celebration;

BUT INSTEAD WILL:

- put emphasis on remembering God's promise to love and care for us throughout the year
- focus on His desire to bless others through us as we live in community

The following is a possible way to Lo-Hei the Christian way. Do try this out amongst your pre-believing friends and family this Lunar New Year!

1. When all the items are on the table, start off by offering a New Year greeting:

“新年蒙福 (*xin nian meng fu*) - May you be blessed this new year!”

2. Add fish slices:

“年年有余 (*nian nian you yu*) – abundance and excess. The Lord provides food in abundance.” (Job 36:31)

3. Add pomelo or lime over the fish:

“大吉大利 (*da ji da li*) – a smooth flow of good things. The Lord will turn the darkness into light... and make the rough places smooth.” (Is 42:16)

4. Add pepper / five spice powder:

“五福临门 (*wu fu lin men*) – five blessings will visit your home. Thank you Lord for the promise that all blessings will come upon us when we obey you.” (Deut 28:2)

5. Add oil sauce in a circular motion:

“顺顺利利 (*shun shun li li*) – may all things go smoothly. Praise the Lord, for anointing us with the oil of joy.” (Ps 45:7)

6. Add plum sauce:

“甜甜蜜蜜 (*tian tian mi mi*) – a sweet life! Praise the Lord, for the sweetness of His Word... sweeter than honey to our mouths.” (Ps 119:103)

7. Add red carrots:

“鸿运当头 (*hong yun dang tou*) – fortune shines. Thank you, Lord, for showing favour to us with restored fortune.” (Ps 85:1)

8. Add green radish:

“青春常驻 (*qing chun chang zhu*) – eternal youth. Renew us Lord, with the strength of a youth to soar like the eagle for you.” (Is 40:31)

9. Add white radish:

“步步高升 (*bu bu gao sheng*) - progress to a higher level. Thank you God for raising us up to be seated with Christ in the heavenly realms.” (Eph 2:6)

10. Add peanuts:

“金玉满堂 (*jin yu man tang*) - a household of gold and silver. Thank you Lord for the promise that the house of the righteous is filled with treasures.” (Prov 15:6)

11. Add sesame seeds:

“生意兴隆 (*sheng yi xing long*) – a flourishing business. The righteous will flourish like a palm tree... planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God.” (Ps 92:13)

12. Add deep-fried flour crisps shaped like pillows:

“满地黄金 (*man di huang jin*) – streets of gold. Praise the Lord, for the streets of pure gold that you have prepared for us to live in eternity.” (Rev 21:21)

POSSIBLE CHRISTIAN PRACTICE 基督徒的实践

虽然“捞起”的习俗在华人社体盛行，华人基督徒也可以参与，但要紧记一些不可有的观念。例如：

- 认为既然上帝是我们的主和主宰我们的命运，我们便可以通过某些礼仪来转运
- 视拥有更丰裕的财富为庆祝的主要原因

相反的，我们应该：

- 强调感恩上帝在一年里应许给予我们爱与关怀
- 把焦点放在上帝希望藉着他给我们的祝福去祝福其他有需要的人

以下是基督徒在捞鱼生的时可以说的祝福语，不妨在来临的农历新年期间与未信主的朋友和家人分享！

1. 当所有的食料都上桌了，开心地说：“祝大家新年蒙福！”

2. 把鱼生放入盘里：

“年年有余！神赐予丰盛的粮食。”（约伯记36:31）

3. 把柚子或酸酩放在鱼生上：

“大吉大利！神必在我们面前使黑暗变为光明，使弯曲的地方变为平直。”（以赛亚书42:16）

4. 撒上胡椒或五香粉：

“五福临门！感谢耶和华 - 如果我们听从耶和华你的话，以下这一切福气必临到我们身上，必把我们追上。”（申命记28:2）

5. 倒油：

“顺顺利利！赞美主，因为祂用喜乐的油膏抹我们。”（诗篇45:7）

6. 加甜酱：

“甜甜蜜蜜！赞美主，因为祂的话语在我的上膛多么甜美，在我的口中比蜂蜜更甜。”（诗篇119:103）

7. 加红萝卜：

“鸿运当头。各样美好的赏赐，各样完备的恩赐，都是从上面、从众光之父降下来的，他本身并没有改变，也没有转动的影子。”（雅各书1:17）

8. 加青萝卜：

“青春常驻！那些仰望耶和华的人，必重新得力；他们必像鹰一样展翅上腾；他们奔跑，也不困倦，他们行走，也不疲乏。”（以赛亚书40:31）

9. 加白萝卜：

“步步高升！感谢主使我们在基督耶稣里，与他一同复活，一同坐在天上。”（以非所书2:6）

10. 撒花生：

“金玉满堂！感谢主的承诺 - 义人家中财宝丰富。”（箴15:6）

11. 撒芝麻：

“生意兴隆！义人必像棕树一样繁茂……他们栽在耶和华的殿中，在我们神的院子里繁茂生长。”（诗篇92:13）

12. 撒香饼

“满地黄金！赞美主，因为祂给我们准备的城里街道是纯金的。”（启示录21:21）

The Tossing

All toss the salad towards the centre of the dish 7 times (the biblical perfect number) with shouts of “Lo-Hei!” and all close with this prayer for one another.

A Blessing Prayer for One Another

May everything you do be Ho-say (good)
everything you eat be Ho-jia (tasty)
every friend you have and make be Ho peng you (good friend)
everyday live a Ho-mia (good) life
and work days become like Holy-days this year
May the Lord bless you and keep you
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace
Amen

捞起!

把鱼生捞起七次(在圣经里“7”是完美的数字), 并大声呼唤“捞起”。之后, 大家可以一起祷告。

为彼此祝福的祷告

愿你所作的一切都美好
你所吃的都是美食
你所有的朋友和结交的都是好朋友
每天的生活都很美满, 你今年的工作轻松写意
愿上帝赐福与你, 保护你
上帝使他的脸光照你, 赐福给你
上帝向你仰脸, 赐你平安, 阿们

Some information from Wikipedia. ‘Ritual’ adapted from Rev Dr Lorna Khoo and Rev Joshua Loo’s article at <http://aldersgate.sg/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/lo-hei.pdf>

This guide is also available at www.tmc.org.sg/cny2016.html, together with other materials to help you BLESS your family and friends this Lunar New Year.

DOES GOD REQUIRE US TO FOLLOW THE OLD TESTAMENT LAWS ABOUT NOT EATING PORK AND OTHER KINDS OF MEAT TODAY?

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The dietary laws for Israel recorded in Leviticus, chapter 11, which include, for example, a prohibition against eating pork, were given for specific religious and, perhaps, health reasons.

The New Testament, however, makes it clear that observation of these Old Testament food laws for religious reasons is no longer required in the New Testament era. Jesus Himself declared that all foods were “clean” (Mark 7:17-23).

In Acts 10:9-16, Peter was informed by God through a vision that he was not to reject the use of certain animals for food on a religious basis. The apostle Paul also writes, “For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (1 Timothy 4:4).

The Bible makes it clear that “the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17).

There is no saving grace in either eating or not eating certain foods. We are saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; see Ephesians 2:8-10. This, of course, does not mean that all animals we use for food are of equal value when it comes to our health.

Many people feel they can win God’s favor and have eternal life by following the dietary laws of the Old Testament. But this is a misunderstanding. You cannot save yourself—but Christ can, and He will as you commit your life to Him by faith.



Image credit: <https://www.supplybunny.com>



Tricia Tong

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

The Old Testament dietary prohibitions were closely related to the worship of God. One's obedience on these detailed food laws showed how important one considered the worship of God to be. Simply put, if a person worshipped God, he would obey God's commands.

An insistence in following the Old Testament dietary laws today on the basis that if one doesn't, then one would not be saved, flies in the face of the coming of Jesus. God has made a new covenant with man that is based on grace and faith. Any blind, legalistic practice or ritual makes a nonsense of Eph 2:8, 9.

Nothing that we do can save us. We are saved by Christ Jesus, and him alone.

She who leads three small groups isn't more worthy of a place in paradise than one of the members in those small groups.

He who helps the poor is not more holy than she who comforts the bereaved.

"— not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph 2:9).

But even in the Old Testament, God already gives us big clues that he desires obedience, not sacrifice.

In 1 Sam 13:7b-14, Saul grew impatient waiting for the prophet, Samuel to offer the burnt offering. Saul presented the burnt offering himself. When Samuel showed up, Saul explained that he felt "compelled" to make the burnt offering. Samuel said to Saul that the latter had not kept God's commandment and so his kingdom would not continue.

God still demands obedience from us in many things. In these things, there is no change, whether or not Old Testament food laws have been abolished.

"The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal 5:19)

Perhaps we don't indulge in witchcraft. But which of us has never felt a tinge of envy or a surge of rage?

As we reach for that piece of *bak kwa* (barbequed pork) this Lunar New Year, we would do well to remember that we fall short of the glory of God. But by the grace of God, and faith in Jesus, we are assured of eternal life with him. We should give thanks in abundance indeed.

you are PIG



Rev Sng Chong Hui

Lunar New Year is drawing near.

This is the Year of the Pig. The piggy icons are everywhere on decorations, *hongbaos* (red packets). They will make their way into our video greetings very soon.

I don't subscribe to the interpretations of the Chinese zodiac, but the Word of the Lord tells us:

*"Since you were **precious in My sight**, you have been honoured and I have loved you" (Isaiah 43:4).*

We are PIG - **Precious In God!**

When you look at your children, no matter how naughty, stubborn or disobedient they might be, remember - they are PIG.

When you look at your teenage nieces and nephews, no matter how funky they might appear in their dressing and the way they talk, remember - they are PIG.

When you are in your advanced years, needing support and assistance, feeling empty and useless, remember - you are PIG!

When you face the raging battle of low self-worth in the lowest moments of your life, remember - you are PIG!

When you pass through the troubled waters of life, cross the swollen river of stress and pressures, face the fiery flame of crises and challenges, God says, *"I will be with you"* (Isaiah 43:2). It is because you are PIG (Isaiah 43:4).

You are PIG, in spite of all your problems, weaknesses and failures.

God loves you. If God has a desktop display in heaven, He will have your picture on it. God is like some lover, who has tattooed the name of the one He loves. He has your name and mine inscribed on His hand. He says, *"See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands"* (Isaiah 49:16).

God even asks a bizarre question, *"Can a woman forget her nursing child?"* (Isaiah 49:15a). Not at all. Even if she could, God says, *"Yet I will not forget you"* (Isaiah 49:15b).

For that, we celebrate not the Lunar New Year pig, but the fact that we are "Precious In God" this year and always.

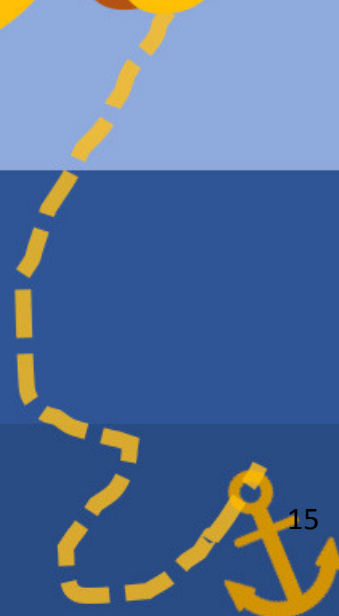
7 - 10 JUNE
HATTEN HOTEL MELAKA

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Deeper

EPHESIANS 3:14-19
TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH CAMP 2019



IN & ABOUT TMC

A TOTFUL MORNING CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION



YOUNG ADULTS MINISTRY CHRISTMAS



YOUTH AVENUE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION



DOMESTIC HELPERS CHRISTMAS PARTY



MANDARIN SERVICE CHRISTMAS
OUTREACH IN PONTIAN



GOLDEN GINGER CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION



CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE



Hay, they were baptised!



Chew Kim Ling

I have had a challenging and discouraging journey reaching out to loved ones who have yet to know Christ and whose hearts are hardened. However, over the past one year, God has lifted my soul by allowing me to be part of the Hay family story of salvation.

Love for the lost souls

Irene Hay and her family have been attending TMC for many years. I know her to be a bright and cheerful sister-in-Christ. But I didn't know that Irene, whose parents have passed away, has only one younger sibling, Harry whom she loves.

Harry was a devout Buddhist who went on regular pilgrimages to Thailand to pray to the Buddhist deities. Irene loved her brother very much and shared her faith with Harry. However, her invitations for Harry to come to church met with rejection. But Irene persevered in her prayers. When there was an outreach event in TMC in 2014, she invited Harry and he finally accepted her invitation.

Faith in God's Timing

That became the turning point for Harry who felt a connection when Rev Oh Beng Kee shared about praying to God versus praying to other deities. However, Harry did not pursue this any further. He continued to practise his Buddhist faith until one day, Irene in love and exasperation asked Harry: "When will you open your heart to God? Are you going to wait until you can't walk to church before you will believe?"

Thank God Harry's heart began to soften. In 2015, Irene told him about the Alpha course in TMC, and he agreed to attend with his wife Shirley, a Christian who had also been praying for Harry's salvation.

It takes a Community of Faith

Also in 2015, our small group HIS Family, after much deliberation and prayer, decided to respond to the Church's call for a small group to "anchor" the 2015 Alpha session. Little did we know that that would become a blessing for us even though we thought we were going to bless others.

We initially hesitated because most of our members were unfamiliar with Alpha and did not feel equipped to be able to be host the sessions. However, we were given training before the sessions and discovered that the key principle of hosting an Alpha session is to show love and hospitality, and allow our guests to express themselves freely without feeling any pressure or judgment. The "heavy lifting" of sharing God's Word was done through the well-prepared videos. We only needed to allow the Holy Spirit to guide the post-video discussions and to move hearts.

It was during this 12-week Alpha session that we came to know Harry and Shirley. Through open sharing and sincere friendship, trust and love began to develop as we walked together in this journey of knowing and sharing about Jesus Christ in our personal lives.

The joy that we experienced when Harry declared at the end of the Alpha session that he wanted to receive Christ as his Lord and be baptised was indescribable. It also boosted our faith, including mine, that our loved ones might also be saved in God's perfect timing. We are now much blessed that both Harry and Shirley are precious members in our small group. We recently celebrated Christmas by organising a BLESS party, inviting our pre-believing family and friends to share the love of God through carols, food and fellowship.

Go and make disciples

Around September 2018, Harry started to reach out in love to his Buddhist aunt, Mdm Tay Yan Woon, since he now believed in the sovereign power of our Heavenly God and the resurrection power of Jesus Christ.

In November, Harry brought Mdm Tay to attend TMC's Mandarin Service. That was his aunt's first visit to a church. She felt the warmth of the TMC family and made friends with Gan's mother on that first visit (Gan is a member of HIS small group and his mother is a regular at the Mandarin service).

By God's amazing grace, after two visits to church, on 11 Nov 18, Mdm Tay declared that she wanted to receive Christ and she was led by Rebekah, wife of lay ministry staff Eddie Goh, to pray in the TMC Plaza to receive Christ into her heart. Mdm Tay was eventually baptised on Christmas Day 2018 – Hallelujah!

Holy Spirit works so that we may joyfully reap together

I am so thankful and privileged to be able to witness God's redemptive plan at work through the years. I have begun to understand that whilst God has His own timing, we are His instruments on earth and need to be willing to be used by Him. It is then that we will be empowered by the Holy Spirit and not rely on our own strength and might. We are to work out our faith in action and be assured that His Kingdom work is not a solo assignment but one to be carried out joyfully as a community of faith, the Body of Christ.



HIS small group's Christmas party with the Hays in attendance



Mdm Tay's baptism



Hay family photo taken after Mdm Tay's baptism



Clockwise from top:
Harry, Rebekah, Mdm Tay



Clockwise from top left:
Harry, Gan, Gan's mother,
Mdm Tay

The only way to go - Discipling Relationships



Rev Alvin Chan

The ever-popular and polemic USA Today columnist, Cal Thomas, himself an evangelical Christian, once made the statement that *“the problem in our culture . . . isn’t the abortionists. It isn’t the pornographers or drug dealers or criminals. It is the undisciplined, undisciplined, disobedient, and Biblically ignorant Church of Jesus Christ.”*

I am one of those who agrees with this analysis.

More often than not, the Church stands and casts the first stone at the immoral and tarnished world, not realising that we are very much part of the problem as well because the Church has not been able to live out a workable solution for the people in the world. I will not go so far, however, as to throw stones at the Church. Instead, I believe that the darker the night, the brighter the stars. The darkness of the world can be overcome by the light of the gospel of Christ. For that to happen, the Church must begin to shine.

The Church must become again, disciplined, disciplined, obedient according to the Word of God. And that is why I can confidently submit that the only way for the Church to become that is through Discipling Relationships.

“Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time” by Greg Ogden is a book that has transformed my pastoral goals and aspiration. From there I am convinced that as a pastor, my crucial role is to disciple others such that in time to come, these whom I disciple can go on and disciple others.

Each one of us, becoming more like Christ, which is what it means to be a disciple, and supporting one another to do likewise, will steadily bring the Church back to her necessary position as the light of the world. The challenge is immense, to put it mildly, but I see no other way the Church can assume this assignment of leading the world back to God – being disciples and making disciples.

Let me summarise from Ogden's book 2 main points on how to be and make disciples.

1. Disciples can only be produced in a trusting relationship.

"Every believer or inquirer must be given the opportunity to be invited into a relationship of intimate trust that provides the opportunity to explore and apply God's Word within a setting of relational motivation, and finally, make a sober commitment to a covenant of accountability."

It is only when we are comfortable enough that we will let our guard down and converse on the deeper things in life. It is only in trusting relationships when we will allow ourselves and others to reach deep into us and bring to surface the most intimate concerns and our true self.

I agree with Ogden when he said *"Disciples cannot be mass produced. We cannot drop people into a program and see disciples emerge at the end of the production line. It takes time to make disciples. It takes individual personal attention."*

The DR provides that environment. Just like every living thing needs air, water and sunlight to grow healthily, a discipling relationship is built around trust and intimacy. Small enough to be comfortable, enough to be deep and caring.

2. Discipleship must be hands-on.

Just like you will never learn how to swim or ride a bicycle by reading a manual or watching a training video, discipleship can never be learnt in full unless we are submersed in it.

"Discipleship training is not about information transfer, from head to head, but imitation, life to life. You can ultimately learn and develop only by doing."

I like what Ogden says here. Life to life. This method was itself brought to prominence because this was the method of Jesus. We call it the Incarnation. God with us. It was good enough for Jesus, it must be good enough for us.

Conclusion

Let me try and enthuse you with this vision of Ogden.

"Can you imagine the kingdom impact if every believer had the opportunity to be involved in an intensive, year-long relationship with at least two others whose expressed purpose was to grow to become a reproducing disciple of Jesus? Church life would shift from the ministry of professionals to a mobilized body of multipliers."

This is to me, is what we must become. A mobilized body of multipliers! This is how we can then go on to impact our immediate community. The only way to go about doing this - Discipling Relationships!

FAQ on DRs

1. I am in a Small Group (SG). Does that mean I am in a DR?

Being in a Small Group (SG) is slightly different from being in a Discipleship Relationship (DR). SGs have been around in TMC for a long time, and so have different forms – some are actually quite large, with more than 20 persons and meet once a month. In some SGs, because people have been hanging around with each other for a long time, they have formed close relationships. Some SGs do a mixture of bible study, fellowship and prayer, while some SGs focus more on one of these aspects. Therefore, SGs can be quite varied in terms of form and substance. Many SGs are open to new people joining at any point in time.

DRs on the other hand are groups of three people (maximum four, and best if all are of the same gender) who gather to seek to grow in maturity as disciples of Christ. In such a close group, people can be more vulnerable with each other about sin and struggles in life. There can also be deeper transparency and accountability which develops when we have built close bonds of love and trust. DRs also meet for a fixed period of time, e.g. one year, and then together assess whether they would like to continue in this relationship for another fixed term. Since we never finish growing in our discipleship, we shouldn't stop being in a DR—when one DR commitment ends, we start another DR with two other people.

2. I want to be in a DR. How do I join?

Ask two other friends if they would like to be in a DR with you, and if they agree, you have formed a DR.

Alternatively, if you would like the church to help you, give your name to the Discipleship and Nurture committee through the church office or iSunday Counter. Someone from the committee will be in touch with you to find out about your preferences with regard to time and people, and we will match you with an appropriate group, or help you form a group.

3. Who can lead a DR?

A DR can consist of peers who have chosen to come together to grow in maturity as disciples. Among you there should be one person who is committed to facilitating your time together and ensuring that there is spiritual growth.

A DR can also be a relationship where two people get together with a more mature Christian. The spiritually more mature person will of course be the leader.

There are other tasks within a DR, including administrative tasks such as reminding others about meeting times, and preparing the place, and these could be shared among the group members.

4. What should we do in a DR?

Everything that can help you grow in your discipleship. Often this includes studying scripture, or a book together (see “resources” below). This study gives you input for your growth, so that you are not just chatting, or worse, gossiping about other people. We encourage you to practise the L3 DNA of Loving, Learning and Leading. That is, when you meet, you spend some time loving one another, finding out how you are; learning together from Scripture or a book; and leading where you seek to grow in your discipleship.

5. How long should each DR meet-up last?

Depending on what you do, meeting times would probably take a couple of hours which would be enough time for the group to share in some depth and pray together. As a general guideline, we suggest meeting for two hours, once a month. Some groups may start with a meal to catch up with each other, before going to a quieter place for the deeper sharing, study and prayer. Other meetings may start with sharing and prayer and then adjourn to share a meal or a drink.

6. What resources are there for me to use in a DR?

There are different materials which will help your group grow in maturity. Here are some suggestions. You can contact Park Ming at parkming@tmc.org.sg for other suggestions.

- a. Pastor Benny Ho has written **7 Virtues for Effective Living – Keys to Building a Healthy Culture** which is based on Matthew 25:21, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” This series is helpful for those growing in their Christian character.
- b. For growing in a more contemplative spiritual life, Ruth Haley Barton has written a number of books such as **Sacred Rhythms** or **Life Together**.
- c. For groups of leaders, and for growing in leadership, the series **Lead Like Jesus** by Ken Blanchard & Phil Hodges with Steve Gardner has 4 guides on The Heart of a Great Leader, The Head of a Great Leader, the Hands of a Great Leader and The Habits of a Great Leader.

#relationshipgoals

We've heard about Discipleship Relationships (DRs) from the pulpit, but what happens when real people decide to form real relationships with fellow disciples in Christ?

DRs may not always look the same, and each DR is likely to be at a different stage in its DR-journey. Let's read how Kelvin and Poh Kit's DRs were formed and how they have grown.

Kelvin, Poh Kit, Joshua and Lynette

Kelvin:

I met Joshua in Phnom Penh when he was staying with Jacob Cheng and Wai Cheng (who were missionaries) in 2012.

Joshua was a university student then. He was inspired by Jacob's ministry in Cambodia, and decided to spend time in shadow-ing Jacob to appreciate the latter's missionary work.

When we returned to Singapore, we kept in touch with Joshua. We invited him to TMC, and sent him messages on Sunday mornings to remind him to join us for service. He joined us for service fairly regularly. We would invite him to lunch with us or over to our home for fellowship, to get to know him better.

Before long, he brought his girlfriend, Lynette to TMC.

The bond and relationship between the four of us continued, and we became an informal DR.

Soon, they worshipped at the 11:15am service. We would spend several hours on Sunday afternoon together, sharing and fellowshiping.

They joined a small group and are now actively serving in the audio-visual ministry at the 11:15am service.

We had a recent Christmas eve BLESS dinner together and invited Lynette's mother (who does not know Jesus) to share with her God's love and blessings. When Lynette's father was ill, together with Jacob, we visited him to minister to him.

We have fondly adopted Joshua and Lynette as our "spiritual children".



Clockwise L-R: Kelvin, Poh Kit, Lynette, Joshua

Poh Kit, Cheng Lian and Christina

Poh Kit:

After many reminders by Ps Alvin on making disciples, I felt led to 'just do it'.

I intentionally looked around and spotted Christina. I decided to ask her if she would like to start a DR with me. She agreed.

At the Connection Cafe, I met Cheng Lian, a newcomer to TMC. I also felt led to invite her to join the DR. But before I could speak to her about the DR, Park Ming asked if I could disciple Cheng Lian. I took this as a confirmation from God.

And so our DR was formed in Feb 2017.

We meet every Sunday from 11am to noon or 12.30 pm in a corner of the TMC Plaza.

We have agreed to support, encourage and build one another up spiritually. During our sessions, we start with sharing about God's work in our lives, our problems and prayer requests. This is kept private and confidential. Then we pray and study God's Word before we end with prayer and a word of encouragement.

We started on the book "Personal Basics for the Journey" by Benny Ho. Subsequently, we embarked on "The 2:7 series" which consists of three books. As we study the Word, we also attempt to memorise verses, pray for one another and our families.

The DR has helped us to discipline ourselves to read the Bible daily, beyond the study book, so that we can grow deeper, be rooted and built up in Him, and strengthened in the faith, to overflow with thankfulness.



L-R: Christina, Poh Kit and Cheng Lian

EVENTS

Sat 2 Feb, 9 Mar, 6 Apr

10.00am Youth Avenue Leaders Captains' Development I
www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123

Sat 9 Feb, 13 Apr

10.00am Youth Ave Leaders Captains' Development II

Sat 9 Feb

1.00pm Youth Ave Leaders Captains' Development III

Fri 15 Feb

and every Fri until 15 Nov

7.30pm Disciple IV
www.tmc.org.sg/d&n.html#discipleiv

Thurs 21 – Sat 23 Feb

Leaders' planning retreat

Thurs 21 Feb

and every Thurs until 6 Jun

2.00pm Precept upon Precept – 1 and 2 Samuel
www.tmc.org.sg/d&n.html#pup

Sat 23 Feb

1.00pm Youth Avenue Lunar New Year steamboat

Sat 2 Mar

10.00am Youth Avenue Leaders Captains' Development I, II and III

Tues 5 Mar

and every Tues until 23 Jul

7.30pm Precept upon Precept – Gospel of John, Part I
www.tmc.org.sg/d&n.html#pup

Wed 6 Mar

8.00pm Ash Wednesday service

Sat 16 Mar, 20 Apr

10.00am Youth Ave Leaders Captains' Development III

Wed 20 Mar

3.00pm Youth Avenue nerf games

Thurs 21 Mar

Mandarin Service's mission trip

Sun 24 Mar

9.30am Books & Brunch by TMC Family & Community Ministry

Sun 31 Mar

11.15am Boys' and Girls' Brigades enrolment service

Mon 15 Apr to Thurs 18 Apr

8.00pm Holy Week services

Fri 19 Apr

3.00pm Good Friday service

Sat 20 Apr

1.00pm Youth Avenue Easter celebration

Sun 21 Apr

6.30am Easter Sunrise service
9.00am Combined English Easter Sunday service, with baptism of infants and adults
11.00am Mandarin Service

Every Sun

9.30am Mandarin Service Prayer Meeting
After the 11.15am service Young Adults' Lunch Fellowship

Last Sun of the month

9.00am
Visit to Institute of Mental Health by Outreach & Social Concerns.
Contact Yvonne Tan at 9091 8589 / yvonnnetangb@gmail.com
www.tmc.org.sg/osc.html#imh

Every Wed

(not 6 Feb, 6 Mar, 17 Apr)

8.00pm Church Prayer Meeting
www.tmc.org.sg/prayer.html

Every 1st Wed (6 Feb meeting postponed to 13 Feb)

10.00am-12.00pm
Yum Cha@10 is an opportunity for people to come together for fellowship, and serves as a platform for TMCers to meet one another as well as non-Christians in the community mid-week. Contact the church office / churchoffice@tmc.org.sg
www.tmc.org.sg/ministries.html#gym

1.00-3.00pm

Rummikub

Every Thurs (not 7 Feb)

9.00am A Tot-ful Morning
A time for caregivers and children aged 0-3 years old to enjoy songs, stories and other activity
www.tmc.org.sg/highlights.html#atm;
www.facebook.com/atotfulmorning

Last Thurs of the month (not in Feb and Mar)

10.00am-12.00pm
St Luke's Eldercare Centre Devotions at Blk 217 Serangoon Ave 4. TMC's ministry to SLEC brings hope, help and the love of Christ to many needy elderly. If you wish to join in, contact Eddie from the church office / eddie@tmc.org.sg.
www.tmc.org.sg/osc.html#slec

Every Fri

8.00 – 10.00pm
Healing Ministry at the Prayer Chapel

Every 1st and 3rd Fri (after Lunar New Year)

9.15am WSCS Bible Study (Acts)

2nd and 4th Sat

9.30am
Fellowship of Ukulelians
www.tmc.org.sg/regular.html#ukulele

Monthly

WSCS Visitation to Homebound. Those interested to bring the church into the homes of the homebound, please contact Emily Wilfred. Group leaves TMC at 10am.

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