



水湾之声

Ripples from the Bay

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本堂主理 蔡伟山牧师

家庭祭坛——筑坛者，由我开始

家庭原本应是一个享受天伦之乐、身心灵命成长的地方，但是家庭也可能是一个造成彼此伤害和拆毁的场所。

常言道：“家家有本难念的经。”的确，许多时候，家人与家人之间所发生的矛盾与冲突，皆非我们局外人所能理解的。

更无法插手其间成为适当的“和事老”。不过，当我们信靠主耶稣，宣告祂成为“我家之主”，让他来掌权和处理，并在家庭中设立敬拜上帝的祭坛，这样，“难念的经”必然得以转化为家家有本该念的经——圣经。

以下特举出圣经中三位有关筑祭坛的美好见证
挪亚——尊上帝为大的筑坛者

圣经中的“家庭祭坛”，起源于（创8：18-20）。根据的圣经记载，当时，上帝因看见人类心里所隐藏着的是极大的恶念，因此祂决定用大水来消灭人类；但另一方面又因出于恩典，上帝保留了挪亚一家人。

大水毁灭了整个邪恶的世界后，人类的新始祖——挪亚，他在洪水消退后走出方舟所做的第一件事就是：“为耶和华筑了一座坛，拿各类洁净的牲畜、飞鸟献在坛上为燔祭。”

创（8：20）这就是人类建立的第一个“家庭祭坛”。家庭祭坛需要时间和耐心来营造，献上祭物也需要付出代价；而献祭者存着敬畏的心则更为重要。敬畏的心是上帝所悦纳的，也能成为后代子孙的榜样，塑造与建立他们对信仰秉持正确和积极的心态。

因此，到了后世就出现了另一位以上帝为中心的筑坛者——亚伯拉罕。昔日，亚伯拉罕凭着信心离开自己的故乡，遵循上帝的指示前往一个未知的陌生地去。在整个旅程中，亚伯拉罕每到一个地方，就设立祭坛，并带领全家人来敬拜上帝，重温上帝的应许，并重新立约。（创12：7）建立祭坛所带出的意义；表明我们无论在何处都可以筑坛来敬拜上帝，以祂为中心、作为生命的焦点。

而圣经中的另一位历史人物——约书亚，也是个负有重大使命的筑坛者

当约书亚晓得自己在世的时间不多了，他就召集以色列众支派聚集在示剑，重申上帝救赎的爱和以色列民所经历的种种神迹，为要避免以色列的后代离开上帝（书24：1-14）。他便向他们慎重地作出信仰的告白：“至于我和我家，我们必定事奉耶和华。”（书24：15）他也要求众人表明立场，专心归向耶和华（书24：23）。

因此，建立“家庭祭坛”来传承信仰，也是我们这一代的使命，以便将我们蒙恩的使命代代延续。而我们的回应是：委身成为筑坛者

传道者说：“看风的，必不撒种；望云的，必不收割。”（传11：4）

若我们时常找各种理由和借口如：孩子还小、工作繁忙、家人还未信主等理由来推延委身的侍奉，那我们就只能在原地踏步，裹足不前。日子久了，难免不进则退。

其实，委身成为筑坛者，要从我们个人开始：积极培养有纪律的灵修。倘若你已许久没读经、祷告，请别再拖延，现在就立刻开始；敞开心扉与上帝立志，恳求祂帮助你每天都与主亲近。并邀请家人一起建立祭坛。已有自己家庭的弟兄姐妹，让我们踏出第一步，以教会的节期作为起点，采用教会所提供的家庭祭坛资料，开始落实“属灵生命的千里之行”。而一些单身的弟兄姐妹，可以主动与小组组员或其他弟兄姐妹一起聚会，彼此分享主恩，见证主爱，互相鼓励。因为，凡在主里的都是一家人。

虽然，要在生命中建立属灵的祭坛，无论对个人或家庭都是一项需要不断努力的长远工作。因此，若觉得自己还做得不够时，只要专心依靠主必然得以加强；若软弱跌倒的，依然可以靠主再次爬起来。在上帝眼中，永远没有太迟，或不可能，只怕我们不开始。

结语：

教会鼓励每位信徒建立家庭祭坛，是因为晓得家人之间若要和睦共处，彼此接纳，是需要靠上帝的帮助方能成事。而建立个人或家庭祭坛，更需要我们腾出更多的时间和精力。藉着读经祷告，敞开心扉来与上帝亲近，好让上帝动工，亲身带领，使家人之间能在主的爱里经历饶恕与和好的自由与温馨。

与家人和好

陈树霖教授

耶稣说最大的诫命是：“你要尽心、尽性、尽意爱主你的上帝。其次也相仿，就是要爱人如己。”（太22：37，39）这诫命正配合本堂去年与今年的主题。去年的主题是“与上帝和好”；今年的主题是“与家人和好”，而且，今年的主题是分三个阶段进行：与自己和好、与家庭和好、与信心社体和好。耶稣所说的诫命表面上看来，好像是两条诫命。但注意耶稣说“其次也相仿”，意思是第二条诫命其实与第一条诫命是一样的，就如一个钱币有两面。遵行第一条诫命的就会遵行第二条，或说，遵行第二条诫命的，也就是遵行第一条。（约壹4：20，21）说：“不爱他所看见的弟兄，就不能爱没有看见的上帝。爱上帝的，也当爱弟兄。”同样地，在绵羊与山羊的比喻中，耶稣对绵羊说：“这些事你们既做在我这弟兄中一个最小的身上，就是做在我身上了。”（太25：40）换句话说，本堂去年的主题的实现，就会自然地引进今年的主题。

有解经家认为“爱人如己”意思是要我们先爱自己，然后才会爱别人。但保罗吩咐我们“各人看别人比自己强。”（腓2：3）。耶稣基督也吩咐我们要“捨己”，意即“放弃自己的利益”。那么，我们如何解释“爱人如己”呢？我们可以从两个观点来看：

1. “爱人如己”不是基于“爱自己”，而是始于“自爱”。“自爱”不同于“爱自己”。“自爱”乃是“洁身自爱”，即“自重”，尊重自己，接纳自己，不随意糟蹋自己，“自爱”不是以“自我为中心”作为出发点，而是基于认识自己的身体为上帝的殿。大卫王在诗139：14里说：“我受造奇妙可畏。”我们每个人都是上帝的杰作，是上帝所看为宝贵，且有价值的。

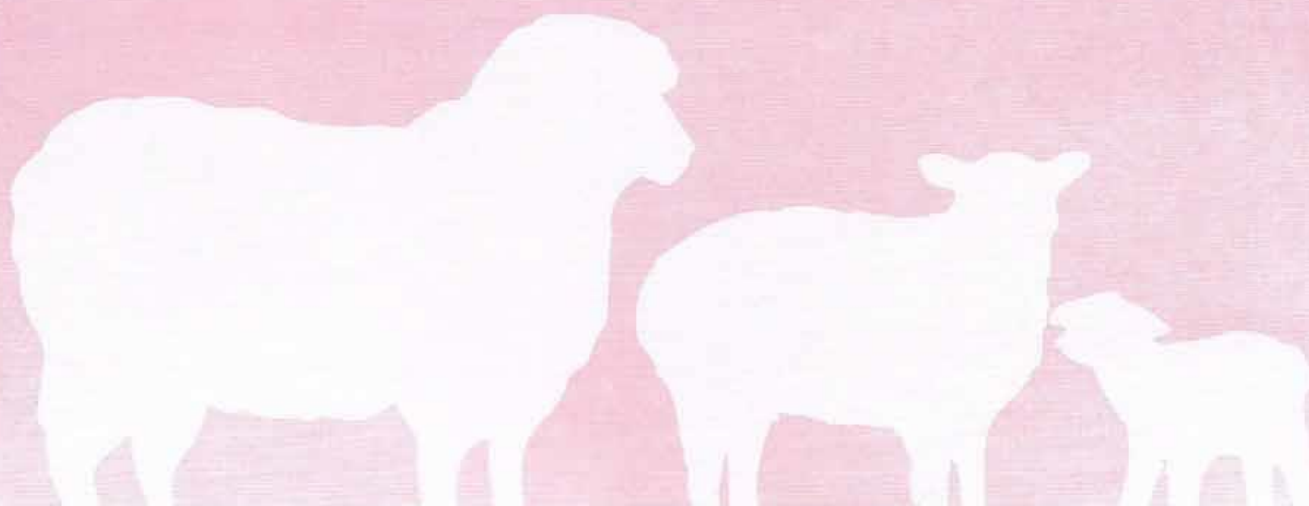
2. 人都有保护自己身体的本能，保罗在（弗5：29）如此说：“从来没有人恨恶自己的身子，总是保养顾惜……”我太太最近跌伤了左脚膝盖，伤口经两周才完全复原。在这期间，她不时细心洗伤口与敷药。这是人照顾自己的本能。所以，耶稣强调“爱人如己”，祂的意思是要我们将照顾自己的本能施与其他人的身上。

如果我们存着“爱人如己”的心态，那我们就能够从自己开始，与家人，以及教会的弟兄姐妹们彼此相爱，而达到“与家人和好”的目标。耶稣对门徒说：“你们若有彼此相爱的心，众人因此就认出你们是我的门徒了。”（约13：35）。相反地，如果我们像哥林多教会信徒那样；时常闹纷争（林前1：10），我们的教会就不能荣耀上帝的圣名。许多时候，纷争出自言语。因此，我们彼此间的言语，是我们在“与家人和好”的事上，所要学习的功课。

我要从圣经角度，与大家分享以下“三不说”与“三要说”的功课。

三不说	三要说
不说伤人的话： 伤人的话引起争吵，（箴15：1）指导我们：“回答柔和，使怒消退；言语暴戾，触动怒气。”有人建议，每当伤人的话未出口之前，心里数“一、二、三”之后，就容易制止之。	要说造就人的话： 如保罗所说的：“只要随事说造就人的好话，叫听见的人得益处。”（弗4：29）一句赞赏人的话，能给对方极大的喜乐与鼓舞。
不说埋怨的话： 保罗说：“所行的，都不要发怨言，起争论。”（腓2：14）我们常把事情的不顺利归咎于别人，因此，怨言百出。	要说感恩的话： 正如保罗的勉励：“凡事谢恩。”（帖前5：18）对任何不顺利的事，让我们从正面来看上帝的作为，而献上感恩。
不说闲话： （箴18：8）如此说“传舌人的言语如同美食，深入人的心腹。”让我们立志作闲言闲语的终点站，对任何传入我们耳中的闲语，不加盐加醋，更不将它再传出去。	要说合宜的话： 让我们把保罗在腓4：8所例出，应思念的事传出去：“凡是真实的、可敬的、公义的、清洁的、可爱的、有美名的，若有什麼德行，若有什麼称赞，这些事你们都要思念。”

其实，保罗在（弗5：29）所说的话，是在谈论夫妻关系。让我们来看更完整的经文：“丈夫也当照样爱妻子，如同爱自己的身子；爱妻子便是爱自己了。从来没有人恨恶自己的身子，总是保养顾惜，正像基督待教会一样。”（弗5：28，29）夫妻关系也是我们本堂在推动今年主题时，所关注的一个课题。“与家人和好”的成功与否，有赖健康的夫妻关系。因此，我也在此与大家分享“夫妻关系”的心得。



今年十月间，本堂主理蔡伟山牧师、和我与太太婉英受邀到印尼雅加达，参加印尼华人基督教会联合会十周年庆典。蔡牧师受邀于主日在以马内利卫理公会礼拜堂证道，讲题是有关夫妻关系。他在讲道结束前请我上台分享，如何保持我与太太四十二年的婚姻。我以（何11：4）所提的“慈绳爱索”分三点与会众分享：

1. 四十二年前我与婉英在上帝面前，已立约让上帝用“慈绳爱索”把我们两人绑在一起。不论安逸与衰弱；富裕与贫穷；健康与衰弱；我们都不离不弃。而且也认定上帝所配合的，人不可分开。因此，“分开”的意念不在我们的脑海中。今日，许多夫妻在争吵中，动不动就提出“分离”恐吓对方，这已违背了在上帝面前的立约。
2. “绑在一起”意味着两人已成为一体，正如圣经所说：“人要离开父母，与妻子连合，二人成为一体。”（创2：24）夫妻的关系是人际关系中最亲密，成为一体的结合是神圣的，故必须珍惜与保护。我曾听过家庭辅导员忠告夫妻时如此说：“在争吵时切勿利用夫妻的关系向对方摊牌，对抗，如此很容易陷入撒但的引诱，以致让第三者乘虚而入，导致婚外情甚至婚姻破裂。”
3. “绑在一起”也表明我们两人已接受对方在性格、嗜好、看法、行事等各方面的差异。因此，林前13：7成为我们四十二年来的生活功课：凡事包容，凡事相信，凡事盼望，凡事忍耐。

婉英性格外向，而我较内向。她凡事不疾不徐，我却是急性的。她喜欢与人交谈，我则较含蓄。感谢主，这些性格上的差异，并没有成为我担任会友领袖与探访事工的阻力，反而成了我的助力。

当然，保罗在以弗所书中，不是只单单谈及夫妻关系。他也谈论父母与儿女、主人与仆人之间的关系。因此，教会里，所有弟兄姐妹，不论已婚或单身，都应认清上帝在他们身上美好的旨意，并肯定自己在上帝面前的价值，从而学习“爱人如己”的功课，并共同朝向本堂今年的目标而努力：“与家人和好”！

常怀感恩之心，常为感恩之行

许群

转眼又到感恩节，在我看来，感恩应是基督徒生命中常存的一种心态。而基督徒的【感恩】，绝非是一种有条件的交易，更不是一种礼貌上的礼尚往来。乃是因为我们原本不配，却蒙受了一份极为“不配得”，“珍贵”的恩典——就是上帝在祂儿子耶稣基督里成就的救恩，使一切信祂的，不至灭亡，反得永生。故此，我们必须由衷的献上感恩。这份恩典诚然丰丰富富、有形有体地居住在基督里，凡在祂里面的也得了丰盛。为此，基督徒的感恩是有着终极的目标和对象；是一股向上的力量，向着宇宙的中心、神的宝座发出；是一份至圣的感激，为着神所赐的丰盛的新生命由衷地感恩，并且凡事谢恩。

自从2014年以来，我就与【感恩节】结下了不解之缘。那一年的感恩节，是我人生中的一个重要转折点，它为我敞开人生舞台的另一道风景，将我安置在生与死的狭窄隧道之中，经历一场生死交锋的考验！

话说2014年11月3日，我依约赴苏州市立医院妇科周医生的门诊。没料到才刚踏进门诊，即刻被安排去住院部检查，而检查的结果竟然是越来越糟糕、病情越看越严重！最终医生确诊出是【癌症中晚期】，并告知体内肿瘤已达六公分。从医学角度来看，我已被列入“高危病人”的行列，随时命悬一线。从那一刻起，我就这样正式与【癌】狭路相逢了。

2014年的感恩节前夕，11月19日，上帝奇迹般地为我预备了上海肿瘤医院妇科“第一把刀”李

子庭教授亲临苏州，为我主刀。在人看来几乎无可救药的情况下，李教授仅用了110分钟，完成了一台不可思议的大手术。手术过程中不但没有出现可怕的大出血，反而连一滴血也没有输入。而病灶——六公分的肿瘤和一切可能被癌细胞感染的淋巴结也被一一清除。我已然度过了生命中最危险的时刻！的确，手术台上，医生施展了超凡的医术；而手术室外，是一大群迫切地为我向神祷告的弟兄姐妹。而垂听祷告的上帝，也及时伸出大能的膀臂，带领我穿越了死荫幽谷，引领我躺卧在青草地上，享受祂所赐的生命。

2015年初春，经过25次放疗、6次化疗之后，我的身体已受了巨大的药物摧残。由于免疫功能的下降，身体变得虚弱，心灵也变得脆弱了。常常要承受各种疼痛的搅扰；先后出现淋巴回流阻塞、带状疱疹、腱鞘炎等等，每一个症状的发生，都带来致命性的疼痛。然而，靠着爱我们的主，在这种情况下，我竟然“过关难过关过”！疾病不但没有把我的身体击垮，反而因着主的应许与怜悯，心灵更加坚强。随着时间的流逝，身体也越来越健康。不久又到了感恩节，我非常期待与弟兄姐妹们一同欢庆这个节日，以弥补2014年错过的感恩节。

然而，天有不测风云：2015年11月26日感恩节当天，气温陡然下降，天气变得异常寒冷，就在我走向欢庆感恩节会场的路上，我开始不住地发抖。那五分钟的路程，我就在不停地祷告中步履蹒跚地走完。没想到一踏进会场，就一头栽倒在一张长沙发上。不一会儿，我觉得后

(左)温仪丽 (中)许群 (右)陈华妤



脊梁骨一阵阵地发热，继而全身发烧。那一天的感恩节我竟然在高烧中迷迷糊糊地度过。更糟的是：高烧竟然延续到第二天晚上，而我的左腿突然痛得不能动弹，类似坐骨神经痛，但却又超过那种痛楚！

更料想不到的是；手术后一整年，我再次与【癌】相遇：癌细胞藉着高烧强势回归，一瞬间扩散到我的股骨头，大腿肌肉、以及腰脊椎上。接着癌细胞又牢牢地锁定了我的左半身，令我几乎半身不遂，并且时刻威胁着我的性命。显然病情急速恶化，犹如再次将我抛入死亡的幽谷，而死神诚然像吼叫的狮子疯狂地向我咆哮袭击，企图碾压粉碎我的生命！

就这样，从2015年12月一直到2016年5月，我从一个医院转到另一个医院，从一个病区转到另一个病区，从一个手术室转到另一个手术室，从一个放疗室转到另一个放疗室，从坐着去放疗到躺着去放疗。如果用「惊涛骇浪」、「波澜起伏」、「惊心动魄」来形容我当时的病况，一点也不夸张。事实上，与【骨癌】交战注定是一场硬仗，是与死神一决雌雄的生死战。死啊！你得胜的权势在哪里？死啊！你的毒钩在哪里？（林前15:55）

我确知；疾病彻底将我从世界的桎梏中释放出来并带到上帝面前，直面向生命的本源。从来没想过会有这么一天；生活不能自理，终日卧床不起，无法行动自如。凡事需要依靠他人帮助，甚至连喝水、吃饭、洗脸、刷牙、如厕等，都需要他人帮助。而这样躺着的日子竟然是大半年！不敢想象像我这样一个曾经活蹦乱跳的人怎能忍受得了这种全身不能动弹的日子？一个曾经风风火火、雷厉风行的人怎能忍受这种面对一切都无能为力的现状？

然而，这大半年的卧病不起，却迫使我学习到人生的另一门重要功课：凡事『顺服』，凡事『感恩』。顺服当下，是心灵最自由的释放。感恩处境，是对慈爱上帝的加倍敬畏与尊崇。相信祂掌权，相信祂掌管，凡事皆有最美好的安排。藉着顺服，擦亮心中的眼睛，看清生命的本质，并非“我能，我可以”，却是“你能，你可以”。

如此，2016年几乎一整年在住院、治疗、复查中度过。而被癌细胞侵蚀的腿部肌肉，因着48次的放疗，留下一个可怕的后遗症——肌肉纤

维化，西医视其为不治之症，无药可救；而中医似乎稍微乐观，以为透过按摩刺激经络，促进气血循环，激活僵硬的肌肉。终然中医西医各有各的说法，我们的盼望却始终在于上帝。相信祂说有就有，命立就立，在祂没有难成的事。

进入2017年，似乎也进入了我们人生的春天，我从卧床不起，到坐轮椅，到依靠步行器，到用拐杖行走，每一步都见证着上帝的信实与恩典。今天，当我可以拄着拐杖，一瘸一拐地自由行走时，对于很多知道我病情程度的人，无论是医生、护士，或是弟兄姐妹，都会赞叹上帝的大能；他们看见我，仿佛看见一个起死回生的人，情不自禁地要高唱哈利路亚！阿们！感谢归于上帝！不过，在生病的三年中，除了感谢上帝，还要感谢身边的家人，教会的弟兄姐妹，以及认识与不认识我的、所有为我代祷的教会肢体。尤其是我家小平全身心地付出，无论是在医院，白天黑夜的陪护；还是回家后，无微不至的照顾，都让我的康复之路充满了温馨、安慰与踏实。

回想过去三年的感恩节，疾病让我无缘参与教会的感恩庆祝。而如今，2017年感恩节又悄然而至，我立定心志绝不错过。上帝已然猜透我的小心思，11月23日，感恩节的当天，苏州的天气格外晴朗、也特别温暖，没有刮风，没有寒流。气温回升，不冷不热，恰到好处。我的感恩就从天气开始，为能顺利参加以“让赞美飞扬”为主题的感恩晚会开始，我终于可以回到教会，融入弟兄姐妹的感恩欢庆中。就在那一刻，我将过去三年所经历的一切丰盛恩典，尽都化作感恩的赞美诗——尽情地奉献在至尊至圣的主耶稣基督面前。

有人说：“感恩是一种责任，感恩是一种修行。常怀感恩之心，常为感恩之行。”而我望着清晨阳光明媚的天空，为空气感恩，为光芒感恩，为仍然活着感恩。

（左）施谦益牧师（中）许群（右）陈华如





作者简介

本文作者许群女士，来自苏州。学贯中西，曾在跨国公司担任行政与市场行销要职。信主后，热心事主。数年前曾从国内远道而来，与夫婿一齐在新加坡接受神学与辅导训练；他们也曾是为本堂的实习生。回国后，还建立了“道生教会”，努力扩展上帝国度。

2014年11月间，当她的夫婿正准备再次出国接受更高级的神学训练时，她却被诊断患上癌症。因为这突如其来的病患，他们只好暂时搁下出国的计划，随即就开始了一段非一般的抗癌疗程；在整个疗程中，虽处处历经险境与困扰，却益发彰显出上帝的奇妙大能与大爱！故这期《水湾之声》特别慎重邀请许群女士亲笔撰写这一段非凡的经历，与大家分享。

衷心祝福她早日康复继续为主发光。



(左) 许群 (右) 小平 (许群夫婿)



浅谈生活中的神学与哲学

陈子华传道

按：教会在过去一年举办了一系列的‘静思之旅’，希望借此属灵操练来塑造信徒们的灵性。我仅以此文与大家分享在反思生命中神学与哲学如何相遇。

禁果迷思：我们生活在这世界上，都要面对周围事物和人际间相处的一些问题。而人类的求知欲或是好奇心往往促使人去追求、了解这些问题的真像。虽然这些真像有时是个无法找到答案的谜团。

智慧开端：科学的发达，医学的进步，科技的日新月异，给人类带来了莫大的冲击和改革。新的思想，新的文明和新的文化不断的产生。生活方式也起了重大的变化；从家族群居，到大家庭的多代同堂和夫妻两人世界的小家庭，而至单亲或单身贵族的家庭。这种变化往往导致我们的饮食起居，生活习俗也受到深远的影响。

王道神道：东方世界多数国家都采用家长式的管教。中国在周朝已经开始施行礼教，让人民透过（君王、臣子、父亲、儿子），认清各自的责任和义务，来共同生活在一起。君王更以道教和儒家思想中的道德规范来统治人民。一个好的、有修为的、施[仁]政的君王被喻为得自上天的任命授权，在替天行道。他成为人民心目中的神，万民归顺就得以享受国泰民安。

终极关怀：科研工作的发展迅速，只能达到对宇宙、大自然作较深入的了解，从而去改善生活空间，追求其真、善、美。并且从生命的层面晋升到意识和精神层面；人开始对生命的存在产生兴趣与质疑。人是什么？人从哪里来？往何处去？进一步探讨人为什么生存；什么才是人类生存的意义和人生的终极关怀。

哲学神学：哲学与神学的思考中心都是以人为出发点；前者提出问题，让后者去一一作答。哲学提供一个架构，让神学去表达神的属性，神与人的互动关系和人如何回应神而以适当的态度去与其他人相处。

因此，在哲学里，“存在”是我们的终极关怀，而在神学上研究这些终极关系能让人们更懂得如何去关怀那位关怀我们“存在”的创造主——上帝。

结尾 哲学探讨，改善人生；神学却满足人生的终极关怀。

一点哲思，易让人陷入无神论，深入的哲思；则将人带入神学。



绿本门徒：扎根真道、深入世界

陈树霖教授

去年底在周刊里，看到绿本门徒招生的消息时，本想与太太商讨后才决定是否要参加。但过了一两周后，招生通告竟已消失无踪！一直到了2017年的一月，还是看不到有关消息；过后才知晓原来《绿本门徒》班早已开始！导师仪丽姐妹说，通告一登出不久就已满额，于是停止招生。不过，刚巧最近有两位学员退出，如今正好在寻找后补。感谢上帝巧妙的安排，除了我与太太婉英刚巧及时填满空缺，连小女（意微）也加入了。于是全班14位学员，在仪丽姐妹的带领下，开始了这八个月的门徒旅程！

起初，以为这将是一段漫长难熬的旅程。但想不到，八个月的同行竟在转眼间结束了。虽然，每周的作业，以及每周六晚上的上课，都需要纪律与生活上的调整，的确不简单。但每次上完课，都有莫名的属天满足与喜乐。这次参加门徒课程，深深地感受到一种特殊的经历。以下总结为五点与大家分享：

一·上课地点是在幼稚园课室。我们这些成年人就坐在小小的椅子上，围绕着低低的小桌子，有如幼童们在聆听老师教课。让我想起耶稣吩咐我们要像孩童的教导。小桌子也拉进了彼此间的距离，尤其是在分享与代祷时刻，让我们深深地感受到一种团契间的温馨。

二·我与婉英两个乐龄人士，与一群天真可爱的年轻学员们相处，并不会感到格格不入的所谓“代沟”隔膜。这群活泼幽默的青年，常常使班上充满欢笑。他们之间，虽然常彼此开对方的玩笑，不过对我与婉英两位长辈却也礼貌周到，谦恭有礼。并且愿意听取我们的意见，真是难能可贵。

三·课程是以双语进行的。我与婉英用中文课本，青年学员多用英文课本。课程视频影片是英语原版，课文内容以华语讲解。仪丽特地化一番心血，把讨论的问题以中英文放在投影上。学员们的分享与代祷则中英并重，大家都能交流无阻。这使我想



全班自拍照：（由前排自左开始）
梁启苑、陈意微、
庄胜蓝、陈锦民、
陈以乐、甘琬琳、
何怀哲、曾婉英、
温仪丽、黄子耀、
陈树霖、谢奕堂、
林旨嫣、许欣安、
黄伟萍

起课文中，我们两次学习到巴别塔的功课。第一次是在第二课里，以“骄傲”为主题，引述创世纪十一章所记载的；由于人类的骄傲自大想要建造一座通天的巴别塔，上帝因此变乱人类的语言，以致他们不能彼此沟通。第二次是在第二十五课，主题为“圣灵”，根据使徒行传二章，有关五旬节时，会众虽然语言各异却能沟通。课文说：“五旬节是上帝对巴别塔的回答。”我想我们绿本门徒班的双语交流，也是巴别塔回应的一种体现吧！

四、有数次，堂上的功课是要求学员们于数分钟内，用自己的话根据亲身经历，简述所学习的功课，两次我都被组员们推选为代表。我灵机一动，就在这两次的课堂活动中各作了一首“即兴诗”，与学员们分享其中的乐趣与领悟。第一首诗是根据在第十一课里所领悟到的，该课标题为“救恩”：

幼随妈赴庙祈福，
以后认识主基督。
一生蒙祂多祝福，
学业事业祂看顾。
全家子孙走天路，
立志作好基督徒，
日日赞美我救主。

第二首诗作是在第十九课里所领悟到的，当晚的课题是“祷告”。我曾在忙碌中遗失了一个光碟，心

里不安，便在祷告中交托主。不久前竟奇迹般地寻获这个遗失颇久的光碟，心中万分感激也更加确信我们的救主是一位垂听祷告的主。便写下了这首诗：

遗失东西找不到，
处处寻找很苦恼。
此物何处记不了，
祈祷坚持不可少。
一日清早勤祷告，
当天下午终找到。

最后的主题是“扎根真道、深入世界”。英文原文甚简洁：Into the word, into the world。内容是从创世记与出埃及记里有关上帝的诫命，带进路加福音中耶稣的人生教训，再通过使徒行传引入圣灵在我们生命中的工作。到了最后一课就把全课的高潮带到耶稣变像的山上。当彼得看到代表律法与先知的摩西与以利亚，以及夫子耶稣基督时，立即建议留在山上。但耶稣的回应成为全课程的总结：“下山吧！把山上美好的经历带进世界。”此刻令我顿悟到整本绿本门徒的升华：“扎根真道、深入世界！”。

因此，在举行结业仪式，林建隆牧师带领我们领受的圣餐，并不是意味着绿本门徒课程的结束。相反的，那正是我们深入世界的起点！

最后一课，林建隆牧师主持圣餐后，与我们一起合照。



红色门徒——分享



分享（一）——陈思恩

红本门徒是我从小到大印象中常听别人提起的课程，原本以为到了某一个年龄就会自动进入红本门徒班。可是过了好几年都没有开课，一直到这一天，终于听到有关红本门徒要开课的消息。机会来了，我很兴奋地报名。

在那9个多月的上课期间，我们班里的兄弟姐妹通过读经，祷告，分享和鼓励，更深刻地认识彼此，也通过这个旅程与上帝走得更亲密。其中过程，（有高有低），我本身在上课的同时，生活中也生了一些重要事件；比如爸妈要出国，我就得开始一个人生活。另外，就在我上门徒课的第一天，我就接到舅舅过世的消息！早上接到消息，晚上却刚好要上门徒课。心情很复杂。不过，感恩的是，在遇到困难的时候，有班上的同学和老师的陪伴和鼓励，心里踏实多了。这期间，（我生活中所发生的每件大小事，）每个星期都至少有一位门徒伙伴听我分享，为我祷告，再次提醒我主内团契的重要性。

在上红本门徒的课程中，让我们很有规律地走过旧约和新约，每周都有主题和相关的功课，还有观赏影片，听专家对于课题的讲解。在这个过程中，我们也有更深一层讨论有关信仰上的问题，听听每个人的看法，并且一起在上帝的话里成长。这次刚好超过半数的兄弟姐妹是青少年，我们也一起度过好几轮艰难的考试期。在这期间，我们学习交托、祷告，在困难中仰望上帝，求主施恩扶持。也彼此互相鼓励，要过更有自律的生活。同时，我们也听到成年人分享他们在生活的不同阶段所学到的功课。在上课分享时，能够听到别人以不同的角度来看待同一段经文，所学到的心得更加宝贵，我发现这种经验是个人读经时所欠缺的，这也是参加门徒学习课程的一个独特性。

虽然我们班有点闷热，可是很开心能和大家一起走完这段旅程，经过几个月的相处后，大家也不会那么陌生了。我也想借此机会来鼓励还没参加门徒课程的兄弟姐妹，考虑报名下一班的红本门徒课。虽然参加九个月的课程会觉得时间很长，可是会有很多的收获，也是个培养良好属灵操练的好机会。最近我在网上读到一位牧师的分享，他说“没有东西能取代与上帝单独相处的时间。”如果你平时没有灵修的习惯，或还未读过整本圣经，也不是很清楚该如何开始而一直拖延，我建议你们可以从红本门徒班开始。参加过后，你会发现；不虚此行，受益良多。希望我们不只是圣经知识的增长，生命也会有所改变，能够活出耶稣基督的生命样式。



分享（二） - 谢知卫

感谢上帝的恩典和带领，让我们在今年初开始来上《红本门徒》课。课程共有34课，约需9个月的时间来完成。有如母亲怀胎9个月，婴孩从母腹中不断的摄取丰富的营养，现在就好像刚出生不久的婴孩，往后的日子还需要不断地学习成长。

班上的胜利弟兄说：“课程虽然结束了，但我们身上的担子却感觉沉重了！”。对的！因为在结业后，我们都要学习将主耶稣的爱活出来，到世界中去服事有需要的人，来荣耀上帝的圣名。

谈到我们这一班，由于年轻人占大多数，他们的活泼可爱使学习气氛较为轻松，我们也能从不同的角度去探讨问题和分享看法。

这9个月过得很快！在课程的要求下，虽然生活忙碌，但大家都还能抓紧时间，每天读经、祷告和做作业，提升我们的属灵生活。课程中，研读圣经，让我学习到其中一个重要的功课：就是「上帝的话语」的引导。通过课上的两项主题：「门徒标志」和「人性问题」，让我们更能从「上帝的话语」教导中来认清自己，对自己的生命有所改变，和对灵命的增长也有很大的帮助。从认识和运用「上帝的话语」，也使我们在和人分享福音时具有较大的信心。但最重要的一点就是上帝借着我们能将福音传扬出去。

这个课程也帮助我通过认识耶稣基督的真理后，会有一种使命感！我会更愿意去参加事奉，去服事和关怀别人。当领受到成为基督真门徒所需的装备条件后，也使我在属灵生活和真理的知识上，要求不断的进步，并愿意效法主耶稣成为仆人去服事人。

所以，各位主内弟兄姐妹，若还未参加《红本门徒》课程，盼望你考虑在你的属灵旅程中，安排时间来参加，以便能学习成为一位基督的真正门徒。

最后，我们这一班要感谢两位老师黄元修传道和陈丽月姐妹的细心浇灌和指导。

2017年溢恩乐龄庆祝成立22周年纪念感恩午宴-感言

李幼吟

2017年11月2日是本堂溢恩乐龄团契成立22周年感恩纪念日,团长颜运星姐妹特于这一天在JurongEast茗香餐馆宴开10席,庆祝这个主恩满溢的日子。当天来参与感恩纪念午宴的,有本堂教牧及会友共一百人,大家心存感恩地齐集一堂,共享佳肴,闲话家常,分享主爱。早上十一点开始,歌颂主恩的短歌,一遍一遍的环绕着餐馆的四周。在施牧师的勉励过后,台上传来颜运星姐妹,以清晰嘹亮的声音在向会众报告有关团契的例行活动的时间与项目。同时更是满怀喜乐的预告有关迎接来临圣诞节的庆祝节目。我一面享用美味佳肴,一面聆听着运星姐在台上殷殷切切地鼓励会友们踊跃参加有关活动的邀请声,心灵里不禁有些感叹!因近些年来,每当有机会与她碰面时总是听到她万分无奈的叹息声:“唉!年纪一年一年老——我想,我应该退下来了!让年轻人去试试吧!唉~”

看到她如此意气消沉,总是不以为然地笑着对她说:“啊!运星姐,别如此丧气与悲观;所谓“乐龄”不就是快乐的年龄吗?这也是年长者的另一个雅号。溢恩“乐龄团契”由“乐龄”人士来带领,不但名副其实而且名正言顺。况且“年龄不是问题,个人的心态才是最大的问题”。只要身体健康,灵命活泼,而且在上帝恩典的职责中,尽心尽力,数十年如一日,做得无怨无悔,这才是上帝所看重与喜悦的。”

就如施牧师在勉励时所说的,什么才是基督徒真正的福气?他以(弗1:3-6)所说的:“他在基督里曾赐给我们天上各样属灵的福气。就如上帝从创立世界以前,在基督里拣选了我们,使我们在他面前成为圣洁,无有瑕疵。又因爱我们,就按着自己的旨意所喜悦的,豫定我们,借着耶稣基督的儿子的名分。使他荣耀的恩典得到称赞。这恩典是他在爱子里所赐给我们的。”

我们既然是被挑选出来的,如一个人在群体中被挑选担重任,是非常荣耀的事。所以基督徒一旦明白我们是蒙拣选的子民,而且在教会又担任某些职分,必定会充满感恩,觉得自己有这个身份是特别的。而且对于自己在圣工上所担任的职务,必然会充满喜乐的尽忠到底!因为蒙拣选就是基督徒极大之福分。

这些年来,眼看着你在所担负的乐龄事工上,数十年如一日,无论任何事,只要交到你手上,总是那么尽心尽力。除了负责每周的例行活动外,若有恰当的日子,还特地组团出国旅游,也顺道参观一些有关的海外宣教活动,并且与当地的信徒交流。让年长人士们,不但在平常日子里,有机会按时到教会参加各种有关活动,偶尔还有机会一起出国观光,添加知识,增广见闻,生活也因生命充满活力而精彩。

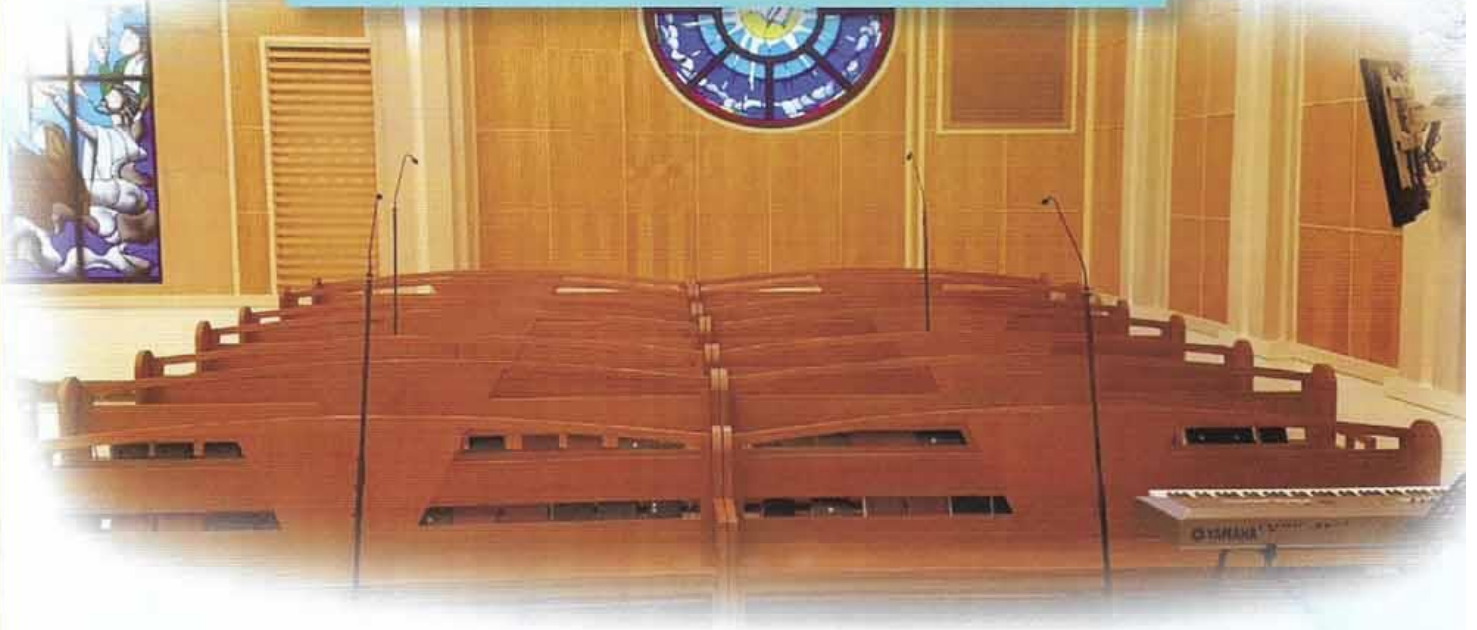
在我看来,溢恩乐龄团契果真是一个蒙恩蒙福的团契。而今,我要对你说的一句心里话就是;在主那丰盛的恩典中,继续加油吧!运星姐!



Hallelujah! Praise the LORD!

A Reflection on Singing in the Church Choir

Peter Kew



Music has always been at the heart and soul of worship at Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church (TACMC). Over the years we are blessed with exceptional leadership and many talented musicians and singers who make music a central part of our ministry to the people.

The TACMC Mandarin Worship Service Music Sunday was held on 12 November this year. Once again, we are reminded of “How Great Thou Art” - “祢真伟大” while TACMC celebrated her 128th Anniversary this year. I do not know exactly how long the Mandarin Choir has existed. From my understanding, it has existed a good

number of years and I am thankful that the Choir is still faithful and still singing. Praise the Lord!

As a Choir member, this Music Sunday has led me to reflect on what it means to be a member of a choir, its role in my life, and its role in the life of my church.

The Choir is a place of service in a church. The role of the choir and musicians in worship is to lead and inspire the congregation in venerating God through music. In the choir, we make a commitment to participate in worship, and to join with the pastoral and worship staff as they lead the congregation in worship. The anthems we sing are carefully selected to enhance the sermons. We sing following the church calendar and also during communion, baptisms, and even at wake services if requested. Often we sing in the midst of our hectic lives, through our own joys and sorrows, knowing that by our very presence, we are affirming our faith.

Many church members love to sing. The fact that so few members have come forward to join the church choir makes me believe that participation in this music





ministry is something that does require a call to serve above and beyond that of the congregant who sits in the pew each Sunday. One must sacrifice time, energy, and convenience for the service of the Lord.

The church has always understood itself as the Body of Christ. Like a human body, it is made of many parts, functions and systems. However, each individual member is related and work together as a body, a community that is mutually sensitive to each other, yet coming together in the name of Jesus Christ. Likewise, the choir is a collection of individuals who know or is learning how to read notes and sing; every choir member has to listen carefully to their fellow members as they sing, so that together as a choir - matching in pitch, variations of loudness, tone quality, rhythm and tempo, and pronunciation -- we achieve as an ensemble and the result is an experience of profound human and spiritual harmony. The unity of members in the presence of God.

The choir is a place to grow. The texts of the anthems we sing teach us about God, and help us to grow in faith. Sometimes, when we have down in spirits, the words of a hymn or anthem we rehearsed or remembered come to mind and speak to our needs. The texts of our hymn or anthem become our meditation and prayer.

The choir is also a place to experience God. We have members of different age groups – ranging from young adults to senior citizens and members with different personalities, music backgrounds and spiritual maturity. It is a challenge to bring all these people together and an even greater challenge to get them together to do one task - sing in harmony. However, by God's mercy, love and grace, He makes it possible to bring us together as a family, uniting us through music.

Singing in the choir is not about achieving perfect performances. The offering of music and work is in a similar manner to the sacrifice in biblical times, it must be prepared with care, diligence, and imagination. Our music must be offered to God wholeheartedly, without any gains in return so that God can use our offering in God's own way in our congregation. It is God alone that makes our music sacred. In this regard, there is a requirement that each member gives his/her best performance, which is carefully prepared for God's use. Such performance demands commitment, time, work and willingness to use our gifts/talents to complete thorough preparations for an anthem. This can only be sustained by our faith and love of God.



Apart from coming together weekly to rehearse our anthems, we also share our prayer requests and pray together. At times, we have devotions, fellowship suppers, celebrate birthdays, and participate in social work and do fun things together, like sports and games.

Singing in the choir is like life in the church. Given our strengths and weakness, with our interests and gifts, God uses us as a group of imperfect people to do great things – proclamation of His love and Salvation.

Seeing where the choir is today, I can only come to God with a thankful heart. He is faithful and has made it possible for the church to be so blessed with a choir that can continue to learn and sing for Him. I am also thankful to those members who went before us for their faithfulness in building the foundation of the choir, although some of them are no longer with the choir due to God's calling to other areas of ministry. I am also inspired by my current fellow members for their love of the Lord and their faithfulness in serving the choir. May we be able to continue to make music for Him as long as we live. Amen.



THE ALPHA COURSE – EXPLORE LIFE, FAITH AND MEANING

Alpha 2017 Organising Committee

A group of about 35 people gathered on Friday evenings for three months in Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church to explore the big questions of life. We had seekers and believers, young and old, visitors from elsewhere, as well as TA and TA2 members.

They made friends over food, listened to talks about Jesus and the Christian faith, and discussed questions such as, “Is there a God?”, “What happens when we die?”, and “What’s the purpose of my life?”



The Alpha 2017 participants

We praise God for being with us and working in our lives. Read on for testimonies from two of our Alpha guests – Anthony and Amanda.

My Experience through ALPHA - Anthony

I had been attending Sunday Church Service for many years in the past. Due to some bad encounters with my Christian friends and ex-colleagues, I began to have doubts about God and stopped going to church.

On 30 June this year, my wife (Karen) and I were invited to the Introductory Dinner of 2017 Alpha Course by Grace Chng, a member of TACMC. That was the first time that we stepped into this church. As we were warmly welcomed by some church members which related to a positive experience, we signed up for the Alpha Course. During the Alpha lessons, I began to ask questions on who God is, why there is God and other queries regarding God. With the sincerity and clear explanations from the team members during our discussions, I was able to develop a deeper understanding about God. As such, I became more interested in the Alpha course.

On 27 July, I suddenly felt God telling me to stop buying 4-D lottery (which I had been buying for many years). I really stopped totally and am not interested in it anymore! After the Alpha session on 11 August, we were looking forward anxiously to the Alpha Day Away on 19 August. However, on 12 August, some personal events requiring our attention cropped up on the afternoon of Alpha Day Away. Feeling sad, we prayed for God to help us. On 15 August, we received a message that the appointment was changed to 20 August. We give thanks to God for making it possible for us to attend the Alpha Day Away.

During the small group discussions at the Alpha Day Away, I understood and realised that the Holy Spirit is already working inside me. When pastor invited us to respond to the sinner's prayer, I moved forward with a peaceful heart to pray and accept Jesus into my life.

On 25 August, I sent my son's car for repair. While waiting, I took a set of Straits Times newspaper and started reading. To my surprise, I finished reading in an hour and a half without developing a headache and giddiness (this was not possible before). During the Alpha discussion that evening, I understood that the Holy Spirit is working in me again, and that I should be able to read the Bible now. On 1 September, I took a Holy Bible from my wife and tried reading. I read for one hour without any trouble of headache and giddiness. I managed to complete the book of John over the next few days.

I was diagnosed with Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) in my right eye about two years ago. I need to have regular injections into my right eye to reduce the risk of total blindness. On 14 Sep, I went for my regular check-up and injection again at the National Eye Centre. The attending doctor told us that there is great improvement in my right eye. My next appointment was hence deferred to four months later (usually it is every two months). The professor said that she would assess my eye condition and I might not need any more injections during my next appointment.



My wife has always been praying for my salvation and for me to trust in God. She also prayed for an improvement for my medical condition (AMD). God has answered all her prayers. We have signed up for Baptism class to prepare for our baptism on 24 Dec 2017. We have decided to make TA our home church.

Anthony and Karen

Reconnecting with God through Alpha – Amanda

I was introduced to the Alpha Course by Siew Lan and Kiong Heng. Although we are relatives, we had not seen each other for years. Though we visit each other's parents during Chinese New Year, our paths did not cross. We reconnected during our combined Mother's Day celebration this year. After that gathering, we kept in touch through WhatsApp.

Siew Lan and Kiong Heng separately invited me to join Alpha Course in Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church. I had no idea what it was about. However, I had a feeling that God was opening a door for me to return to Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church as I have been thinking about returning to my home church. Having been away for so long, I had lost touch with the people and was not sure if those I knew were still around and if I would still be welcomed.

Through the Alpha Course, I reconnected with brothers and sisters-in-Christ and felt very encouraged by their warmth and hospitality. I have also learnt a lot from

Nicky Gumbel's easy-to-understand messages and loved our small group sharing. I was so glad to see the amazing transformation of group member, Anthony. Indeed God is performing miracles in our lives.

By the end of the course, I had decided to return to TA to worship God and serve him through singing in the choir. Now that I reflect back, it is truly God's blessings for this opportunity to return to my home church. I am really grateful for Siew Lan's and Kiong Heng's invitation and for Teresa, Gavin, and all the Alpha Course team members' love and encouragement.

I pray and hope that more people will get to know about the Alpha Course and come to join these wonderful weeks of learning and fellowship. Their lives will be transformed by our almighty God.

Amanda



ALPHA PARENTING CHILDREN'S COURSE 2017

TAN SOK HONG AND ANGELA TAY



The inaugural Alpha Parenting Course conducted by our TA English Service commenced on 9 Jul 2017. The journey began in mid 2016 when a group of parents were invited to a feedback session with Pastor Seet. Sensing the need to strengthen the family, the 10-session Alpha Parenting course catering to parents with kids up to 10 years old was launched. Praise to God, we had nine sets of parents signing up, with three pairs of small group leaders. Members of LOG (Ladies of Grace) ministry and Church School Teachers were also roped in to mind the kids while their parents attended the course after Sunday worship.

Each session comprised a video clip followed by a breakout session where parents were clustered into three groups for discussion and sharing. Topics like setting boundaries and the five love languages were taught through the video clips and parents shared the takeaway points and their own parenting experiences in a small group setting.

The participants appreciated these practical lessons as reminders of their children's need, for example, to have their love bank filled up, to listen to them with empathy, or to have clear boundaries set in place to regulate their behaviour.

The final session was helmed by sister Serene who gave parents the opportunity to share their main takeaway lessons from the course through cue cards. It was a creative way of using photos to draw out responses from the participants. Here are some of them:

One couple picked a photo of a bungee jumper in action. Their takeaway was that parenting is like doing a jump but God is the rope that keeps them from hitting the ground - He is in control.

Another couple with two children chose a photo of coloured Cheerios. To them, no two children are alike, so as parents, they shouldn't compare but should appreciate each child who is sweet in his or her own way.

One mother picked the photo of a telephone booth. She said that since only one person could be using the booth at a time, it reminded her to listen to each child without being distracted.

As part of the closing, Rev Seet gave an exhortation to parents and prayed for each family when the kids were brought in to join us. The session ended with a celebration lunch for all.

We are indeed thankful to God for seeing us through the 10-week course; for the support rendered by brothers and sisters in the various roles of facilitators, such as small group leaders and child minders; and the nine sets of parents who took courage to take the plunge with us for this new program! Plans are underway to do a second run of Alpha Parenting and Alpha Teenagers in 2018. Look out for these programs.

DISCIPLE I: BECOMING DISCIPLES THROUGH BIBLE STUDY

Siew Yee Kit

When Rev Erick Tan first floated the idea of conducting *Disciple I: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study* in 2016, it had been 10 years since the course was conducted in our congregation. A few of us registered our interest and attended the introductory briefing. During the briefing, we learned of the amount of time and commitment required - we could not miss more than 4 or 5 sessions if we were to graduate from the course.

Trust that God will see you through.

With that encouragement from Rev Erick, we came together and embarked on the course. We pored over 36 weeks' worth of assigned Bible passages and lesson material 6 days a week, give or take a few, and met every Saturday to go through the videos, discussions and Bible studies. Yes, there were times many of us had to attend to other matters and missed some sessions, but still we managed to complete the course.

God was seeing us through.

Yes, it took a lot of our time and effort. Some of us who had to work, went for lessons, rushed from camp, attended to very young children, looked after elderly grandparents and did a myriad of things, but we offered our five loaves and two fishes and found great encouragement from one another and from Rev Erick. Alas, at the end of 2016, Rev Erick was posted out of our church and we could not convince his new church to allow him to finish the course with us.

God saw us through.

By His providence, Rev Dr Edwin Tay took our group, with Rev Seet coming alongside us when needed. By that time, we had begun to know one another better and had established a rather interesting and unique group culture and dynamics. We are certain that God had His plans laid out perfectly as He blessed us with pastors who could hit off with our group very quickly and was able to guide us, with all our difficult questions, through this very challenging course.

God saw each of us through.

We had many interesting lessons and experienced how those lessons could be applied to our lives in very intimate and immediate ways. We struggled with difficult passages and ideas and learned to see how those difficulties can be reconciled by learning more about the just, faithful and loving almighty God we worship. We also grew closer to one another and learned more about ourselves as we got to know one another better. Perhaps one of the most impactful sessions was when we learned about our spiritual gifts as we learned to listen from God to share about one another's gifts.

God had seen us through.

We are not called to be mere believers. We are called to be disciples of Christ. Jesus made it clear by the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. Therefore, if you have not answered the call, consider joining the Disciple I course. It is one avenue that is available to help us take the first step to becoming His disciples through studying and applying His Word. Do not content to wait and ready ourselves to begin; rather, trust in Jesus who is immeasurably more faithful than

God will see you through, too.

Now this group is looking for facilitators to start Disciple II. Let's pray we don't have to wait 10 years for that!

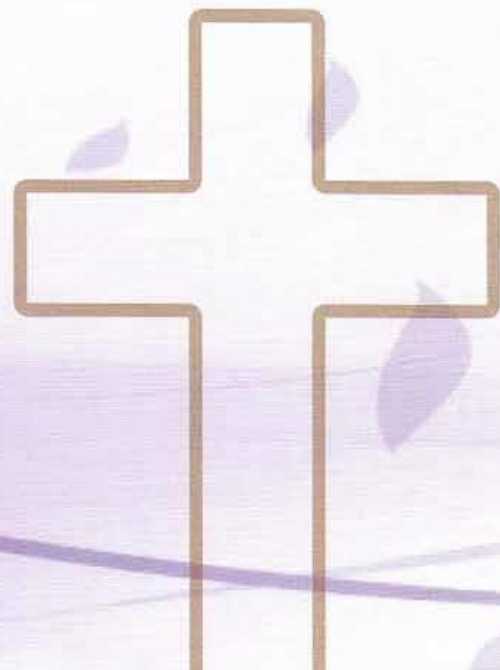
"I could feel warmth going into my body"

Ling Daw Hui (Victor)

I went through a difficult period with severe health issues from 25 August 2107. I had a fall and hit my head on two hard places. I had to stay in hospital for 20 days at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH). A neurosurgeon told me that I must never fall again, or else I might be paralysed for life. There was spinal constriction/deterioration and (cervical) compression at the C3 and C4 discs. This period was difficult for me as I suffered from many other health issues such as prostate problems and degenerative spinal disorders, just to name a few. I also need to take several medicines such as Tamsulosin Hydrochloride, Co-amoxiclav, and Levetiracetam. While these medicines help to relieve pain, going through physical suffering each day has taken a toll on me. I thank God that I have recovered a lot.

Mr Gavin Chan from TA's Tampines St 83 cell group visited me when I was in the hospital. When he prayed for me he put his hand on my shoulder. I could feel warmth going into my body. Similarly, when Pastor Richard Tay prayed a long prayer for me when I was in TTSH, I could feel warmth going into my body. He gave me a 42-page book titled "The Amazing Results of Prayer". What especially resonates with me was the quotation on the cover: "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." (Matthew 21:22).

Note: Pastor Tay serves as a Senior Pastoral Staff with Church of Singapore (Marine Parade) since March 1992.



Trust in the Lord - He manages my cancer

VICKY TAN SOR CHOO

About five years ago, after a full body check-up, I vomited overnight and had to be rushed to KK Hospital emergency clinic. The growth in my abdomen was so big and my creatinine level was so high that it implied that my kidneys were not functioning well and that CT scans could not be done immediately. As such, I was put on drip during the first week to get the creatinine level down so that I could eventually go for the necessary CT scans. During that time, all I could do was pray and trust that God would answer my prayer. My faith in God kept me going. I was positive that God would heal me, and that He would always be with me. Even the doctors were surprised by my cheerful and positive outlook. After the first week and two packs of blood transfusion, I was ready for the CT scans. I was diagnosed with Stage 3C ovarian cancer and surgery was the best option, followed by six cycles of chemotherapy. So, to the operation theatre I went, nervous and anxious but clinging to my faith in God.

As I journey through the treatment, my son, Samuel shared his repertoire of Christian songs from his mobile phone with me. One of the songs, entitled "Jesus, Beautiful Saviour" really touched me. The lyrics were as follows:

*Jesus, Beautiful Saviour,
God of all Majesty,
Risen king,
Lamb of God,
Holy and righteous,
Blessed redeemer,
Bright morning star.
All the heavens shout your praise,
All creation bow to worship You.
How wonderful, how beautiful,
Name above every name, exalted high.
How wonderful, how beautiful,
Jesus your name, name above every name, Jesus.
I will sing forever, Jesus I love you, Jesus I love you
I will sing forever, Jesus I love you, Jesus I love you"*

This episode of health scare happened so suddenly. But I put my faith in God. I prayed and praised God for the timely diagnosis and left the surgery in good hands. Though the surgery took longer than expected, from the estimated four hours, I was in surgery for six hours. Recovering from surgery, I was so happy to see my husband who must have been very anxious and praying very hard too.

The surgery was a success and my recovery was speedy. Thanks to Reverend See and wife, church elders, small group ministries, family, relatives and friends for all their prayers all the time.

Lying in bed almost 24/7, my mind wondered. Many vignettes crossed my mind. I would like to share this recurring thought with you.

"A drop of water" (The Rich Man and Lazarus – Luke 16:19-31)

The bible has a story about two men. When alive one was rich and feasted on good food and wine everyday but did not believe in God. The other was poor and had faith in God. When they both passed on, the rich man was burning in hell while the poor man found comfort in heaven. The rich man asked for a drop of water from a man in heaven and pleaded for him to send messengers to his living family members, so that they can receive God's grace.

Some of us reading this are Christians, others are not. Some children are Christians while their parents are not or vice versa. Pray. Attend church services. You want to be together with your family when life on earth is over. It is the belief that God is our saviour that will keep us together in eternal life.

To eradicate the cancer cells, I had to go through the chemotherapy treatment. Relying on the healing hands of Jesus, the ugly and frightening side effects of chemo such as vomiting, loss of appetite did not happen to me. I only had to shave my hair and bear with minor numbness of hands and feet.

After the chemotherapy, I was on the road to recovery for almost five years now. My regular follow-up blood tests showed normal levels of CA markers until in January 2017, a small cancer node (Cardio phrenic Angle: near the heart) was observed during a CT scan. There was a recurrence, so I went through three cycles of chemo to reduce the growth. The treatment did bring the size of the cancer node down by half – Praise the Lord. I proceeded with another three cycles to complete the treatment. "Trust in the Lord. He will manage your health," I told myself. I am now on oral medication to control the growth. The latest CT scan showed no further growth. I will continue to have faith and submit myself to God to manage the cancer cells in my body.

Remember the meaning behind these songs and continue to grow in faith.

"Count Your Blessings"

"Trust in the Lord and don't despair"

"What A Friend We Have In Jesus"

"Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus"

"Thank You Thank You Jesus" ... and more. Attend church service to learn more. See you in church.

I am sharing this article in appreciation of God's grace. His healing, presence and comfort in those difficult times helped to further strengthen my faith. And in appreciation of prayers, gifts and visits, text messages, phone calls, cards, and more by church members, family, friends and relatives.

PEACE WITH OURSELVES

Prof Tan Chew Lim

Jesus said the first and the greatest commandment is: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22: 37, 39). This commandment is in line with the themes of our Church for last year and this year. Last year, our theme was "Peace with God". This year, it is "Peace with Ourselves", which is to be carried out in three phases, namely, "Peace with Self, Peace with Family, and Peace with Church Family." On the surface, Jesus seems to refer to two commandments. But note that Jesus says that the second is like the first which means that both commandments are actually the same. It is like both sides of a coin. Thus observing the first commandment will lead to observance of the second. Alternatively, obeying the second commandment is deemed to be obeying the first one at the same time. As written in 1 John 4: 20, 21: "For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.... Whoever loves God must also love his brother." Similarly, in the parable of sheep and goats, Jesus says to the sheep: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40). In other words, the implementation of last year's theme of our Church, will naturally lead to this year's theme.

Some commentators interpret that "Love your neighbor as yourself" means that we are to love ourselves first before we can love our neighbors. There is a Chinese proverb that says "He who does not consider himself first will be eliminated by Heaven and Earth", meaning that this person cannot survive in the society. However, this selfish thought is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. Paul encourages us "to consider others better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3). Similarly, Jesus also asks us to "deny ourselves". So, how do you interpret "Love your neighbor as yourself"? We can view it from two perspectives:

1. "Love your neighbor as yourself" does not begin with "Love yourself", but rather it is based on "self-respect". Respecting yourself differs from loving yourself in that by respecting yourself, you value yourself, you accept yourself, and you do not abuse yourself. It is not self-centered, but it recognizes that your body is the temple of God. Just like what King David says in Psalm 139:14: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made", each of us is a masterpiece made by God and treasured by God.
2. Everyone has an instinct to protect and care for his/her body, just as Paul says in Ephesians 5:29 "No one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it ...". My wife had a fall recently that hurt her left knee with a wound that took two weeks to heal. During that period, she would never forget to wash and change dressing for her wound regularly for she was constantly reminded of the pain. This demonstrates the human instinct of caring oneself. Thus when Jesus says "Love your neighbor as yourself", he means to apply this instinct of caring and loving yourself to your neighbor.

If we uphold this attitude of "Love your neighbour as yourself", we will be able to love one another beginning from ourselves, to Family and then to the Church Family so as to achieve the goal of being at Peace with

Ourselves. Jesus told his disciples: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35). On the other hand, if we cannot be at peace with ourselves like the quarrelsome church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1: 10), we will not be able to glorify the name of our Lord. Many a times, quarrelling comes from the use of language and choice of words. Thus there are lessons to be learnt in our daily conversations with others to achieve Peace with Ourselves.

I would like to share some thoughts on three Don'ts and three Do's based on Biblical teachings:

Don't	Do
<u>Don't say hurting words:</u> Hurting words lead to arguments and angers. Proverb 15:1 says: "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. " Someone suggests counting 1, 2, 3 before we say hurting words. In this way, we are better able to control them.	<u>Do say edifying words:</u> Paul asks us to say "only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." (Ephesians 4:29). A word of praise and appreciation brings joy and encouragement to the hearer.
<u>Don't Complain:</u> Paul says: "Do everything without complaining or arguing" (Philippians 2:14). We often complain and blame others for things that go wrong.	<u>Do say thankful words:</u> Just as Paul says: "Give thanks in all circumstances." (1 Thessalonians 5:18), let us see unpleasant things in positive lights and be thankful for God's working in them.
<u>Don't gossip:</u> Proverb 18:8 "The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts". Let's determine to be a "terminal station" for all gossips that come to us. Neither add on nor pass it on.	<u>Do say appropriate words:</u> Let us pass on things that Paul encourages us to think about: "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things." (Philippians 4:8)

Earlier on I used what Paul said in Ephesians 5:29 to illustrate "Love your neighbor as yourself". There Paul was actually talking about the relationship between husband and wife. Let us see the verses in entirety: "In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church." (Ephesians 5:28, 29). The relationship between husband and wife is also an important topic that our Church is concerned with in promoting the theme of "Peace with Ourselves" this year. The success of this theme hinges upon a healthy husband and wife relationship in a family. Let me share my own experience in this respect.

In October this year, our Pastor-in-charge Rev Chua Ooi Suah, my wife Grace and I were invited to the 10th Anniversary Celebration of the Communion of Chinese Churches in Indonesia (COCCI) held in Jakarta, Indonesia. Rev Chua was also invited to speak on Sunday at the Emmanuel Methodist Church. Rev Chua's sermon topic was about the relationship between husband and wife. He invited me to the pulpit in the last 10 minutes of his sermon, to share how I maintain my 42 years of marriage with my wife. I used the allegory of "cords of human kindness with ties of love" mentioned in Hosea 11:4 as an illustration to share three points with the congregation:

1. 42 years ago, Grace and I have already made a covenant before God to be bound together with "the cord of human kindness and the tie of love", for better for worse; for richer for poorer; in sickness and in health, we were already confirmed tied up, acknowledging that what God has joined together no one can put asunder. Therefore "separation" has never been in our vocabulary in our 42 years of marriage. Today many couples are quick to suggest breakup during their arguments, easily forgetting the covenant they made before God.
2. Being tied together implies that the two have become one flesh, as said in Genesis 2:24 "A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." The relationship between a husband and wife is the most intimate relationship among all human relationships. Being united to become one flesh is sacred and is to be treasured and safeguarded. I once heard a family counselor advising couples in their times of tension never to put their marriage relationship in a state of confrontation. This can easily place one into Satan's temptation, giving opportunities for a third party to intrude into their relationship leading to adultery and even a broken marriage.
3. Being tied together also means that we have already agreed to accept each other differences in character, hobby, thinking and ways of doing things, etc. Thus, 1 Corinthians 13: 7 has become our learning experience for the last 42 years: "Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (NKJV). Grace is an extrovert while I am an introvert; she is slow-paced but I am fast-paced; she enjoys talking with people while I tend to be quiet. Thank God that in my service as the Church's Lay Leader and in my visitation to church members, Grace is a great helper and not a hindrance.

Of course, Paul does not only just talk about the relationship between husband and wife in his letter to Ephesians. He also talks about relationships between parents and children, between masters and slaves. Therefore, in church, all brothers and sisters, whether married or single, should understand God's wonderful plans for their lives. We should treasure our value in God's sight and learn to love our neighbor as ourselves. In so doing, let us strive towards our goal for this year: "Peace with Ourselves!"

The significance of the establishment of altars by Abraham is that we can build an altar to worship God wherever we are, and focus on Him in our life.

Another historic figure in the Bible who is also a builder of earthly rituals – Joshua

When Joshua knew that he was running out of time, he called all the tribes of Israel to gather in Shechem, reaffirming the love of God and the miracles that the people of Israel experienced. In order to prevent the descendants of Israel from leaving God (Joshua 25: 1-14). He declared that: "As for me and my house, we must serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15). He also demanded that everyone should concentrate on returning to the LORD (Joshua 24:23).

Therefore, it is also the mission of our generation to establish a "family altar" to enable future generations to inherit the faith. We should resolve to commit ourselves to become altar builders.

The preacher said, "Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever look at the clouds will not reap." (Ecclesiastes 11: 4)

We are prone to use various reasons and excuses such as our children are still young, we are busy with work, and our family members are yet believers for not setting a family altar. When we procrastinate, we will only be able to stand still. As time goes on, it is inevitable that we will even retreat.

As a matter of fact, to set up a family altar, we should start from ourselves. We can start by actively cultivating disciplined spiritual practices. If you have not read the Bible for a long time and prayed, do not delay any longer. You can begin now! Open your heart to God and ask Him to help you be close to Him every day. Invite your families to set up altars. With the brothers and sisters of our own families, let us take the first step. Beginning with fellowship in the church, we can start to implement the "spiritual journey of thousands of miles" using the altar materials provided by the church. For some of our single brothers and sisters, you can take the initiative to meet with group members or other brothers and sisters to share the Lord's grace with each other, and witness the Lord's love and encourage each other. For every one who is in the Lord is a family member.

Establishing a spiritual altar in life is a long-term endeavor that requires constant effort, both for individuals and for families. Therefore, if you feel that you are not doing enough, you can only concentrate on the Lord to strengthen yourselves. If you are weak and fall, you can still get up again with the strength from the Lord. It is never too late or impossible in the sight of God as long as we begin.

Conclusion

The church encourages every believer to set up a family altar. This is because we know that in order for family members to live in harmony and accept each other, we will certainly need help from God. Establishing personal or family altars will require more time and effort for us to open our hearts and to become close to God through reading and praying. It is only through spending time with God that we allow God to start His work of leading our families. Through the journey, we can experience God's love, forgiveness, freedom, warmth, and harmony.

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BUILDING a FAMILY ALTAR - IT BEGINS WITH me



Pastor-in-Charge
Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church
Rev Chua Ooi Suah

The home is supposed to be a safe place for us to enjoy familial love and to grow spiritually. However, the home can also be a place where members harm and hurt one another.

As the saying goes: "Every family has a difficult tale." Indeed, in many cases, conflicts and tensions between family members are not easily understood by outsiders. As such, it is often difficult to intervene and be a peacemaker. However, when we trust in the Lord Jesus and proclaim Him to be the Lord of our homes, we can allow His powers to deal with the tensions and conflicts at home. Setting up a family altar at home to worship the Lord will naturally transform the difficult tales in our family to one that is biblical when we read and obey what the Bible tells us.

The following is a list of three testimonies from the Bible about the sacrificial bearers.

God is a great builder –The story of Noah

The "family altar" in the Bible originates from Genesis 8: 18-20. According to the biblical account, at that time, God saw the evil thoughts hidden in the heart of humanity, and He decided to destroy humanity with floods. Because of His great love for humanity, God retained the family of Noah out of grace.

After the great flood that destroyed the entire evil world, the first thing that humanity's new ancestor, Noah, did after the flood receded was to build an altar for the Lord as recorded in Genesis 8:20. "Then Noah built an altar for the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it." (Gen 8:20) This is the first "family altar" that mankind has established.

Home altars need time and patience to create. For us to offer our sacrifices also demands us to have a heart that is pure and grateful. Our grateful and pure heart will be accepted by God and serves as an example to future generations, in shaping and establishing their correct and positive attitude toward our faith.

In the next generation, God raised another faithful servant – Abraham

Abraham left his hometown by faith and went in the direction God instructed him. He was a stranger in the places he was directed to go. Throughout the journey, Abraham set up altars wherever he went and led the whole family to worship God, review God's promises, and renew the covenant. (Genesis 12: 7,8; 13: 3-4 ...)

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