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TRINITY
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SALTSHAKER



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Seeing Red All The Time

By Reverend Bernard Chao

A few days ago, my son Elijah, armed with newfound learning discovered at kindergarten, asked me with the demeanour of one who knows, whether I knew the meaning of the colours of our Singapore national flag.

Now, I ought to know it.

After all, it was taught when I was in primary school. The information was printed all the time in my school diary throughout secondary school. I even taught it in my days as a Boys' Brigade officer for badgework.

But, after a fair bit of head scratching, I could only recall a vague rojak of ideas. Something about brotherhood and purity, right?

With National Day just past, I think it is good for us to remember what our flag actually means.

The red symbolises universal brotherhood and equality of man; the white represents purity and virtue; the crescent moon symbolises a young nation on the rise; and the five stars stand for our nation's ideals of democracy, peace, progress, justice and equality.

We should know what our national flag means.

We ought to care about what is happening in our nation. We must care enough to act constantly and consistently as concerned citizens.

This is part of our Christian duty and obedient discipleship.

It is implicit in God's command for us to love others.

And it is explicit in the Apostle Paul's teaching that we are to submit to and honour those in authority, and to live in such a way as to be an example and blessing to our neighbours, our fellow citizens, and all who live and work in Singapore (see Romans 13:1-14).

Indeed, we are told to "...clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ" even as we live, work and play among others.

Continued on page 2...



The red of our national flag represents brotherhood. May it remind us that Jesus came, lived, taught, and died so that all – every person “regardless of race, language or religion” – may become children of God.

Let it also remind us each time we see the Singapore flag flutter and the red pulsate in the air, that we are called to love our fellow citizens, to love them so convincingly that they will heed our invitation to become brothers and sisters, in Christ.

The white of purity and virtue should encourage us to live out holy lives, and is a picture invitation to us, a people called Methodists, to spread what John Wesley called “scriptural holiness” across our land.

May we live and lead by our example, in such a way as to transform families, schools, workplaces, public institutions, media, and recreational activities, towards the purity and virtues of the Kingdom of God.

Let's change the way we look at others.

Let's see them the way Jesus does – as children of God, and brothers and sisters in the Kingdom.

Jesus cries for them, cares for them. So should we.

If we want to invite our neighbours, colleagues, and fellow Singaporeans into the family of God, let's start by treating them like family.

Paul challenges us: “Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them.” (Romans 12:9)

In that familiar national song, “Stand Up For Singapore”, we sing: “You've got something to share; so show us all you really care.”

What would it take to really care, really love our nation, our fellow citizens, our community?

Get interested and get involved.

Get interested in what is happening in your neighbourhood, your residential committees (RCs), your community centres (CCs), and in our nation. Get involved!

Offer concrete help to your neighbours, volunteer with the RCs and CCs and their activities – care for people through the wide variety of avenues and charities that are already available.

Get interested in what is happening in the public sphere – in education, in business, in government. Get involved, and help out wherever you can, with whatever expertise you have, with goodwill in your heart, with humility in your spirit, and gentleness in your speech and action.

Every time we see the national flag flutter, let's see the red and remember to love, really love, our fellow citizens. May we see red all the time in this way, and love, really love, all the time.

Saltshaker

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始终不渝的红色

文 赵伟君牧师

几天前，我的儿子以利亚，带着他刚从幼儿园那里新发现的知识，兴致勃勃地跑来问我是否知道我们新加坡国旗上面的颜色的含义。

如今，我全知道了。

毕竟当我小学时候，我是曾在学校里学习过的。有关这方面的信息曾一丝不苟一直被记载在我们学校的日志上，整个中学阶段亦是如此。我甚至曾在我仍是个Boys' Brigade队长时候向队友教导有关内容。

可是，经过一番苦思之后，我仍只能吐出含糊不清的答案：是不是关于手足情谊和纯洁之类的含义啊？

国庆节刚过，我想我们应好好记住我们国旗的真正意义。

国旗上的红色象征“四海之内皆兄弟及人人皆平等；白色象征“纯洁与美德”；新月象征“新兴的国家”；五颗星星象征着“民主、和平、进步、公正及平等”。

我们应知道我们国旗的含义。

我们应关心国家中发生的事情。我们应常常对我们的关心付出行动，并且还应是贯彻始终的关心。

这也是我们作为基督徒及使徒中的义务及顺服的一部分。

其中也包含着上帝要我们彼此相爱的命令。

使徒保罗在他的教导里曾很清楚地告诉我们要顺从于我们之上的权柄，并要我们成为我们的邻居、我们的国民同胞、还有在新加坡居留工作的所有人的榜样和福气（请阅 - 罗马书13章：1-14节）。

确实，他告诉我们“。。。总要披戴主耶稣基督。”，即便是在我们的生活中、工作上和相互交往中。

我们国旗上的红色代表着手足情谊。这里要提醒大家：耶稣来过、生活过、教导过并因着祂的死使我们——每一个人能够“不分种族、语言和宗教”——都成为神的儿女。

这里提醒大家：当我们每一次看见新加坡国旗飘扬及那红颜色飞跃在风中时，那就是它正在向我们召唤，要我们爱我们的手足弟兄、要关爱他们到让他们相信他们将接受我们的邀请并成为我们在主内的弟兄姐妹。

白色所代表的纯洁和美德应鼓励我们要过神圣的生活，这也是一个邀请的画面：就是曾有一位名叫卫斯里的卫里公会会友曾呼吁我们要在世上过如“经上所说的圣洁”。

让我们通过我们的见证来生活，让我们将家庭、学校、工作场所、公共机构、媒体及娱乐活动等转换成一个富有纯洁和美德的神的国度。

让我们改变对他人的看法。

让我们看待他们有如耶稣看他们一样——如上帝的孩子们，及在神国度里的弟兄姐妹。

耶稣为他们哭泣、关爱他们。我们也当如此。

如果我们要邀请我们的邻居、同事及新加坡同胞到上帝的家庭里来，我们就得先待他们如家人一般。

保罗向我们挑战：“爱人不可虚假。。。善要亲近”（罗马书12章9节）

我们熟悉的爱国歌曲，“Stand Up For Singapore”，里我们唱道：“有些东西你要与他人分享的；就请展示你真实完全的关怀”

要如何才能真实完全的关怀，真正地爱我们的国家、我们的同胞、我们的社群？

提起兴趣并且参与。

对你周边邻里所发生的事情、你的居委会（RCs）、你的社区中心（CCs），和我们的国家感兴趣。积极参与！

向你的邻居提供具体的帮助，志愿参与RCs及CCs和他们的活动——通过各种广大不同类型和方式的渠道及现有的慈善机构来关怀其他人。

对公共圈子里所发生的事情感兴趣——无论是在教育、商场、政府的范围里。参与，无论何时何地的提供帮助，不管你的专长是什么，只要是出自好意，发自内心的，在你的精神里有人道，并且在你的言语和行为里是和蔼可亲的。

每一次，当我们看到国旗飘扬时，当我们看到红颜色的时候，请记得去爱，真真实实的去爱我们的同胞。让我们无论何时何地都要如此去爱，真正的付出关爱，永远始终不渝的。

WHY CARE FOR OUR SOULS?

By Lim Sue Yien

The theme of the small group conference this year, held on 3 and 4 July, was Caring for the Soul.

Lofty abstract concept.

So what did it all mean? And why bother about it in today's world where we have a lot of other important matters to occupy our hearts and minds?

The conference attracted 100 participants of all ages and representatives from all small groups, including our Mandarin service.





SOME OF THE SPEAKERS AT THE CONFERENCE

The keynote speaker, Mr Koichi Ohtawa, prodded the audience to reflect on soul care, something that we perhaps do not think about too much in the hurried pace of our lives.

Not only that, we were challenged to answer some questions ourselves.

For example, we were asked to think about the areas in our lives where our souls needed to be tendered to, and what three key checks we have to determine whether we are caring for our soul.

Just like we care for our bodies by taking our temperature to check for symptoms of H1N1, this was a clear call for us to also take stock of our spiritual health.

Once we answered these questions for ourselves, we were also asked to ponder on who exactly is giving us that care. Do we have spiritual friends helping us to tend to our spiritual lives, or do we journey alone?

The conference workshops lined up along three broad areas.

The first was self care, in the workshops “Reflecting on our life”, and “Nurturing a Rhythm of Faith, Life and Work”.

The next area was mutual care, that is, caring for one another’s souls. This was tackled in three well-attended workshops: “Accountability Groups” by an old friend of TMC, Pastor Lai Kai Ming, “The Ministry of Prayer” by Pastor Bernard and “Spiritual Mentoring” by guest speaker Rev Dr Tan Soo Inn.

If it becomes too difficult to care for our own souls ourselves, we can and must seek help from other fellow believers. We also learnt how to receive care from Jesus via workshops on “Nurturing a Rhythm of Prayer” and “The Jesus Prayer”.

Mr Ohtawa also shared his personal experiences of regaining strength through being with God in silence and solitude. He used to be a man of action, but through the years, he’s discovered that recharging through solitude, just like Jesus repeatedly did in the Mount of Olives where he liked to retreat to pray, was essential to keeping his soul healthy.

Psalm 4:4 says to “meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still”. Everyone’s rhythm in being still before God is different.

For Mr Ohtawa, it was in the early morning when he liked to be by himself. For others, like the Psalmist, it would be in the quiet of the night.

Whichever way, and whenever it might be, participants went away feeling called to spend deliberate time with God alone, and also to care for the souls of others through intentional spiritual mentoring, praying for each other, and through the transparent friendships of accountability groups.

Mr Ohtawa’s un-anxious presence, together with his quiet demeanour, made us realise that we have been rushing around too much.

After the unhurried pace of the conference, the calmness and serenity we felt was similar to having just visited a spa. But this retreat was certainly much more than that.



Minority Report

By Lim Sue Yien

Japan has a population of 127 million people, of which less than 1% are Christian (Protestant and Catholic). That means less than 1.27 million Christians live in Japan. If anyone would know what it feels like to be a minority, it has to be a Japanese Christian.

TMC had the unique opportunity to host Mr Koichi Ohtawa and his wife Shioko in July when they came from Japan to lead the Small Group conference and to guide the Silent Retreat. Curious to know how he became a Christian in a country with one of the world's lowest Christian populations, the Saltshaker interviewed Ohtawa-san.

Ohtawa-san first came into contact with Christians through 2 school friends. They brought him to youth group in church. Being educated in a boys school, going to church also held other attractions for the young 17 year old!

Aside from girls, Ohtawa-san was drawn to search the bible; he was overwhelmed by the love of God in John 3:16. In fact, even before he had become a Christian, he was stirred by a strange desire to share bible knowledge with unbelieving friends.

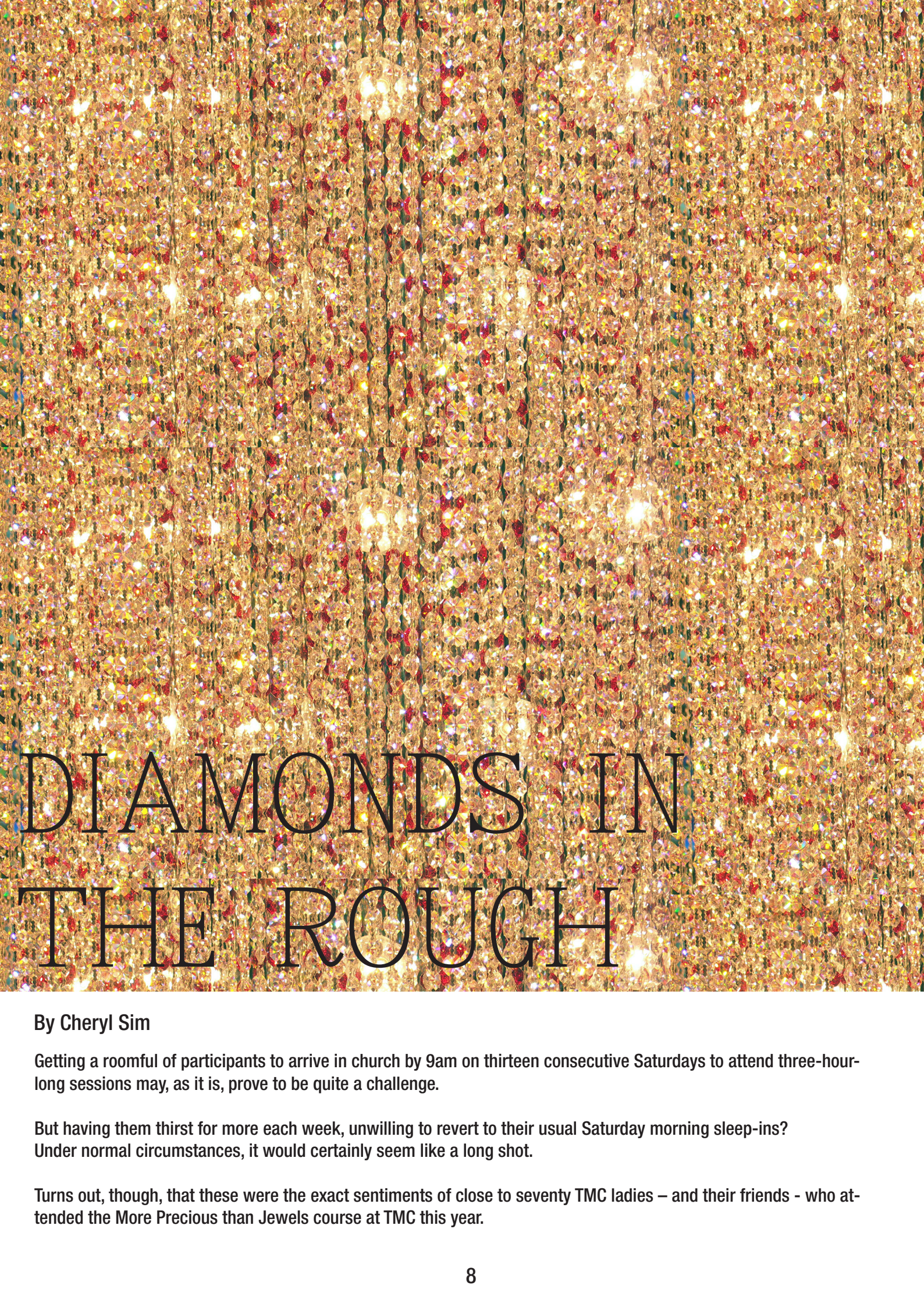
On a summer's night in 1960, he "could not help but receive Christ". Ohtawa-san's faith was young but he was on fire for God. At the summer tennis camp, he would grab anyone he could to tell them about Christianity. One younger boy, to his surprise, actually said yes to receiving Christ!

However, there was a heavy price to pay for his faith. As the eldest son of a devout Buddhist family, his parents lost face amongst relatives and friends. Their eldest son was no longer able to bear the responsibility of observing sacred family rituals. While Ohtawa-san reflected

on all the fights he had with his parents about his decision, he was sure that his parents had made a bigger sacrifice than he did.

When asked why there are so few Christians in Japan, Ohtawa-san believes it is not just the strong Buddhist tradition that wraps the country, but the very materialistic way of life of modern Japanese that leaves no room for God. One cannot after all serve both God and money.

After speaking to the gentle Japanese man, it was clear that regardless of where one is in the world, people know and see God through the living testimony of Christian friends. Ohtawa-san's school friends brought him to church. The loving church community, and the many seminars in Japan, though small, are certainly effective enough to be the salt and light of the world today.



DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

By Cheryl Sim

Getting a roomful of participants to arrive in church by 9am on thirteen consecutive Saturdays to attend three-hour-long sessions may, as it is, prove to be quite a challenge.

But having them thirst for more each week, unwilling to revert to their usual Saturday morning sleep-ins? Under normal circumstances, it would certainly seem like a long shot.

Turns out, though, that these were the exact sentiments of close to seventy TMC ladies – and their friends - who attended the More Precious than Jewels course at TMC this year.

For the first quarter of this year, women of all ages spent these valuable Saturday mornings letting God's word and His perspective infiltrate and impact all areas of their lives – as wives, daughters, mothers, sisters-in-Christ, and children of God.

Ms Ding Joo Choo facilitated the course with equal parts wit and wisdom, sharing endearing personal anecdotes and imparting valuable nuggets of truth from the Word. So refreshing were the weekly sessions that many ladies compared "Jewels" to a haven, where they could be refilled for the week ahead.

Amongst other things, "Jewels" encouraged participants to 'Let Christ live His life through you' and 'Have a growing love relationship with Jesus Christ' in their daily living. Sessions tackled specific issues such as worry, parenting, and the like, using Scripture to highlight God's thoughts on very practical issues. Visitors would have been greeted by a roomful of women reciting Proverbs 4:23 by heart, with actions to boot!

The emphasis placed on the Scripture proved invaluable. On a personal level, "Jewels" showed me that God does speak to me through the Bible. I learnt afresh that His word is indeed living and active, and found myself reading the Bible with expectancy rather than out of mere habit or duty.

It would not be untrue to say that most women were encouraged, if not greatly uplifted, in their spiritual journeys through the three-month course. At the last session – dedicated to testimony sharing – testimonies flowed freely, with person after person praising God for the change He brought to their lives through "Jewels".

Some of these were beautifully simple testimonies of slow yet steady transformations in character: the ability to rest in God, to stop worrying, to speak responsibly. Others praised God for the miraculous physical healing they experienced through the times of prayer during the sessions. Yet more shared how God was changing their relationships with their spouses, guiding them into deeper love for each other as they learnt to love their husbands, Christ's way.

*A virtuous woman...is far more precious than jewels,
and her value is far above rubies and diamonds.*

Proverbs 31:10

More than three months later, I still find myself recalling the stories recounted by Joo Choo, still find myself seeking to learn more about Christ's way through His Word, still find myself resting in the knowledge that the Lord of hosts deems me one of "(His) jewels, (His) special possession, (His) peculiar treasure." (Malachi 3:17)

And when Joo Choo comes again next year (watch out for her next course!!), I know I'll be right in line, ready to sign up...and so will these ladies:

Diana David: I find the "Jewels" course to be relevant and the many issues covered in the lessons are issues that I can identify with in my daily living. The best thing about this course is the practical application of God's Word to cope with (these issues). "Jewels" also taught me to look at every situation from God's perspective. The many testimonies shared by Joo further strengthened my faith in God.

Joanne Wong: I have definitely benefited much and received so many nuggets of truth and joy from the lessons. God spoke to me in a relevant and timely way through each lesson and through the countless testimonies shared by Joo. I was also able to put into practical application the lessons taught.

Patricia Tan: I attended the "Jewels" course in the early 90s when it was first conducted by the writer, Cathy Houba...I did not hesitate to enrol for the course again this time as I needed a new "polish" in my spiritual life to shine for Jesus. Throughout the 12 weeks, I was encouraged by Joo Choo's testimonies of God's grace and the power of His Holy Spirit and I would bring back a verse (from the coursebook) to meditate on. I am still using the book for my personal devotion after the course as it is richly filled with God's precious words. I wonder if there is such a similar course for men 'cos it would benefit the men too. "Jewels" is indeed God's gift for women!



Men @ Prayer

by Joshua Wong

Whenever the news and concerns of the church were shared during Sunday service, I would love to flip through my bulletin to look at what the church had planned for us in the months ahead.

One thing that always caught my eye was a little drawing of four men titled Men at Prayer. I had always wondered what Men @ Prayer was all about. Was it just a prayer meeting, I asked myself.

So one Saturday, I finally decided to tag along with my dad, who attends Men @ Prayer every Saturday morning, just to see what it was all about.

That morning, I sat myself down in a group of about seven to eight men in the Abraham Lounge. Seeing familiar faces like Pastor Bernard, Uncle Yip and Uncle Seng Hee, I felt at ease. The meeting started off with a prayer followed by a time of worship with Uncle Terrence playing the acoustic guitar.

When worship was over, there was a time of personal praise, where each man would take turns to say a line about God's goodness.

I felt really comfortable with the quiet time, hearing phrases like "You are God and there is none like You", and "Thank you God for your faithfulness".

There was also time for the men to share about their week and their problems; this was really wonderful as they could pray for one other's problems and share their own struggles or how God has worked in them, as an encouragement to the others.

A passage relating to "Revival Prayer Meetings" was given out to each person, and after reading the passage, the men would pick out points as a basis for prayer later.

The group prayer took place after, as the men prayed in turns for each of the points, and also for the continuation of the youth revival after the youth camp, Encounter '09.

After this, it was time for breakfast and more fellowship!

But before I dug in to the delicious noodles lovingly prepared by Uncle Yip, I threw him and Pastor Bernard some burning questions I had about Men @ Prayer.

How and why did you start Men @ Prayer?

Uncle Yip: I had already been thinking of this for many years, and it was a personal burden for me. I felt that many men are not involved in church and the WSCS (Women's Society for Christian Service) is much more active. In many families, the spiritual leaders are women even though the men should be in this position. Men @ Prayer was started to build men up spiritually and to help them to lead, starting from their homes.

Pastor Bernard: The name of the group might have put some people off as they feel that it might just be a prayer meeting. But it is actually more of a platform for men to get together. The early meeting time of 6.30am is also another factor that is affecting the growth of this ministry. Many men complain that their weekday nights are filled with other things and that they do not have time to attend. Having the meetings at 6.30am on a Saturday morning would cater to everyone. It is a good time for fellowship and breakfast. As the meeting ends at 8am, it would leave the rest of the day free for the men. Having an early meeting builds spiritual discipline. It is good to seek God before anything else in the day. What are a few hours of sleep for God? I would like to see men restored to their positions as the spiritual head of the family and I would like to prepare fathers to lead their children and family. I would also like to see more young men involved in this ministry.

After all that questioning I finally got to enjoy Uncle Yip's delicious noodles, and continued to fellowship with the other men. It was a truly enjoyable and energizing experience for me, and I hope that more men will be able to come down to experience and join this wonderful ministry.

Men @ Prayer is held 6.30 to 8am every Saturday morning (except Saturdays when the LCEC is meeting) at the Abraham room on level 1.

To find out more about Men @ Prayer, do contact Mr Yip Fook Yoon at 96911132 or Pastor Bernard Chao at 97461566.



Finding Love

By Eugenia Koh

The topic of finding love is one that has garnered great interest through the ages. As beings made to give and receive love, many out there are on a journey seeking to be loved and to love.

As part of its Discipleship and Nurture program, a session on Finding Love was conducted on 30 May, with guest speakers Amos and Karen Ang from Campus Crusade along with a panel of young adults - Serene Ng, Steven Sim and yours truly - to share our experiences and our journey.

Below are some excerpts from the session, covering a range of hot button topics and commonly asked questions.

Top of the list was the favorite question of all time – Is it wrong to date or marry a non-Christian?

Eugenia: The question goes back to who God is in our life and what role He plays. Personally I would not date or marry a non-Christian as my faith and beliefs are a big part of who I am and it is important for the one I marry to understand and share that with me. It is the same for anyone passionate about something (be it soccer, travelling, animals etc). We would want our loved ones to be able to share it with us and this applies to religion as well. There is a great joy in growing together in Him. God is a God of great goodness and He wants the best for us. We can trust that He'll provide us one that is perfect for us and with whom we can journey joyfully in Him.

How do I know the person is the right one for me? Is there such a thing as the perfect partner for anyone?

Serene: From my personal experience, getting to know Say Yong has been a journey. We started as two people who didn't like each other but over time you see a different side to that person. I saw him work out his faith and grow in the ministry and that drew me to him.

Karen: There are some questions that you can ask yourself to evaluate this

1. How does the relationship make you feel about yourself?
2. How does it encourage you to take steps you would never have taken and enhanced you as a person?
3. How does he/she make you a better person?
4. How does he/she increase feelings of value in your self?

As to whether there is the One for you, there are two schools of thought – the Dot and the Circle theory. The Dot theory

states that there is just one person for you while the Circle theory states that there may be many ones within the Christian circle, and you grow to become the one for each other. While there are incidences in the Bible where God arranged for specific matches such as Issac and Rebekah, the Bible does not mention that there is just one specific person for you. I subscribe to the Circle theory, based on what Paul writes. 1 Corinthians 7:39 - "...she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord."

Marriage is something that needs to be worked at. Nothing – not even finding the seemingly perfect one – guarantees a perfect marriage and one that is without problems. It requires work and the only confidence we have is our relationship with God and His love that works in and through us.

Is there such a thing as love at first sight?

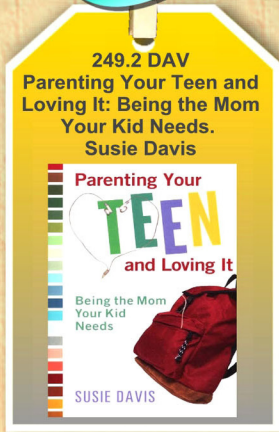
Karen: I refer to James Dobson's book on romantic love. The premise is that one cannot love an unknown object regardless of how attractive or sexy it is. While it may be a strong emotion, it is really not love. It has nothing to do with that person. It is infatuation - being in love with an ideal, in love with what this person represents. You have to validate it (your attraction) by gathering information about this person over a period of time. It may not be consistent but even love is not self-sustainable.

In fact in hard times, you actually need to protect that feeling of love. While chemistry is important, you cannot use it to be the main determinant of your choice of person. Sometimes, chemistry can be dissipated. Feelings can come and go.

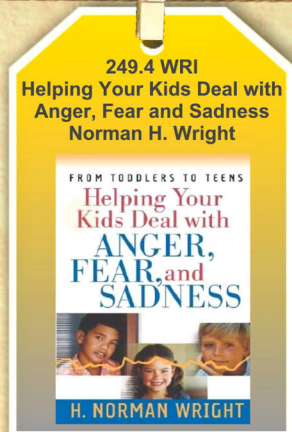
Steven: It's more a good impression of someone and a crush so you want to know that person better. This can be a strong attraction especially for guys who are very visual creatures. Love at first sight can turn out to be dislike at the second meeting.

I guess be it for all those looking for love, or who have found love and are working on it, let us always look towards God as the perfect lover, and to work towards growing in a love relationship with Him first and then with the one God places in our life.

Selections for the family



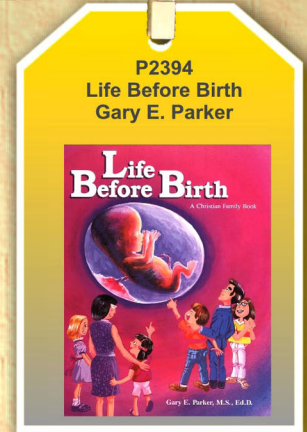
It's never been tougher to be the parent of a teenager. Slammed doors, mood swings, cell phones and Facebook. How can a mom build a great relationship with her teen? Susie Davis, a seasoned mother of three shows how to effectively influence teens without irritating them, offers scriptural help for tough situations, and shares prayers and promises from Scripture that will encourage all moms.



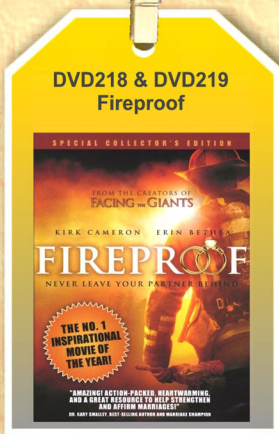
No parents want to see their children struggle, especially with emotions such as anger, fear and sadness. Family counselor, Norman Wright provides some guidelines and learning activities for children that encourage them to work through these difficult emotions. Parents will gain keen insights into the cause of these intense moods and develop sound principles in dealing effectively with them.



Puzzled by what makes your child act the way he or she does? Tobias aims to help you identify your child's unique learning style so that you can move your child from excuses to accountability, eliminate unnecessary frustration at home and school, and appreciate the unique gifts he or she has to offer!



Life is special... A book for Christian families and others who teach the dignity of life before birth to this and future generations. Dr. Parker and his wife, Mary, explain the Biblical view of life before birth. Topics such as abortion and birth defects are covered in a special way. An important book for families developing a Christ-centred view of human life.



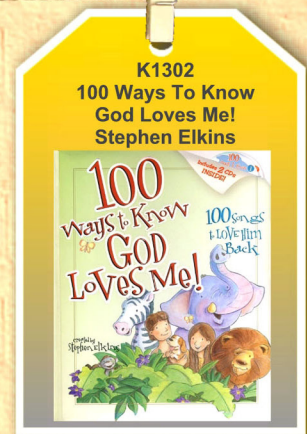
An action-packed love story about a firefighter, his wife & a marriage worth rescuing! At work, inside burning buildings, Capt. Caleb Holt lives by the old firefighter's adage: "Never leave your partner behind". At home, in the cooling embers of his marriage, he lives by his own rules. His job is to rescue others. Now Caleb Holt has to face his toughest job ever, rescuing his wife's heart.



Adam Sheppard, a teenager struggling with the loss of his mother, has an unexpected challenge thrown in his path. In the summer before entering high school, Adam struggles with teenage awkwardness, the constant threat of bullying and a tragic numbing loss in the family. Clipping Adam is a heart-warming story that celebrates the resilience and courage of the human spirit. This film gently reminds us that with the help of family and friends, one can always find his way home.



It's a moral tug-of-war for Caleb Hogan - a Patrick Henry College student and moot court team member - caught between his Christian father and his feminist attorney mother. Caleb and the team tackle a legal case involving abortion just as his mother argues the same case before the U.S. Supreme Court! Must Caleb compromise his beliefs to win the championship? Come What May is a vivid reminder that choosing what's right is never easy...but it's always worth the cost.



God loves your child in amazing ways. This delightful book will show 100 unique ways God shows His rich love to all of his children - from Bible times to today. Discover that He keeps my family safe, just as He kept Rahab's family safe, He answers my prayers, just as he answered Jeremiah, and He gave me life, just as He breathed life into Adam! Two full-length CDs are included, giving kids 100 sing-along Bible songs to show God they love him back!