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SALTSHAKER



**Was Jesus
Handsome?
...and does it
matter?**



Shaking Salt

Was Jesus Handsome? ...and does it matter?



by Dr Kwa Kiem Kiok



The mass media bombards us with images of beautiful women and handsome men. Advertisements for slimming centres show bosomy, long-legged women with big double-lidded eyes, symmetrical features and smooth fair skin. With the growth of the market for beauty products for men, we see many good-looking men with six-pack abs and toned bodies purveying skin care and shampoo. Celebrities – Asian and Western – often feature in the media so we imbibe, consciously and unconsciously, notions of what is physically appealing.

To some extent we all take steps to be attractive or at least well put-together, because we want to be accepted by people around us. After all we don't want people to stare at us because we look slovenly, or worse, ugly. But how far should we go in order to be deemed attractive?

Attractiveness is determined by the society, there are no objective standards for beauty. For example, fair skin is prized in Asia and this is seen in the proliferation of whitening skin care products in the market. However, the tanned look is prized in the United States, since being tanned shows that one is sporty, active and has leisure time to spend outdoors. Thus, there is a steady market for tanning parlours. As Christians, we should not be swayed by popular trends.

More insidiously, American culture prizes youth and youthfulness. Being old is seen as being worthless, so the signs of ageing like wrinkles are carefully botoxed over and white hair dyed. But Asian and biblical cultures value age because with it comes wisdom and experience (e.g. Exodus 20:12, Job 12:12,). Therefore, as Christians, we should follow biblical values by showing respect to the elderly among us. Furthermore, since we are all ageing, let us do so gracefully, without feeling that we have to keep up the appearance of being young. **The wrinkles, grey hair and sagging body are signs that we have lived. And if we have lived well and meaningfully and have experienced much, we need not be ashamed if it shows physically.**

While we place so much emphasis on our appearance, the Bible actually tells us little about the physical features of the characters. The boy David is described as “ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features” (I Samuel 16:12), but we are not told of how other people looked. Was Esther beautiful? What did Paul look like? Was Jesus handsome? There is no physical description of Jesus, though personally I believe that his bearing was authoritative and compelling because of the way people responded to him.

There is little in the Bible about the physical appearances of people because in the biblical worldview looks are just not important. **It does not matter whether Paul was short or attractive, what is crucial is that he was an apostle called by God to reach out to the Gentiles.** We may imagine that Peter was a sunburned, muscular, bearded fisherman, but as a leader in the early church he preached so powerfully that 3,000 people were “cut to the heart” (Acts 2:37), repented of their sins and were baptised.

Therefore Christians today should follow the biblical worldview which does not characterise people by their looks. While we may take steps to make ourselves feel more attractive, we must not judge others based on their appearance, because when we only look at the outside we can be quick to jump to conclusions about what is inside the person and that is wrong.

A second way that Christians can truly follow the Bible is to **value what God values and not follow the standards of the world.** I have mentioned above the value of age and experience. Other characteristics such as the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24) and the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) must be important to us, should be how we seek to grow, and what we should spur on in each other. When we are concerned about these characteristics, then skin colour, double eyelids and chiselled cheekbones are unimportant.

A PRAYER FOR THE SEASON OF



LENT

Dear God and Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your precious teachings found in the Beatitudes. I remember the time when the Holy Spirit convicted me of my sins and shortcomings. I came to you poor in spirit and with a mournful heart in need of forgiveness. In meekness, I clung on to you like a little child to seek your face and to hear your soft gentle voice speaking to me as a loving Father would.

I hungered and thirsted after your righteousness; only you could satisfy. And now, as you have shown me amazing grace and mercy, I too would pay it forward and show others the same grace and mercy that I received from you.

I remember the great sacrifice that you made to mankind by giving your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die for my sins and the sins of the world. May I also be willing to take up the cross and die to myself and my sinful desires. Help me, Father, to be a peacemaker for you wherever I may be, spreading the good news of salvation to my fellow men, whom you bring to my path. I thank you so very much for the people whom I have had the opportunity to bless, and share Jesus Christ with, be it in word or in deed.

Finally, dear Heavenly Father, I ask that you would prepare me for the day of persecution: for taking the step of faith and obedience in following the path of righteousness for Jesus Christ's sake. I gladly rejoice, knowing that great will be my reward in Heaven.

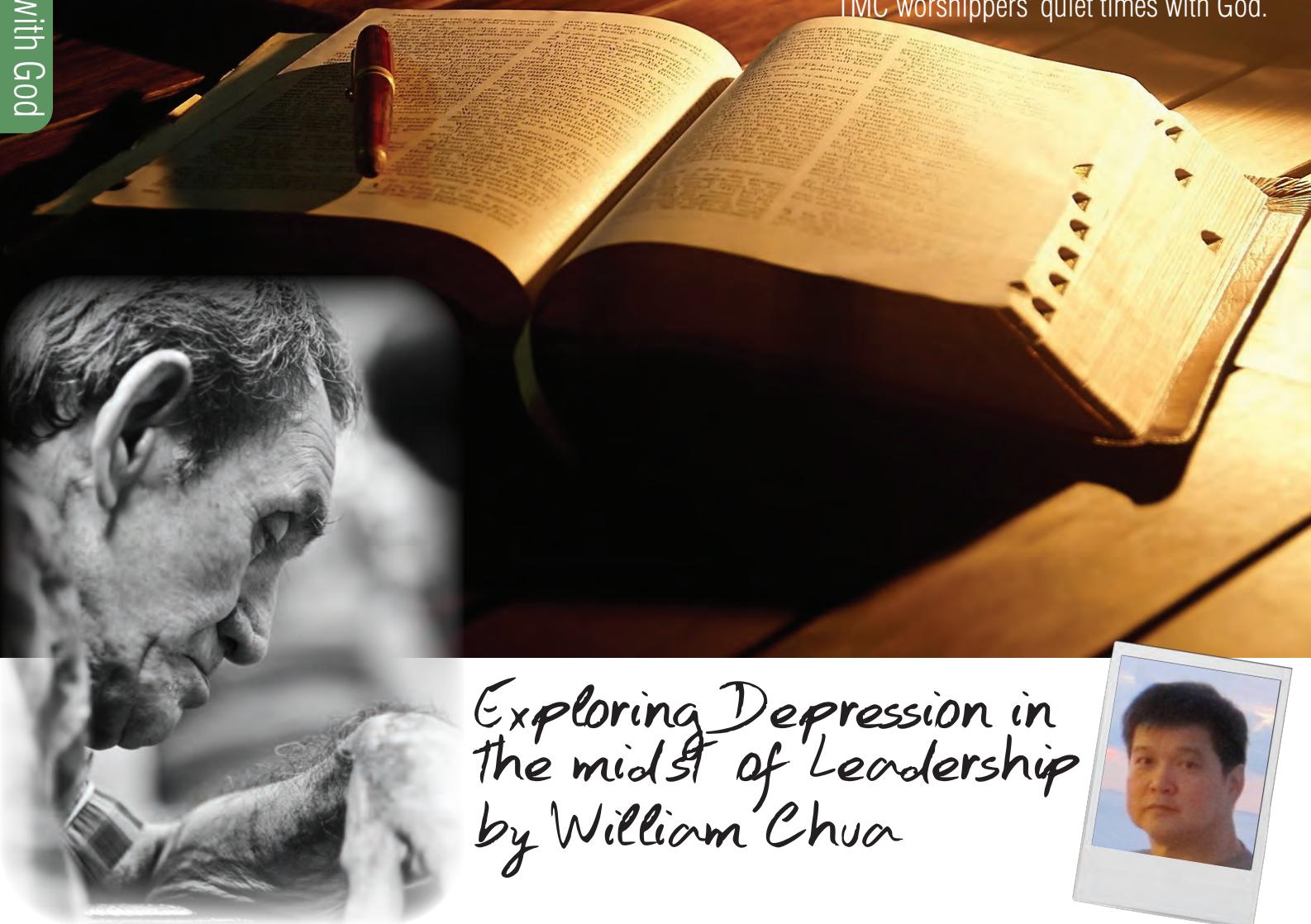
In this season of Lent, let me be reminded again of Your Son Jesus Christ, who endured great suffering during His Ministry on earth: both in life among His people whom He so dearly loved, and in death on the cross of Calvary where He suffered and died.

In Jesus' Name, I pray. Amen!

letters to God revealed

This new column gives us a glimpse into TMC worshippers' quiet times with God.

connect with God



Exploring Depression in the midst of Leadership by William Chua



The bears hung on to the floating glaciers that eventually melted in the ocean. Scientists watched as the bears swam till exhaustion and drowned to death. The bears tried their very best to cling on to the last moment - perhaps they knew they had no alternative.

What about Christian leadership? One Singaporean missionary went through depression as her father attempted suicide six times due to clinical depression.

Another Singaporean pastor devoted 40 years, almost his entire life, to ministry work. Yet his wife suffered from depression and was unsupportive of his calling.

What about those leaders who have had burdens for an "unworthy" class of humanity, those whom mainstream churches in Singapore are not prepared to accept? In the midst of abundance in churches, and the sheer number of rich Christians in society and the marketplace, there still exists frustration and loneliness among many.

Even though Elijah experienced the power of God, he had had enough. "Let me die, O Lord", is a common cry among

steadfast Christians who have done so much for God, but find ourselves standing on glaciers, with no alternatives.

1 Kings 19:3-4, 14, 18

³ Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, ⁴ while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."

¹⁴ He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too..."

¹⁸ Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."

The reality is that even in Elijah's time, 7,000 struggled under similar circumstances. Yet, though the path ahead may continue to remain a tough journey, we are not alone.

James Tang's Journal



"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
(Psalm 119:105)

At my baptism just last year, one of our church friends dedicated this verse to me to inspire me further in my walk with the Lord. At that time, it felt appropriate, as I had begun to discover the power of the Living Word through my Discipleship class. The impact of the verse was heightened when I heard the song "Thy Word is a Lamp unto my Feet" in a CD, a baptism gift from my small group.

I have often shared at the Men At Prayer meeting that, as I delve deeper into the Bible, it is truly amazing how powerfully the words seem to leap out at me at very appropriate times, when I need some reassurance or some guiding light on what I should do.

For example, I was hesitant about volunteering my services for an upcoming church-related activity as I had never served in such activities before. When I decided to do it, the Daily Hope message that I later received that day reaffirmed my decision. It was: "We are not saved by service, but for service" and it quoted 2 Timothy 1:9, "It is He who saved us and chose us for His holy work, not because we deserved it but because that was His plan."

Another time, when I was asked to share my testimony in front of other Christians, I prayed and somehow, turned to the Book of Corinthians. Two verses there struck me as though to encourage me:

*"I believed; therefore I have spoken." (2 Corinthians 4:13)
"This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God." (2 Corinthians 9:12)*

As I reflect on my personal walk, I have come to realize that the various stages of my journey have all been part of His plan for me – I have shared at the Men's Prayer meetings many signs of God's prevenient grace for me and I have come to accept that these are all part of His plan for me.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you." (Jeremiah 29:11-12)

Indeed, *"By the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect." (1Cor 15:10)*

Amen!

Will you consider telling us how God has been speaking to you? If so, drop a message to the Saltshaker team at tmccomms@gmail.com with the excerpt from your quiet time journal.

If you haven't been spending quiet time with God recently, or are wondering if you should begin journalling what you've learnt, why not start today? Journalling can be as simple as writing down the insights you've gained into God's Word, and how you can obey what His Word says.

You might even find the following acronym useful in helping you in your journalling process:

S Scripture: reading God's word
O Observe: study and learn from the text
A Application: what is God's word to me?
R Response: what is my word to God?

Let's Hear It Again!

This is an edited version of a devotion shared by Rev Wilborn at the TRAC Annual Conference last November.



BUSY

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30

The Christian yoke is not meant to be heavy or burdensome. Instead, Jesus tells us it is just the opposite - easy to bear, not too heavy. So how come so many of us are so tired?

During the first half of the twentieth century, the number of hours the average American worked decreased by 25 per cent as a result of industrialisation and new technology. In the 1960s, economists predicted that we were headed into a crisis of leisure and that by the twenty-first century we would actually have more free time than we would know what to do with.

A crisis of leisure.

What irony.

Today, people are not only not working less, they are working more and taking less vacations than they did forty years ago. How is this possible? What caused a fifty-year trend to completely reverse itself?

Well, I have it on good authority that this is what happened:

One dark and stormy night, Satan called an emergency meeting of demons from around the globe. In his opening address he said, "We've got a problem. We can't seem to keep Christians from meeting as a church. We can't stop them from reading Bibles and learning the truth. But not to worry! I have a solution that will solve the problem.

Here's the plan. We're going to steal their time so they can't develop a relationship with Jesus. Because we all know that once they gain that close connection with God, our power over them is broken.

Inundate them with media to make them work harder to buy things they won't have time to enjoy. Put widescreen TVs, DVD players, game boxes, and PCs in every room

and keep them going constantly. Before long, the nice, quiet homes they worked so hard to buy will offer no escape from the pressures of work!

Keep them too busy to enjoy nature with no time to reflect on God's creation. If they do happen to go outside, make sure their iPods are plugged into their ears and their cell phones are tightly clenched in their hands.

Soon, they will be working in their own strength, sacrificing their health and family."

Before long, Christians everywhere seemed to be busier, always in a hurry, and having little time for God, their families or for themselves. And having no time or energy to tell others about the power of Jesus to transform lives.

BUSY became more than a four-letter word.

Being Under Satan's Yoke.

In the *Screwtape Letters*, Wormwood is severely admonished for allowing the human in his charge to take a walk alone and read a book for pleasure.

Screwtape wrote, "What's wrong with you...don't you know silence is detestable!"

We (the demonic realm) will make the whole universe a noise in the end...the melodies and silences of Heaven will be shouted down. Now I admit, we are not yet loud enough, but research is in progress."

This was written in 1942. C. S. Lewis already understood Satan's plan.

It's good to be productively occupied. But in our society, busyness seems to define who we are. It's become a measuring stick used to gauge a person's importance.

Self-worth has become tied to "what we do" and society rewards us for doing more. This is subject on which I can speak with some personal authority. For many years,

UNDER SATAN'S YOKE

my life revolved around back to back corporate meetings, flying from one place to another, putting out fires, reducing headcount and measuring performance on output. During rare vacations, I spent hours taking conference calls and doing email.

People react differently to busyness. Overwork stresses some people. Others thrive on it.

But God in His infinite mercy allowed me to hear Him through the noise.

Consider these six questions and jot down yes or no to each:

- 1) Are you always in a hurry?
- 2) Are you rarely able to finish everything on your "to do" list?
- 3) Do you use days off to catch up with unfinished work?
- 4) Has more than one person ever told you to slow down?
- 5) Do you feel guilty when you relax?
- 6) Do you have to get sick to take time off?

If you have more yes's than no's, you may be too busy, as in B.U.S.Y.!

I learnt the hard way that busyness feeds the ego, but it doesn't nourish the soul.

Technology is a wonderful thing. But, like money, it all depends on whether we manage it or we allow it to manage us. In business, the upside of connectivity is greater efficiency and productivity at lower cost. For individuals, the downside of connectivity is zero downtime.

While meditating on this devotion, God gave me three words to share with you:

1. **Retreat.** Some people think of it negatively, like running away. But I prefer the military definition of retreat - taking definitive action to get away from the enemy and get to a safe place.

Jesus often withdrew to be alone. He deliberately went to quiet, solitary places in order to hear God. In the Gospel of Mark, there are no less than eleven occasions when Jesus

took a break from work to pray in solitude, to conference with his disciples, to grieve, or to simply rest.

2. **Refocus.** Going to a quiet place, whether it's for an hour, day or weekend, gives us time to think about our values and priorities so we can realign our schedules and activities with what is truly important.

In addition to keeping a "to do" list, perhaps we should all have a "stop doing" list.

3. **Relax.** This is a hard one for many of us, isn't it?

"Be still and know that I am God". In Psalm 46, the command to "be still" comes from the Hebrew verb stem meaning "to let go, to release, to be weak". Hebrew grammar places emphasis on the second imperative - "know". So we are commanded to be still, let go, release or surrender in order to know God is in control.

In Cambodia, God taught me to surrender the false notions I had of being in control of time. He released me from dependence on my own efforts, and took away the yoke of busyness.

The yoke which Jesus invites us to embrace is his way of grace and freedom from the power of Satan. Only by surrendering and coming to Him will our souls find rest.

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soaring above

“Those that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they will soar like eagles; they will run and not be weary, they will walk and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31

I have been trying to understand and meditate on why Christians sometimes experience so much adversity and suffering. I have even questioned why we would even want to be a Christian if we go through so much suffering.

I feel troubled, when some Christian friends tell me that they are afflicted with health problems because of their sinfulness. I am also troubled when I hear, for example, somebody thank and say that God reserved the parking lot for them. Why should God favour us with a parking lot just because we are Christians? Why should we, as Christians be given preferential treatment from a loving God?

If God cannot stop suffering and pain, how can He be an all-powerful God? If He will not stop suffering and pain, how can he be a God who cares for and loves us? These are questions that naturally come to mind.

But I've learnt some things about suffering after meditating on His word:

1. God does not guarantee that we will always be free from trials and suffering, but He has guaranteed that sufficient grace is available for us to overcome whatever adversity we are facing.

God has chosen to run the world by love and order, which means that both Christians and non-Christians alike are both protected and judged equally.

If God treats Christians differently, we would miss the discipline that comes from living in a universe of impartial law. Christianity would degenerate into magic.

2. There isn't always a direct relation between suffering and sin.

We believe that if we do the wrong thing, bad things and punishment will follow. This certainly did not happen in the life of Joseph, who did the right thing but was thrown into prison and mistreated.

“Who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?” Jesus replied, “Neither... but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” (John 9:1-4).

My focus should not be on why I am suffering but to see what God is doing in the midst of the trial, to look at the opportunities to draw near to God to see how He is leading me through this adversity.

Sometimes God uses difficult moments in our lives to bring forth something extraordinarily beautiful. The times of adversity I experienced were also times when I felt closest to God.

3. I have to have a mindset that suffering, trials and adversity are not inconsistent with the fact that God loves me.

Sometimes, I refuse to step into another person's pain as it forces me to question my own belief in God.

Job's suffering in the Old Testament challenged friends' beliefs. For seven days, they sat silently with him. (How I wish I have friends like these!)

But after seven days, they felt compelled to come up with an explanation for Job's suffering as this challenged their faith and their understanding of God. All of us want to believe we can control our destiny - that is, control God - by behaving properly so that God does not bring any calamity on us.

Job's circumstances challenged everything his friends wanted to believe in God - that God is good and He will not punish or bring calamity on us if we faithfully serve Him - and this frightened them.

Can Job's words in Job 6: 14-17, describing his friends, also be referring to me as well?

“A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, even though he forsakes the Almighty. But my brothers are as undependable as intermittent streams, as the streams that overflow when darkened by thawing ice and swollen with melting snow, but that cease to flow in dry season, and in the heat vanish from their channels.”

Sometimes God does not give us answers other than, “Trust Me.”

4. God made us in His image, and He experiences pleasure as well as pain and sadness. But His emotions do not get out of control, bringing Him despair.

Being close to God will not prevent us from feeling unhappy but it can prevent us from feeling despair, as despair is caused when we lose the meaning of our suffering.

Nobel prize winner George Wald says, “When you have no experience of pain

Adversity



by Lee Park Ming

it is rather hard to experience joy.” It is difficult to imagine joy unless we have gone through pain.

As in Isaiah 40:31, a downward tilt of the eagle’s wings will cause it to be dashed to pieces on the rocks. An upward tilt of its wings will make it rise above the storm, pushed up there by its fury.

I need to use suffering as a transforming agent to push me closer to God and to love Him more.

5. As I will not be exempt from adversity, I must, with God’s help, seek to use it to learn how to be a stronger person.

In Acts 16, Paul and Silas are thrown into prison but instead of wallowing in their suffering, chose to pray and sing to the Lord. There was an earthquake and we later learn that God used this bad situation to convert the prison guard. Sometimes we are so caught up in looking for deliverance that we miss God completely in the circumstances that we are in.

Pain may come from an evil source but we can put God at the heart of all the pain we are going through. If God chooses not to heal, I must be able to use it for His will and purposes in my life so that He may be glorified.

6. When things go wrong, I get disappointed with God because He did not carry out the plan that I have laid out for myself. I need to focus on God as He is, and not as I would like Him to be. Instead of wallowing

in self-pity and retreating into myself, I need to bow at the feet of Jesus in repentance and ask God to take over and lead me.

7. I must not forget when I am in darkness, what I have learnt in the light. When I encounter dark and difficult times, I can choose either to remember Easter Saturday, where all the disciples ran away and lost all hope; or Easter Monday where the full light of Christ’s promises that He will rise again and that He is living, was made known.

8. Be honest with God. I must be willing to admit to any disappointment I may feel. God cares about the frustrations and struggles that I am going through. He already knows about them, and He still loves me. God Himself is experiencing all my pain. He will listen to my prayers and give me the peace that I need.

9. If I believe it has cost me a lot to live in this world, I must remember that it cost Jesus very much more.

Dorothy L. Sayers wrote, “For whatever reason God chose to make man as he is – limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death – He had the honesty and courage to take His own medicine. Whatever game He is playing with His creation, He has kept His own rules and played fair. He can exact nothing from man that He has not exacted from Himself.”

Jesus responded to all his suffering and pain with compassion.

10. Focus on the spiritual more than just the physical, for the physical part of me is just temporary, but the spiritual part lasts for all eternity.

This means that I need to have the hope that I will pass from this world to a place without anymore pain and suffering, as God’s glory will fill everything. I need to keep one eye on eternity to understand what I am going through now on earth.

God does bless, God does heal and He also answers prayers, but no matter what happens, He is sovereign, He is my God and Lord. I just need to lean on Him. Only when I lean on Him, can I soar like an eagle above the storms of life, and not faint along the way.

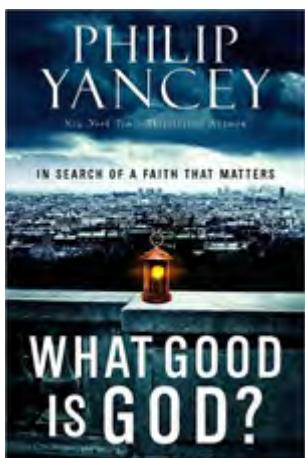
In Job 13:15 it says, “*Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.*” If I can claim this when I go through a storm, I know I will come out a better person.

“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior” - Habakkuk 3:17-18.

Today when you are experiencing hardship, difficulty or personal darkness, seek the light and beauty of Christ, for He longs to show you how much He is with you in your suffering. He is there also with you in your brokenness.

Bibliothèque

connect with God



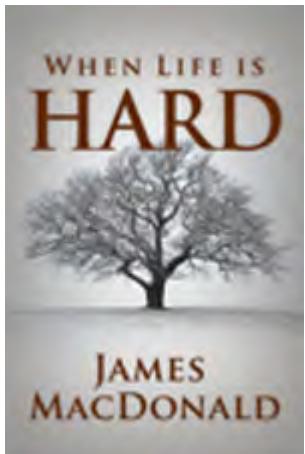
What Good is God? by Philip Yancey

Journalist and spiritual seeker Philip Yancey has always struggled with the most basic questions of the Christian faith. The questions he tackles in this book concern the practical value of belief in God.

His search for the answer to this question took him to some amazing settings around the world: Mumbai, India when the firing started during the terrorist attacks; at the motel where Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated; on the Virginia Tech campus soon after the massacre; an Alcoholics Anonymous convention; and even to a conference for women in prostitution.

At each of the 10 places he visited, his preparation for the visit and exactly what he said to the people he met provided evidence that faith really does work when what we believe is severely tested.

What Good is God? tells the story of Yancey's journey - a story of grace for armchair travellers, spiritual seekers, and those in desperate need of assurance that their faith is really the thing that matters.



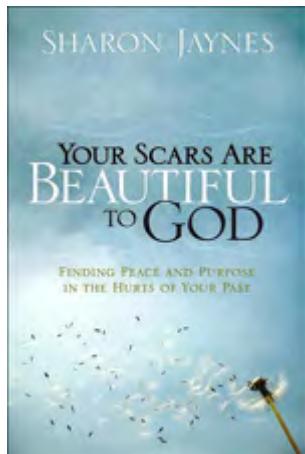
When Life Is Hard by James Macdonald

When life is hard and when things do not go the way we want them to, we often spend all our time pleading, begging, yelling, refusing and questioning why.

While none of these things are necessarily unusual, they are missing the ultimate point because it is only when life is hard, when things get ugly, when all hope seems to be lost, that we are able to understand the superiority of a life lived in God.

Working his way through five questions we've all had run through our heads, Pastor James Macdonald helps us to understand what we should do now. We begin the journey by looking at different types of "trials", figuring out exactly what we're dealing with and recognising that God certainly knows as God often refines us in so many ways that we can't even see.

God told us to expect trials so do not be surprised when they come. Rather, take the chance to grow and lean on God even more when they come.



Your Scars Are Beautiful To God by Sharon Jaynes

Inspirational speaker and author, Sharon Jaynes, declares that like the wrinkled spine of a good book, our internal and external scars are our unique story, which is waiting to be told.

Jaynes reminds readers that all of us will receive scars over the years in two ways, either by the hand of another or by our own choices. Both scenarios, Jaynes states, are invitations for Christ to restore and heal.

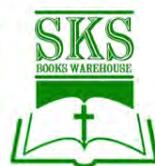
Weaving real women's stories of abortion, sexual abuse, infidelity and the like into every chapter, Jaynes effectively explores specific topics with biblical references and practical suggestions. She details the power of recognising Jesus' presence through one's scars by reflecting on their purpose, redeeming pain by investing in others, replacing wounds with scars and restoring a broken heart.

Chapter 11 is one of the most powerful chapters in this book as it deals with the lie of disqualification that many of us succumb to after being wounded - when we choose to believe that because of personal sin, all our opportunities of being "qualified" for the good things in life are destroyed.

Citing Luke 22:31, Jaynes unpacks Jesus' response: "When you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." While it is a given that Christians will fail, she says, God intends for them to repent and emerge stronger. Although Jaynes' writing may not rouse an emotionally riveting response, the book is a reliable resource for Christians in pain.

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Leader's Column

connect with one another



“ TMC, DO YOU
LOVE ME? ”



by Albert Yeo
Associate Lay Leader

He said to him the third time, ‘... do you love Me?’ —John 21:17

In John 21:17, Jesus asked Peter three times, “Do you love Me?” Peter must have felt really hurt by Jesus’ persistent questions. But these questions brought into sharp focus in Peter’s mind who should be at the centre of his personal life.

God works in different ways to bring each and everyone of us to the same realisation. When we cross this chasm, there is no more doubt in our minds as to who the Lord of our life is.

The Lord’s next remark to Peter was, “Feed My sheep.” Three simple words. Jesus urged Peter to act on his new revelation. Jesus did not ask Peter to talk about his new revelation, exciting as that may be. He commanded Peter to feed the flock.

The leaders of TMC spent 25 and 26 Feb in a planning retreat discovering the Lord’s plans for TMC for 2011/2012. The Spirit of the Lord was clearly in our midst as the Lord sent us back to TMC’s Mission Statement. Through trial by fire, all chaff was burnt off as God reminded the leaders who the Lord of TMC is.

“Responding to God’s love for us, we seek to love God and one another and share the Good News, with the help of the Holy Spirit.”

He is the God who brought TMC through many church redevelopment projects and through the years since her inception. He asked the leaders, “TMC, do you love Me?”

The consequence of this realisation is, “Feed My sheep.” The Lord has asked TMC’s leaders to concentrate on, “Praying unceasingly, Missions & Outreach and Members & Leadership Development”.

These three objectives are not new. They tie in with the three Connects. What has changed is how we are going to sharpen our focus. We are going to do less, but we are going to do them well. God is working in our midst. As Oswald Chambers reminded us,

“If I love my Lord, I have no business being guided by natural emotions—I have to feed His sheep. We will not be delivered or released from His commission to us.”

Come, let us all re-discover that Jesus is indeed the centre of our lives and prepare ourselves as TMC gets ready to feed His sheep!

small group connect

connect with one another



Martha's Bustle & Mary's Balance

As you partake of Holy Communion in our church, do you ever wonder how the table came to be laid so carefully with white lace cloth over the elements? Who actually prepared the "wine" and the bread? What brand of grape juice do they use? How do they get the juice into all those tiny cups?

Family Circle formed out of a small group of people who were experiencing the "Purpose Driven Life" Church Engagement Programme together in 2005 during Lent. Amy, the SGL, was the facilitator for the programme, and was approached by some of the participants to start a small group after the programme ended. The "pioneer" members were Chui Lin, Katherine, Sok Eng, Sandra and Charlotte, who has since moved on to another small group. The other members are Grace, Lena, Aileen, Stephanie, Anita and Irene. Family Circle used to meet every Sunday for an hour between the 8.45 and 11.15 services, but in order to accommodate commitments to various ministries that the members were involved in, the meetings have been cut down to the 2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays in a month.

Due to the very short meeting time, about 30 to 40 minutes are spent in study, and the rest is spent in sharing, fellowship and praying. The SG did the "What's So Amazing About Grace" CEP together in 2006, and followed that with Phillip Yancey's "The Jesus I Never Knew", then "Women of the Bible", and now "Men of the Bible". This desire to know the Bible better and deeper stemmed from the story of

Mary and Martha. All the ladies in the SG will freely admit that they live very busy "Martha" lives working, looking after their families and getting involved in various ministries in church, so the regular SG meetings, in addition to their individual Quiet Times, provide the "Mary" balance.

In 2008, Family Circle was approached to prepare the Holy Communion Elements and Table on a monthly basis. The ladies prayed about it and decided to sacrifice sleep one Sunday a month and arrive in church at 7.15am to prepare the Elements together with Soo Yee, who is not with Family Circle, but who also serves faithfully side by side with her sisters in Christ. With bleary eyes and shaky hands, the ladies pour out the grape juice into hundreds of the tiny Holy Communion cups in less than half an hour with the help of... wait for it... SOYA SAUCE BOTTLES! Yes, the humble tau yew bottle has a higher calling! On the 1st Sunday of each month, the ladies fellowship over this menial yet very important aspect of church life, and feel honoured to serve the Lord and His church this way. Through the years, many different brands of grape juice have been used, including Ribena (which quickly lost out as it is technically NOT grape juice but blackcurrant!) and for the past 2

years or so, the "Berri" brand seems to be in favour for the rich, dark red colour and flavour.

Could you do more as a small group? Would you want a simple but fulfilling activity that everyone in your group, both young and old, could participate in, and help the church? For starters, the Saltshaker that you are now reading needs hands to help it into envelopes. We print 700 copies once every two months that are mailed to each member's household and neighbouring churches.

If your small group is interested to help, please contact Dawn in the church office.

About Small group connect...
This feature is brought to you by the small group committee at Trinity Methodist church. It seeks to bring and integrate small groups into the church life of trinity Methodist church. It features one small group per month.

More about small groups at TMC can be found at www.tmc.org.sg/smallgroup.html, Park Ming at Parkming@tmc.org.sg or 62824443

IN AND ABOUT TMC

INTERMEDIATE PHOTOGRAPHY COURSE



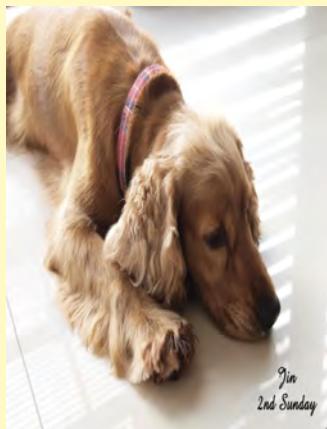
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Write something...



Trinity Methodist Church

TMC is now on Facebook! Connect with one another and others through TMC's Facebook page by liking the TMC Page on Facebook.

Keep up to date with the events happening in TMC and beyond. Update your friends, parents and even grandparents about the exciting events occurring in TMC such as our upcoming church camp in June. Got a question about the details of an event? Post a comment to clarify your doubts.

Connect with one another on various events occurring in ministries such as Youth Ministry and Seniors' Ministry.

Got a question that needs clarification? Comment on a post to clarify your doubts. TMC Communications Ministry will respond to you promptly. Connect with others by inviting friends to join in events such as Contact 123 Courses.

Interested in viewing photographs of recently attended events? Direct links will be posted to give you easy access to TMC's photo album.

So what are you waiting for?

Go to the TMC website at www.tmc.org.sg to like Trinity Methodist Church's Page on Facebook!!



The Great Egg Drop



by Edwin Koh

1: Officers & boys of the 47th Company

2: Supportive parents: They came even though their son could not make it

3 & 4: A picture of togetherness, proud parents with their sons

5: Boys attempting to protect their egg

The officers of the Boys' Brigade 47th Company and the Teleios in Christ Small Group wanted a Christmas celebration that was warm and full of surprises for the boys and their parents.

So on 19 Dec, a party went full swing at Kensington Park clubhouse, courtesy of Dennis and Patricia Yong (to whom we owe a very big thank you!)

Pastor Bernard gave a very heartfelt opening speech, but after that, all eyes were on the mainly nyonya buffet spread.

The highlight of the party was the Great Egg-Drop Game. Each team was required to protect an egg with only drinking straws and adhesive tape.

Some boys received promotions and expressed their thanks to their parents, who in turn, gamely gave their views on how the Boys' Brigade has helped and nurtured their sons.

The Teleios In Christ Small Group felt that there could not have been a better way of connecting with others during that time of year. We look forward to another good year of ministry with the Boys' Brigade.

DIARY OF A MISSIONARY

January 2011

Dear beloved friends and prayer supporters,

At last year's Watchnight Service, the pastor of my home church exhorted me from Psalms 90:12 that by learning to number our days, we will gain a heart of wisdom.

She shared several things, but one impressed me the most. She reminded me of William Carey's missionary endeavors in India. Carey was a tentmaker and worked in several jobs including as a manager of an indigo factory and a lecturer in a university. He laboured for many years, was broken-hearted many times, and faced umpteen rejections and disappointments. But he plodded on.

I thought of my own life in Cambodia, a pale shadow of what Carey had gone through. I thought of the things that had disappointed me and broke my heart.

There was a girl whom I still love dearly. I saw great potential in her despite her failings. I gave her as much of myself as I could even when others told me to "forget about her". A leopard would not change its spots, they said. One day, she came to me with a little bag and said goodbye. She wanted to return to her life of roaming the streets.

Then, there was a brother whom I knew since he was in high school. A good guy but he had a weakness for stealing. This year, he stole something intangible - he stole the credit of another person and made that person look very bad. He even forged my signature and used it against that person.

There was another brother whom we gave so much, even matching him with his wife. One day, we asked for a small favour – to clean the house of another missionary who had been away for months. We gave him \$10 as a token of appreciation for an afternoon's work. He

said: "Is that all? The house was so dirty and I mopped it twice." We were taken aback by his response.

When we left in 2003 for our furlough, I gave a pair of earrings to a dear sister. That pair of earrings was a wedding gift which I loved very much. I gave them to her because that was how much she meant to me. Just recently, I asked her about it and she said she sold it in exchange for another pair of earrings. I know it seems so trivial, but I was disappointed because I felt her actions reflected the depth of her love for me.

I asked myself: Why? Why should I go on in Cambodia? Why should I continue to love and give of myself and help people who may turn out to be disappointments, who may betray my trust, who may not be grateful, who may not reciprocate in love.

I was reminded of the very first reason why I decided to become a missionary in 1997: I was thankful to God for all He has blessed me with. I desired to thank God by serving Him. He brought me to Cambodia and opened my eyes to the needs of the Cambodians. I desired to act in obedience. So, it was and is, for Him and Him alone.

Many missionaries face similar heartaches, and I'm sure more painful ones than I have experienced. I had a lovely brunch with a veteran missionary and a dear friend of TMC, Fi, a few days ago. She too shared about her challenges and her heartaches with some of the children to whom she has given so much. But this has not changed her commitment to love and raise them.

So, as we begin another year in the mission field in Cambodia:

Please pray for us all that we will continue to be faithful to God, to the work He has called us to and to the covenant and commitment that we have made with Him.

*For His People....
Until He Comes Again,
Claire (& Kevin)*

The next Day of Prayer for Missions is on Sat, 25 June. Make a date to join us in prayer for the work of missions and our missionaries. Contact Andy Chew for more details.



CROSS-ING OUT IDOLS



She had been a Taoist for most of her life.

For Madam Chai Chew Moi, 70, the religion was thrust upon her when she got married as she helped her mother-in-law out in the preparations for the many Taoist festivities. Over the years, she slipped into the beliefs and followed the rest of her family in practising the many rituals and rites.

Speaking in a smattering of Mandarin, Cantonese and Hokkien, Madam Chai, a widow, said her husband died more than 10 years ago. With no children and little education, she lived alone with some savings her husband left her.

When she slipped and fell on a morning visit to the market a year ago, she was hospitalised for four months. It was during her stay in hospital that she had her first encounter with Christianity, from visiting church workers who shared the gospel with her.

After she was discharged, her road to recuperation led her to rehabilitation and exercise at the Serangoon branch of St Luke's Eldercare Centre. There, she became friends with Madam Alice Tham, a TMC Mandarin service member who helps out on the monthly care visits with the TMC team.

Said Alice: “When I first met her at St Luke’s Eldercare, she was a lonely old widow with few to care for her in the autumn of her life. She was sad and disabled by her fall, barely able to handle living alone.”

Alice said that as Madam Chai was unable to cook, she would receive a delivery service of lunch and dinner boxes on most days.

“It was a sad existence and she didn’t get about much,” she said.

Alice spoke to her nicely and was compassionate towards her plight. She shared with her more about Christianity and slowly convinced her to attend the church services.

Madam Chai was initially apprehensive, but with transportation provided, coming to TMC on Sundays proved to be a breeze. She also thought that it could be a new activity that could give new meaning to her life.

The warmth of the church members she met touched her and she quickly made new friends.

One day, she made a firm decision to turn to our Lord Jesus. And with the help of TMC’s Eric Cheong, she recently had all her previous idols disposed, closing a chapter of her past.

She now enjoys the camaraderie and the care she receives, a departure from her otherwise lonely existence. With blessings from her brother and his family, she looks forward to Sundays at TMC.

“I daresay her week’s highlight is coming to church on Sundays where she is given lunch before being sent back. With some new friends, things seem to be looking up and she is slowly starting to understand the Bible scriptures,” Alice said.

“Perhaps in time her next step is formally receiving Christ if she gets baptised.”

Indeed we praise the Lord and look forward to the day Madam Chai joins our fold at TMC.



DIA.

"Call to me and I will answer you and tell"

Dial 333 and you can reach God. It's as easy as three digits! The children at TMC learnt this simple and valuable message from Charia, who works at Transworld Radio Cambodia and has been working with CM in reaching out to others beyond Singapore.

In the two hours or so of Sunday School, Charia whisked our children to Cambodia, where they learnt about the people, the Geography, and learnt about how God was working in the lives of their peers in Cambodia. Charia told the children the story of Hannah and explained to them how God answered Hannah's call because she prayed and called to Him.

During the course of the lesson, our children came to know of Charia's sick mother, who is in need of medical treatment. The children saw that Charia needed to call out to God, and together with the teachers, everyone dialled 333 and prayed for her.

After the lesson was over, Charia presented the children with letters from their pen pals in Cambodia. Many of the children were excited, amazed and happy that the letters had written earlier actually crossed national boundaries and reached their pen pals in Cambodia.

What excited them even more was that even though their pen pals spoke a different language from them, God had provided translators in Transworld Radio to translate the Khmer language into English for them, so that they could understand and reply to their penpals!

As the children started penning a second letter to their pen pals, many of them saw how similar their peers in Cambodia were to them, despite vast cultural and economic differences between the two countries. Stanley Joshua, aged





L 333

*you great and unsearchable things you do not know".
Jeremiah 33:3*

eight, said, "I like lions. I think he likes elephants." Jason Tan, 10, said his pen pal has a buffalo, and that he himself has a rabbit and wants a dog too!

Many of our children gave encouraging words in their replies to their pen pals. Charlotte, 11, felt happy that her pen pal blessed her and prayed for her and her family. Josiah, aged 7, felt "very touched", and wrote back to his pen pal to let him know that he would be praying for him too.

Our children also felt grateful that they were brought up in Singapore after understanding from Charia the poverty and constraints that Cambodians face in their everyday lives. Valerie, 10, said her pen pal's parents are farmers and that she felt "privileged and lucky" that she lives in Singapore.

Apart from the songs, dance and Khmer language that our children learnt, Charia gave the children one important message: Remember to call Jesus every day by reading your Bible and he will never miss any of your calls!

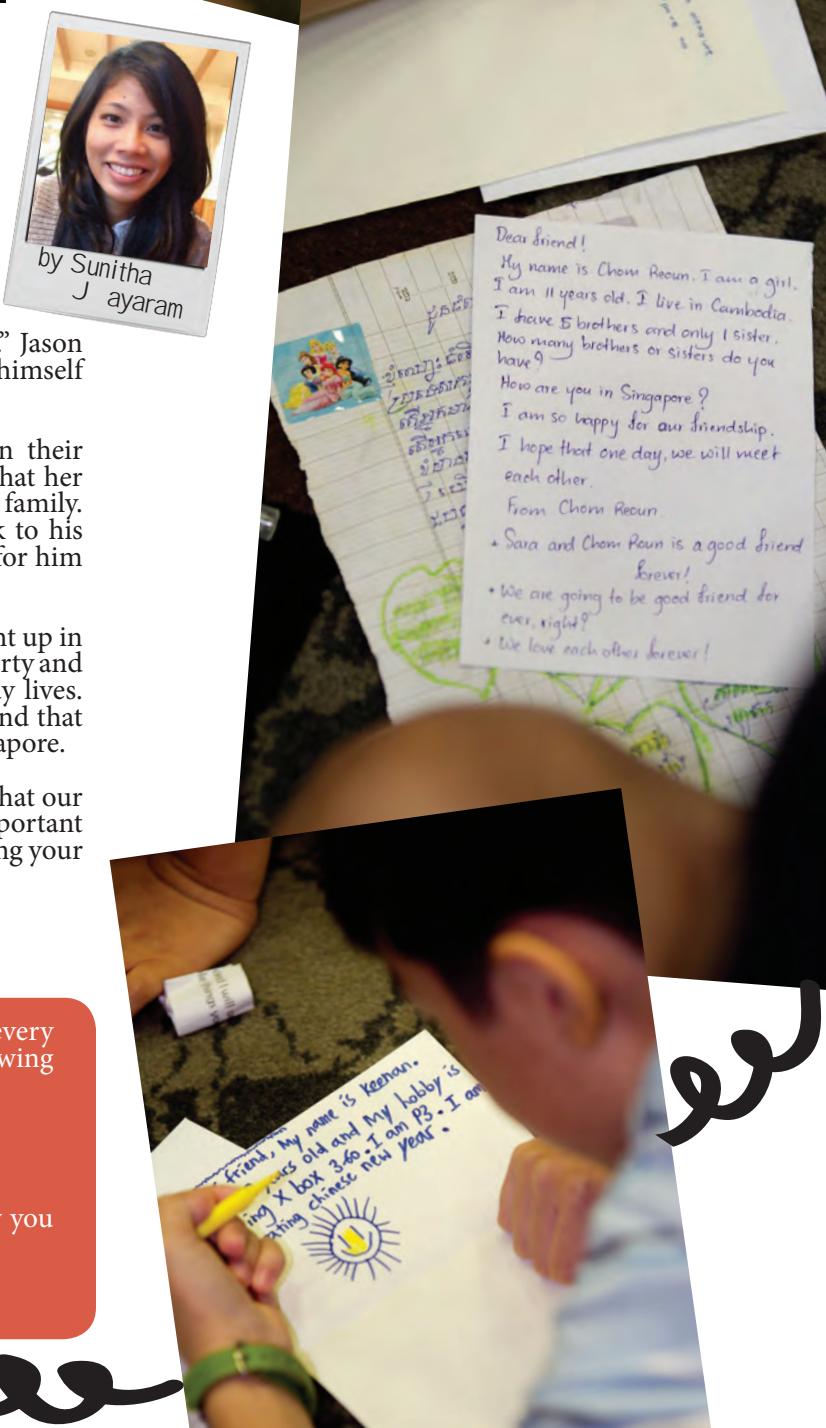
The children and teachers meet with God every Sunday at 8.45am and 11.15am at the following locations in church:

Infants	Abraham Lounge, L1
Pre-school	Kindergarten, L1
Primary	Hallelujah, L3

For more information on our activities and how you can help out in the CM, kindly contact Chew Kim Ling, chair person (91903998) or Alice Lim, lay ministry staff (90921589)



by Sunitha
Jayaram



EVENTS

Connect with God

Every Saturday

0700hrs - Men @ Prayer

Holy Week Services

Mon- Thurs, 18-21 Apr, 2000 hrs

Good Friday 22 Apr, 1000 hrs

Easter Sunrise Service, 24 Apr, 0630 hrs

Easter Service (English), 24 Apr, 1000 hrs
(Sanctuary and Emmanuel Hall)

Easter Service (Mandarin), 24 Apr, 1000hrs
(Upper Room)

Visit www.tmc.org.sg/pulpit.html for sermon titles and more

Connect with Others

Fri, 1 Apr and Sat, 2 Apr

Children in Prayer conference 2011 with the theme "Arrows in the Quiver". Singapore's third national prayer equipping conference for children, parents, church leaders/workers. More details at www.tmc.org.sg/highlights.html#cipc

Sun, 3 Apr, 1100hrs

Henry Chong music concert

Invite your Mandarin-speaking friends to this evangelistic concert. Details on the website at www.tmc.org.sg/highlights.html#henrychong

Wed, 6 Apr and 4 May, 1000hrs

Yum Cha is a platform for over-50s to meet mid-week for fellowship, singing, snacks and of course, tea. Bring your friends, relatives and neighbours! More details at www.tmc.org.sg/ministries.html

Sun, 24 Apr and 29 May

Visit to Institute of Mental Health by Outreach & Social Concerns. Want to serve with them? Contact Eric Cheong at eric@tmc.org.sg or at 62824443

Thurs, 28 Apr and 26 May, 1000hrs

Visitation & Devotion @ St Luke's Eldercare.

Please contact Eric Cheong at eric@tmc.org.sg for more details

Connect with One Another

Sat 16 Apr, 1800hrs

Paya Lebar Methodist Church

Youth Ministry Fusion 2011: Raised to Worship, Open to give, Out to Serve. Fusion is the annual gathering of Methodist Youths from all 20 TRAC churches and 15 schools for a great time of worship, prayer and listening to God's word. This year, Jon Egan and the Desperation Band (from New Life Church in Colorado Springs) joins the Methodist Family praising the Lord Together!

Sat, 21 May

Fellowship amongst servants in Outreach & Social concerns. Join to learn more about their work.

SERVICES REQUIRED

WHO IS IN THE COUNTING HOUSE COUNTING THE MONEY?

Not enough people, says the Finance Committee, which needs volunteers.

Responsibility: collate the offering into different denominations and record the amounts accordingly on Sundays and special days like Christmas after the worship services. Volunteers would be placed on a pre-agreed duty roster.

Simple pre-requisite: A devoted Christian with a fear and love for God.

Training: Training will be provided. A counting team leader will be present to guide you.

For more information: Please call Denisa at 62824443 or denisa@tmc.org.sg

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