

Stepping Out With God

Henry Kong





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I have always wanted to keep a compilation of the many articles that I have penned over the past 45 years of full-time ministry, but have been distracted. To make matters worse, I have not been keeping copies or good records of many of these pieces, especially those in the early years.

Most of the articles in this volume were archived on my 3Cs (church, computers and cuisine) webpage and lately on Facebook.

They have been placed in reverse chronological order, the latest, first, as I not only consider them to be better writeups, but they are easier to locate.

Members of the Pasir Panjang, Singapore congregation may find this collection interesting. Others may find it useful, as I have received good comments from Facebook readers all over the world.

I want to dedicate this book to my beloved wife Nat, who has served faithfully beside me all these many years. I would not have come so far nor lasted so long without her love and support.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my daughter June, who is the joy and pride of my life. I rely on her to proofread all my writings and she has the knack of turning a routine piece into something rather good.

To the one and only church that I have ministered for so long, thank you for your love and care through the years. Serving God with each one of you at the Church of Christ, Pasir Panjang, Singapore is indeed the best job in the world. I would not exchange it for anything else!

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Knowing God's Will

Everyone is interested in knowing the will of God

- More importantly, "What is God's will for me?"
- As in, "Whom shall I marry?" or "What vocation I should be in?"
- Even, "What is God's will for me today?"

1. We can know the Will of God

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

- God has not chosen to hide His will from mankind
- Throughout history, God has made known His will for mankind
- God revealed His will directly to man, through prophets and the Holy Spirit

2. Today, His will is revealed in the Bible

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

- God has used the Holy Spirit to guide over 40 men to write the Bible over 1,600 years
- Men has tried to destroy it, but it remains the top bestseller
- Men has tried to discredit it, but its contents hold true to this day

3. God's Will is for All Men to be Saved

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

- God so loved the world that He sent His Son to die for us
- He has delayed His Son's return that everyone may have opportunity
- If we do not get to heaven, we can only blame ourselves

4. It is God's Will that We do good

1 Peter 3:17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

- Some people mistakenly think that God's will is to make us happy

Others think that God's will is to make us healthy, wealthy or successful
In fact, God says better to suffer (be poor, unhealthy...) to do His will

5. Our lives should be obedient to God's Will

James 4:15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

- We should no longer be servants of sin to fulfill its lusts
- We must lay aside every weight and sin to run the race
- We must deny ourselves, carry the cross and follow Him daily

6. To follow God's Will, We must want to do it

Luke 22:42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

- The prosperous farmer of Luke 12 thinks only of his own will
- Are we willing to accept God's will in our lives?
- Are we willing and ready to do God's will each day?

7. Rewards of Knowing and Doing God's Will

1 John 2:17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

- The person is no fool who gives up that he cannot hold
- It is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgement
- Jesus is coming soon – are you ready (ie doing His will)?

Conclusion

James 1:22-24 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

- If you do not know the will of God, start reading the Bible today
- If you are familiar with the Bible, check to see if you are in the faith

Application

- For some, we need to say as in Luke 15:18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee
- For others, we say to you as in Acts 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

The Whole Duty of The Church: To Speak the Truth in Love

The more I read the word of God, the more I am led to see that my task as a minister, the task of leaders as well as the task of each and every member of the church is to speak the truth of God's word in love as commanded in Ephesians 4:15.

1. It is so important for the church to proclaim the truth as preserved and inspired by the Holy Spirit through the ages. We need to stay close to the Bible, telling it like it is without adding or subtracting from its divine revelations.

The core of this truth is the gospel of Christ. This must not only be told, but obeyed and lived in the lives of all who embrace it. In doing so, sin must be denounced and all wrongdoing must be called out and dealt with.

2. Just as important, this truth must be spoken in love as our passage clearly instructs. Indeed, Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 13:2, that it does not matter the extent to which we go in our effort to practice the word of God; if we do not do it out of love, for then there is no profit at all.

In the years of my ministry, I have seen people in the church - from members to ministers and missionaries who will 'throw the book' at one and all, without being kind, charitable or patient. As a result, the faith of many is shipwrecked and many churches divided.

It is vital that we handle the word of God with love. Just as true giving must be done cheerfully, proper preaching must be done lovingly. Every Christian must present the gospel in the way our Lord Jesus have done, with loving compassion, patient tender care so that no soul will miss heaven.

We all agree that what the world needs is the gospel of Christ. The way to proclaim the gospel is more than putting Bibles in hotel rooms or stuffing gospel tracts in mail boxes. I believe that every person in this world needs the opportunity to hear the gospel proclaimed in love, so that they can make a proper and heartfelt response to it.

An example of this is in Acts 17 where Paul shared the gospel to the Jews in Thessalonica and Berea. Since God has created us as free moral agents, we observe the various responses to the word of God. Given the opportunity to

hear the gospel, they respond in accordance to their comprehension and motives, and will have to answer for their decision in the final day.

In the same way, our leaders need to speak the truth in love as they lead the church and confront sin. They have to answer for each soul that has gone astray, and deal with sin in the lives of members. Patiently and lovingly, they must minister so that none misses heaven.

If I had my life to live over again, if there was anything I could change in my ministry, it would surely be in this area. As I look back over the years, I sense that on many occasions I could be more loving, kinder in speaking the truth and more patient in meting it out. Doing so would not only obey God's command, but allow God's will to be done instead of insisting it on my terms and my way.

How to Follow in the Footsteps of Jesus

The Bible exhorts us in 1 Peter 2:21 - "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps"

1. In attempting to imitate our Lord, we start with a disciplined prayer life. Luke 11:1 records, "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

2. A Christ-like follower is passionate about the church. He is present, active and supportive. John 2:17 tells us, "And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up".

3. If we are serious about following Christ, we will also love and care for our fellow followers. In John 10:11-12, Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

4. A Christ-like follower will promote and empower others. We learn in John 21:15, "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs."

5. To keep on following Jesus, and not to give up, we need to cultivate the joy of Jesus. Hebrews 12:2 explains the long-term endurance of our Lord and for us, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Sound Doctrine

"But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" - Titus 2:1

Since the Restoration Movement extended to our shores in the mid 1950s, the churches of Christ have made it our goal to build our faith and doctrine on the word of God. We seek to provide a book, chapter and verse for every spiritual lesson and practice. Through the Bible correspondence course, many came to know the Lord's church, mostly young people in secondary school.

As one of these young people, I was very zealous in my appetite for these Bible doctrines and was present every time the doors of the church were open. Not satisfied with this, I requested for a weekly Bible study near my home and started a youth publication. I went on to graduate with the first group of students at Four Seas College of Bible and Missions and worked full-time from that time with this congregation.

In the early years of my ministry, there was much strife amongst the churches of Christ. Various ones were attacking one another in the name of truth over a host of issues from the women's role in the church, to the work of the Holy Spirit. This led to divisions around the world. In the mission fields of Asia, congregations usually followed the line of their sponsoring churches.

In Singapore, all but the two congregations who were sponsored under the umbrella of the Four Seas College chose to subscribe to its founder's 'contending for the faith' doctrinal stance. This is because as New Testament Christians, we prefer to study the Bible for ourselves without being coerced into another's stand. Over the years, as members from both these congregations grow in faith and knowledge, unable to reconcile what they read from the Bible with their teaching and practice, droves of their members left these churches.

What constitutes sound doctrine?

Over the past several years, the majority of our new members are transferred members from other congregations. As I sit with many to bring them up to speed with our programmes and goals, I invariably ask them why they choose PP. Almost without exception, they would first point to the solid Biblical stand of PP, and many also articulate that they like the way the leadership speaks the truth in love.

So what constitutes sound doctrine? Is it toeing the line presented by some missionary, as some churches are doing? Is it holding on to what we first believed and refusing to change even when we have grown in grace and understanding? Or is it going back to the Bible and following what it teaches? We may hold to whatever the missionary dishes out to us in our Christian infancy, but as we grow in faith and study the Bible diligently we should apply and retain only what the word of God teaches.

Allow me to offer some crucial steps that will help us grow in faith, hold on to sound doctrine and be well pleasing in the sight of God, like the church in Philadelphia who "didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name" - Revelation 3:6-8.

1. Study the Word of God firsthand

There is no way anyone can be certain that what he believes is sound doctrine except from his own study of the word of God. This is why the apostle Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 2:15 to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth".

2. Corroborate every teaching with the Bible

I do not believe that anyone deliberately preaches what he knows to be false in order to deceive others when he may join his audience in hell. But be careful, we owe it to ourselves, like the Christians in Berea, whom Acts 17:11 tells us were "more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so".

3. Own your doctrine, don't copy & paste another's

Since the Bible is our roadmap to heaven, we cannot take any chances by simply accepting another's doctrine, no matter how sincere or well-meaning he may be. I love Jesus' encounter with the unnamed Samaritan woman in John 4, especially at the point in John 4:42 when her friends "said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world".

Every generation of Christians has to re-examine the doctrines that we pass down to them and make it their own. Because if all we do is to blindly accept the faith of our fathers, when the time of testing comes, we will not have a strong foundation.

4. Grow and be willing to change if necessary

Recently there has been much discussion on marriage and divorce as our Sunday 9:30am Bible classes study the book of Corinthians. Some are surprised, even among the leadership that although I have no quarrel with the stand that a Christian may remarry if his spouse commits adultery, I firmly believe that divorce is not an option in Christian marriage. If my wife is to leave me, I would not remarry but await the possibility of a future reconciliation.

This is because I believe God hates putting away. To seek adultery as a licence to remarry, is, in my thinking, to seek a loophole to further my own desire. I want to have the mind of Christ, to be a person after God's own heart, and to do what might honour and please Him. Life on earth is brief, but heaven is forever. I want to give up my rights so that I can give my honest answer to God in judgement, as every man must. In time, as I continue to grow in grace and the knowledge of God's word, this may change. But at present, this is the position I hold for myself.

The Bible tells us in Acts 18:24-26 of a preacher called "Apollos, knowing only the baptism of John... whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly".

My Legacy for PP

I have devoted most of my life to kingdom work. From the early age of 12 I was involved in church and parachurch activities. As the Lord enables, I look forward to serving His church with greater zeal, insight and effectiveness. I also know that there will be a day, perhaps sooner than later that I will no longer be around. When that time comes, if the Lord delays His return, I pray that through my many years of nurturing, teaching and example, PP will raise up men and women who read the Bible for themselves, check every doctrine according to the word, so that they may embrace it, stand firm on it and exercise it with love, because 1 Corinthians 13:3 tells us that if we do "have not love, it profited nothing".

This, in my understanding, is sound doctrine.

3 Keys to Making our Lives a Living Scarifice Daily

We Live in a Complex World. If we are not focused, it is so easy to be distracted, occupied and stressed by many unimportant things.

Are you distracted? The Bible tells us in 1 Kings 20:39-40 how a soldier was busy here and there. As a result, the prisoner that he was entrusted to watch over escaped. Now, he has to pay the full plenaty of his carelessness.

Are you too busy? There are many things that demands our time and attention. In Luke 10:40-42, Jesus compares the busyness of Martha with the focused priority of her sister, Mary.

Are you burdened? It is so easy in modern day Singapore to be stressed out by our studies, careers and committments in the home. Hebrews 12:1 urges us to lay aside every weight and sin that so easily ensares us.

It is high time to adjust our priorities! Top on this list is to live our lives as a living sacrifice to God on a daily basis. Here are 3 keys that will give us a head start:

1. To Live is Christ

Paul's testimony in Philippians 1:21 is that the reason for his existence is Christ. Like Paul, Jesus Christ must be key in our lives. In everything we do, we must ask what would Jesus do if He was in our place? Each morning we need to ask what would Jesus have us do? Let Jesus be the deciding factor in all we do – not politics, our opinions or preferences. We must be willing to deny ourselves so that His will will be accomplished in our lives each day.

2. People Matters

In Matthew 25:40, the Bible reveals "And the King will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.'" Everyone counts because each one is created in the image of God. The good that we do for one another, is regarded by Jesus as favour done to Him personally.

Jesus said in John 13:34, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another". In everything we do, we are called to value people, not count numbers and

measure the success of our projects. We are to treat one another with respect - as friends, the way we want to be treated. People are not a bother, but priority for the Christian.

3. Heaven is our Goal

Hebrews 11:16 tells us that the men of God in the past "But they now desire a better place--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them." I find this very encouraging and reassuring because I want heaven to be my home too.

Above all, souls are what we treasure and worth giving our lives for. Mark 8:36, 37 tells us, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The answer clearly is that we have no profit when we lose our soul.

God desires faithfulness and fruitfulness from each one of us. He does not demand success; everyone should do what he can. God will be pleased when we put Him first.

Conclusion

To present our lives as a living sacrifice to God each day, we must put Christ first and walk each day ever closer with Him. People is our priority; they matters – meetings, events, Bible studies are created for people; not people for them. Then look forward to heaven! Live with Eternity in Mind – while our physical body perishes the inward man is renewed daily!

The Kind of Servants God Uses for His Church Today

Over my past 45 years with PP, I have trained, mentored and nurtured many new converts into the Lord's work at PP. Looking back, I want to share three essential qualities of the kind of servants God uses for His church today.

1. Competency

It is important for us to understand that there are many things that every Christian can learn and become competent in, given the passion, commitment and time.

For example, the Bible teaches in 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." No one will ever be 100% equipped in scaling the truth of God's word. It is a competency that every Christian should apply themselves to learn and grow in. The same is true in soul winning, hospitality and other areas of the Christian ministry.

Still, there are certain areas that are clearly for the gifted. This is clearly spelt out by the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 12 when he describes the various functions of the body of Christ. For example, over the years in my ministry, I have acquired a good number of skills which I am competent in. However, I have to admit that I have no skills when it comes to songleading. I am tone deaf, cannot carry a tune and realise that it is a task better led by others.

So in ministries like writing, teaching, preaching etc. we should select and use Christians who are competent in these areas. Not everyone can do these things, some of us are more gifted than others. All of us must be aware of our gifts. When we serve the Lord with services that we are good at and enjoy doing, we reap much good and bless many. But if we insist in serving the Lord in areas where we are not good at, it can be a frustrating exercise that leads to discouragement and may turn others away from the Lord.

2. Member in Good Standing

It is so important that the congregation uses only members who are in good standing in the service of the Lord. Members who are irregular, treat others unlovingly, are unrepentant and have unresolved issues with the leadership

need to work on their faith, before attempting to serve in the local congregation.

Jesus taught in Matthew 5:23-24, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

In the Old Testament God was very careful in selecting people to serve Him as priests. Take a look at Leviticus chapter 21 and you will see how those serving God must set the example for the entire nation.

The Lord wants servants who are regular in worship, faithful in giving and display integrity in their lives and service to the Lord. They must speak well of the church and its leaders and not be given to gossip or slander.

3. The extra mile

While competency and good standing are so important in deeming us fit for kingdom work, what I most look out for is this third factor, which the Bible refers to as the 'second mile'. Over the decades, I have seen many fine Christians in good standing serving God in a most competent way. Among this number, some have come and gone, and are no longer in the faith, much less, serving God. What went wrong? I put it to you, the missing extra mile.

I am very aware that there are some who serve out of duty, rather than passion or zeal. Others serve to promote themselves or have other ulterior motives. Still others serve grudgingly. When I do not sense 'the second mile' in a Christian worker at PP, I am not keen in keeping the person in the ministry or using him on a frequent basis.

I firmly believe that those who serve the Lord must want to do it fervently. They must count it an honour and privilege, and even rejoice when they have to suffer loss in doing God's will (Acts 5:41).

When I see servants of the Lord digging into their own pockets, giving top priority to their calling and making sure the entire body is edified, I sense that the worker is going the second mile. These are the kind of servants God wants for His church. People who will set the example and lead His people to do greater things than we ever could hope to do.

In Luke 10:2, Jesus said, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth

labourers into his harvest." There will always be a need for servants to do kingdom work. God requires the best we can offer. More than just the fruits of our labours, God wants us to give from the bottom of our hearts - fully, truly and without holding back.

Let us set our house in order, resolve matters with the church and give of our best to the Master.

Christian Worship as Contrasted with Eastern Worship

If you are like me, we were brought up by parents who worshipped one of the many Eastern gods. Growing up, much of their practices were either taught or ingrained in our susceptible young minds. As such, even when we have embraced Christ, many of the notions still linger in our thinking even as we strive to worship in spirit and in truth.

Below are some notions that we will do well to discard as we seek to worship God more devotedly.

1. In many Eastern religions, we come to worship when and as we feel like, individually, and leave as we come in without the mutual support nor connection with fellow believers. Hebrews 10:25 not only encourages us not to forsake the assemblies but to exhort one another as we prepare for the fellowship.

2. Invariably, worshippers of Eastern faith go to temples when they have a need or request, always to seek a blessing. Hebrews 13:15 exhorts us to offer sacrifices to God; to seek the Giver and not the gifts.

3. In Eastern worships, the focus is on participation of the ritual - so long as the devotee performs the ritual, the worship is satisfactorily completed. John 4:24 teaches us to worship God in spirit and in truth.

4. As a child, my grandmother taught us to say prayers asking for blessings for the family, but also to be sure to add some curses to people whom we do not like. Matthew 5:44 directs us to bless those who curse us and pray for those who spitefully use and persecute us.

5. Very few Eastern religions demand a change of heart or lifestyle amongst its adherents. You can carry on drinking, gambling and all other vices. Romans 12:2 demands that we do not conform to this world but be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

It is so important to understand that we need to make a clear and distinct shift from our former beliefs so that we may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

A More Inspiring Worship Begins with Me

I am so glad that brother Truitt Adair, president of SIBI has come and helped us deal squarely and Biblically with one of our weakest areas - inspiring worship. Although we understood that the score is not terribly low (2 percent below regional average), the congregation was quick to rededicate, and our leaders have already started taking active steps. You will be reminded and be exhorted more frequently that a more inspiring worship begins with you.

There is a limit to what the men to serve can do. In fact, the early church did not even have a men to serve roster. When they assembled together, each one came with a blessing - a song, word of exhortation etc. So it is important, if we are to worship God in spirit and in truth, like the early Christians, we should also come seeking to bless, instead of receive.

Many have the mistaken conception that worship is a time to receive all kinds of blessings from God. So instead of coming to worship God, they come seeking the gifts rather than the Giver. As a result, we hear things like, "I do not get much from the worship" uttered instead of the admission, "I did not contribute anything to the worship". No wonder we go away criticising the songleader, complaining about the sermon and even leaving before God has dismissed us from His presence!

In closing, I want to apologise for the mistake I made in taking your children from you at worship in the past. In order to keep the children quiet at worship, we organized Bible classes and children's hour at the same time. These children are now teens and youth; they sit together away from their parents, and often are found talking, texting on their mobiles and even playing games at worship. While improvements are seen, families must sit together at the worship assembly so that children may learn how to behave from an early age in the house of God (I Timothy 3:15).

45 going 46...

On 1st May 1966, the new congregation of Christians meeting at Queenstown moved to a shoptop at Block 47, Tanglin Halt Road. Although I had been with the congregation before this date, this marked the day I started working full-time in the ministry.

How quickly the years have flown. Through the years, there have been good and hard times. Nat was with me since the beginning, grading the Bible correspondence courses, teaching Bible classes and planning the visits to members and visitors. June was a great addition to the team, and then Ramesh. As God blessed my ministry with able, devoted men and women, the work continued to grow.

It has been a great 45 years. If the Lord wills, I would like to make it an even 50. Still, 45 years is quite a long time to be with a single congregation, and I am most blessed to have come thus far. Thank you each one for your faith, example and support.

An Overwhelming Response Last Sunday

What a wonderful way to complete the 45 years' ministry with a great Sunday last week when more than three quarters of the members at both the morning worships, stepped forward to rededicate themselves to a more purposeful worship each week to God.

I am as excited as a child on day before my birthday, thinking of this coming Sunday (1st May 2011) where I will worship with a congregation that is intentional in giving God our very best at worship. As we live each day for Christ in Christian service (Romans 12:1, 2) this past week, let us come, seeking the Giver (not the gifts), with our buckets full so that we can bless others.

I can think of no better way to start my 46th year of full-time ministry with PP!

To God be the glory.

Serving with John 17:12 as Our Goal

When I was a new convert, I was eager to teach and share the word of God. I was painfully aware of what the Bible teaches in James 3:1 - "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." However, because of my zeal and desire to bring the gospel to as many as I could, I proceeded to equip myself as a full-time student at the local Bible college to share the Word.

The Responsibility of Ministry

While in Bible college, I was serving as an intern with the congregation at Moulmein Road and upon graduation, entered full-time ministry with the church at Pasir Panjang. The goal for my ministry was John 17:12 "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition..."

If teachers were judged more strictly, I understood that ministers would be subject to even heavier judgement. So right from day one of my ministry, I have rarely accepted invitations to preach at other congregations on Sundays. It is my belief that the congregation I serve will benefit much more from this practice than the occasional lesson that I share with other congregations.

It is a common trend with many congregations, that while we put in much effort to win the lost to Christ, it is so easy to allow members to leave by the back door. The Pasir Panjang congregation was not amongst the first congregations in Singapore, nor was it ever the fastest growing, yet because of our focus in not losing any that the Lord has given us, we are now the largest congregation.

Now that the church has grown, the work and problems have also multiplied. Still, our goal remains unchanged: to ensure that no member at Pasir Panjang misses heaven.

Addressing Persistent Sin

Our elders and leaders will lovingly and patiently work with every member, whatever the sin or problem may be, for as long as it takes. We will not give up on anyone, we will keep our doors open and will continue to work with the member as long as he is willing to sit down and talk.

There may be some, like Judas in this passage who may decide not to repent or no longer want to submit to the word of God. The church will not turn our backs on them nor cease to pray and keep trying to restore these members.

In all the years of my ministry, there has never been any occasion that the leadership has had to "throw the book" at anyone. Even when we are having the greatest difficulty in reaching out to a member, we just need to keep talking. In this way, as we deal with the sin and stay on top of the situation, we prevent the leaven from infecting the entire lump.

Our Common Goal

I have also never come across any member who is bent on dividing the church. All of us know how terrible and futile it is to do this against Christ. Often, we may be caught up in the heat of the matter or misunderstand the other person's motive. Truth be told, every member loves the Lord and wants to go to heaven as much as we do.

We are in the life transformation business and have seen how the word of God is able to touch the most stubborn heart. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" - Isaiah 55:11.

The best we can do is to serve with the goal of securing the soul of everyone we minister to. Just as our Lord Jesus has shown us, we must deal with the sin and love the sinner. May God help us to extend the grace we have received from Him to each one we serve.

How to Own a First-hand Knowledge of the Bible

In my years of ministry, I have come across individuals and churches who are passionate about the truth. Yet, instead of going to the Bible, these individuals rely on brotherhood materials, by people they regard as faithful writers. To me, this is no different from what established churches are doing with their creed books.

Jesus warns us in Matthew 15:9, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

The Bible is very clear in encouraging us to go to the fountain source - directly to the word of God. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." - 2 Timothy 2:15.

When we study the word of God, and use it as the foundation of our faith, we will grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. And as we become firmly rooted, we become more noble, like the Bereans of Acts 17:10-11 - "And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

The Bible declares in Romans 3:4, "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar."

There is no short cut to understanding the word of God. It requires much study. It demands a teachable heart open to the Spirit's pleading. Most of all, we need to have the integrity to examine our lives and adjust it in accordance to the word of God

When I was growing up, I observed how my grandmother fed my baby sister. She would take a spoonful of porridge, chew it in her mouth, then spew it on the spoon and feed that mush to her. Then I thought of Christians who never read the word of God for themselves and rely on others to tell them what God teaches.

The Bible is not hard to understand. The more you read it, the Bible says that you will be more skillful with it. "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Hebrews 5:14. Insights will come as you return again and again to the word.

In today's Internet world, it is easy for anyone to google the web and find religious teachings that agree with any and every viewpoint. PP does not want our Bible class teachers and preachers to rely on second-hand opinions and pass them on to the congregation as the truth. We want our teachers and preachers to study the Bible and share their first-hand knowledge with the class. Brother Cher Yam is a shining example of such a teacher and preacher. Over the years, he has diligently studied the Bible and worked hard in teaching and preaching. The current series on I Corinthians is the result of his first-hand study of the word of God.

PP has to be careful that every generation of members go to the word of God and discover all the key doctrines for themselves. This is the only way that PP can check itself, be strong and preserve the purity of the church for future generations.

8 Things I Desire for PP

Nat and I have devoted ourselves to the ministry at PP over the past 45 years. God has blessed the work by supplying PP with devoted members who have upheld our hands in serving this congregation.

There are many things we want to empower PP members to do. Below are eight that we feel are most basic and yet so important.

1. Attendance

We encourage every member to be regular at the weekly Sunday morning worships. Members who cannot come in the morning are asked to attend the evening worship. PP will not accept any transfers of members if they are unwilling to attend Bible classes. All members, especially leaders, deacons and elders are urged to attend as many of the meetings of the church as possible. Hebrews 10:25 exhorts us not to forsake the assemblies.

2. Behaviour

All members are taught to follow Jesus and become more like Him each day. Members at PP are expected to touch one another, and all they come in contact with, with the love of Jesus. As the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13), we are to extend the grace of God, accord value to everyone and treat all with agape love.

3. Commitment

We expect every member to give top priority to kingdom matters at PP. As Jesus loved the church and gave His life for it, we are encouraged by many who are walking in His steps. We should not allow the distractions of this life to prevent us from seeking first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33).

4. Discipline

In my article on the 13th February 2011 edition of Focus (<http://www.ppcoc.org/2011/feb11b.pdf>), I highlighted the D.E.P.T.H. approach that PP is taking in ministering to our members. 4 out of the 5 approaches require our elders to work patiently, with loving tender care, for as long as it takes so that their souls may be saved. However, I will not hesitate to speak to any member who is at odds with another, causing division and doing damage to the body of Christ. When these do not listen, appropriate action

will be meted out, according to the Bible (Matthew 18:15) with due regard for his soul.

5. Eldership and Leadership

Our leaders have a day job like us, but devote much time to the church. Our elders are doing a splendid job in praying, pastoring and being present for members at PP. 1 Thessalonians 5:13 teaches that we are to esteem our leaders highly. Members who disrespect, slur or slander the leadership are suspended from serving at PP until the issues are resolved. I will speak to each one personally with the objective to work towards the time when they can serve PP fully again.

6. Foundation

Instead of searching the internet to find material that reflect our points of view, and then circulate it to individuals by email or use them in Care teams, Bible classes and sermons; we encourage all members to study the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15) and like the early Christians in Berea, to search the scriptures to test whether those things are valid (Acts 17:11).

7. Giving

In order not to distract our members, PP only requires members to give as God has prospered (2 Corinthians 9:7) on Sundays and once a year, on Missions Sunday in October. Members are encouraged to grow in the grace of giving and lay up treasures in heaven through sacrificial offerings to support the work PP is doing at home and abroad.

8. Hospitality

This is the queen of all virtues - the sum total of our Christian devotion to God. God has blessed PP with so many opportunities to open our homes, take visitors out and invite foreigners for meals. This task should not be carried out by the current few, but every member at PP. Romans 12:13 tells us to share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

I have listed just the basic 8 expectations I have for members at PP. These are the ABCs plus DEFGH... I want to empower the membership, not only to excel in these areas but grow to embrace more and more. Nat and I have enjoyed our ministry with PP over the years. We want to thank members and leaders at PP that have supported our service and made it so fruitful. It is a joy to work with transferred members who inject new blood as they learn how PP does things and fit in.

As God gives us strength, we will continue to love, serve and build the body at PP. Whatever obstacles we may face; together in unity, with patience, prayer, love and not giving up on one another, we will continue to grow and glorify God, as we touch lives for eternity.

While our elders keep watch over the flock with their patient pastoring, prayers and presence; as your minister, I am fully aware of my calling, as Paul also reminded the young minister, Timothy - "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" - 2 Timothy 4:1-2.

The Most Important

Jesus tells us that the most important commandment of all is to love God and one another (Mark 12:28-34).

In order to love God whom we have not seen, the apostle John tells us we start by loving one another. 1 John 4:20 - "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

When God reached out to sinful man in an effort to reconcile us back to Him, He did not judge us according to our fallen state, but in His grace, accorded us a sense of worth that we do not deserve. 2 Corinthians 5:19 - "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

In the same way, as Christians reach out to each other and those out of Christ, the most important thing that we can do is to demonstrate the grace of God by bestowing a sense of worth and dignity. When the other person senses our value and concern for them, our relationship is securely built on a firm and solid foundation.

In the course of my Christian faith, it has been such a blessing for me to enjoy the fellowship of such Christians. They make me feel loved, appreciated and at ease in their company. Each time I am with them, I want to do better. Their faith is so uplifting as I know that they will always extend the grace of God to me.

What the church and the world needs today is for every Christian to extend this very grace of worth and dignity to all we come in contact with - so that we can truly be the salt of the earth; the kind of people God wants us to be.

PP Elders now on its 7th Year

PP was the first congregation in Singapore to install elders. It took us 40 years to come to the maturity to appoint elders. Our elders have been a great blessing to the church at PP and in many ways, to the deaconship, leadership and my work.

Prayers

Since the installation of our elders, they have met weekly on Sunday afternoons at 5pm to cover the church in prayers. On many occasions, they visit hospitals, nursing homes and members' houses to pray. In my mind, this is the greatest blessing elders bring to PP - "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him... The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" - James 5:14-16.

Presence

It is most encouraging to see our elders making a consistent effort to be present at all our services, to the extend of attending both the morning worships. This is so important not only in setting the example, ("Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" -1 Peter 5:3) but to get to know the members and for the members to get to know them. Since their appointment, they have opened their homes on Chinese New Year to the church and have been outpouring in their hospitality to members and visitors.

Pastoring

The appointment of elders has helped the leadership become scripturally organized. I have relegated to the elders, the pastoring duties that I formerly assumed when we did not have elders. Our elders perform marriage counselling, sit down with members when they sin and patiently work out issues with members with loving tender care in an effort to restore them to active service - "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" - Ephesians 4:11.

Our elders hold a day job like all of us. I am amazed at their dedication and the hours they put in their ministry. There is no doubt in my mind that the Lord's work and the welfare of members are first priority in their lives. I thank God for their faithful wives and the support that our deaconship and leadership give to our elders.

With elders, the work of the church is better organized, PP is currently experiencing the period of our greatest growth. Some of this growth has been the result of members from other congregations placing membership at PP. These families visited PP and because they found many good things taking place at PP that they could benefit from and contribute towards, they too are now an integral part of the congregation at PP, adjusting to the ways things are done at PP.

With the membership exceeding the 500 mark, we will need to increase the number of elders (as well as deacons). I know how difficult it is for an elder to take care of more than 100 members. As PP's minister, I recall the hard time I had ministering to 300 members before we installed elders. I would like to appeal to our men to desire to serve as elders, then to start exemplifying the 3 Ps (praying with/for members, presence at our meetings, pastoring members and visitors) so that we can build up a ready pool for our future eldership.

Bottomline

While ministers see to the running of the church and evangelists, the expansion of the church, elders are to focus on the members of the church. They serve best in prayers, presence and pastoring. James 5:14 instructs the church to call the elders to pray, because their prayers avail much. As elders attend every assembly of the church, visit members and open their homes in hospitality, like Lyn Anderson's book, they smell like sheep. And as they watch over the flock, patiently pastoring members and ensuring that no wolves creep in with false doctrines, they wisely empower the leadership with the rest of the work of the church, because "it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables...But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" Acts 6:2-4.

What Happens When You Pray

Whenever one of God's children prays, even the gates of hell tremble! It may be a child in prayer, or an old woman. Every prayer carries with it the full power of the God who created the heavens and earth. Consider what happens when you pray:

1. You recognise the sovereignty of God over everything

Now you are beseeching the throne of grace. You are calling on the greatest power available to come to your assistance in this time of prayer. Matthew 17:20 "And Jesus said unto them... for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

2. You are willing to let God take charge of your situation

You are ready to submit to His goodwill whatever the decision God may make in response to your request. Not our will, but His will be done.

Luke 11:2 "And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth."

3. You are assured that God hears your prayer

He is willing to come to your assistance.

Matthew 7:11" If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

4. God is able to help you

In fact, He is able to do more than you ask of Him. Ephesians 3:20 "Now to him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us."

5. No matter what happens, you will be able to look back and realise that God has worked to your best interest in answering your prayer.

Romans 8:28 "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose."

6. When you rise from your prayer, you will be blessed

Luke 18:14 "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Good things happens when you pray. Make this year all it could be. Whatever the situation, whatever the problem, God is only as far away as a prayer.

"Oh what griefs we often forfeit,
Oh what needless pain we bear.
All because we do not carry,
Everything to God in prayer!"

Showers of Great Blessings!

In all my 46 years with PP, I haven't witnessed such an outpouring of blessings as we have in the past few weeks! All of us should be humbled with the showers of great blessings from the Lord.

It started with a great thanksgiving service on the 26th December 2010. It was our last worship of the year. At the 6pm evening worship, more than 130 members returned to thank God for 2010 and ask for His blessings in 2011.

The service was followed by a great potluck with a variety of contributions lovingly prepared by many. To get a sense of the uplifting atmosphere, go to Facebook and check out the video taken by brother Patrick.

Annual Youth Camp

On the next day, almost a hundred of our youth enjoyed their annual camp. We had participants from Shanghai and Philippines who made the trip to be a part of the great fellowship.

One of the key anchors of the camp was the solid Bible study by brothers Harry and Cher Yam. This resulted in a few baptisms - David Goh, Kith and Kay Lee amongst others.

Couples' Retreat

Meanwhile, parents were having the time of their lives at the couples' retreat. Right from the first session, tears were flowing. By the time it ended, there were many rededications and hugs all around.

View videos and photos of the retreat on our Facebook page. Some of the wildest moments were at the karaoke lounge after the traditional candlelight dinner on the final night. A video has been posted, and from what I hear, many more are soon to follow.

Annual Church Planning Day

In the same week on 1st January, members spent the first morning of 2011 together. How our hearts were stirred when one by one, our leaders came forth to share the plans and vision for the next 364 days of the year!

"Nothing happens by chance at PP", commented more than one of the speakers. Indeed, PP is fortunate to have a good number of devoted leaders who are willing to spend and be spent for the cause of Christ.

The icing on the cake was the baptism of elder Simon's youngest son, David.

First Lord's Day in 2011

The first Lord's day of 2011 took off in a wonderful way and set the mood for the rest of the year with four baptisms. There were many visitors at all three services. Brother Brain, father of Juith Chen shared with the congregation Christian hymns that he has authored before the 11am worship..

I was really moved and impressed by regular visitor, Kwan Xin Yi who waited until she reached her 18th birthday (thus given permission by her parents to choose her faith, much like sister Katie Tey). Immediately after her baptism, Xin Yi was amongst the first batch to attend SIBI's weekday courses!

The next day, SIBI's 2-year full-time course rolled out smoothly with 5 full-time students and many members and youth present.

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!

2010 Roundup

Nat and I started 2010 with PP's first missions trip to Myanmar with a team of the best 10 travel companions ever. We took our usual Chinese New Year get-away to Chiangmai, Thailand soon and then settled down for what turned out to be a rather spectacular year

Nat is not working much these days. As usual, she is busy reaching out, visiting and lending support to me and the church like she has always done. We were glad that amongst those that Nat has reached out to, Phai and David not only obeyed the gospel but gave birth to a bouncy baby boy who took the name Nat suggested, Jonathan.

I am thankful that I had a clean bill of health at my annual checkup and managed to keep my weight at an even 70kg. I have been teaching and preaching more this year, and enjoying it immensely. One of these series, "Walking with God", may be downloaded from www.ppcoc.org/walkwGod/ complete with lessons notes, teacher's guide and powerpoints.

June and Ramesh are a great comfort. We see them at church on Sunday morning, evening and Wednesdays. They come over for dinner on Tuesdays and we go for Saturday morning walks and breakfast at the Botanical garden. June had a promotion this year; Ramesh was away on job training in Norway for several weeks and ended the year with a new job.

We had a great camp in KL, Malaysia in June with over 350 participants from PP, plus two dozen overseas guests. Our missions giving and budget continue to grow - this year, to the tune of a quarter of million dollars. I am excited about our partnership with Batam, Indonesia and Baguio, Philippines where we are helping growing congregations to do much more, as they model the way for the rest of the congregations in their countries. SIBI, our Bible school is rolling out its 2-year full-time course on 3rd January next year!

The highlight of our travels this year was to the Shanghai Expo, a treat from our daughter, June. We enjoyed the Asian Missions Forum in Bohol, Philippines - one of the best in recent years. As soon as I complete my quarterly Bible series next week, we are heading to Malaysia for a short break and also to fulfil the long standing request to teach and preach at Wangsa Maju, Selangor. Before the year ends, Nat and I have signed up for PP's couple retreat at Batam, Indonesia.

It has been a great year, and we hope that yours has been just as outstanding. Nat and I got an iPad each and are somewhat active on facebook. If you are not already on facebook, or are not our friend on facebook, please get on it and keep in touch.

The best of Seasons Greetings from Us to You and Yours!

The Kind of Service that Pleases God

The most important thing for a child of God to do is to live the life of a Christian that pleases God. As the light of the world (Matthew 5:16), we are to let our light shine wherever we go, so that all may see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven.

All Christians should strive to devote each day for Christ and walk with Him, as we are studying at our Sunday 9:30am Bible class. Like our elders, our lives must be beyond reproach, and an example to believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).

As we grow in faith, every Christian should desire to serve the church, like the house of Stephanas, whom the Bible describes as 'addicted themselves to the ministry' (1 Corinthians 16:15). We thank the Lord that He has raised many like the house of Stephanas at PP who diligently and sacrificially pitch in to serve the Lord in a wholehearted and cheerful way. It is my joy to mention just a few of these great servants of the Lord at PP whom I want to uphold as role models of the kind of Christian service that pleases God.

Brother Daniel Ng and his family are the Von Trapps of PP. They enjoy singing as a family and are really outstanding and passionate about it. Instead of keeping this talent to themselves, as soon as they transferred to PP, they searched for ways to share with the congregation. In a new environment, working with the leadership is not without its hiccups. On one occasion, they were ready to throw in the towel. Still, like true troopers, they persevered and greatly blessed PP with regular monthly a cappella singing, quarterly singspiration and singing classes.

Brother Peter Lim obeyed the Lord with his brother, Ting Jwee in his teens. Through the years, he has been active and faithfully serving the Lord, bringing his parents to Christ. In the past several years, he was our MVP (most valuable player), as he took over the organisation of the annual church camp from our church staff. He went on to serve as the current chairman of our ROS (Registry of Societies). A 'take charge' guy, he turned our occasional Awareness leadership sessions into regular ROS sessions, and along with it, the AGM and other activities under his purview. I am glad that we have such a servant of the Lord at PP.

Brother Seah Siow Hwee became a Christian in his youth against the wishes of his family. This conviction has shaped his entire life, putting Christ as his first priority. He has modeled the way for all of us in male spiritual leadership roles, by ensuring his children are brought up in the way of the Lord. As a freelance computer programmer, his income was not regular. This has never affected his faith, nor his regular giving to the church. Siow Hwee is an effective and excellent teacher and preacher, with a passion for missions. Their hospitable family hosted many sessions for foreigners. He has been involved in missions from as near as Malaysia to all the way in China. Now he is spearheading the new work in Vietnam with great zeal and much success. Although he had issues with the the China missions, his zeal never faltered and he continues to serve the Lord in the best brotherly spirit.

These are but three examples of the many soldiers of the cross that I am blessed to work with. Each of them has left an indelible mark in the progress at PP which will continue to benefit and bless many, through the years.

Because they are willing to take the trouble to work with the church in team ministry, they can draw the full resources from the congregation and their labours will continue even after they have left each specific effort. The church at PP is calling on members to step up and serve in the growing ministry at PP.

The kind of service that pleases God is one in which we are willing to work in consensus, ready to accept the decision of the majority and be accountable to the church for our efforts.

Be a Team Worker
Don't Rob the Glory from Christ and His church

It is good for every Christian to abound in good works. As we grow in faith, we must begin contributing to the work of the church through our attendance, giving and prayers. We can speak positively of the church and its leaders, provide hospitality and bring friends to Bible class and worship.

The next step is to be involved in the ministry of the church. The Bible teaches in Ephesians 2:21 that all members must be fitly framed together in the church. The Bible does not teach that members can go solo and do their own ministry outside the church that he is a member of.

Resist the urge of doing your own thing and staying in your comfort zone. Take the vital step forward to be involved as part of the overall work of the church - drawing from all the resources of the church, being accountable, working and learning from one another.

Sure, it takes more effort serving in the team ministry. It is easier to do it our way and take our ball home when we do not agree with others. When we do so, we rob the church of our contribution and the glory from Christ and His church. Join the examples of the three men in our article as team workers - the kind that pleases God.

PP's Missions Programme

The PP church has already surpassed our 2010 missions Sunday goal of \$200,000. What then?

Last Sunday, we thank all members, visitors and friends who have given to our Missions Sunday. Over \$210,000 have been received and more are coming in. By this time next year, we would have enough for the 2011 missions budget of a quarter of a million dollars.

1. Our first concern is to address the portion of members who have not given a gift to Missions Sunday. PP's growing missions expenditure cannot depend on a few large donors, but on every member giving their best.

If you are a member at PP, and have not given your part to our Missions Sunday, please pick up an envelope from the usher's tray and drop it in the contribution bag. Do not let a single Missions Sunday pass you by without giving a heartfelt gift to missions. The amount is not important, it is your participation in PP's missions effort we are looking for.

Or if you have not given in accordance to your ability or as God has prospered you, may I encourage you to give a second gift. It could be that you held back your gift for another mission or are distracted from giving fully.

2. Next, brother Patrick is inviting all members who have focused on one or more nations into the PP missions interest group. For the start, there is nothing you need to do. As news and updates are received on the area of your focus, you will simply receive an email with that information.

Should you prefer not to be updated, simply let Patrick know and we will unsubscribe your name. You may, at a later date join the interest group if you please.

As part of the interest group, you will not only receive updates but advance information of any trips that are in the conceptualization stages. You may contribute suggestions, ask questions or even volunteer to be part of the team.

Giving to Missions Sunday is a great way to support our missions effort. Being a part of one or more interest groups is the next vital step in your involvement in PP's missions. Missions interest groups are to our missions programme what Care teams are to our body life at PP.

3. Look out for nationals of your focus country at PP and in Singapore. You do not need to board a plane or boat to do missions! The fields are ripe unto harvest, and they are in our backyard.

Reach out to these people. Get to know their countries. Keep them in your prayers.

When these nationals visit PP, attends SIBI or our church camp, be the first to volunteer hospitality. Do not wait for the appeal. Anticipate the need by setting the example. It will encourage our coordinators and set the positive spirit of hospitality.

4. Different mission fields have different needs. Check with the coordinators on how you can help. When in doubt, simply direct your queries to any of the church staff or our elders.

5. Thank you for your support in sustaining and increasing PP's missions effort. We thank God that we are able to achieve what has been accomplished so far. Still, there is much more we can do. May our budget of a quarter of a million dollars multiply many times in the coming years. "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" - John 4:35 .

Missions interest groups are to our missions programme what Care teams are to our body life at PP. If you are passionate about missions, you should be informed and involved, just as you would in a Care team

Simply jot your email on the attendance card during the month of November and indicate the interest group you are focusing on. You may select one or more; even all if you are undecided. There is nothing more you need to do - just sit back and get occasional updates.

If you want, you can make suggestions, ask questions and respond to updates.

- China Interest Group - i/c Henry Kong, Anthony Li, William Wong and Alice Tan; partnering Tony Yeung, Shanghai

- India Interest Group - i/c Patrick Ong, Henry Kong; supporting Joel Madiki, Hyderabad; partnering Joe Swamy, Mumbai

- Indonesia Interest Group - i/c Tan Beng Chuan, Irene Cheang; partnering Batam & Nias churches

- Malaysia Interest Group - i/c Tan Beng Chuan, Swee Aun, Winston; supporting Puchong and Wangsa Maju, partnering Seremban

- Myanmar Interest Group - i/c Paul Lim, Adrian Teo, Henry Kong; supporting Samuel, Joseph, Beckham & Hnin Muang, partnering Winsome, Philip
- Philippines Interest Group - i/c Peter Lim, Winston, Swee Aun; supporting Tuao, partnering Midtown
- Thailand Interest Group - i/c Henry Kong, Nat Kong; supporting Sak, partnering San Sai
- Vietnam Interest Group - i/c Seah Siow Hwee, Henry Kong partnering Can Tho and HCM churches

The Kind of Giving that Pleases God

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7

We are all familiar with the above passage from 2 Corinthians chapter 9. Each year, no matter how much the PP congregation gives on Missions Sunday, we believe that it pleases God because every cent is given freely and cheerfully. The fact that the amount given is not only sustained, but increases each year, is a testimony to the support and wide participation of the entire church.

This year, at this time of writing, over \$187,500 have been given on behalf of PP's missions programme for the coming year. This exceeded the \$185,000 given for the last 12 months. No doubt, as the final gifts come in before the end of the year, we will surpassed our goal of \$200,000.

This past week I sent a letter to every member to thank each one for their support. If you are not a member and gave to our missions efforts, I also want to extend our appreciation for your gift. We are grateful that even those who do not attend PP are giving towards our Missions Sunday. It encourages me to know that Dr Gordon Hok and Madam Liew Qui Yin, friends of elder Winston, have contributed \$2,000 towards our outreach in Malaysia. This is not the first time they have given generously to PP's missions.

The full listing is printed in this issue of Focus. We have done this since the first Missions Sunday so that we can provide proper accounting in a public manner. If you have given and do not receive a receipt or are not listed in today's Focus, please check with sister Annie Cheng, our staff administrator.

What the Church Expects of You

If you are a member at PP, all that the church expects of you is to give cheerfully, as God has prospered you. We do not set an amount for any member - it must be according as you have purposed in your heart. The only other time that the church expects members to give besides the weekly contribution is on Missions Sunday, once a year.

For the weekly Sunday giving, a good guideline to begin is the Old Testament example of a tithe - 10 percent of your income. Some can give more, others

less. As we grow in faith, we should also abound in this grace also (2 Corinthians 8:7). Your weekly contribution to the church is vital to maintain the work of the church and cater to its growing needs. This is why, if we are out of town for work or vacation, it is important that we make up our contribution on the weeks that we are away.

Other Giving and Collections

Occasionally, as the need arises, there may be other giving and collections in the church. This may be something as simple as a child asking a grownup for sponsorship of some fund raising activity in school to helping out some member or visitor with finances. The church does not require any member to give to any of these causes. Indeed, we would appreciate it if you would first consult our church staff or elders before being involved in these extra giving and collections. Chances are, our financial committee may have already been working with these people, in an effort to help them solve the need in a long-term manner.

Missions and Special Needs

The church receives many requests for help and missions efforts throughout the year. Every request is carefully considered by the particular missions interest group. For everyone we help, dozens are refused. The policy of the church is that every member gives just once a year on Missions Sunday. The amount collected will be used to fund all our missions efforts and help special needs that we deem necessary. For instance, recently the church gave thousands of dollars in relief efforts to Pakistan and Philippines.

If you are a member at PP, we expect you to support our missions efforts by setting aside your gift on Missions Sunday. When you have given your part, like I mentioned in my sermon on Missions Sunday, we do not have any qualms about you giving to any other missions. But if you hold back on your support to PP's missions, or cut back in part to help another effort, then you have done a disservice to the church. As a member, you are expected to do your part for the church first, before expending your funds elsewhere.

As in the case of other giving and collections, it would be good to check with our church staff or elders before being involved in other missions or special needs. Again, chances are that the church is already assisting or you will learn why the church is not involved.

A case to point: when brother Ming Hui received an sms from Malaysia to help a certain individual to start a new work, he wisely approached me to seek counsel. As we looked into this case, we learned that this person has

disagreed with the congregation that he is currently working with and supporting him will certainly cause division instead of helping in reconciliation.

In a Nutshell

1. Members at PP are expected to give cheerfully, as God has prospered them.
2. No amount is specified for any member as he should give as he purposed in his heart.
3. A good starting point is a tithe (10%) -members are encouraged to increase this amount as they grow in faith.
4. The only other gift the church expects of PP members is on Missions Sunday. Again, no amount is specified, and every member is encouraged to give above the past year as God has prospered them.
5. When a member has fulfilled his weekly and annual missions giving, he is free to exercise his liberality and benevolence as God has blessed him.
6. It is always wise to check with the church staff or elders before helping out in other missions or special needs. The church may already been involved or have good reasons not to be involved.
7. While it is good to be helpful and benevolent, let us heed to what the Bible says in Romans 14:16 - "Let not then your good be evil spoken of".

The Church is the Bride of Christ

Some Christians think that as long as they have a personal relationship with God, they do not need to bother about the church. How surprised they will be when Christ returns, He will not be looking for individuals but for His bride, the church! (Ephesians 5:27, Revelations 21:2).

The church is the 'called out body'. 1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light

Jesus is the founder of the church - Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

When we rendered obedience to the gospel, we are added to Christ's church - Acts 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

We are to worship, grow and serve together in the church (1 Corinthians 12) - Ephesians 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.

God works through no other insitutions today except the church - Ephesians 3:10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God (Read also Ephesians 3:21).

We are to build scripturally organized congregations in every location - Acts 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Members are to be subjected to the church - Matthew 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

When we despise, divide and hurt the church, we are doing it to our Lord Jesus - Acts 9:4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? (cf Acts 8:3; 1 Corinthians 15:9).

Points to Ponder

1. What does the church meant to Christ?
2. What idoes the church mean to you?
3. Are you willing to devote your life to the church, and even die for it, like Christ did?

Application

1. Do you put your own interest above that of the church?
2. Are you willing to bear and forbear, patiently working and serving to build the church?
3. Do you insist on your own way and take your ball home when others do not go along with your thinking?

Bottomline

Glorify the church that Jesus loved and shed his blood for!

What is Walking with God?

1. Christians are disciples (learners).
2. We grow from babes to disciples when we are able to disciple another (2 Timothy 2:2).
3. Churches that make disciples (instead of mere baptisms) will grow, and keep on growing.
4. To be a disciple, we need to put God first, and lean on Him to help us carry the cross daily.
5. The Christian walk is a daily, living relationship with God.

Bottomline

When we stopped our quiet time with God, we become like a boat without fuel - going nowhere and will not reach our destination because we have broken the relationship. Everything in life breaks, wears out or weakens - the only thing that grows stronger through the years is our faith in our relationship with God.

A Good Rule: Check the Source

One morning after an Asian Missions Forum in Thailand, Nat and I were enjoying the sights and tastes of Bangkok when it suddenly dawned upon me that our flight home was scheduled for yesterday afternoon instead of today. I checked with the travel agent at the hotel, he could not help me, but added, "Why not go back to the source?" It happens that the SIA office was within walking distance and we had our tickets adjusted to that afternoon's flight without additional cost.

This valuable lesson - going back to the source has been a good rule for me, and as I think about it, for all of us at PP. Consider the following situations...

1. Whenever a person tells you things about another, especially things that are not complimentary, it is always good to go to the source to confirm if it is just hearsay (Matthew 18:15).
2. When someone asks you to help a person in need, it would be expedient to check with that person in need before jumping in with what the third party requests of you. You can also call the church ministers to see if the church is already helping this person.
3. When individuals seek your contribution to a certain cause, eg missions, it is wise to check with our missions committee to see if the church is already helping and what the overall goal of the church for this nation is.
4. Above all, when you are taught various doctrines about the church, it is so essential that we go back to the source ie the Bible, to see if the word of God supports it. (Acts 17:11).

It is commendable for a person to do good. But be aware of Romans 14:16 - "Let not then your good be evil spoken of" by going back to the source.

Bringing PP's Missions to Another Level

Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest - Matthew 9:36

The countdown for Missions Sunday has started and it is getting exciting...

For a long time we have told our members to go, give and pray for missions. I am glad that PP is moving beyond simply going, giving and praying. We are moving on to the next level in our missions efforts. Take for example:

1. Batam: after starting the dependant congregation there, it has grown to become independant of PP. Currently, the congregation has forged an inter-dependant partnership with Batam, in helping them to reach out to other areas of Indo-nesia, particularly Potianak.

2. Tuao: start from scratch in church planting, Tuao today is a growing congregation now expanding into the captital, Tuguegarao City. While PP is focusing on Tuao, we have forged a great partnership with the Baguio congregation. We are now looking at ways in which we can work with this large congregation to strengthen and accomplish even more for the Lord's work in Philippines. It is great that we move on from just concentrating on small churches so that we can solidly stand behind Baguio and built it into a congregation of influence like PP.

3. Yangon: we started the Myanmar missions by supporting Samuel Thang. Now as Sam, Beckham and Joseph learned the truth and were rebaptized to make certain (Sam did not because he recognised his baptism was correct), they have named their congregation, churches of Christ and are calling on one and all to return to the N.T. church. PP is now supporting Hnin Maung and working with Winsome from the 8th Mile congregation. As early as September, after the Myanmar elections are over, we hope to conduct weekend courses at the Church of Christ college and a VBS for children.

3 Key Strengths of Cancer Survivors

At the recent Asian Missions Forum at Bohol, Philippines, I was glad to meet up with sister Dory again. She has recently retired as a judge of the Regional Trial Court Branch 9 in Davao City, and has started several initiatives in many community projects.

She brought some of her books to the Forum. The one that caught my eye was, 'Ate Perla and That Cancer', a story of a cancer survivor living in faith.

This small book is a good read, taking just an evening to complete from cover to cover. Though it is not intended to be a medical journal, the contents have been reviewed by a panel of medical specialists.

Ate Perla is a middle-class Filipino who contacted cancer when her children were just kids. She is now 66 years old, and has not only seen her children grow up and have families of their own, but she has also outlived her husband.

She was amongst a group of cancer victims that a doctor was treating at the same time in a Manila hospital. When she returned some years later, the secretary to the doctor was amazed to see her, as everyone in the group have gone and she not only survived, but was doing well.

While it is heart-rending to hear of the treatments that she had to undergo over an extended period, it is interesting to read of how she survived despite all the odds. Key to her recovery are 3 strengths that sister Dory clearly outlined in this book, a true account that will uplift, inspire and encourage cancer sufferers, their families and care-givers. If you are interested in reading this book, send an email to wageavis@yahoo.com for the attention of sister Dory P. Cruz-Avisado.

1. A cheerful dependence on the mercies of God. When Perla could have taken an hour's flight to Manila for treatment, she choose a boat trip of 2-3 days instead, as she wanted time to pray about this situation. When going for treatment with her sister, they often mistook her as the caregiver since she was the more cheerful one, always looking for ways to help others. Throughout the book, Perla's positive faith was her greatest strength.

2. Right from the beginning, while being treated by western medicine, she also depended on alternative medicines. This book lists these medicines

that were prescribed to her by Dr. Diana Diaz which led to her recovery.

3. A third factor that helped Perla was a change of diet and habits. Exercise is necessary to strengthen the immune system. This book also mentions the type of food that helped her fight against cancer (pages 26, 38, 40 and 46).

There is no easy way out of cancer. Perla's situation became worse before it got better. The western approach, eg cobalt treatment took its toll on Perla. Some days are really bad, but there are also better days, as well as good days.

Reading this book gives me a new perspective as a caregiver to many of our members who are currently battling cancer. Even in the darkest moments, there are strengths that we can fall back on. The greatest of these is faith in God. If we trust and accept His will and give thanks in spite of it all, like the 3 Hebrew children (Daniel 3:17-18), we can be accepting whatever the outcome.

The Most Important Question: Are You A Team Player?

"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" - Ephesians 2:21

Looking back over 40 years of my full-time ministry, the single most important pillar of the work at PP is the team ministry that has developed through the years.

In the Lord's vineyard, we must understand that every member loves the Lord as much as we do and gives his best in service to God. We must be willing to bear and forebear one another as we patiently serve the Lord with joy to the end. When we focus on self and do not work with the established committees of the church, we rob the church of our loyalty and deprive ourselves of the resources that can come only from the corporate body.

The church at PP was started by brother Ong Aun Nam with a group of teenagers in 1964. He carefully organised the church and parcelled out various responsibilities to different ones. But after inviting missionary A.L. Harbin to work with them, brother Harbin took over the leadership and took on the decisions by himself. In doing so, almost all the original group of teenagers left the church, discouraged.

Build a team

After little more than a year, brother Harbin left Singapore to return home to USA, putting me in charge of the work. The first thing I did was to call the church together for the first of a series of regular business meetings and reassigned responsibilities to various ones. This team ministry has been tweaked through the years, and has put PP in good stead.

The past decade has seen the mentoring of a group of men from the church we call 'Awareness'. They come together regularly as a team to lead the church. Now our elders and deacons, together with our ministers and the elected ROS (Registrar of Societies) members meet regularly for formal meetings at the church building. Just as any male member was welcome to attend past 'Awareness' sessions, we also welcome male members to the regular ROS sessions.

Support the team

As the team ministry works together, we learn to respect and esteem each other for each one's labour and love for the Lord. Every one is important and every opinion carefully considered. Often as the case may be, a decision is needed and is arrived at through general consensus. Whatever a person's view may be, when a decision is made, all the team uphold and supports it. This has contributed to the unity and strength of the church through the years.

As a team, we stand by every member who is serving and helping out in the work of the Lord. We may not do everything perfectly or be approved by every member of the church. But we are doing our best and improving as we learn to do better. We are just so thankful for members who are willing to serve in so many areas - teaching, missions, hospitality etc. Also, it is great to see the good support and response given by the church to annual events like retreats, camps and missions Sundays.

Be a team player

In modern day Singapore, people get up and leave if things are not done their way. But in the church, we echo the question of the apostle Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life?" (John 6:68).

Members who do not attend these ROS sessions may not understand or agree with decisions which are arrived at after discussions at these sessions. Our elders and minister welcome feedback from members, are willing to explain and clarify matters and will even bring your suggestions up at the next meeting. If you have ideas or suggestions, the best thing that you can do is to join in these ROS meetings, speak up and see if there is consensus to adopt your idea.

Bottomline

It is good to be found doing the Lord's work on a personal basis. It is better to be a team player and give the glory to Christ and His church. The church needs and expects every member to put his or her weight behind the activities, missions and work of the church. Sure, it is more difficult to work with others than to do your own thing. But God has called you to be what elder Adrian terms a "Body Builder". Do not dissociate yourself from our programmes to do your own thing. Be a team player, do your part as a member and build up the body of Christ.

When you do, you learn and draw strength from others who love God as much as you do and yearn to serve Him like you do. You have available not only the entire reserves of the church, but are assured of future generations who will maintain and continue the work you are doing.

A case in point

Brother Daniel Ng and his family are sold on church music. Recently when brother Jason took SPC on a session, those amongst his family who can, are present to give their support. In my mind, it would be so easy for this family to do their own thing.

We thank God that they are team players. Right from the beginning, they led the monthly singing, then the weekly Singing classes and now the quarterly Singspiration as well. These involved a lot of planning, hard work and a certain degree of difficulties. And because they persevere, the entire body was built up and enriched.

What about you?

Can Christ and His church count on you? What would the church be like if every member was like you? Will any of the many works of the church be done? Can it be said of you by our Lord that "in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord"? - Ephesians 2:21.

7 Lessons I have Learned from My Ministry over 4 Decades

For over 4 decades, I have picked up a number of tips that put my ministry on a firm foundation. I would like to share 7 that I believe to be most needed:

1. Team work = God's work

When we become so full of self that we pick up our ball and go home whenever things do not go our way, we rob Christ and His church the glory due. Sure, it is easier to do our own thing, but God has called us to be fitly framed together (Ephesians 2:21).

2. Anytime is too soon to give up

The key to success in the ministry, eldership, Christian service etc is the ability to bear and forebear. There were many occasions in the past 4 decades, especially in the early years that I came close to giving up the ministry. But when I took my attention off 'self' and focus on God's work in prayer, I find the strength to go on (Galatians 6:2-5).

3. Be true to God's word

While devoting my life to the ministry, I wanted to secure my salvation as well. In order to fulfil my ministry, I felt I must know the word, understand its message, what God wants of each of us, without adding my opinions or thinking (Romans 3:4).

4. Treat all with respect and none too much

Everyone is important. By the same token, no one is more important than another. Through the years, I have strived to be true to God and make decisions based on conscience, and not because I was beholden to any man.

5. Pray

Nothing can be achieved without God's blessing. If there is any 'gift' in the ministry that I want to excel more than in any other, it has to be the ability of prayer.

6. Do original work

Craft it carefully, think through every detail and give it your very best effort. I am so glad that right from the beginning, whether an article, Bible lesson or sermon - I have made it my own work and not the echoed or copied opinions of another.

7. Prepare ahead

Be present at least 15 minutes before each event. When members gather for worship, Bible study or an event - the location must be set up, with every detail and preparation ready. I review every event: what is required, who should be there and what I can do, well in advance.

The Church Must Give Priority to Making Disciples

For over 4 decades, as I travelled around Asia visiting churches of Christ, I have observed few churches devoting time to building disciples. Most preachers and leaders teach and preach but do not devote time to mentoring members.

As a result, many Christians do not have the necessary grounding in the faith, and do not remain faithful to Christ. The church experience high turnovers, unable to grow to maturity.

PP is not the first congregation in Singapore, nor are we the fastest growing church. However, through the years, we have been successful in retaining our members, consolidating our strengths and we have learned the value of growing the maturity of the body.

While I am keenly aware of this deficiency amongst the brotherhood, this important work was once again brought to my attention the month when five overseas preachers attended SIBI. As they shared with me their concerns, I was moved to meet with them 3 times each week to mentor them in their ministry.

As PP continues to preach the gospel, it is so important that we keep the membership strong with a variety of programmes to suit and reach out to every sector of our membership. A current example is the "Second Half" seminar for our older members.

Next time, when you reach out to win someone for Christ, do not stop after his baptism. Continue to hold his hand, help him integrate into a Care team and model the way for him. Let go only after he has grown enough to win another to Christ (2 Timothy 2:2).

A Matter of Legacy

This past week I celebrated my 63rd birthday. I have been a member of the Lord's church for over 48 years. In 13 days' time, I will begin my 45th year of full-time ministry with PP.

It is the most needed job in the world

Paul says in Philippians 1:23-24 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

When I entered full-time ministry with PP on May 1st, 1966, the few preachers of the churches of Christ were older men, converted in the latter part of their lives. As support for church work is inconsistent, I was the only one to enter the ministry out of the 10 graduates of the first class of the Four Seas Bible College.

Today, all the older preachers have gone to receive their reward in heaven. Most who took a stab at the ministry have dropped out. Only a handful are in full-time ministry. More than ever, there is a great need for workers in the ministry.

It is the most important job in the world

Jesus said in Matthew 9:37-38 The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

When I was baptized into Christ on 10th February, 1962, there was only one congregation of the Lord's church at Moulmein Road. The attendance on Sundays numbered around 50 persons. Even though the church was small, it had the important task of preaching the gospel to a young nation which had just gained independence from the British.

Today, there are about a dozen congregations of the church of Christ in Singapore. Less than half of this number have full-time workers. As a result, most of these congregations have less than a hundred members and some are not growing as they should.

It is a life long commitment

Christ says in Luke 9:62 No man, having put his hand to the plough, and

looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

We have witnessed the devoted ministry of men like brothers Charles Cook and Ed Wharton. What an encouragement it is to see the younger Tom Goracke passionately coming forward as the next generation of full-timers. Now is the time for our youth to consider stepping in and devoting their lives in service to Christ, like these before them have done.

Not everyone is suited for full-time ministry. Indeed as Matthew 22:14 puts it, many are called, but few are chosen. More than ever, the church today needs younger men who are willing to give their lives to the ministry. These must be willing to say no to what the world has to offer, and consecrate themselves totally to the Lord's work in humble, passionate and exemplary dedication.

In turn, the church must look out and groom likely candidates who are willing to give of themselves fully to the ministry, providing them with every support and care.

It is the best job in the world

It was said of the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:16 that they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

I had never wanted to anything except to serve in the full-time ministry. I started immediately upon graduation from the local Bible college and have kept on going. Through the years, PP have supported me and my family in a generous and encouraging manner.

All these years, I have never purchased a share nor invested in anything. I am not rich in this world's goods, but have all that I ever need; enjoying every spiritual blessing. Every day I look forward to coming to office, meet people, teach the gospel and open new mission fields.

It has been a great life, indeed it is the best job in the world.

The Place of God in Your Life

Where do you put God in our lives? Who Does God Mean to Us?

- Pocket God - Genie in a Lamp?
- Wearable Jewellery- Lucky Charm?
- Far and Aloof - Out of touch with my needs

Who does God mean to us? Is Your God is Too Small? Has God remain static?

- J. B. Phillips' Book - Your God is too Small
- Meek and Mild
- Resident Policeman
- Grand Old Man in the Sky

Do We Create God in Our Own Image?

- Like a Woodcutter – Isaiah 44:17

We need to confront God as in...

- Bethel experience – Gen 28:11-19
- Isaiah 6 experience
- Damascus experience – Acts 9:3-19
- Job's experience

God is Far Above All We Can Think

- Like an ant before Eiffel Tower

God is All Powerful; Ever Present

- He has always existed
- He create the world by His word
- The Bible is beyond comprehension

So Awesome yet... God is a Personal God...

- He made us in His image – Gen 2:7
- He planned the church before the foundation of the world
– Eph 1:4
- He has always desire to dwell amongst us – Exodus 25:8

Why? Because God is Love...

- He first love us – 1 John 4:19, Romans 5:8
- He made the first move to reconcile us back to Him – Eph 2:16
- He is patient, ready to forgive and not willing that any should perish – 2 Peter 3:9

Get to Know God...

- Discipline yourself and family with a daily Devotion
- Keep the Word fresh by studying and discussing at Bible classes
- Learn to Walk and Talk with Him as a Personal God
- Give God the priority in every area of your life – Romans 12:1, 2.

How Anyone or Any Church can Understand and Follow What God Wants Us to Be...

This was the seminar outline that I shared with over 50 denominational participants in Myanmar last week. Our mission leader, deacon Paul was scribbling notes in earnest during the first half when he had to surrender his notes to another participant, since the 50 copies we brought were insufficient. This morning he was at my office, asking me if I can expand on this outline. Good idea for a future project. In the meantime, here's the bare bones that you can use, with a little comment here and there.

Introduction - in today's divided christendom,
it is important to go back to the Bible

Acts 17:22

And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus, and said, Ye men of Athens, in all things, I perceive that ye are very religious.

Acts 18:25-26

This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John: and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately.

1 Corinthians 1:11-13

For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos: and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?

This We All Believe... these truths are shared by all believers:

Romans 3:4

God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

John 17:17

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

1 John 2:15-17

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

What Can We Do... to achieve unity

2Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Acts 17:10-11

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Beroea: who when they were come thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of the mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.

The Bible

- + Methodist Discipline = Methodist Christian
- + Catechism = Roman Catholic Christian
- + Westminster Confession = Presbyterian Christian
- + 39 Articles of Faith = Episcopalian Christian
- + Book of Mormon = Mormon Christian
- + Nothing - Nothing = Christian

Why not be just a Christian?

Revelation 22:18-19

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.

James 1:23-24

For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

Secular Organisation vs Scriptural Organisation

Many churches are organized under the pyramid structure with

Head Quarters
Regional Office
Local Congregations

Whereas the New Testament pattern is for local congregations to be autonomous. Christ is the only head of the church and all members must work together in consensus according to the teaching of the Bible.

Titus 1:5

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee

Acts 20:28-30

Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

1 Peter 5:4

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Which Church Will Be Saved?

Matthew 7:21-23

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Matthew 15:13

But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

Ephesians 5:26

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word

We need to do more than just to reform the church.
We need to restore it to its original pattern.

Genesis 6:22

Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

Exodus 25:9

According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

Matthew 15:9

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Is Christ's Prayer for Unity Possible?

John 17:20-23

Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me.

Matthew 18:3

And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

How We Can All Agree...

1. No compromise: Matters pertaining to salvation

1 Timothy 4:16

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

2. Study: Matters not pertaining to salvation, let us study together

Isaiah 1:18

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

3. Cultural Traditions: no need to split over these

1 Corinthians 11:16

But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

4. Matters of Opinion: let each man hold to his own views and not impose it on another

Romans 14:4-6

Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? to his own lord he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be made to stand; for the Lord hath power to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that eateth, eateth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, unto the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

Conclusion:

Do You or Your Church want to Understand
and Follow What God Wants Us to Be?

Revelation 2:29

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

James 1:23-25

For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing.

We aim to be Christians only but we are not the only Christians. Anyone can open the Bible, read it and follow it to be the kind of people God wants us to be.

Discussions

1. Your discussion leader will summarise the lesson in his own words

a) Feel free to ask any questions

b) Share with us any suggestions that you may have

2. Your discussion leader will share of his experience in learning and becoming what God wants him to become

a) We encourage you to share your personal experiences as well

3. On the next page are two examples of coming to an understanding of what the Bible teaches

a) Go through each and see if you agree

b) Share your comments

Application A - Plan of Salvation

Much confusion is seen among the religious world regarding the matter of salvation. How much can one be sure – really sure? Just as a man is certain he is not lost if he holds the street map on his hand and fixes his eyes on the street sign; a person can be sure regarding the state of his souls if he holds the Bible and fixes his eyes on his response to it. So, let us go to the Bible – God’s word for the answer

In the Bible, we see many places where men asked this question about their salvation and received inspired answers. Let us turn to God’s word and read if for ourselves.

Acts 2:37 – Question: What shall we do?

Answer: Repent and be baptized (v.38)

Acts 16:30 – Question: What must I do to be saved?

Answer: Believe (v.31)

Acts 22:10 – Question: What shall I do, Lord?

Answer: Arise and be baptized. (v.16)

How is a person saved? Simply by believing, repenting and being baptized! Read also Rom 10:9-10, Eph 2:8-9, James 2:17 and Rev 2:10

This is what the Bible teaches about salvation. It is so simple, clear and easy to understand when we go to it personally.

Another Application – Instrumental Music in Worship

Should we use instrumental music to worship God? Let us see what the Bible says. We see that instrumental music in worship is only used in the Old Testament and no command is given in the New Testament.

Romans 10:17 teaches that faith comes from hearing the word of God.

Since we cannot worship God today using instrumental music by faith (since it not in the New Testament) it becomes sin (Rom 14:23).

Thus we understand why Cain's offering was rejected (Gen 4:5.) You see, Heb 11:4 tells us Abel offered his sacrifice by faith (based on God's word) while Cain did not – thus it was sinful. And God did not respect his sacrifice even though he may be sincere and have good intentions.

How to Start a House Church in Your Home

Introduction

This lesson contains easy to follow instructions on starting a house church in your home anywhere in the world. The instructions are divided into 3 sections:

- Worship
- Bible Study
- Ministry.

Worship

Preparation

- The first thing to do in starting a house church in your home is to seek the cooperation of your household. Share your idea with them and get their support to
 - Allow you to use your house for the Lord's work: worship, Bible study & ministry
 - Join you in worship, Bible study & ministry.
- Next, take your plans to the Lord in prayer and ask Him for His blessings.
- If there are other Christians living near your home, talk to them about it. If they agree with you in starting a house church, get them to pray with you and be a part of it.

Getting Things Ready

- First, you need to prepare a room to be used for worship.
- Next, set a time on Sunday for the worship. Be sure to choose a time that you can be free every Sunday.
- You will also need Bibles and song books. If you do not have these, please send us a letter or email and we will help you get these.
- Finally, you will need a cup of grape juice and a piece of bread for the Lord's Supper. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), the bread He used was unleavened bread. Unleavened bread is easy to make, using flour and water.

The First Worship

- On the Sunday of your first worship, it will be a good practice to start on time. If you are expecting others outside your family to attend, you should be ready to receive your guests before the time you have set.

- After everyone is seated, the male Christian will welcome everyone and it will be good to start with a prayer, asking God to bless the time of worship. Matthew 21:13 - My house shall be called the house of prayer.
- A passage from the Bible may be read. The book of Psalms is a good book to read from as it is the worship book of the Bible.
- This may be followed by singing some songs together. I Corinthians 14:15.
- There should be a 20-30 minute lesson from the Bible. Acts 2:42.
- Take time to partake the Lord's Supper every week. Acts 20:7.
- Finally, just like the early Christians, a contribution may be taken. 1 Corinthians 16:2.

It should be noted:

- The Bible teaches that the worship of the church is to be conducted by male Christians. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 says: "Let the women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as also saith the law. And if they would learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home: for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church."
- The Lord's Supper and giving are for Christians only. Those who are not Christians are not expected to give or partake the Lord's Supper.
- Everyone is invited and welcome to take part in the rest of the worship.

A Sample Worship Schedule

Welcome
 Opening Prayer
 Scripture passage
 Songs
 Preaching
 Lord's Supper
 Giving
 Closing Prayer

Notes

- To make unleavened bread, here is a suggested recipe: mix 3/4 cup water with 1/2 cup flour. Then break apart in pieces and flatten. Bake or fry until edges are brown, about 15 minutes.
- To download helpful materials, log on to www.ppcoc.org
- Keep the worship going every Sunday. If you are out of town, it will be good to arrange another person to keep the worship service going.
- After the worship is running smoothly for a few months, it is good to take the second step, starting a Bible study.

Bible Study

Bible Teaching

- The Bible is our guide in everything that we do for the Lord. Psalm 119:105
- Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
- At the end of our lives, we will be judged by it (Revelations 20:12).
- We must study the Bible to grow in faith. 1 Peter 2:2 - As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.
- Every Christian must study the Bible to be approved of God. 2 Timothy 2:15
- Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
- The early church devoted themselves to the teaching of the Bible (Acts 2:42).

How to Start a Bible Study

- After the worship has been running smoothly for a few months, it is time to start a Bible study in the house church.
- Depending on the number of people attending, you may want to have 1-4 classes
 - Children's Bible Class
 - Youth Bible Class
 - Ladies' Bible Class
 - Men's Bible Class
- You can get lessons for the Bible class from www.ppcoc.org or by writing to the address in the introduction page. Members of the Church of Christ in Singapore will also be happy to visit you and help you get these classes started.
- Men can teach any of the 4 classes. Ladies can teach all the classes except the men's Bible class.
- It is good to set an hour for these classes. A good time to schedule it is after the worship.

Other Bible Studies

- Besides the Bible classes on Sunday, according to the need and opportunity, it is good to have another Bible study session on another day of the week.
- This could be conducted in the evening on a week day or on a Saturday morning or afternoon.
- Depending on the time of the session and the number of people who attends your house church, you may want to have anything from 1-4 classes. For example if it is held on Saturday morning, it will be good to have a children's Bible class. However if it is held at night, perhaps one adults class will be more suitable.
- Because there is no worship, the session can be longer. A recommended

time is 90 minutes.

- This session can be a study of a book from the Bible, a chapter each week. Recommended books are the Gospels, Acts, Romans, Ephesians and I John.
- This session should be opened to all, and those who come on Sunday can invite their family and friends.

Notes

- We cannot teach what we do not know. Teachers for the Bible studies must first read the Bible and understand it before they can teach others.
- The Church of Christ in Singapore can provide short term training from a few weeks to 6 months to anyone who wants to be trained. Please email or write to the address on the introduction.
- When you start a regular worship and Bible study in your house, you are doing what many of the early Christians have done. Romans 16:5 - Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.
- According to Myanmar laws, a house church cannot have more than 20 people. When your group is approaching this number, you can split into 2 groups and meet in 2 places. This is also a good practice in China and other places.
- We want you to know that you are not alone and we are available to assist you in every way. Please keep in touch with us.

Ministry

- If you have started a worship or Bible study, you have done well.
- If that is all you can do, keep doing it.
- However, if you can add ministry to worship and Bible study, it will enable you to grow in faith and effectiveness.
- 2 Timothy 4:5 - But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.
- There are many areas of ministry, these 5 areas will be a good place to start. You can add more as you are able or see the need.

1. Giving

- When you started worship in your house, one of the things you do in worship is to give to the Lord.
- The money you collected must be accounted for and used for gospel work
 - Help to maintain the cost of worship, Bible study and ministry
 - Help needy members and others in need (Acts 4:35).
- It is good to select 2 or more persons to count the money given every Sunday, and give a record of both income and expenditure.

2. Church Meeting

- Besides worship and Bible study, it is good for the church to come together once a month to discuss the work of the house church.
- Men should take the lead, but women can participate by giving suggestions or asking questions.
- One of the things that you should do in this meeting is to report the total amount of giving collect, expenses and balance. You can also discuss what to do with this money.
- Another important matter to discuss is the attendance. Is it increasing? Is anyone ill and should be visited?
- The best way to decide on matters at this meeting is by consensus. If the majority is in favour of a decision, then it is good to proceed.

3. Newsletter

- It is good to print out a newsletter once a month or a week.
- This newsletter can include the giving, expenses, attendance and a short article.
- For samples of a newsletter, go to www.ppcoc.org. You may want to adopt some of the features for your newsletter.
- File a copy for reference as it will be a good source of history in later years.
- Also, you can use the newsletter to invite your friends and neighbours to join you at worship or Bible study.

4. Visitation

- It is good for the church to visit those who have attended the worship and Bible study.
- When you go into the homes of these people, you show them that you are concerned about them and their physical needs, not just their salvation.
- When you are able to see their needs, help them if you can.
- If they have any Bible questions, you can use the visit to answer them. Sometimes they will not ask in worship or Bible study, but will ask when no one is around.
- Before you leave, say a prayer for this person and his family.
- Acts 2:46 - And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart.

5. Fellowship

- Fellowship is a time when the house church gets together to get to know one another better, and to enjoy each other.
- A simple fellowship is for everyone to bring some food, so that after worship or Bible study, we all can eat together.
- Another form of fellowship is an outing – going to a park or some place. It is good when you do so, to invite your friends and family too so that

they may get to know Christians.

- You can use the giving at worship to help pay for some of the cost of these fellowship.
- Acts 2:42 - And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Christians as Citizens

Romans 13:1-7

- V1 - Let every soul be subject
- V5 – to avoid wrath; good conscience
- V6 – pay taxes
- V7 – give honour
- 1 Timothy 2:1-2

Christians in the Community

- Romans 12:17-21 – live in peace
- Show kindness – Romans 12:13
- Do good – Galatians 6:10

Christian Families

- Set the example – 1 Peter 3:1-2
- Salt and light – Matthew 5:16
- Holding forth the word of Life – Ph 2:16

Conclusion

- 1 Thess 4:11-12
- Lead a quiet life
- Mind our own business
- Work with our hands
- Walk properly to those who are outside

Giving The World A Chance to Hear the Gospel

Everyone has the right To hear the gospel once than the person Who has heard it twice - Jimmy Lovell, Founder, World Bible School

How much of a Chance will Asia get of hearing the gospel?

- China: Over 1 billion lost souls
 - atheistic communism
- India: Over 1 billion lost souls
 - Hindu and Islam
- Indonesia: Approaching 500 million lost souls
 - Islam

What chance will Asia be saved if we do not reach out to them?

- Take a quick look at our missions endeavours
- Focus on what we can do right here where we are

Quick Overview of PP's Missions

- Youth Missions
- Batam Missions
- China Missions
- India Missions
- Malaysia Missions
- Myanmar Missions
- Philippines Missions
- Thailand Missions
- Manchester Missions

So what can we do? Can be Overwhelming

1. We can pray
2. We can give
3. We can go

Let's start where we are

- SIBI Classes
- HI Bible Class
- Chinese Ministry
- House Helpers BC
- Bishan Outreach

- Youth Ministry
- Church Camp
- Bring a Friend

Consider what we can do right here where we are

- Reflect on what we know

Care for One Another

Care for One Another - 1 Corinthians 12:25

People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care

For who hath despised the day of small things? - Zech 4:10

- A card or SMS
- Thank you notes

God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you - 1 Sam 12:23

- Family, friends...
- The world today

Come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us - Acts 16:15

- Lift, meal, b&b
- More opportunities

He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah - John 1:41

- We like to share food outlets, why not gospel?
- Care team, OBS, camp

That we should be to the praise of his glory - Ephesians 1:12

- Words that uplift
- Thoughtful deeds

And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward - Matthew 10:42

The Mercies of God

What are the mercies of God?

- Loving Kindness
- Compassion
- Grace
- Hard to comprehend – meditate
- God's ways are not our ways
- Make God into our own image

Faithful Love

- Faithful love flowing down from the thorn covered crown,
- Make me whole, saves my soul, washes whiter than snow,
- Faithful love calms each fear, reaches down, dries each tear,
- holds my hand when I can't stand on my own. Faithful Love
- Faithful love is a friend, just when hope seems to end,
- Welcomed face, sweet embrace, tender touch filled with grace,
- Faithful love, endless power, living flame,
- Spirit's fire burning bright in the night guiding my way.

Examples

- Jonah and Nineveh
- Sodom and Gomorrah
- King David
- Thief on the Cross

Characteristics

- New every morning - Lamentations 3:23
- Repentest of the evil - Jonah 4:2
- Longsuffering - 1 Peter 3:20

In Essence...

And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this - Ezra 9:13

Application

What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? - Psalms 116:12

The Blessings of Being Members in Good Standing

How Some Fall from Grace

- Romans 14:13
- 1 Corinthians 10:12
- Galatians 5:4
- 2 Timothy 4:10
- Hebrews 10:26
- Hebrews 10:25

How Others Remain Faithful

- 1 Timothy 4:16
- 2 Peter 1:10
- Galatians 6:2
- Ephesians 2:21
- Hebrews 2:10

Blessings of Members in Good Standing

- Please God - Daniel 3:16-18
- Joyful Living - Nehemiah 8:10
- Set Example to Others – Matt. 5:16
- Build up the Church - Ephesians 4:16
- Secure Home in Heaven

The Joy of Worship

I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD -
Psalm 122:1

All memberships require attendance

- Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together
- Hebrews 10:25
- Seek ye first the kingdom of God - Matthew 6:33
- And Jesus said unto them, How is it that ye sought me?
wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?
- Luke 2:49

Yet, Some have difficulties with attendance

- Hard to be regular
- Cannot come on time
- Take communion and go
- Had to go to rest room
- Hard to concentrate
- Constantly critical
- Had to leave early

Why Attendance is so Important

- Leaders must be seen
- Some leaders can't cut it
- Elders Adrian, Beng Chuan, Winston...

Why Attendance is so Important

- Members who are regular:
- Core, key, dependable
- Too many come just once a week
- "Better times"

Why Attendance is so Important

- Visitors who are regular
- Our best 'prospects'
- Opportunity for further involvement

Why Attendance is so Important

- Community looking at us
- Condos on both sides
- Shine forth God's wisdom

- Example at Tanglin Halt Attendance is Simple
- Easy, does not require much effort
- No need lots of preparation
- Does not require any talent/ability
- Do not costs a lot of money
- Anyone can do it
- All that is needed is your time
- Benefits of Attendance
 - Set a good example for others
 - Please God
 - Help the church grow
 - Create interest
 - Build your influence
 - Learn Something
 - Get to know members/visitors
- How to attend church
 - Prepare – invite someone along
 - Come fresh, with new shirt
 - Be there early to greet others
 - Dress well, appropriately
 - Be alert and attentive
 - Apply, internalise lessons
 - Linger behind

Bottomline:

- Come
- Come often

Run with Patience...

Run with patience - find energy To keep on going.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

1. It is God's Work; His worry

- We cannot amount to much – 3 generations and it's gone
- Except the Lord build - Psalm 127:1
- Ephesians 6:13

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

2. Do not seek to get Credit

- It is God that gives the increase
- Glorify God in heaven -Matthew 5:16
- Luke 17:10

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

3. Serve with Humility

- All stand equal at the foot of the cross
- Don't deceive yourself – Galatians 6:3
- Colossians 4:1

Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

4. Do not brush away Criticisms

- Even 5% truth must be considered
- Wise will learn - Proverbs 9:9
- Luke 16:31

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

5. Focus on the Good in another

- So easy to find fault
- None that doeth good - Romans 3:12
- Galatians 6:1-2

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

6. Serve in Love & Understanding

- Everyone is serving out of love, freely
- Put yourself in another's shoe – Heb. 10:24
- Not the first angry word that started a quarrel:
- Proverbs 15:1

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

7. Work as a Team

- We cannot do it alone
- Two are better than One – Ecclesiastes 4:9
- Ecclesiastes 4:12

A threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Any time is too Soon to Give Up!
Find Energy To Keep on Going...

Run with Patience

- 1. It is God's work – let Him worry about it
- 2. Do not take credit – all glory goes to God
- 3. Do not think too highly – all equal
- 4. Don't let criticism discourage – learn
- 5. Focus on good of all – build unity
- 6. Respond in the spirit it is given
- 7. Do not labour alone – team ministry

Grow Your Prayer Life

Prayer:

Most important thing man can do
Most powerful thing man can do
Most easy thing man can do
Most exciting thing man can do

Prayer...

Can move mountains – Matt. 21:21
Availeth much – James 5:16
In fact, nothing impossible with prayer – Matt. 17:20,21

For the Average Christian:

Up to 6 times a day in prayer
Wake up, devotion time, breakfast,
Lunch, dinner, before sleeping
Still much room for growth!

7 ways to make your prayer life more adventurous

1 Journal Your Prayers

Daily Care, Bible, Pad, even phone
Focused, accumulate, answers
- a prayer journey!
I desire therefore that men pray - 1 Timothy 2:8

2 Engage in prayer seasons

3 days, 50 days, 1 week, 7 weeks...
Important, job, trouble, op... Important, job, trouble, op...
Jesus, Moses, Elijah...
Get others to join you

3 Do a prayer walk

Purposeful, physical encompassing
Neighbourhood, office, club...
Stroll, walk, jog...
Jericho – Hebrews 11:30

4 Pray through the Directory

Family tree, class, office, club...
Prayer concerns - relationships

We sin for failing to pray - 1 Samuel 12:23

5 Set times and places

Jesus seeks a solitary place
Quietness of the night
'Closet prayers' – Matt. 6:6

6 Spot Prayers

Responding to daily situations
Even at traffic 'red lights'
Pray without ceasing – 1 Thess. 5:17

7 Just do it

Prayer - most talked about, least practised
Most important part of Christian armour
'With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons...'
- Ephesians 6:18

Just like a Baby...

Wholly dependent on parents
Communicates even can't talk
But as baby grows communicates better

My dream for PP more than just growth

PP = Praying People
May we be victorious with God in prayerfulness

A Fresh, Bright New Mindset

What will this year bring?

- Same as last year
- Better than last Year
- Worse than last year
- Don't know if can make it through 2010

What will You Do?

- Hope for the best
- Tweak here and there
- Give it a new coat of paint
- Make new year resolutions
- Live a day at a time
- Put on a new mindset

Consider these Verses

- John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.
- John 17:19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.
- Ephesians 5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,
- 1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

What will the new year promise if...

- You decide on a new mindset?
- Sanctify your thoughts with the word of God?
- Let the word of God dwell in you richly?
- Be always ready to give an answer to every man?

1. Read through the Bible

- Devote time each day
- Catch up during weekends
- Use traveling times
- Get a reading partner
- Alternate between Old and New Testaments

2. Explore a New Version

- New KJV
- Holman Bible
- The Message
- Lend new insight to familiar verses
- Keep the Bible Message alive

3. Research and Reflect

- Less daunting than it sounds
- Recommend Great Commission Resources
- Used in our Bible Class and Missions
- Goes directly to the text
- Allows you to reflect deeper

4. Take a SIBI course

- Parcel in time for a SIBI course
- Good stuff at SIBI's O.B.S.
- Crash courses at SIBI day classes
- College-level courses offers deeper insights
- Don't let the opportunity slip by

5. Find time to Share the Word

- Could be one-on-one
- Or a Care team
- Facilitate a B.C. group
- Do not really learn until we share with another
- Do not let the Sword become rusty

What do You think?

- Would the new year be different?
- Would you grow in grace and knowledge of God's word?
- Would your Bible related activities set a positive model?
- Would you touch lives and influence others for Christ?
- Would you be a source of blessing to the church?

Be Your Best this year!

- Romans 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
- Like Abel – Offer a better sacrifice
- Like Enoch – Walk with God
- Like Noah – Save your household
- Like Abraham – Live in faith
- Like Paul – Be invincible (Romans 8:27)

Quit Ye Like Men

The Bible calls on us in 1 Corinthians 16:13 to stand up like men should, not to be a butter-toast christian. This exhortation is not directed just to our men, but is used in the general sense of the word for both genders.

There was a time here in Singapore, not too long ago, that when a person wanted to obey the Lord in baptism, they would bring a suitcase with them. This is because they were going against the will of the family, and wanted to be prepared just in case their parents will throw them out of their home.

During those times, the word of God was much desired, the bible is worth sacrificing many meals for and obeying the Lord was more important than anything in this world. Today, I sense a waning in passion and observe that more are moving towards a comfort zone of our own making. We are easily offended if spoken to too directly. Little things cause some to stop coming or change congregations such as, 'my child cannot get used to Bible class teacher' or 'the congregation does not have youths that are my son's age' to 'not enough parking lots'.

The call today is QYLM - Quit Ye Like Men!

The illustration of the body builder, shows a physique that the world would describe as a perfect body of a man. We will attempt to look into the 7 parts of the spiritual body that we want to build up starting from the feet. I will use examples from the Bible, both from the Old and New Testament of both men and women that will inspire us to 'quit ye like men'.

Firm, Sturdy, Beautiful Feet

In John 6, we will see how the beautiful feet of Simon Peter which was once washed by our Lord Jesus were firm and sturdy. The Chinese have a saying that describes this characteristic as one that does not know how to run even when hit by a stick repeatedly!

John 6:65-68: "And he said, For this cause have I said unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of the Father. Upon this many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Jesus said therefore unto the twelve, Would ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

What a spirit! To stay on and on - during good times and difficult times. Especially when others are leaving by the droves, knowing that a person is no fool to give up what he cannot hold for that which he cannot lose.

I rather be on a losing side that will ultimately win than to be on the winning side that is bound to lose. Moses left the riches of Egypt to take the side of the slaves of Goshen. Today, history has vindicated him as the true victor. Can we not learn to stay on? Members like sisters Belinda, Peggy, Foon Yong, Lillian and others are still with us - from the very beginning. So are brothers Ong Ann Nam, Simon, Timmy and more.

The first thing in building a spiritual body is to dig in and dig in deep with strong, firm, sturdy feet.

Legs That Will Follow After The Truth

Next, we move up from the feet to the legs where we are introduced to a woman who was not a Christian, not even a Jew but heathen. Yet because her legs would not lead her to desert her family by marriage, in times of hardship and famine, our Lord Jesus was born from her lineage.

Ruth 1:16: "And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

We not only need firm steady feet grounded on the word of God, but we need legs that will follow loyally the true God. The words of Ruth are not easy to utter and even more difficult to follow. Her sisters-in-law have already packed up and returned to their kampong. In the eyes of the world, that was the prudent thing to do under the circumstances.

Alone, Ruth clung to her mother-in-law. I would like to think that it was her good and honest heart that has caused her to embrace the true faith of her mother-in-law that clinched her decision.

Where are our legs taking us today? What are we following and giving our time and energy to? I put it to you that if we do not remember our Creator in the days of our youth, if we follow other gods and pursuits as we enter in National Service, working life or marriage, if we do what is convenient on Sundays instead of devoting it to God, we will find no blessing.

We have not exercised our legs but let them go along to the path of least resistance, and to do whatever is most beneficial to you, rather than taking the Lord into consideration.

Strained But Tough Thighs

From legs, we move up to the thighs. Here the Bible tells us of a most interesting event that shrunk a person's thigh.

Genesis 32:24-32: "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for, said he, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And the sun rose upon him as he passed over Penuel, and he limped upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip."

Was it God that Jacob wrestled with or was it an angel or man? Whoever it was, the point is that Jacob saw the heavenly visitor and will not let go at all costs until a spiritual blessing was bestowed. Remember that this was the same man who stole the blessing of the birthright from his brother Esau.

I would to God that all of us be as desirous of a spiritual blessing as Jacob was - if this were so, our upper room would be overflowing every Saturday, and Bible classes every Sunday!

The Heart of the Matter

Now to come to the heart of the matter - the heart, these strong blood-pumping arteries that never stops working as long as we are alive.

Matthew 8:5-13: "And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth in the house sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And he saith unto him, I will come and heal him. And the centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but only say the word,

and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers: and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. And when Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. ...13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And the servant was healed in that hour."

Place your hand on the left side of your chest where the heart is... and ask 'where is my heart?' Jesus said that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The centurion's heart was made solid stuff. First, he had a heart for a sick servant. Then, his faith was so strong that he asked for no sign; just affirmation from Jesus that He would heal his servant. That was sufficient.

It is time that we all stay in focus, put our trust in God firmly and not falter. And in doing so, we reorder our lives and routine to reflect this faith of ours.

Strong, Erect Backbones

Ever since my wife had trouble with her back, I began to realise how important strong, erect backbones are. A slipped disc, thrown back and lack of calcium can cause much discomfort and pain.

Job lost practically everything he had, all that was important to him. Yet he had the gumption, the backbone to stand up for God in spite of everything.

Job 1:20-22: "Then Job arose, and rent his robe, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped; and he said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

What a great fortitude of character this man Job had! Will we serve God when we are poor? When we lose our jobs? When we have to live from hand to mouth? The Lord has been pretty good to alot of us. Will we stand up for Him, continue to serve Him and praise Him whatever our circumstance?

In many years of full time ministry, I have seen people come and go. If I were to keep record of the reasons, they will be long and make interesting if not humorous reading. The real test of our Christian lives however, is no how well you started, but how well your persevered. As we are called to run the Christian race, we need patience (like they say, as patient as Job) to trust God for good things as well as things those are not so good. The reason for this is because, finally, our test is not based on how much God blessed us in

this life but how we acted when these blessings were taken from us. May we all learn to develop strong backbones!

Large, Generous Hands

Open up your hands, look at your palms. What do they say to you? Are they busy hands? Thifty or generous hands?

2 Samuel 24:19-25: "And David went up according to the saying of Gad, as Jehovah commanded. And Araunah looked forth, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him: and he went out, and bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground. And he said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshing-floor of thee, to build an altar unto Jehovah, that the plague may be stayed from the people. And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, the oxen for the burnt-offering, and the threshing instruments and the yokes of the oxen for the wood: all this, O king, doth Araunah give unto the king. And the king said Nay; but I will verily buy it of thee at a price. Neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto Jehovah my God which cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. And David built there an altar unto Jehovah, and offered burnt-offerings and peaceofferings. So Jehovah was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel."

How do we give to the Lord? Is it our best? Does it cost us something? How about our Sunday giving? Do we do it consistently?

When we have a pay cut, an emergency hospital bill or car repairs... does the Lord gets a cut as well?

Look at our hands again. May we have the mindset of David, exercise it in such a way that when it comes to the Lord, we are there with our best efforts, unlike the people at Malachi's time... consistently and ever increasing. The Lord will respond with much more like He did in answer to David's sacrifice.

Thick Skin, Shameless Face

Finally, we look at the head, more accurately, the face.

The Bible records an account where Abraham bargained with God. He did such a good job, that I would like to take him shopping with me some time. The Lord was about to destroy Sodom when Abraham started to plead for them.

Genesis 18:23-33: "And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there are fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou consume and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And Jehovah said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sake. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes: peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, I will not destroy it, if I find there forty and five. And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for the forty's sake. And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there. And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for the twenty's sake. And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for the ten's sake. And Jehovah went his way, as soon as he had left off communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place."

What a shrewd bargainer Abraham was! From 50 to 10. The point is, he was not afraid to lose face for the sake of souls. Why? Because he felt passionately for them that we would say that he had 'thick skin'!

What about us? Could we at least try - open our mouth and tell others we are Christians and share our story in order to bring them to Christ?

In Conclusion

In closing, we have gone all the way from the feet to the head, to the skin that keeps everything intact. Which part in our spiritual body is in need of attention? Where do we think we are?

Each of us needs to start our spiritual exercises by developing a contrite heart because Psalm 51:17 tells us that God will not despise such a heart. Then let us treat our faith, the church and all that is holy as a pearl of great prize. According to Matthew 13:45, it is worth effort effort and every sacrifice. May we all stay focused on our faith, not falter, slacken nor ever give up. James 1:8 states that a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. Quit ye like men! Start your spiritual exercises today. Tomorrow may be too late.

Getting Up Close and Personal with God

Get to know God more deeply

In the business world, there is a saying that "it is not what you know but who you know that counts". This is true in all areas of life. It is even true in death. If you do not know God, you don't have anything to stand on - not in this world or in the next.

To know God, is to have a desire to be aware of Him more and more each day. This is a life-long endeavour. There are some people who have no desire for this.

In Romans 1:28, the Bible tells us that there are some who refused to have God in their knowledge... "being filled with all unrighteousness... hateful to God... without understanding... unmerciful: who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them."

Recently, brother Mark Brewer gave me a few books which his parents brought all the way from USA. One of the books was entitled "Can Man Live Without God?" This is the next book on my reading list.

For me, knowing God is more than just pure knowledge or being able to prove His existence or quote X number of verses. If we know God, who He is, what He wants for us to be, our lives will be transformed.

Our outlook, world view and practices on a day-to-day basis will be different. The verse that comes to mind as I ponder on this thought of knowing God is Proverbs 27:1: "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; For thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

In Matthew 6:34, Jesus puts it this way, "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof".

I put it to you that if we know God and what He has in store for us, we will learn how to live each day fully, one day at a time. I know some of us are having health problems - long term ones that need a lot of care.

I received a note some time ago from Sister Nora that she had glaucoma, just like my wife. This is a very frightening and depressing ailment. Then last month, she wrote again saying she had injured herself in a big way! Please remember her in your prayers and send her a card after you have read this to cheer her!

Others have relationship problems and wonder if it will ever be alright. Then there are those with failing business, falling grades and so on... and you wonder how this year is going to turn out.

May I encourage you to get to know God... live by His grace one day at a time!

Suppose I could see all that was going to take place on the first day of 1996, I would have been totally overwhelmed! Death of my mother, Nat's illness, my father's operation, 2 deaths in Nat's family... what a year!

But because we know God and have tasted his goodness through the years, we are able to take on each circumstance in full trust and even with thanksgiving, relying fully on His goodwill at all times. Thus when the year is over, as we look back and take inventory, we see a string of good things resulting from knowing God and living in His providence.

Let's count some of these: Baptisms increased from 7 in 1994 to 9 in 1995 and last year it doubled to 18. Personally, it has been the most creative year in my ministry. I was able to launch the youth development programme, work on encouraging godly fathers and men's involvement, further extend our missions participation, revamp our planning day, enhance our worship, start the internet services etc - thanks to a supportive leadership and a caring membership.

The idea is to live a day at a time fully in God's timetable. After making plans for the future and laying by something for old age, let God take care of tomorrow. Give today your best shot; not just for your personal gain but for others and especially for God. Ask often during the day, "Is this what God wants me to be?"

So many people miss today because they live for tomorrow, weekends and that special occasion. They look forward to the time when they finish their exams, get married and the kids grow up... and miss today altogether!

Draw nearer to God

A second guideline for the new year that I would like to recommend is for us

to draw nearer to God. Where are you in relationship to God? If your relationship with God is compared to a family car where would you place God? Is God in the back seat or in the driver's seat? I know some people who put God in the boot and leave Him there until they need Him. You know, kind of like a spare tyre.

The Bible says in James 4:8 for us to draw near to God with the promise that He will draw near to you.

When our lives are ordered in such a way that we want to be with God in an intimate way, our hearts and our minds will be seeking His will and doing the things that please Him.

Drawing near to God means living every day in full awareness that you are in partnership with God in everything that you do.

I love the way the Psalmist puts it in Psalm 118:24: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

If we know that today belongs to the Lord and you are walking close to Him like partners... you can take whatever the world dishes out and turn every moment into a blessing.

One way of looking at this is to think of ourselves as missionaries. Suppose you are sent by PP to Batam, Indonesia. As a missionary, what do you do? Do you complain when you go from pillar to post to obtain a visa? Do you worry if all the comforts of home are not readily available? What do you do when you come across some people who seem to want to make your life difficult?

As a missionary, I presume you will take all these in your stride. You know you have been sent, that you are not alone or without support. You will turn every encounter into an opportunity to share Christ. And rather than complain, you rejoice that you are privileged to be sent as a missionary.

It is easy to understand the role of a missionary, but should not our lives be lived in a similar vein if we desire to draw closer to God?

There are times in the ministry, when I feel distressed and discouraged. But there was never a time when I felt the urge to quit, no matter how tough the situation was. Why is this so?

2 reasons.

1. Just like the missionary, if God is with me and wants me to keep going, why should I dishonour Him and let people and things cause me to desert the Lord who abundantly provides?

2. As I look back at each of the unpleasant situations, troublesome times and discouraging moments, I notice one thing common to all.

A "Bosses' Day" card I received some years back read:

"When this place gets frantic, You're here!

When this place gets stressful, You're here!

When this place is driving us nuts, You're here..."

Inside the card reads:

"Is it possible that there's a connection?"

Jokes aside, in all those difficult, discouraging moments the thing I noticed was these were also the growth points of my life.

Every time the church meets a challenge, faces a crisis or struggles with a problem... if we draw near to God, let Him take over and stay with it the way God wants us to...there is everything to gain.

I think of Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail that resulted in the conversion of the jailor and his family. I think of the dissention between Paul and Barnabas that resulted in Mark becoming once again a useful worker in the kingdom. Then I saw how the death of my mother brought my father back to church and how Nat's illness brought such support to our lives by so many.

We don't have all the answers but as we draw near to God...we find that everything that happens to us, good or bad... can be used for His glory and praise.

Love God more dearly

Finally, my third guideline for the new year is to encourage us all to love God more dearly.

Of all the things I do, this is one area that I need most help on, and one that I need to grow on more than any other.

Sure, it's easy to say I love God - I gave my life for the ministry didn't I? Yet, if I were to use this to say that I love God, I would have missed the point altogether!

I know for a fact, that there is nothing that I would not do for God. No one

that I would not give up. Nothing that I would not sacrifice.

And if Jesus were to come today, my response would be "even so come Lord Jesus!"

But all these would be too easy.

You see, for us to truly love God, John says in 1 John 4:20, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

To love God we must love His creatures. We must accord them the love and respect due. On no occasion should we wish for anything other than heaven's blessing to be among our fellow men.

This is a hard saying because people don't always treat us right. Sometimes we are mistreated and people often do not take the time or trouble to see our point of view.

And at times we are just dismissed as of little or no importance.

As I am thinking of following-up my series on the Beatitudes with the Sermon on the Mount, I have been making some notes and reading on the side. One of the verses that has given me new insight was Matthew 5:22 in which our Lord Jesus teaches, "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

First, notice the progression: angry without a cause - judgement; call Raca - council and then worst : fool - eternal consequences.

Why would it be so terrible to call a person a fool? If you are in military service, you probably hear this every day. I won't be surprised if it has been applied to you more than a few times! And too often, we spew these out in rapid fire like a machine gun!

Driving a car, we may call the inconsiderate driver, a numbskull. In discussing politics, we may refer to certain people whose policies we cannot agree with as a bunch of monkeys or less complimentary terms. And sometimes I wonder over Sunday lunches how many members have 'roasted preacher' on their menu?

This has to stop! What these actions actually say is we have no respect for the other party. That we know it all, that only our opinions or ways are right and if they do not listen to us or do it our way that they are fools!

Jesus says that this is not the way that a person who truly loves Me will treat another. I am so afraid that many of us who will never ever be condemned because of our doctrine, works or faith will miss heaven anyhow because we fail to love our brother.

So here you have it - 3 guidelines for this year:

1. To know God more deeply.
2. To draw to God more closely.
3. To love God more dearly.

Our response to these three guidelines should be just one word - repentance. Pause, take stock of our situation and where we are heading. Consider the 3 guidelines and make the necessary adjustments. And if we do, this year will be different.

How To Have A Long Term Ministry

Here are some of the things that have kept me going and going and going...

1. Joyfulness

Last month I shared with our leaders that I can take anything the world throws at me and all the devil may subject the church to. But take away the childlike excitement just to be "at church" with my brethren on Sundays, and I will quit tomorrow.

Sure, there were disappointments and discouragement along the way, but never depression. 99.99% of the past 30 years were accompanied with joy overflowing.

2. Walk with God

One of the great payoffs of being in the ministry is that you have time for things of God. His word. Meetings. Worship. In these and other exercises I have forged a deep abiding relationship with our Father such that nothing can touch me anymore.

From the first day in my ministry when I spent that day in prayer and fasting, I vowed to God that He will be my only boss - that I will not play it safe or sway to the will of committees and men. His will be the only voice I hear and today, His voice rings louder and clearer than ever.

3. Devoted Family

Should I lose everything tomorrow, I will still rejoice and thank God for a family devoted to God. My wife has faithfully shared my ministry through the years. June is a Bible class supervisor and teacher as well as my personal "I-need-it-first-thing-tomorrow-morning" proof reader.

Joy, our adopted daughter is married to a computer professional, Peter who preaches for a small congregation in Thailand on Sundays. These people have stuck with me through some pretty bad times and their encouragement make these times easier to take.

4. Nourishment from the Word

When I graduated from Bible college in 1964, the president Dr. Pence Dacus

presented me with a hardcover Thompson Chain Reference Bible which I still use. His words to me which I followed to the letter were to "read firsthand for yourself first before seeking other references."

This habit, cultivated over the years helped me to uncover insights from the word of God which I have thought through and claimed for my own. This has helped build PP in an exciting, unique and scriptural way with many innovative programmes.

5. People-building business

It is amazing to me as I reflect on the manner I associate with the congregation, through the years. In the foundational years, I was eating "ice kacang" with the members after every worship. As the congregation grew, we took them home for lunch on Sundays.

Now as the number increases, I still enjoyed being involved in every sector of the congregation (as well as the Chinese and Hearing impaired) as with the Thai and Filipino ministries. I thrive on their feedback, care and encouragement. Unlike the average member who receives feedback from peers, this wide-range of contacts has kept me close to the pulse of the people I serve.

6. A sense of mission

Long before we adopted the Vision 2000 goal, there has always been a sense of mission in my ministry. Instead of running after every new trend, blown by every wind of doctrine, PP has been pretty focused. This was impressed to me in a strong way (before I realised I was doing it) at Oklahoma Christian University in 1982 when I was introduced as a person with a sense of mission. More than just the recognition received over the years is the knowledge that as a minister, each day I touch lives and make a difference that no other vocation offers. It is an awesome responsibility that I do not take lightly.

7. Mentors

From my early introduction to Christianity I was fortunate to have known several godly couples which have been my mentors until this day. These examples and voices of experience have been a source of comfort and role models all my life. People like the Howard Hortons, Eddie Couches, Robert Rowlands and Joe Cannons. You can't ask for better company than these good old boys.

8. Ongoing Leadership

Since taking my place as the minister at PP in 1967, I have taken the task of leadership building at heart. The rule of thumb is that all members must serve willingly - there is never any compulsion. I am thrilled that we have developed a leadership (who comes up and takes charge and to whom I am accountable to) who works well with a score of devoted Care Team Coordinators. If the Lord should take me today, Vision 2000 will continue on course because of the open ongoing leadership.

When You Suffer...

PRECIOUS SOUL,

In Your moment of Grief...

As you now grieve through the loss of a loved one, this message comes to you specially to bring understanding, sunshine and assistance in this dark hour of loss.

If there is a God, why does He allow pain, suffering or death?

This may perhaps be your first question.

The Bible teaches that every good and perfect gift comes from God (James 1.17). He does not bring us suffering or pain. Very often this is the result of man's own foolishness, sinfulness or ignorance.

But why does He allow it? To be sure, God can wipe away all tears and take away all sorrows if He so desires. He can prevent the devil from continuing in his evil ways. But suppose He did exactly that - what then?

The earth would be different overnight. No suffering or pain!

Just imagine two boxers in a ring, fighting and punishing one another without stopping because neither could feel pain. Imagine also a baby banging his head against the wall because he feels no pain. The fact is, without pain we cannot accurately distinguish between good and harmful actions. And while our internal organs bleed and break, we would go on our merry way feeling no pain.

Yes, most assuredly, God has His purpose in allowing suffering and pain in this world. It acts as a warning that something is not right. When we suffer, it causes us to stop and think of our careless actions and its consequences, something we otherwise might not do if we felt no pain. Most of all, it helps us to feel and truly realise our own inadequacy and to return to our Creator for assistance and strength.

As you go through your grief, use this vital time to examine yourself. Ask if you have been mindful of God in your life. Examine the purpose and direction your life is heading. Lay your life open before God. Cast out every dead weight. Pray like King David of old for God to search your heart. Use this situation to rededicate yourself totally and seek strength from the Fountain Source at times like these.

As you do this, it may be that God is using your plight to bring you closer to Him and further away from the vain unimportant things of this life. If so, you can benefit from your grief.

Not all grief is the result of sin. Job of the Bible was a good man, perfect in the sight of God. Yet God allowed Satan to inflict suffering upon him. If this is your case, may I encourage you to meet every difficult situation in the arms of faith? As you go with God, so will God go with you. And as you stay close to Him, you will come out of these stormy days better, brighter than before -- as gold purified by fire. Once again, we have much to benefit because the end result will be better.

It may be that you are suffering now because of the mistakes and wrong of others. If this is so, you can number yourself among the Greats of the Bible, side by side with Jesus. You see, He also suffered, but not for sins that were His own. The apostles after Him rejoiced because they were counted worthy to share in their sufferings for Christ. So can we.

Most important, as we endure this moment of grief, let this be a reminder of a place where such suffering does not exist. In heaven there is no pain nor sorrow. And as we look forward to this permanent home of the soul, we realise that the present sufferings are but for a brief season and cannot be compared with the joys to come.

Our prayers and hearts are open to you in your suffering. We can feel deeply for you at this time. Not sorrowful as those who are without Christ and without hope, but enduring joyfully because we trust in Him who assuringly comforts us by revealing that "all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28).

One of these days, very soon, when all of the toils and labours are over, and when we sweetly find our rest in Heaven, we shall see our God face to face. Till then we will never fully appreciate our moments of sufferings but in childlike faith, entrust our souls to His keeping. We realise that the temporary pains which we endure now will be replaced with everlasting joys to come.

In the meantime, Dear one, hang on. Trust Him and abide by His will. Very soon, the silver lining around the cloud will appear and the worst will be over. You would have emerged from your trials stronger, more mature and better for it, for you have touched one of Ilfe's most deepest cords. Our Care Teams at Pasir Panjang stand ready to minister and assist you in working through your grief. All this while, please know that you are remembered in our prayers for we know that this will be a source of great comfort to you... in your moment of grief.

Are You Offended?

In James 3:2, the Bible tells us that "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

Many things offend. And they hurt. Some cut deep. While they offend, we should not take offense.

It is so easy to justify by saying, "Lord, I give up my time for your work... and this is how your people are treating me?? I am so discouraged, I am thinking of quitting."

Alas, too many of us fall into this trap of the devil. This is the same voice as the one that asked Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. So many good Christian workers have given up participating in the church's activities and offering service because of this - you know who they are. Even preachers who should know better do the same.

For me, to do the Lord's work is blessing enough. I came into the ministry without the promise of the next month's pay, without CPF for more than a decade... and I'd gladly do it again just to have the privilege of working in partnership with God.

All these years, the going has been hard (it is never be easy swimming against the tide) but I am blessed with wonderful people at PP that uphold my hands. Often people will be sly, offensive or downright mean. It is not easy to be a doormat. If I took offense everytime this happens, guess how long I could take it? Not very long, like most others. I would keep writing off people who offended me until I had noone to work with!

So in doing the Lord's work, the key is found in Acts 5:41 in the example of the apostles that "They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name." Just do the Lord's work in partnership with God. Forget offenses like we should forget praises (in the spirit of "Father forgive them for they know not what they do"). Take it to the Lord in prayer, and go away doing better and treating this person better than before.

When we do not take offense, giving the other brother in question the benefit of doubt and continue to serve the Lord and love the brotherhood:

a) We will keep serving the Lord no matter what

- b) God will be working with us in partnership and will renew us
- c) Others who intentionally or unintentionally try to offend us will still be working with us, and by our good conduct we may win them to serve the Lord more lovingly.

Let us continue serving the Lord without taking or giving offense and never give up on Him, the church or one another.