

# 45•65 by Henry Kong







Credits: Penny Kendall Photography



# 45•65

Today as I celebrate my 65th birthday, in another two weeks, I would have completed 45 years of full-time ministry with the Pasir Panjang congregation. This is the only job I have had, and the only congregation that I have worked with.

The years have flown by swiftly. Over the past 45 years, my ministry partner, Nat has shouldered the load and battled every situation by my side. Soon came our capable daughter, June who lends us strength and comfort through her faith and devotion. In the past many years, our son-in-law, 'can do' Ramesh, was a ready help in almost any situation.

To commemorate 45 years of ministry, I have compiled this collection of selected articles and sermons which I have shared with the congregation. Starting this week, I will mail a copy of this book to every member together with my birthday card on his or her birthday, to show my appreciation for the love and support the church have given to me and my family through the years.

God called me to His work, when I was in my teens. Through the years, He has provided, equipped and blessed my ministry. I could not have done anything without God and His people. All praise and glory belongs only to Him.

My birthday wish for the congregation is that every member may grow in desire to worship, walk and enjoy God's presence. This was my sermon to the congregation yesterday, and the first article in this book. It has been a great ministry, the best job in the world. I will continue to give of my best, together with my family as long as God gives us strength.

16 April 2012

**Henry Kong**  
henry@ppcoc.org

# Table of Contents

5	My Heart's Desire and Prayer for PP
9	Look Back in Wonder
12	The ABCs and DEFGH of Sin
17	Knowing God's Will
19	Seven Technologies for Kingdom Work
22	The ABCs and DEFGH of Church Ministry
25	How to Present the Gospel of Christ?
28	What is the Good Pleasure of God?
30	When You Lose a Loved One
33	When You Suffer
35	How Anyone can Understand and Follow What God Wants Us to Be...
43	What will it take for PP to Fulfil its God-given Duty in Missions
44	After Death, What Then?
46	How to Gain Ownership of the Bible
48	How to Pray as We Ought
51	How to Prepare a lesson for your Care team, Bible Class or Worship Service
53	Levels of Faith
54	The Soon Return of Christ
57	Why PP Care teams are Biblical and Important for You
61	I See You
64	The Whole Duty of The Church: To Speak the Truth in Love
66	Sound Doctrine
69	3 Keys to Making our Lives a Living Sacrifice Daily
71	The Kind of Servants God Uses for His Church Today
74	Serving with John 17:12 as Our Goal
76	Going Back to the Bible
79	The Most Important
80	Work of Elders at PP
82	What Happens When You Pray
84	The Kind of Service that Pleases God
87	How PP carries out God's command in Giving
90	The Church is the Bride of Christ
92	The Most Important Question: Are You A Team Player?
95	Full Time Ministry
97	The Place of God in Your Life
99	How to Start a House Church in Your Home
105	Run with Patience...
107	Grow Your Prayer Life
109	Getting Up Close and Personal with God
115	Are You Offended?
117	How To Have A Long Term Ministry
120	The Gospel of Christ
122	The Joy of Christianity

# My Heart's Desire and Prayer for PP

My deepest wish for the congregation at PP is that every member may grow in desire to worship, walk and enjoy God's presence. The Psalmist declares, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" - Psalms 122:1.

In fact, he prefers a day in the house of the Lord than a thousand days without this privilege. And he would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of ease (Psalms 84:10).

I would to God that every member at PP have this mindset - that instead of seeking blessings and gifts from God, we may above everything, truly seek the Giver.

Let me share some trends I have observed at PP that have been a source of concern and reason for prayer on my part.

Case #1: As we come to study God's word on Sunday, Wednesday and at SIBI, let us seek not only an understanding of the word, but a deeper relationship with the One who spoke these words. Most of the time, only a handful are at the Bible classes at the appointed time. The majority walk in after the singing and prayer. Don't you think that our study of God's word would be enriched if we factored in time for the singing, prayer and chapel, which gets us in the frame of mind to focus on His word?

Case # 2: I have observed that often, when a group of members spend Sunday afternoon in the church building, when it is time for evening worship, they quickly get on the bus and head home. I lament at how much they have missed, robbing themselves of the extra hour that they could have spent at worship and in the company of fellow worshippers.

Case #3: Consider how much time we spend at the breakfast area talking amongst ourselves, then reluctantly shuffle into the auditorium well after the call for worship.

What kind of example are we setting to our visitors, members, peers and family with regards to the priority we have on worship?

Out of the following seven levels of worship - which of these attitudes below describes your passion for God?

1. Worship is a waste of time:

All that is required of me as a Christian is to attend one service on Sunday. I do not need further worship or learning. I can use my time for better things.

When our lives become so filled with self, our personal time and our needs (even good things that we put above God like family, exercise, charitable causes), we stand to lose touch with God completely.

1 Timothy 4:8 reminds us, "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

We become like Martha whom Jesus rebuked in Luke 10:41-42, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her".

2. I do not enjoy worship:

I cannot focus, am easily distracted and get nothing out of worship. Worship is not about self, but God. It is not how you feel, what you get out of it, but your regard and relationship with God. Our passion in worship will grow as we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

For carnal man that we are, worship does not come naturally and we often worship a god made out of our own image. Paul shares his struggle in this area in Romans 7:14 "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin".

3. Worship is a commandment that I need to fulfill:

As long as I show up, go through the rituals, do not expect any more of me. Could this be the very thing that our Lord Jesus condemned in Matthew 15:8, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me"?



#### 4. I don't mind worship, I can take it or leave it:

Many people find the worship experience quite pleasant and are not adverse to it. Still, they have not developed a passion or desire for it. This mindset is acceptable to many Christians, but is truly repulsive to the One you are worshipping.

Here is what Jesus says in Revelation 3:16, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth".

#### 5. I know worship is important:

I am still learning to worship more deeply. This is the lowest safe level in any relationship to God. We know we have not arrived; have ways to go; but we yearn to do better by reading, learning and doing more in the area of worship.

We become like the man who said to Jesus in Mark 9:24, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief".

#### 6. I am enjoying worship:

I come each time the church opens its doors. Whenever possible, I strive to be early so that I can be part of the singing and prayer session. I want to set the right example and I conduct family devotions at home.

This is the level that the leaders of the church wish for every member at PP. When the rank and file of the church are on this same page, we will see a genuine atmosphere of inspiring worship.

This is exactly what Jesus said in John 4:23, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him".

#### 7. Passion for worship:

Top on my list is the worshipper whose zeal for worship makes him create opportunities to commune with God beyond corporate worship. It is a natural outgrowth from level 6 when a worshipper is so passionate about his worship with God that he will parcel out huge chunks of his time in watching, waiting and praying.

He often goes to his secret closet, at times praying through the night as Jesus encourages in Matthew 6:6, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly".

#### Reflection:

Which level am I at? No one can answer this question except me. In heaven we will bathe in the presence and worship of God. If we are not already moving in this direction, think how out of place we will be there.

Since I found the pearl of great price and became a Christian, I have never missed a single service of the church. Each time, I strive to be at least 15 minutes early. Through the years, this one thing, more than any other has put my faith in good stead. I want to encourage you to do the same. There is not any activity that will pay dividends now and in the world to come, as worship.

Start now, to secure heaven and build a closer walk with God.



# Look Back in Wonder

On 16th April, 2012 I celebrated my 65th birthday. Two weeks after that, I completed 45 years of full time ministry at PP. The Lord has left His imprint on me and this work in an impactful way, throughout this period. I want to share God's faithfulness and provision, and our congregation's response to these blessings.

## The Faithfulness of God

I stand amazed each time I reminisce how God took the dream of a bunch of teenagers to establish a congregation of the Lord's church and blessed it abundantly. We had little education, no influence and hardly any money. Like a mustard seed, it grew and grew so that, like the parable in Mark 4:13, we are now able to give assistance to 'birds of many nations'.

God blessed us year after year, like the devoted Father that He is. Even though we started without any funds or backing from any adult or group, God soon sent sister Polly Lee to apply for a HDB apartment in Queenstown, so that her home might be available as a base for us to start the work.

At this time, the A. L. Harbins returned from their tenure in Australia and agreed to minister to this new work. As the church grew, Lam Teck Ming successfully applied for a shophot next to the Tanglin Halt market and allowed us us to use the ground floor for our meetings.

Just as we thought that things could not have worked out any better, I happened to be completing my last few months at the Bible college and ready to serve full time.

Looking back, the faithfulness of God is clearly demonstrated in his providence for PP through over four decades, despite mistakes we made and our human shortcomings. It has been well put in 2 Timothy 2:13 that God is always faithful even if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny himself.

## The Timely Providence of God

Serving in the ministry is the best job in the world. If I had to do it over, I would not change it for anything else. Going to work is such a joy, knowing that I have the opportunity to touch lives for eternity. As long as God gives me strength, I will continue to serve Him and give of my best.

Still, it is not the easiest vocation to undertake. There are many obstacles and heartaches. Many times, I am faced with situations that have driven me to my knees as there seems to be no solution. On the occasions my wife Nat and I thought we should throw in the towel, the Lord comes in and provides every need.

I remember a time in our early days at Tanglin Halt. The church was growing and we had to add an extra assembly on Sunday mornings to cater to the growth. It was then that the devil tried to derail us and threw one impediment after another at us.

Somehow the authorities got wind that we were using the shoplot for religious purposes on Sundays. They gave us a month to cease services! We pressed all the panic buttons, and try as we did, we could not find an alternative meeting place.

At that time Nat was teaching Thai classes at the Outram Road YWCA. Using her connections, she not only secured the main hall for our meetings but when the Samaritans of Singapore (a suicide helpline) vacated their offices, we were able to boost our presence and activities considerably. That turned out to be the period of our fastest growth, doubling the congregation over the next few years due to the Y's central location.

Soon, we were feeling the effect of the heavy strain on the church's finances in renting two offices. The Lord was watching us all this time, providing and helping us take each step with Him.

All of a sudden, we had several American families showing up at the church because of the offshore oil business. Normally, at that time Americans would worship with the Moulmein Road congregation since there were American missionaries serving there.

We did not know how they located us (the internet was in its infancy, so we had no presence on the web) but somehow they found out that we were worshipping at the Y. They liked the church so much that they continued worshipping with us. Their added contributions helped cover the extra costs, and when we grew strong enough financially, one by one they left - as suddenly as they arrived. To this day, we are still keeping in touch with these God-sent angels!

Catch me or Nat some time, if you are interested in these stories - we have many more testimonials of the bountiful providence of God over the years.

## Our Response to the Goodness of God

In Psalms 116:12, King David asks, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?' So in the same way, each of us should also respond from an overflowing heart of gratitude to God's faithfulness and provisions through the years. We who are recipients of God's choicest blessings must pass on this grace to honor His Name.

One of the more obvious ways we are doing this is in our missions efforts. Not only are we planting churches, supporting foreign nationals and training leaders, we are now partnering growing churches like the Midtown congregation in Philippines to assist them in areas they are lacking. Even though we are clearly focused on the big picture, individuals especially old wounded soldiers of the cross are very much on our radar. A recent example is our response to Al Henderson's illness, an early missionary to Taiwan.

Not so obvious, is the way PP has tried to set the example for churches throughout Asia and beyond on how we should go about our Father's business - lovingly, Biblically and responsibly. Many members in Singapore who are disillusioned by their congregations who have drifted from the word, have kept their faith and returned to worship with PP, where we are working with them to actively labour and build the kingdom of God. Members who have strayed, sinned and who are divorced find support, understanding and a helping hand. Individuals who have blindly held on to dogmatic, legalistic teachings and have come to PP to worship, are urged to study the Bible for themselves so as to honour and worship God in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

What will the future hold for PP? The God that has provided for us in the past will surely continue to do so. He has grown His flock, provided devoted elders, deacons, leaders and members. As we stand firm on His word, zealous in His work, reaching out to touch with the love of Jesus... we have this promise from John 14:12 - 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.'

# The ABCs and DEFGH of Sin

The Bible deals with sin from cover to cover. In fact you do not have to go further than the third chapter to get a vivid description of the first sin. Move another three chapters, and you will see how sin has spread to the entire world!

Open the newspaper today, or turn on the TV - sin abounds. The recent looting in UK saw people of all ages (some as young as eleven) of all socio-economic backgrounds (one was the daughter of a millionaire), plundering and looting all over the country.

Now look in the mirror. What do you see? Be honest. Is there sin in your life? No one (except God) knows better than you. What are you going to do about it? Here are some suggestions:

## 1. Aware of Sin

What is Sin? The Bible tells us in 1 John 3:4 that "sin is the transgression of the law". Paul struggled with this in Romans 7:7-9 where he writes, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

What does sin do? Make no mistake about it, sin erects a wall between you and God. It cuts off all blessings and sustenance from above. Isaiah 59:2 declares, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."

What is the result of Sin? Romans 6:23 tells us in no uncertain terms, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

## 2. Beware of Sin

Do not go through life like an ostrich with your head buried in the sand. All mankind has sinned. We commit sin every day - by doing bad things as well



as by not doing good things (James 4:17). The Bible tells us in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

In case the above verse does not sink into our heads, let us be clear that there are no exceptions. Paul tells us in Romans 3:12, "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Please do not be deceived. The apostle John reveals in 1 John 1:8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

### 3. Careful of Sin

Search your heart like the Psalmist of old in Psalms 139:23, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts." Is there a secret sin? Perhaps an evil thought? Be careful that sin does not come in, as Genesis 4:7 tells us, that it is never far away, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him."

Sin is like the proverbial camel who asks to put one leg into the tent on a cold night. When his master allows him a foot, little by little, the animal moves his entire body into the tent. The dreaded truth is that sin enslaves. In John 8:34, "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."

Every sin goes through various stages. James 1:14-15 describes this process in this way: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

### 4. Declare Your Sin

The Bible records Achan's secret sin in Joshua chapter 7. While God was giving the Israelites victory after victory over indomitable foes, they were totally defeated against the small city of Ai because of the sin of one person. In Joshua 7:19, "Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me."

Not only do we have the tendency to hide our sins, like David, often we commit sins which we do not deem to be wrong. As David was a man after God's own heart, he constantly examined himself as he did in Psalms 19:13,

"Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."

Indeed, there is no benefit in hiding sin. We may hide it from our family and friends. Even convince ourselves and others that we have not sinned, but you cannot mock God. Galatians 6:7 warns us, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Again, Proverbs 28:13 reminds us, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

## 5. Enter into God's presence

To seek complete cleansing of our sins, like the prodigal son of Luke 15, we must leave the pigsty and return to our Father's house where we belong. In Psalms 51:11, David prayed, "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

The only way to deal with sin is to rid of it completely. Do not leave any residue behind to ferment and hibernate. In Psalms 51:2, the Psalmist cried to God to "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

It is not good enough to get rid of the virus of sin. We need to fill the vacuum left by the devil with God's presence. Jesus tells in Luke chapter 11 of a man who was cleansed of an evil spirit, but did nothing. So verse 26 tells us, "Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

## 6. Fight the good fight

When we have decided to deal with the sin in our life, let us get back into the Christian race by making it our goal not to sin. Hebrews 12:1 puts it this way: "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..."

It is so important that as we do, we put on every single piece of the entire armour of God described in Ephesians chapter 6. "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" - Ephesians 6:13.

Indeed, we need to stay alert, watching and praying as Jesus instructs in Mark 14:38, "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak."

## 7. Grow in good works

Cleansing of sin and bearing fruits of repentance go hand in hand. It is not enough merely to confess our sins; we need to follow through with godly sorrow and not the sorrow of the world (i.e. to feel sorry only because we were caught in wrongdoing). Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 7:10, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." In Matthew 3:8, John the Baptist calls on those who responded to "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance".

This explains the mindset of the apostle Paul when he declares in 1 Corinthians 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Like Paul, we all can be faithful unto death and receive the crown that is reserved for us in 2 Timothy 4:8, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Revelation 2:10 urges us to "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

## Conclusion: Harden not Your hearts

Brethren, do not harden your hearts when dealing with sin. 1 Timothy 4:2 talks about Christians who have had their conscience seared with a hot iron because of sin.

Do it today. Do not go to bed with the devil (Ephesians 4:26, 27). Hebrews 3:15 urges us, "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation."

We have an example in the apostle Peter in Luke 5:8, "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

There is no need for anyone to remain in sin. Christ offers us forgiveness and continuous cleansing in our walk with Him, so that when He returns, we will be ready to be received in the clouds with Him. 1 John 1:7 assures us,

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."



# 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 should I 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...) doing 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 which 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.

# 7 Technologies for Kingdom Work

We are so blessed to be born in a time of mass communications and modern technology. A person that senses the times, knows what works and does not get sucked in by everything that is new is able to harness them to great productivity and effectiveness for kingdom work. Here are 7 I use for kingdom work.

## 1. PowerPoint

Now, it is possible to follow the lesson of even the most incoherent preacher, thanks to Powerpoint. At PP, our setup has a screen in front of the audience, a really large projection behind the audience for the preacher as well as a led screen at the pulpit which the speaker can read off and control. No need for anything fancier than this.

The strength of the PowerPoint usage is in your slides. Many speakers have too many slides, with too much animation and too much text. When your lesson exceeds 10 slides, it is time to review and trim. Check to ensure only points are flashed and not full sentences or entire paragraphs! The way I use PowerPoint is to have a left column in every slide where I list my main points as I progress.

## 2. Pagemaker

The only essential program in our computers at PP is Adobe's Pagemaker. We have been using it since version 3, somuchso our staff can run it in our sleep. Adobe is now moving from this flagship product to something more encompassing, but this is where we cut our teeth - from posters, banners to bulletins and books. Anything you conceptualize in your head can be effortlessly displayed on Pagemaker!

This past Saturday, after my regular morning walk at the botanic gardens, I thought of putting all my recent articles into a book. I sat down with Pagemaker, searched for a graphic and did a preface. After lunch, I looked for my articles from my website and Facebook, and took a break. By six in the evening, the book was completed. After a quick proofread, it was posted on Facebook and our webpage. Within hours, I got comments from Samuel in Myanmar, David in China..... Astounding - all within 24 hours!

### 3. Google Groups

PP has been using google groups for our missions interest groups as well as our leadership deliberations. This not only allows us to share information and reports very quickly, but enables us to think through, get comments and really fine tune any project or decision we need to make. I highly recommend it for any working committee.

### 4. Digital Bible

I have come to the point that I would be vastly handicapped in my lesson preparation without a digital Bible. Oh yes, I have prepared many a sermon without it, and will prepare many more without one. However, it is so much better with one.

I use SwordSearcher on my desktop, but on the go with my iPad, I may use Laridian's Pocket Bible or Olivetree's Bible Reader. These digital Bibles allow me to search for my text, explain the meaning of the word in its original language and gives me the commentary of its context. In addition, it allows me to copy and paste Bible texts for my notes and PowerPoint slides. Neato!

### 5. Adobe PDF

This is probably the most popular and portable of all formats in the babble of the cyber world. The reader is free, and now there are many good free converters like PdfCreator.

The PDF file format allows you to share files in emails and over the internet - photos, documents, PowerPoints, spreadsheets etc. The conversion is seamless, like printing the file. The file is smaller than the original format. For example, after completing my book on Pagemaker last Saturday, I was able to convert it to PDF in an instant and post it on the web. Best thing since sliced bread!

### 6. Skype

Since phone calls are so cheap, even international ones, I hardly, if ever use skype. However, our missions teams use it to followup missions trips and conduct regular Bible studies and even worships. All these without any extra cost.

### 7. Facebook

Unless you live in a cave, Facebook is currently where the action is. From



keeping in touch, finding lost friends to winning elections and selling products, this is the place to go.

PP has a group at Facebook called 'ppcoc and friends' which has actually more members than the congregation itself. Instead of just updates like you will find in a webpage, members give comments, post photos and videos and it is easy to send an announcement to everybody.

What do you think? What do you use that is good and effective that I have not mentioned above? Send me an email!

# The ABCs and DEFGH of Church Ministry

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

It is so important in dealing with erring members, to work patiently, with loving tender care, for as long as it takes so that their souls may not be lost. 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.

# How to Present The Gospel of Christ?

While members of the Lord's church are diligent in the study of the word of God, I suspect very few go deeper or venture to understand the big picture. Most members are satisfied for someone else to share insights or rely on the time tested doctrines that we have inherited from overseas missionaries.

When it comes to the gospel of Christ, I daresay that most of us miss the mark by a country mile. We either say too much, or else we distill it to the tried and tested "5 Steps of Salvation" (i.e. Hear, believe, repent, confess and be baptized).

This year as I was assigned to prepare the outlines for "Acts in Action", I enjoyed a second wind delving into what the Holy Spirit accomplished in the early church. It was a spiritual journey for me as I revisited events and places (some of which I have visited in real life). I went away with a clearer picture of what the gospel of Christ is.

## God the Father

Starting at the beginning, the gospel of Christ was revealed in Genesis 3:15 when man committed the first sin. It is God's will that we obey God. When mankind disobeys God, he will justly receive the punishment due. The gospel or good news is that God has designed a way out for our sins.

## God the Son

In Jesus Christ, we see the love of God the Father who sent His Son to die in our place so that we may be redeemed from our sin. Jesus lived a sinless life, satisfying the demands of the law and willingly laid down His life to purchase us from the penalty of sin. The cross signifies His sacrifice and His resurrection assures us of the hope of His promise.

## The Holy Spirit

The book of Acts begins with the coming of the Holy Spirit and ends with the words of the Holy Spirit (Acts 28:25). In between these chapters we see the good news preached to the Jews first, and then to the gentiles.



On the day of Pentecost after Christ's crucifixion, Peter is chosen by God to present the first gospel message. His hearers are convicted and three thousand are obedient to his plea to 'repent and be baptized'. As the gospel is preached, churches are established, elders appointed and lives transformed.

### Conclusion

The gospel, in brief, is the good news. It is God's purpose to save fallen men that they may repent of their ways which will condemn them for all eternity. By God's grace through faith in Jesus we find full and complete remission of all sins. As we turn from our former ways to walk with Christ in the light, we conform to His image and maintain a living relationship with Him until we return to be with Him forever.

So the proper proclamation and response to the gospel must include:

1. An understanding of the message  
(e.g. conversion of the Eunuch - Acts 8:26-39)
2. A change of heart  
(e.g. conversion of 3,000 - Acts 2:14-41)
3. A life of service to Christ and His church  
(e.g. conversion of Lydia - Acts 16:13-15).

God is the judge of all things, including a person's response to the gospel and his eternal salvation. As Christians, it is so important that we teach the gospel in its totality, ensure that our hearers understand the message, and disciple them to mature faith.

This will definitely take more effort and work, yet we are assured that "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalms 126:6).

Hebrews 2:10 puts it this way, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

However, if we fail to go the distance, Jesus warns us that we may be doing more harm than good. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Matthew 23:15).

Indeed, 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 teaches that "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by

fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire".

# What is the Good Pleasure of God?

“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” - Philippians 2:13

It has been a great learning experience for me to present the outline for the book of Acts for our Bible classes this year. I relived the powerful works of the Holy Spirit in the early church as I went along. Amongst the many lessons that impacted my walk with God is the reminder to let God be God, and that there is nothing more important than to allow His good pleasure to be done in our lives.

The apostle Paul was bestowed with much power and spiritual gifts above any other. He wrought many miracles and even brought the dead back to life. Even his handkerchiefs had healing power!

Yet it pleased God for Paul to undergo much hardship and persecution. God could have delivered Paul from beatings or stonings, but allowed the natural sequence of events to take place without His intervention on most occasions.

At the end of his life, Paul was a forgotten old man. It was only after much searching, that Onesiphorus was able to locate him. His long-time fellow worker, Demas had forsaken him, observing what Paul underwent and probably beat a hasty retreat.

Left alone with only Luke the physican to tend to his ailing battle-worn body, he was condemned, awaiting death. What an inspiration it is to learn that although his outer man perished, his spirit was renewed and soaring!

God could have rewarded His faithful servant, Paul with a comfortable senior life, like the apostle John. Or at least the comfort of the many souls he had won for Christ around him. I could think of many things I would do for Paul if I were the minister of the church in Rome. But in the same way Christ came into the world, unnoticed; Paul completed his mission to the gentiles par excellence and left without fanfare.

This led me to think of the many situations in life and experiences of members and the church. It would be so easy for the Lord to heal a sick member or divert an incident that we all saw coming. It is at these times that I remember

Paul's dying days - alone, forsaken, unappreciated by one and all.

Because Paul understood the good pleasure of God, and fully subscribed to it, he was able to pen the heroic words recorded in 2 Timothy 4:6-8: "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing."

Press on, brethren. God is in charge and is at work for you. It is so easy to second guess reasons but so hard to lean on God as we accept His good pleasure for us in difficult times.

# When You Lose a Loved One

Whenever I prepare to speak at the wake or funeral, I tried hard to look for reasons to comfort his family and friends for the loss, but found none. It would be so easy to second guess, offer platitudes and try to get over this great loss. But I have chosen not to offer straw hopes, and instead draw the faithful to God's unfailing love and faithfulness that will sustain and give a hope that is not fragile.

In the book of John, chapter 11, we read of the tragic and sudden death of Jesus' good friend, Lazarus of Bethany. Throughout the account, the author observed that Martha was the stronger of the two sisters. She met Jesus ahead of the funeral crowd and expressed deep faith in Jesus and the resurrection (John 11:22-27).

In her brief meeting with our Lord, "Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" (John 11:40).

Mary, on the other hand was constantly accompanied by friends during the funeral so that she would not be overwhelmed with grief in her bereavement. These loved ones followed Mary when she made her way to see Jesus.

Like Martha, her first words to Jesus were to chide Him for taking so long to come to them. Mary said, perhaps in anger or frustration, "if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (John 11:32). Unlike Martha, Mary was so overcome with grief that Jesus was unable to explain God's plan to her like He did to Martha, but simply wept along with her.

In this touching incident in the life of Jesus, we see how God cares for each one of us in our pain and empathizes deeply with our hurt and loss.

We also find hope that those who have left us are safe in the arms of Jesus. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

Most of all, we are reminded that in all things, God is in charge and sovereign. Even when we cannot find any reason for the loss of a loved one, especially one who is taken away so suddenly and quickly, if we understand God's will,



purpose and good pleasure for us in such times, like Job of the Old Testament we can remain steadfast, faithful and secure.

It is as though a large carpet has hovered over our heads and brought darkness and despair to our lives. Looking up, all we can see are a jumble of colour threads, all messy and confused, like our minds are.

Yet if we are looking at it from God's perspective, not the reverse side of the carpet - it is beautiful, well ordered and carefully designed.

I know that it is difficult to see God's glory when a loved one is taken away from us so swiftly. But like Martha, we need to be reminded that our Christian walk is not about us, our wants and our future. It has always been about God, His good pleasure and purpose for us.

In Philippians 2:13, Paul tells us that "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." For the Christian, nothing is more important for us than to understand this and allow our lives to be submitted to God's good pleasure.

Make no mistake about this: God's purpose will be done. There is no force in the world that can circumvent it. It will be done with or without our participation. As for me and my house, I want to be used by God for His good pleasure.

God is the potter, and we are the clay. In order for us to be God's workmanship (Ephesians 2:10), we must be willing to deny ourselves, carry the cross and follow Him. But when we harden our hearts, God cannot use us because hard clay is brittle and cannot be conformed to His image.

In driving home this point, Paul asks in Romans 9:21, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

God will be God. Isaiah 55:9 puts it this way, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Let God be God. Whether we sense Him at work or not, the world is turning in the way it should and God is still in charge.

There is no clear reason now for the loss of a loved one, a baby born with defects or the millions of hungry children in this world. Much of it is the

result of sin, man's selfishness and our fallen world. One of these days, when our lives are over, like Paul we can say, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Corinthians 13:12).

In the meantime, hold on and trust God. Like Job, the end will be better!

# When You Suffer

In Your moment of suffering....

PRECIOUS SOUL,

As you work through a time of struggle and pain, this message comes to you specially to bring understanding, sunshine and assistance in this difficult period.

If there is a God, why does He allow pain, suffering and 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 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 consequences we cannot accurately distinguish between good and harmful actions.

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 reflect upon our careless actions and their consequences, something we otherwise might not do if we felt no pain.

Most of all, it helps us to 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 your life's purpose and the direction in which it is heading. Lay your life open before God. Cast out every deadweight. 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 draw 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 the sufferings of Christ for His sake. We can, too.

Most important, as you endure this difficult period, let this be a reminder of a place devoid of such suffering. 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 feel deeply for you at this time. You should not feel sorrowful as those who are without Christ and without hope, but endure 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 our toils and labours are over, and when we sweetly find our rest in Heaven, we shall see our God face to face. Until 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 life's deepest cords.

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



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

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.

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.

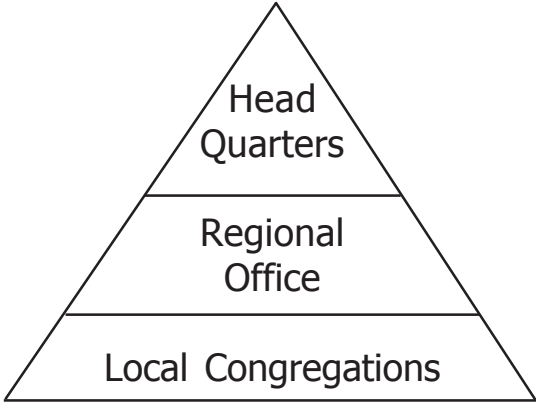
James 1:23-24

For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man

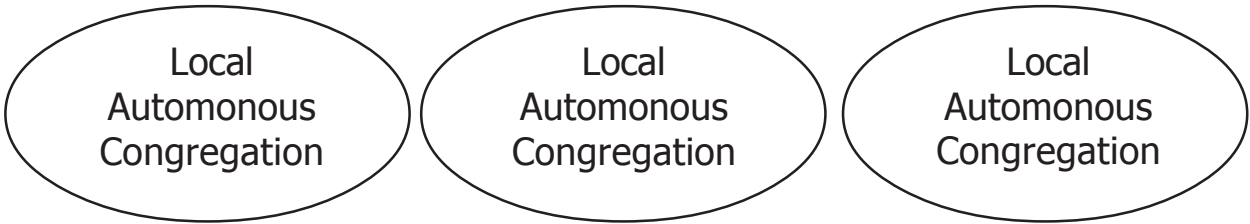
beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

Secular Organisation  
vs Scriptural Organisation

Many churches are organized under the pyramid structure with



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

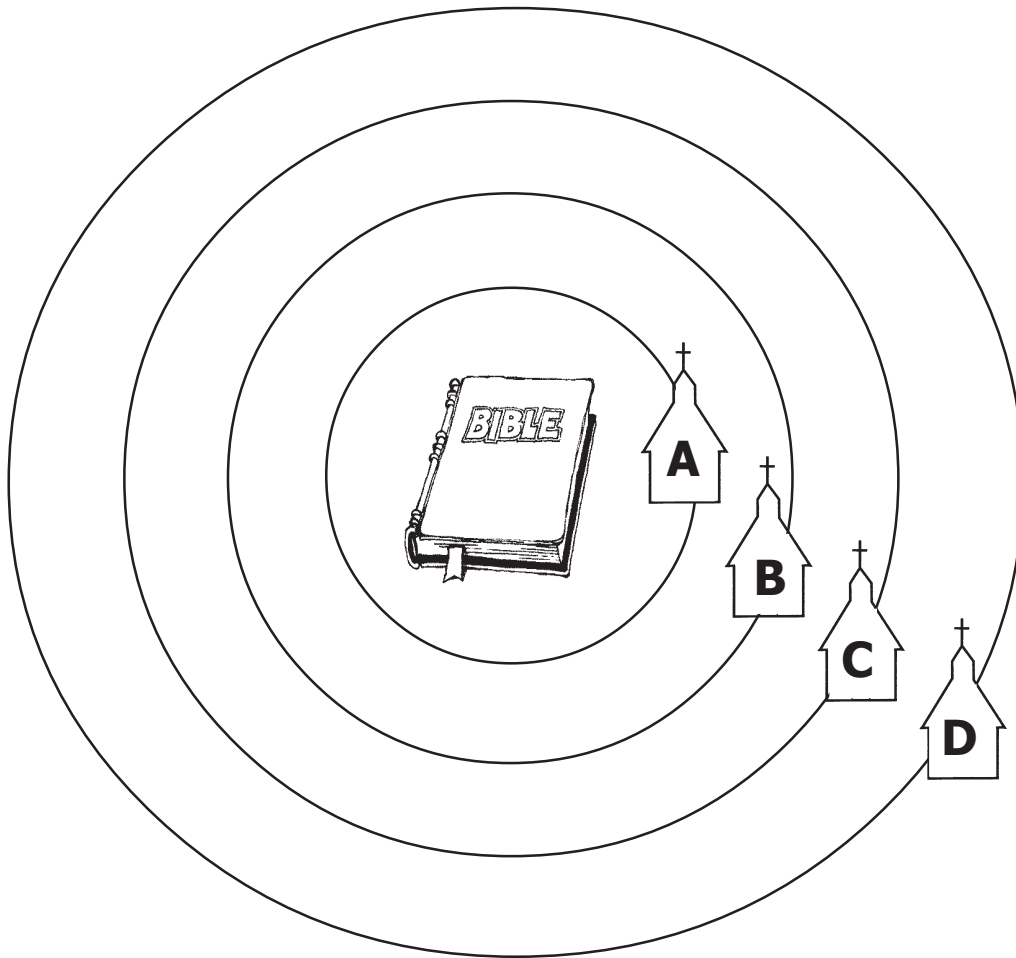
Acts 20:28-30

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.

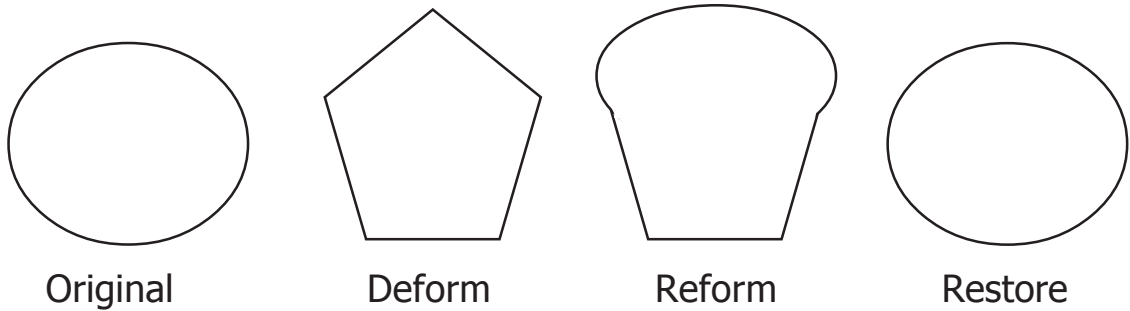
### Matthew 15:13

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?



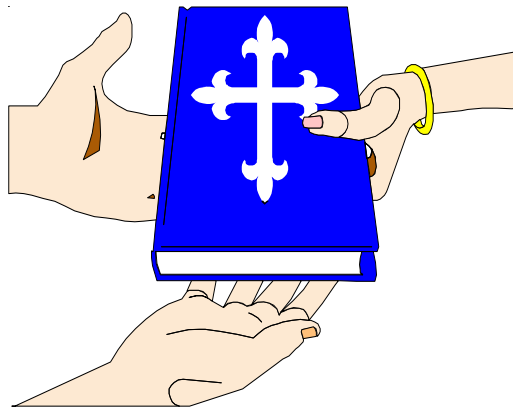
John 17:20-23

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 divide 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 it 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.

# What will it take for PP to Fulfil its God-given Duty in Missions

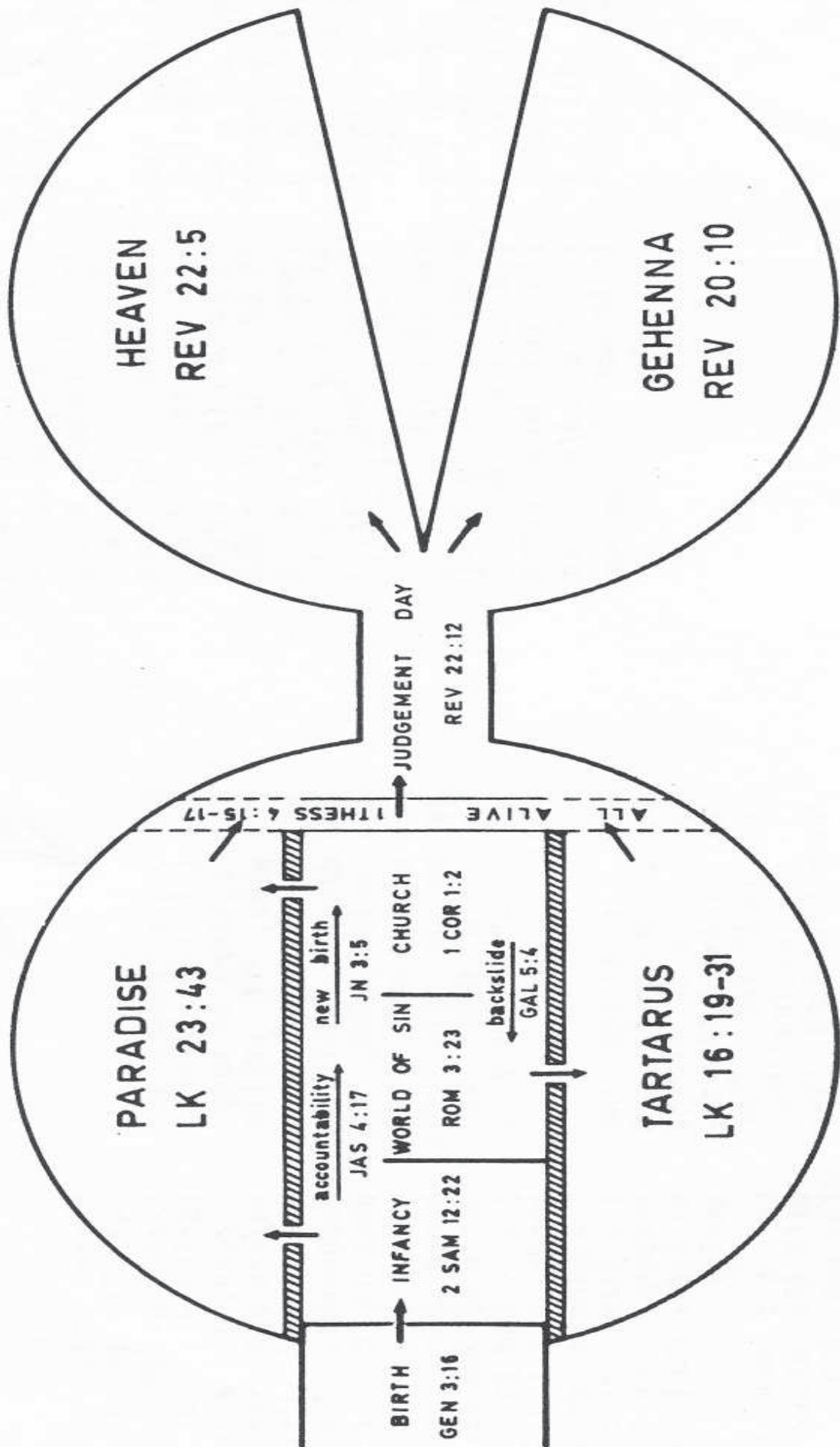
PP has enjoyed a long and successful history in missions. Starting in the late 60s, we were renting a house in Century Gardens, Johore and getting Bible college students in Singapore to reach out with the gospel on weekends.

We moved on to supporting new ventures in Ayer Tawar, West Malaysia, supporting preachers in Malaysia and planting new churches in Batam, Indonesia and Tuao, Philippines.

More than 200 members have been to one or more missions trips by PP. Besides purely missions trips, PP are now organising more medical trips as well. Over the years, PP has built a large network of partner churches throughout Asia.

I am convinced that PP's God-given role in missions will not be accomplished by some great plan or vision. Nor will we get the job done by raising millions of dollars. As it was done in the book of Acts, it will be so in 21st Century Singapore - every Christian reaching out with the gospel of Christ.

The church is only as strong as its weakest link. If the missions culture is not imbedded in the heart of every Christian at PP, there is little the leadership can do to get the job done. But if each one of us, like Mary, will take out our alabaster box and break it for the sake of souls lost without Christ, we would have done all we could, and achieve the missions set before us.



# After Death, What Then?

The unseen future after this life is often a mystery to many. For some, it spells hopelessness, fear and despair. But for the child of God, we are encouraged "that we sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." (1 Thess. 4:13).

Why is it that the Christian can be so secured in death, and full of hope? The answer is Christ. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thess.4:14).

Where do the dead go? The chart on the left page depicts two worlds – the period before Judgment Day; the second, after the Judgment. The top section of each is used to describe the place where the presence of God is and the bottom for the abode with Satan. The middle column of the first circle represents the life of an individual in this world.

Let us now proceed with the answer to the question, where do the dead go in each aspect of life.

We are brought into this world through physical birth (Gen.3:16). This brings us into the age of infancy. Should a person die during this period of innocence, he goes to God (2 Sam.12:22). However, a person soon grows up and becomes accountable for his actions (James 4:17). This brings him into the world of sin (Rom.3:23). Should he die at this time, he dies in an unsaved condition.

When Jesus came, His purpose was to give us life more abundantly in His church (John 10:10). As a result, we do not need to remain in this unsaved condition, but through the new birth (John 3:5 cf Acts 2:38) we are added to the church (Acts 2:38, 42). If a person dies within the boundaries of the church, he goes to be with God. However, it is possible for a Christian to backslide (Gal.5:4) into the world of sin. If he does so, the abode of Satan awaits him in death.

On the return of Jesus, all who have been dead in Paradise (Luke 23:43), Tartarus (Luke 15:19-31) or are still alive (1 Thess.4:15-17) will be gathered for the Judgment day (Rev.22:12). At this time, the good will be gathered into Heaven (Rev.22:5) to be with their God forever; and the bad will be cast into Gehena (Rev.20:10) where they will suffer eternally.

# How to Gain Ownership of the Bible

Many Christians rely on others to tell them what the Bible is all about. Even earnest Bible students often default to others when they come across difficult or controversial passages of the Bible. Somehow, most are fearful or reluctant to take ownership of their Bible knowledge and do very little original thinking or teaching.

Here are 5 steps that will help you to gain ownership of your Bible knowledge.

1. Read: Simple enough, but so few do it, especially in its entirety or on a regular basis. May I suggest that you read the entire Bible every 3 months ie alternating between the 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament. This way, you would have read over half as many books of the New Testament, the way it should be.

2. Register: Get a good hardcover register book and use it to register a log of your reading. Jot down also verses that uplift you, words or passages that you do not understand etc. How quickly this register fills up will reveal how much you love and value God's word.

3. Record: Turn your hardcover register book from back to front and start at the last page to record a summary of each chapter you read. Cluster similar chapters together and do your own outline of each book of the Bible as you go along. You will find as you revisit each book each time, you will grow in your understanding and insight.

4. Reflect: One of the best and easiest ways to grasp any verse or passage of the Bible is to:

a. Write down the verse or message (do it in your register)

b. Describe in your own words to your best understanding what it means.

c. Follow up with the "I will..." - your response to the article. What you will do as a result of the verse you just read?

Here's an example:

1. In the first column write the passage in your own handwriting eg. John 3:16

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

2. In the second column, write out what you think the passage means to you

eg. God loves me so much that He is willing to give me heaven's best

3. In the third column, write out what you will do about it with sentences beginning with "I will..."

eg. I will be appreciative of God's love for me

I will trust and believe in Him

i. First write the passage in your own handwriting eg. John 3:16 - For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

ii. Next, write out what you think the passage means to you

eg. God loves me so much that He is willing to give me heaven's best

iii. Now, write out what you will do about it with sentences beginning with "I will..."

eg. I will be appreciative of God's love for me

I will trust and believe in Him

5. Remember: Instead of those heavy duty memory verses that your Bible class teachers forced on you, this time all you need to remember is book and chapter - eg. John 11 Jesus wept. As you commit more chapters to memory, it will come naturally. In a few years, you would have mastered most of the Bible.



# How to Pray as We Ought

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" - Romans 8:26.

We learn in Luke 11:1, "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".

The disciples observed that Jesus set the example in prayerfulness, felt their inadequacy and approached the Master for assistance in this important area.

## Age of Grace

While the Bible has much information on the subject of prayer, it is important for us to understand we now live in the age of grace.

In the Old Testament we read how certain ones cried to God to utterly destroy their enemies and have their petitions granted with haste. At the onset of His ministry in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus clearly says that our idea of a good outcome may not always be what is the best in every situation. He put it in these words: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" Matthew 5:11-12.

## The Big Picture

1. Seek the Giver, not the gifts. Prayer is primarily talking with God but we have often reduced it to asking God for stuff. Jesus said in John 15:4, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

2. Let God surprise you with His abundance. Too often we are afraid to ask God for His extravagant blessings that He is longing to shower upon us. God challenges us in Malachi 3:10 to "prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

3. Do not limit God with your request. Lay your needs before the Throne of grace and let God take over. Ephesians 3:20 reminds us, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

4. Realise that every prayer is a partnership with God. It may require a personal rededication, an act of penitence or a first step on your part to realising the answer to your prayer. David understood this when he said in Psalms 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise".

5. Let God be God. His will be done. He will not grant your request if it goes against His sovereign will. Philippians 2:13 tells us "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure".

### A More Excellent Way

While it is always good to pray and bring our requests to God, let us do it properly, in the way that God wants us to, not merely focusing on the results but the journey and how it can help develop us and strengthen our relationships.

1. Instead of "God, help the flood victims in Pakistan", pray "May Your people be moved to reach out to the flood victims in Pakistan and that the victims may see Your goodness through Your servants".

2. Instead of "God, give me a speedy recovery", say "I thank You for being with me in my illness and ask You to continue to sustain me to recovery."

3. Instead of asking God for my parent's salvation, say "help me to focus on keeping in touch with my parents and sharing them the gospel of Christ".

4. Instead of praying that "God will help me in all my trials", say "Give me strength that I may overcome and understand Your will and submit to Your good pleasure in my current trials".

5. Instead of asking God to "Give me complete recovery", say "Give me strength to grow stronger each day as I walked with You".

### Conclusion

In going to God in prayer, our posture is so important. Let us pray with the Psalmist in Psalms 19:14, saying, "Let the words of my mouth, and the

meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength,  
and my redeemer".

# How to Prepare a lesson for your Care team, Bible Class or Worship Service

*"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" - Titus 2:15*

It is both a blessing and privilege to share God's word - whether to just one, a few or standing room only crowds. We should prepare well, flesh it out from the Word and reflect thoughtfully on how we should present it. Here are seven Ps that you would do well to consider.

1. Pray. You are communicating God's word as His vessel. You cannot do it on your own strength or understanding. Like the men who wrote the Bible, we need God's help in presenting His precious message.

2. Purpose. Consider the recipients of your message. Who are these people and what are they seeking to know? What is their current state of understanding? What change are you seeking to effect through your message? You are not just filling a slot in a programme. Seek to uplift, bless and encourage as you speak.

3. Prepare. First, narrow down the subject of your lesson. Then take time looking for contents of the subject. Finally, work on examples and illustrations that will drive home your lesson. Then start working on the script and powerpoint.

4. Practise. Go through your lesson mentally or in front of a mirror. Time yourself. Record your rehearsal and listen to it critically. Make notes and practise until you are satisfied with your presentation. Invite family or friends to provide feedback.

5. Polish. A week before the date due, take time to polish your lesson. Double check your outline or powerpoint for errors. Do you need to trim your lesson? How about memorizing your bible passages or illustrations so that you are fluent and able to keep eye-contact throughout your lesson and not sound like you are reading from notes that you prepared the night before.

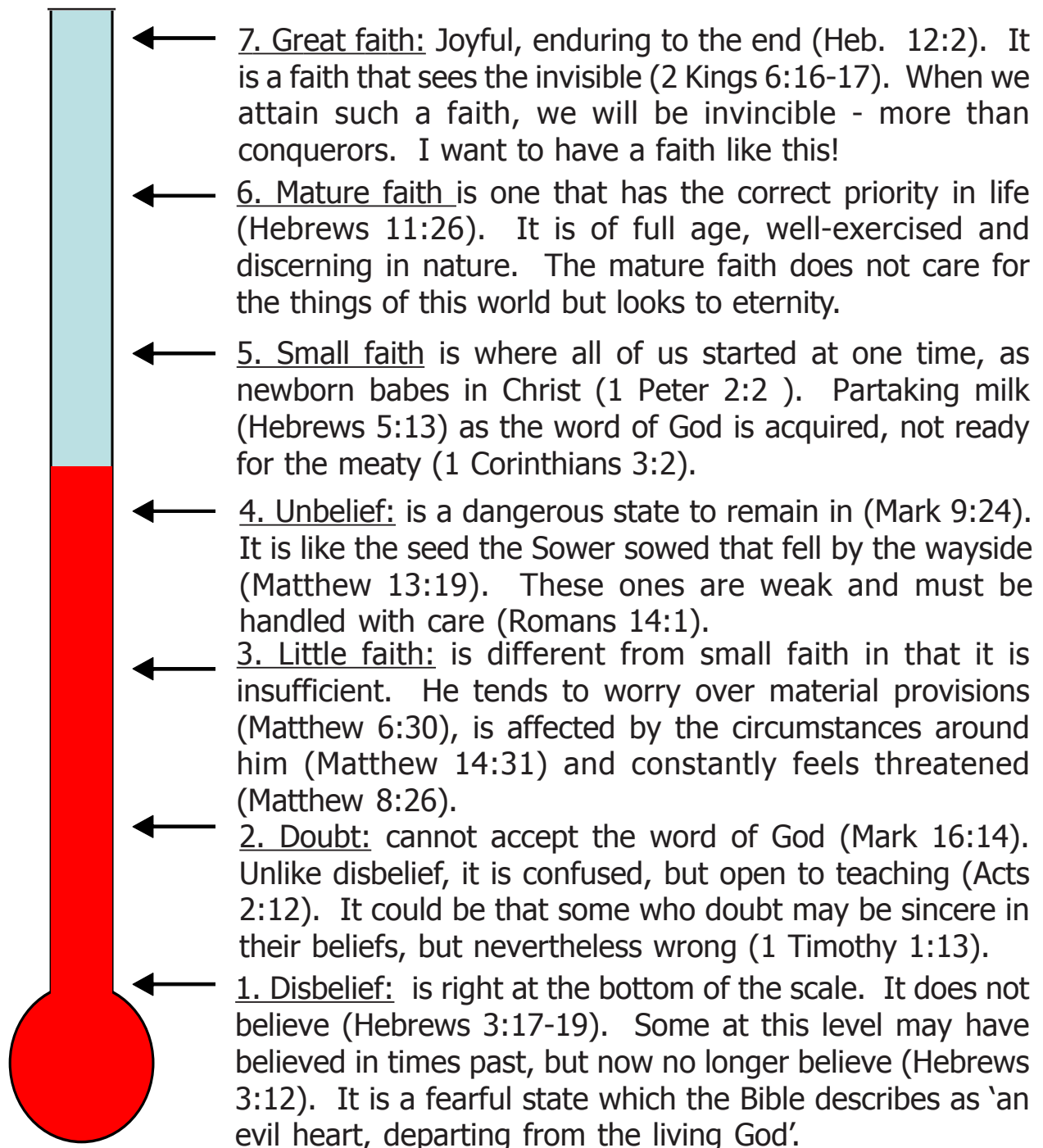
6. Pray. This time, not for your lesson but for the occasion and people who will receive your lesson. Psalms 19:14 should set the tone for our presentation - "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength, and my Redeemer".

7. Preach. Do not start with an apology, focus on self or ride hobbyhorse on your pet peeves. Remember the admonishment from 2 Timothy 4:2 - "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine".

It was said of Jesus in Matthew 7:29 that the people stood in awe of His teaching. If we give due diligence to the noble task of communicating God's word, we can command respect, draw people and tell the good word convincingly, powerfully and effectively. We dare not do anything less.

# Levels of Faith (in a Nutshell)

Luke 18:8 puts this question to us: "when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" As we are living in the last days, in 2012 it is so important that we examine where we are in our faith and make sure that it is on a firm footing. Below is the 'Faith-o-Meter' with the different levels of faith.



# The Soon Return of Christ

No one will doubt that we live in what the Bible refers to as "the last days". Hebrews 1:2 tells us that 'in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things'.

We need to be aware that the Bible's final word on His return in Revelation 22:20 is that Jesus will return quickly - 'He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

As important and urgent as Jesus' return is, Mark 13:4-5 underscores the danger of being misled. 'Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you'.

The purpose of this article is to point the reader to the fountain source, the Bible, for the definitive 4 W's and 1 H on this subject.

## 1. Who is coming?

It is obvious since the subject of this article is on the return of Jesus, the person who is coming is Jesus Christ. Mark 14:62 records, 'And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.'

Although Jesus will be returning, he will not be coming for the same reason as when he first came. In the first coming of Jesus, Matthew 20:28 tells us that His mission was to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Romans 2:16 reveals that at Jesus second coming, He will be returning not as a Saviour, but Judge, when 'on the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.'

## 2. Where is Jesus coming?

He will be coming to this World. Acts 17:31 tells us 'Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.'



Certainly, we understand that Jesus is returning for the wicked. Revelation 6:10 tells us that 'And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?'

Also, Jesus is coming for the church, both to reward as well as to judge us. 1 Peter 4:17 declares, 'For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?'

### 3. When is Jesus coming?

This is the most discussed area of interest. Despite clear Bible teachings on this subject, many have predicted actual dates of the return of Jesus. My observation is that many end-of-the-world predictors are actually sincere about this, because some who were wrong in their prediction (obviously!) were quick to set another equally inaccurate date.

Christ will return when the gospel is preached throughout the world. Matthew 24:14 teaches, 'And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.'

It will be during the last days as recorded in 2 Peter 3:3-4 - 'Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.'

The bottom line to the date of the return of Jesus is that no one knows the exact date. It will be unexpectedly, like a thief in the night as revealed in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 - 'for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.'

### 4. Why is Jesus coming?

When Jesus returns, it will be a glorious day for Christians because Jesus will fulfil His promise in John 14:3 to receive us to heaven - And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.'

Jesus is returning to judge the world. According to 2 Timothy 4:1, the apostle Paul declares, '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'.

As Jesus' return will usher the end of the world, it will be preceded by the judgement day where He will punish the wicked. 2 Thessalonians 1:8 tells us that 'in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

## 5. How is Jesus coming?

When Jesus returns, nobody will miss it. Mark 13:21 tells us 'if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not'.

It will be a noisy affair when Jesus returns. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 declares 'for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first'.

Revelation 1:7 confirms this, saying 'behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him'.

## Conclulsion

The most important detail of the return of Jesus is our response to His advent - how to prepare for Jesus' Return. The Bible is clear on this matter and we would do well to take note.

First, we need to live holy and godly lives according to 2 Peter 3:11 - 'seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness'.

Then, we need to remain in our relationship with Him. 1 John 2:28 puts it this way, 'and now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.'

As the return of Jesus signals the end of our opportunities to serve God, let us heed the admonishment of John 9:4 - 'I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.'

# Why PP Care Teams are Biblical and Important for You

Under the leadership of brother CC Teng, you will be hearing a lot about our Care Teams this year. This is because Care Teams are Biblical and important for you. Already, 40% of the membership has experienced our Care Teams, and have come to enjoy the many benefits. Many have come to realize that it is indispensable to their spiritual growth.

If you are not in a Care Team, the next few minutes that you spend reading this article may be the best investment in your life. Ultimately, we cannot force anyone to be in a Care Team. But like the gospel, you owe it to yourself to consider its value and whether to make it a part of your life.

## Biblical Basis

Right on the birthday of the New Testament church, we read how the members would 'continue daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart' - Acts 2:46.

Search the scriptures for the 'one another' passages and see how the inspired writer urged early Christians to get together with the purpose of encouraging one another.

Although the New Testament makes no reference to Care Teams, we see the same situation in the Old Testament which made no references to synagogues. However, because of clear Biblical commands to worship God and assemble together, synagogues were started during the captivity when they could no longer go to Jerusalem to worship God. Jesus not only preached in synagogues, but the apostles used it to spread the gospel.

## History of PP's Care Teams

At a men's retreat at Garden Hotel more than 20 years ago, the twelve who attended took a long hard look at our history, where we were, and where we wanted to be. On that significant date, Vision 2000 (1000 members in 2000) was born. This committed group of men continued meeting weekly at the home of elder Adrian to lay the path towards a thousand member church.

The church camp was one vehicle we used, but we realised that even more important was to empower small groups who would support, encourage and mobilize the multitude of members, so that we would not miss the trees for the forest – and every individual would be recognized, surrounded with care and could exercise his or her talents.

### Unique and Original

As we crafted the small group concept for PP, it was an original and unique programme of our own. It was not a replicated programme from other churches, as we wanted to meet the unique situation and needs of our own members. Our focus was PP and the entire framework was a result of months of brainstorming.

Other congregations soon got wind of what we are doing. I was invited by two congregations in Malaysia to conduct workshops in an effort to help them start Care Teams. In one of these congregations, to the credit of the leadership, Care Teams are now an integral part of the Seremban congregation.

### Evolution of Care Teams

Brother Lim Kok Hin assisted me in conducting Care Team introductory sessions to launch the new programme at PP. I vividly remember how sister Pang Foon Yoong was the first of a dozen members who enthusiastically responded to this new initiative. Over the years, she has stayed active with PP's Care Team programme, giving birth to a few groups on the way.

Today, in addition to Care Teams, our youth have structured several groups of their own. While all maintain the basic concept of Care Teams, each one is as different and unique as a fingerprint.

### What are PP's Care Teams?

Unlike highly structured 'cell groups' run by many churches, our leaders have wisely elected right from the beginning to allow members to group themselves into teams of their own choosing to meet their own needs and interests. These three components are basic to all PP's Care Teams:

1. Anyone can join any Care Team - there are no secret societies in the body of Christ and every Care Team is open to all members. This is so important and fundamental. We are constantly aware of the danger of some Care Teams which may be treading a slippery path of exclusiveness and elitism, something we cannot allow.

2. Members are to pray for one another each time they meet.
3. Care teams are to meet regularly, if possible every week.

### The Structure of Care Teams

When we rolled out our first few Care Teams, I spent more time preparing and checking on them as they were new, and to get them on their feet. I was careful to call for coordinators' meetings fairly frequently, at external venues like the Garden Hotel and also the church premises.

When Care Teams were able to run on their own, I passed the baton to deacon Lim Li Chhoan, then to brother Patrick Ong and now to our elders. These people are entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that Care Teams are running smoothly and functionally, but independently.

### Present State of Care Teams

Currently, our records list more than 35 Care Teams. Conservatively assuming that each team has a coordinator, assistant and 4 members – this works out to over 200 members in Care Teams or roughly 40% of 500 members.

Each group is different. Some meet religiously on a weekly basis, others meet fortnightly or even monthly. Each session usually lasts between 1-2 hours but some have stretched to 3-5 hours. Most groups are involved in Bible study, but some favour visitation and benevolent projects.

### Importance of Care Teams

Although the time each member spends at worship, Bible classes and church activities is vital for spiritual growth; as PP continues to grow, achieving intimacy becomes a greater challenge. It is easy for the leadership, like the early church (Acts 6:1), to miss out some members in the ministry of the church.

In Care Teams, members not only develop leadership, they get to know brethren, and become accountable for one another. We have observed that in times of crisis, illness and bereavement, fellow Care Teams members are the first to respond.

Without this kind of support, members could, in the bustle of activities be lost in the crowd, and miss out on the vital 'one-anothering' of the Christian walk.

## Future of Care Teams

Much has been done, but much more needs to be done. PP hopes to double the number of members in Care Teams by the end of the year. After we near the 80% mark, our aim is to ensure 100% of PP members are in a Care Team. What can be done to help us reach this ambitious goal?

1. Awareness - members must understand the importance of Care Teams and make it a priority to ensure that they have a group of fellow Christians that they can depend upon, as well as support. We will use the Focus newsletter, posters, announcements and activities to catch your attention.

2. Training - our current Care Teams can only absorb a few more members each for optimal functioning. Already a workshop is planned this Saturday to help coordinators do a better job in Care Teams and help them to start new ones. We will need over 35 new teams over the next 11 months if we are to realise our goal of 80%. We look forward to new Care Teams of parents, mixed youth and even golf kakis.

3. Sustainability - each and every Care Team must be able to stand on its own feet, with capable coordinators and assistants who can report back on progress, and communicate successes and challenges – so that we can all move ahead. It is indeed better not to have a Care Team than a bad Care Team which simply meets to gossip and tear down the church rather than to edify and grow.

What about You?

Are you already in a Care Team? If you are, can you do more than what you are already doing? Perhaps you may grow your Care Team by inviting others to join? Or if it is a mature team with experienced members, to split up to grow both the groups (like mitosis in biology)?

Not in a Care Team? Perhaps you are too busy or unsure to consider joining one. But now that I have your attention, may I urge you to reconsider? The soul that you save may not just be your own - but that of your family's as well in setting the right example.

Text or email me if you have queries. Better still, call up one of the teams listed in the membership directory. The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. A Care Team could be the best present you give yourself in 2012.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more...” - Hebrews 10:25

# I See You

'I See You' is a documentary series currently being shown on TV's Channel 5. It tells the story of caregivers; their challenges, struggles and triumphs. It is compelling, touching, and should inspire us to reconsider the way we treat the aged, afflicted and handicapped.

It is so easy, even when we summon the best of our Christian traits and "ought to's"; to touch lightly as we journey along. Instead of loving our neighbours as ourselves, we barely notice our fellowmen as we pass them by, often like ships in the night.

Even with people we see everyday - at the bus stop, around our office, at shops or food outlets we frequent; we perform our business transactions, distracted and wrapped up in our own thoughts, with at best a nod or a mumbled greeting, never even knowing their names.

Take this scene and transpose it to the church. No doubt the situation is vastly improved, but it still has some ways to go. Do we greet each brother or sister we pass? How about members younger or older than us? Do we take time to ask how their walk with the Lord is going? Find time to meet up with them and uphold them in prayer throughout the week?

In the TV series 'I See You', the caregivers were able to carry out their duties because they truly saw the afflicted, handicapped and addicted. These people were not invisible to them. They were not problems or burdens to be avoided. Instead these people provided the caregivers the opportunity to be their best selves, grow and become better for the experiencing of providing care and love.

Everyone is important because we are created in the image of God. Whether we are whole or handicapped, it is so important that we see each other, accord to the individual a sense of worth and see how we can reach out with the love of Jesus.

Indeed, there are none so blind as those who will not see. God has placed us in this world, at this time of history with the people around us for His purpose. When we choose to dig a hole and hide our talent and do nothing, we miss the whole purpose of our existence.



Jesus says in Matthew 5:13 "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the foot of men."

### Charity Begins at Home

Make 2012 special. Start at home and take a long hard look at people that are under the same roof. You may have previously taken them for granted, written them off or given up on them. Trust me, this year can be different if you are willing to see them in a new light.

When God appeared before the young king Solomon, He asked him what he truly desired as God was ready to grant whatever Solomon requested. In 1 Kings 3:9, Solomon said, "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?"

The Bible tells us that God was so pleased with Solomon's request that He showered upon him every other blessing that he had not even asked for!

Here, we see the key in all our relationships - understanding. Seek not so much for people to understand you, as for you to understand them. A person is what he is for many reasons. If we do not take time to walk in his shoes and experience his fears and anxieties, we have no right to label or criticize him.

### Make Understanding Your Hallmark

How would you respond if you saw a man boarding the bus you were on, with 3 kids who were behaving badly? What if they were making loud noises, playing games and running up and down the walkway? And what if this father was just sitting by, not even trying to make them behave?

Most of us would think badly of both the father and children. Some may even have words with them. But if we understood that he had just returned from burying his wife and facing the emptiness of a future without her, we may be less critical and more supportive.

### Everyone is Different and Precious

No matter who we are, everyone is different and precious in God's sight. So it follows that they should also be in our sight. They can be no reason for us to ignore, underestimate or look down on another human being.

It is true that there are some people who are just hard to get along with - a boss who loses his temper on a daily basis, a colleague who is perpetually late for meetings and people who seem to enjoy picking on us. Even in the Lord's church, there are members who are hard to forbear. So what do we do?

The first thing is for us to clean our own spectacles so that we can see clearly (Matthew 7:3). Then we need to move closer so that we can better understand why this brother is doing things that cause us grief. As we do, let us be ready to give them extra grace, just as God for Christ's sake has given us.

Ephesians 4:32 tells us, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

May I urge every member at PP to see each other through the eyes of Jesus in a most compassionate and understanding way. Do not distance yourself from someone just because you find him or her difficult. Perhaps God has brought him to you that you may see them, walk with them and share your strength with them, so that they may hand-in-hand with you, triumph over their obstacles in life.

# 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.

# 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 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 not 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 all my life to kingdom work. From the early age of 12, I was already involved in church 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 Sacrifice 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 penalty 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 commitments in the home. Hebrews 12:1 urges us to lay aside every weight and sin that so easily ensnares 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.

# 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.



# Going Back to The Bible

From time to time, I have decried the dysfunctional heritage we have inherited from the Restoration movement in the USA. The first missionaries arrived at our shores in the mid 1950s and sowed the pure seed of the word of God. In time, it took root, and gave birth to a sprinkling of churches. Then as Jesus predicted in Matthew 13:25 "But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way".

It did not take long, for the opponents of these doctrines which caused divisions amongst the brotherhood in America to spread to Asia, causing a great irreconcilable divide from Singapore and Indonesia, all the way to China and India.

In Singapore, two congregations got so caught up in this controversy that they now consider themselves the only two true churches of Christ in Singapore. Such a narrow self-serving stance has its consequences, and we observe significant numbers from these congregations leaving and starting new congregations in other parts of the island.

It would be a mistake for us to conclude that such legalistic thinking is confined to the remaining members of these two congregations. Indeed, some who left, still uphold many of the doctrines without thinking or further examination. These patterns of thinking have caused problems for other churches, including PP, as they reflect the intolerant, shallow and dogmatic mindset that had in the past caused so much grief.

These misled souls are easy to spot as they cannot teach or preach without referring to what they deem to be 'sound brotherhood books' as they have not diligently searched the scripture in order to own their faith.

Another giveaway sign is the belief that they have the entire Bible figured out, that every single teaching and doctrine of the Bible has already been clearly proven by their 'sound preachers' so that everything is clearly truth or falsehood.

Because of this mindset, any and every teaching becomes an issue for debate and a test of fellowship. Instead of applying the paramount teaching of Christ (1 Corinthians 13:1,2), they end long-standing relationships, tear down good works and leave with a sense of self-righteousness.

An example is in the area of marriage, divorce and remarriage which has caused divisions within the church. Unthinking brethren have jumped onto the bandwagon and fanned the fire, wreaking more havoc.

At PP, we have members sending emails to congregants they may not even know, saying that their circumstances will send them to hell. Others gossip about these matters, demanding immediate answers from the leadership in an aggressive and disrespectful manner.

We will continue to engage these and other members who need to learn more, and indeed find ways that we can communicate better in this and other areas starting with the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage as follows:

#### In the Beginning

Jesus states it clearly in Matthew 19:8 , "He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so."

Genesis 2:24 tells us that the original plan of God was, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Malachi 2:16 explains, "For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously."

#### The Reality

Like all of the ten commandments, the truth of the matter is that none of us is guiltless when it comes to our obedience of God's will.

Although it was not God's will to give Israel a king, He conceded to their demands. In the same way, God has never allowed divorce, but because of the hardness of their hearts, gave permission to do so in Deuteronomy 24.

In the New Testament, Jesus showed us by teaching and example how to deal with this matter. In John 8, when He was presented by a woman caught in adultery, Jesus called on her accusers to examine themselves before passing judgment, He exercised forgiveness and strictly command her to sin no more.

Churches of Christ would do well to understand the nature, teaching and application of this matter.

## The Nature

Marriage, divorce and remarriage is a personal matter. Only when it has transgressed the clear teachings of the church, should the leadership be involved. It should never be the subject of gossip or idle discussion by anyone else who is not involved. 1 Timothy 5:13 warns us strictly about this and 2 Thessalonians 3:11 labels those who do this as 'busybodies'.

This is also a sensitive subject, in which the involved parties are deeply hurt. As such, it must be handled with the most tender loving care and understanding so that healing may take place and the affected souls, fully restored in Christ Jesus as indicated in Galatians 6:1, "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."

## The Application

Under the heading, 'In the Beginning', on the left column, we have seen the key principles of the Bible on this subject that we all agree on. So what happens, when a member falls short and is divorced or commits adultery? This is how we deal with it at PP:

1. When we are aware of the matter, the elders are informed, and the matter is brought to the throne of Grace to cover all parties involved. Depending on the confidentiality of the case, the leadership may be involved (Proverbs 11:14).
2. As the minister of the congregation, equipped with training and experience, I am usually the person asked to deal with the parties involved.
3. Every counseling session is private and I will not divulge any information to anyone. I will update the progress (not the details) of each session to the elders, and whenever applicable to the leadership, to seek their feedback. Members who ask for information will be told that this matter is being dealt with, and when finally concluded, will be notified. Often, I seek additional counsel from my mentors overseas.

As Jesus has taught and set the example, the church is to deal with each member according to the word of God, with love and care. Whatever the sin, the blood of Jesus is all-sufficient. We fully expect every member to comply and support the decision and outcome of each case as the leadership deals with these matters, based on these clear Bible teachings; even though various ones may have different opinions or stand.

# 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.

# Work of Elders at PP

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 view, 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 extent 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 availeth 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."

7. 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!"

# 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 Simon Goh became a Christian in his youth against the wishes of his family. Since his early teens, serving Christ is his first priority. He has been involved in every area of the work of the church at PP since her early years and remained faithful and active since his baptism. In fact, through his Christian example, not only his sister Sharon, but both his parents who once forbid him to attend church, have become Christians. Simon is now an elder of the church, serving effectively with his capable wife, Wai Leng. He is an effective and excellent teacher and preacher, with a passion for missions. This hospitable family have hosted many foreigners.

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 building the church at PP which will continue to benefit and bless many.

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.

# How PP carries out God's command in Giving

"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 render 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 mean to Christ?
2. What does 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 interests 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 quit, taking your ball home when others do not go along with your thinking?

## Bottomline

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

# 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 led SPC in a session, those amongst his family who could, were 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 involve a lot of planning, hard work and a certain degree of difficulties. And because they persevere, the entire body is 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.

# Full Time Ministry

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 Lau Kin Fatt and Ong Kok Bin of West Malaysia. What an encouragement it is to see the

younger brother Patrick Ong 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 need; enjoying every spiritual blessing. Every day I look forward to coming to office, meeting people, teach the gospel and opening 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 remained 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 created 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 desired to dwell amongst us – Exodus 25:8.

Why? Because God is Love...

- He first loved 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 priority in every area of your life – Romans 12:1, 2.

# 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](http://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](http://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](http://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.

# 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 builds, we labour in vain - 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.

# 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.

# 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.

# 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. Worships. 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 teacher, House Helper Newsletter editor as well as my personal "I-need-it-first-thing-tomorrow-morning" proof reader. Ramesh is taking care of the 8am worship, assisting in the technical equipment amongst other things.

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 enjoy being involved in every area 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 as a team. If the Lord should take me today, Vision 2000 will continue on course because of the open ongoing leadership.

# The Gospel of Christ

"In the beginning, God... " Gen. 1:1 - The first four words of the Bible reveal that God existed right at the beginning.

"God created the heaven and the earth." Genesis 1:18 - God was not aloof nor inactive. He created both heaven and earth.

"So God created man in His own image." Genesis 1:27 - Of all the things God has created, only mankind was created to be like Him.

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth." Genesis 6:5 - Although mankind received every good thing from God, he strayed from Him and became full of wickedness.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son..." John 3:16 - To help us return to God, God became flesh in the person of Jesus and showed us the right way to live.

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." John 1:11 - Instead of accepting Jesus, the world spurned Him and eventually got rid of Him by nailing Him on a cross.

"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." I Corinthians 15:3 - In dying on the cross Jesus took the penalty for our wickedness and redeemed us from our sin.

"And that He was buried, and arose again the third day." I Corinthians 15:4 - The grave could not hold Jesus. He proved all He had said and promised by rising from the dead.

"Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you..." Acts 1:8 - After Jesus died, was buried and resurrected from the dead, He promised to send His followers the Holy Spirit.

"Repent ye, and be baptized...and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38 - Mankind can receive the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit when he turns from his wickedness and is baptized.

"For if we live after the flesh, ye shall die." Romans 8:13 - To continue to live without God, we bring pain and sorrow to our lives while we live, and then die without any hope.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Romans 8:14 - However, we can change our lives by following what the Holy Spirit would have us do to become children of God.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, come." Revelation 22:17 - The Holy Spirit together with the bride invite you to turn from your present lifestyle and come to God.

"And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17 -The choice is yours to make. The rewards are great, but no one can force you to make this change.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him." Revelation 3:20 - Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart even as you read this. Will you open your door to Him while there is still time?

"Surely I come quickly." Revelation 22:20 - On the day that Jesus returns, it will be too late. The good news is that it is not too late now. Will you accept the good news of Christianity today?

# The Joy of Christianity

Have you discovered the joy of Christianity?

If not, allow me to share it with you for the next few minutes...

I was not always a Christian.

I used to wonder what makes Christians tick. Why they attend church and why they do good.

Then I began a study of their religion through tracts, books, courses and even worship services. Each time I longed to have their radiance, smile and fellowship.

After regular attendance I was surprised that no one pressured me into acceptance. Instead, they taught the bible in love and invited me to respond to these acts of obedience:

Faith in Jesus Christ - believing that He loved me and died for me as the promised Son of God.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life". John 3:16.

Repentance of past sins - changing my life from serving sin to God.

"Repent ye, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord". Acts 3:19.

Confession of my faith - declaring my conviction in the choice I was now making.

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved". Romans 10:9.

Baptism into the death of Christ - the washing away of my sins and walking in a new life.

"We were buried therefore with Him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life". Romans 6:3-4.

This is a complete response...



which I made upon acceptance of the claims of Christianity.

Thus, I

- put on Christ; Galatians 3:27
- am forgiven of past sins; Acts 2:38
- am added to Christ's church; Actc 2:47
- am redeemed; 1 Peter 1:18-19
- have a home in heaven; John 14:3
- am a new creature! 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Realising these,

- peace of mind flows in my life; Romans 5:1
- gratitude fills my heart; 2 Corinthianc 9:15
- hope enters in; Colossians 1:5.

Daily, I will continue to

- study His Word; 2 Timothy 2:15
- tell the Good News; Acts 8:4
- follow His life; I John 1:7
- worship with the church; Hebrews 10:25
- do good to others; James 1:27
- look towards heaven; Hebrews 11:16.

Problems do come but I am not alone

- God helps me and gives me a way of escape
  - 1 Corinthians 10:13
- and I have learned to rely upon Him for all good
  - Romans 8:28
- should I ever forget His love and fall way,  
I will return to Him - 1 John 1:9.

Each day is then a

- grateful day; Psalm 9:2
- confident day; Proverbs 14:26
- happy day; Psalm 118:24.

As a result I begin to bear fruit, grow in faith and experience the joy of Christianity.









