

The Marriage Course

By The Family Life Ministry



The Marriage Course is a fun, enriching and very practical course of seven sessions. There is no group work and each couple's conversations are completely private. More importantly it equips couples with practical tools to build a strong and healthy marriage. Run over seven consecutive Sunday afternoons, the course will help the couples to:

- Understand each other's needs
- Communicate more effectively
- Grow closer by learning methods to resolve conflict
- Recover from the ways you may have hurt each other
- Recognise how your upbringing affects your relationship
- Improve relationships with parents and in-laws
- Develop greater sexual intimacy
- Discover each other's "love language" and much, much more....

This course, whilst based on Christian principles, is very helpful

for Christians or non-Christians alike, troubled or stable marriages. A cohort of 4 couples had completed



the course in 2023 and two of these "graduated" couples now share a slice of their experience with us.

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Yuki & See Hunt

I came to know about **The Marriage Course (TMC)** through my husband's friends. Many years ago, I had watched a YouTube introduction of this course and had wanted to join at that time but didn't know how to. So this time when our friends introduced TMC to See Hunt and I, we both decided to join.

We married 5 years ago and have known each other for about 15 years. I am Vietnamese and a Christian. He is Malaysian and a free-thinker. We have different cultures and speak different languages. It was not easy to communicate. There were a lot of misunderstandings and we couldn't resolve our issues. When he speaks to me he just wants me to listen but I like to comment and show him solutions. I want to communicate with him better but feel stuck sometimes.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we couldn't meet each other and that made the relationship more challenging. We even thought about divorce. I prayed to God every day. I thank God I have the chance to join TMC with my husband.

I enjoyed TMC very much since the first session. I felt that it was more like a date than a class.

The discussion exercise on 'Knowing me, knowing you' helped me realize that I didn't know what my husband really wanted (I had thought I knew him very well). The course helped us to arrange time to talk to each other easier. I liked the Resolving Conflict session. I knew that we were one team and together we could resolve our issues. I learnt to "see our marriage as a partnership in which we combine our strengths and support each other's weaknesses". We argued a lot after the first session and decided to go to the seaside to sit and continue our conversations. We chose to face our issues rather than ignore them.

I enjoyed all the session topics. I feel all of them cannot be separated. I want to practise and remember all of them every day.



TMC Hi Tea @Berea

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you (John 15:12).

The love of God for me is unconditional love. Throughout the course till now, it has helped me and See Hunt to communicate and listen to each other better. By holding a handkerchief or an item when taking turns to speak, helps us become more patient to listen.

Forgiveness is the most challenging aspect for me. It is not easy to forget. Love keeps no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5).

I thank God for giving me a chance to join TMC. Thank you to my friends, Fui Been and Lip Meng, for inviting my husband and I to this course. Thank you Holy Light Church (English) for organizing this course.

I pray that God will allow this course to come to Vietnam, to our local churches and help more people.

Yuki

I came to TMC because I believed there was something for both my wife and I to learn to manage our relationship better. We have had challenges before coming to the course, mainly in communication, understanding and acceptance of one another. During the sessions, we became more open to the course and more open to one another. Though there were conflicts and arguments during the sessions, I found that they were helpful for me to understand my wife better.

Having attended TMC, the greatest difference that I see in my relationship

is that I have become more open to her. I am able to feel more towards my wife and I am able to stand in her shoes more than before. Suddenly my understanding of her struggles or the way she reacts to my actions seem to become better and I am able to have more patience and compassion towards her. My grudges or frustrations over conflicting moments become less.

What I enjoyed the most is that TMC has become the structure of how she communicates with me. Yuki is learning to improve herself by following the guidance of TMC and she is able to follow through. This has made our communication and our handling of issues better.

The topics of handling issues and modes of communications were truly helpful in my interactions with Yuki. Before this, I would be bogged down by issues between us where I focused only in defending and explaining myself. The session on The Power of Forgiveness was also helpful. I guess, sometimes it is more impactful for Yuki to learn certain value or truth through other channels of learning than sharing by me.

What I found most challenging is that a person will always go back to his or her 'old self' if one does not practice the value of what one has learned. It takes discipline from both parties to commit to the lifelong learning before one can claim that he or she is truly free from the struggles.

See Hunt



Cassie & Yuen Chow

We were introduced to **The Marriage Course (TMC)** in church in 2017 and also by Maria back in 2021 but were not able to make it. After much prayer and anticipation, we finally made it to TMC in February 2023.

We thank God for the opportunity to explore the different topics in the course. We found the first session of the course particularly beneficial as we often neglect to connect meaningfully with each other due to many things including that we both have different vocations and engagements.

We got married in 1999 and this year marks our 24 years together. At times, we have mixed feelings on how we could have spent the journey together in a different manner and how situations could have been handled differently. Although we had attended a pre-marital counseling course at the church we were attending, we found that marriage involved a journey that brought a lot of joy as well as challenges. The issues we faced in our marriage is typical of many couples, which include parenting, relocation, finances, physiological needs and

relationships with the extended family.

As a Christian couple, we often engage with the church community and it's God's Word that keeps us grounded especially in handling conflicts, facing challenges and addressing the differences that we have. We find that prayer helps tremendously as we choose to surrender to God the things that we can't change. We give thanks to God that through our health crisis last year, Yuen Chow's mother also came to know our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

TMC is a very comprehensive programme giving us practical and relevant tools including checklists and questions that are deep and insightful, some of which we have never thought we ought to bring up. As Yuen Chow comes from a family of all boys while Cassie is from a family of mostly girls and attended all-girls' schools (from elementary to high school), our worldview was quite different. These differences were all covered in the course. We found them refreshing to revisit and talk about, in order to improve our understanding of each other and appreciate the differences we have. Knowing that in Christ, we ought to put off old and unwholesome habits, we can better handle it with each session giving us ample time to discuss and think deeply in a very nice ambience given.

We find the venue we attend every Sunday particularly relaxing and the stewards for each session were all so helpful and understanding - even when we arrived late for certain sessions.

We are also so thankful that there were arrangements for missed sessions too.

The hi-tea sessions each week were very nostalgic for us as we first met each other during a hi-tea outing too. Having been through many family outings, we find that we ought to spend more time with one another in a more planned and intentional manner as a couple, just like before our marriage.



Looking at the TMC journal, we find the appendices 1, 2 & 3 helpful to give us a grip of the sessions we had gone through and to put into practice what we had learnt.

Lastly, we would like to pen our appreciation to the team who put this course together to enable us to spend quality time with each other and discuss the issues that matter. We trust that as we continue to use and apply the tools given, we can grow stronger in love and with greater understanding for each other. All glory to God for His leading and guidance in our lives!

From A Pastor's Desk

Entrance into the Kingdom of God – Transformation of Our Will and Character

By Rev Dr Chuah Seong Peng

We have been learning from Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew about the Kingdom of God. Jesus began His ministry by calling us to repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand. According to Luke 17:21, the Kingdom of God is the reign of God in our hearts. To enter into His kingdom is to live under His reign coming under the Lordship of Christ in every aspect of our life. To do so, we are to repent, turn around, have a total mindset change of trusting God instead of self, and live a life of obedience to Him and His word. This involves a transformation of our will and character to the will of God and the character of Christ.

How can we do so?

There are four steps that I find useful from Dallas Willard in his book, *Renovation of the Heart*. It involves the four stages; from surrender, to abandonment, to contentment, and to participation. Let me share with you some of the insight I gained.

First, there is surrender. This is the first stage where we surrender our will to God because we consent to His supremacy in all things. We may concede to practice it, but we may still resist it since it is an intellectual acknowledgment of His supremacy. In this condition, there is still much

struggle to give in to God. This is a good start where the centre of self, the heart, or the spirit, is now willing for God to be God, even if it is with little hope and enthusiasm. There is still much struggle with God in darkness for there are unwillingness to act on the light we have received.

By the grace and wisdom of God, for those who begin to surrender, they will move on to abandonment. Such joyful abandonment of self means they will no longer hold back any part of themselves from God's will. Compelled by His love, surrender will cover all of life, not just intellectual assent to the truth and command of God. Even when things do not go their way, they no longer grumble and complain. They have come to embrace the promise of God in Romans 8:28 and accept their situations as the good plan and purpose of God for those who love Him. As Dallas Willard shared, *"We cease to live on edge, wondering if God will do what we want. Pain will not turn into bitterness, nor disappointment into paralysis."* We have peace in times of turmoil and uncertainty. We find rest for our soul in Jesus as we learn to use His strength and ours together to bear our load as He promised in Matthew 11:28-30.

Beyond abandonment comes contentment with the will of God. We are contented not only with His being who He is and what He has ordained in general, but also with the particular

lot for our life, for His will is perfect. At this stage, gratitude and joy are the hallmarks of our life. We do everything without grumbling, as Paul tells us in Philippians 2:14. We rejoice always even in times of needs and troubles as we bring our petitions to God with thanksgiving and experience His peace beyond understanding that guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7). Our struggle with surrendering to God is of the past.

According to Dallas, *"But we are not done yet. Beyond contentment lies intelligent, energetic participation in accomplishing God's will in the world."* We surrender to God's will and act with it. God's will, not our will, is the source of our strength. We take actions to accomplish the will of God by His Spirit's power. We live in Christ, led by the Spirit, as Paul tells us in Romans 5:17, the man who receives God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

This progression towards full identification of God's will in our life is a journey of growing up in maturity in Christ. It may not be fulfilled fully in this lifetime. But it does not really matter. Our part is to begin as best we can. We are called to be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect, not that we are to be completely perfect in this life. God is perfecting us. He is the One who works to will and act in us as Paul

tells us in Philippians 2:12-15. All these are the work of God in our life to transform our characters to shine like stars in the universe as we learn to surrender to God like Christ in His humility. As we grow in Christ, we are to grow in our humility, our trust, and reliance on God. Then we will discover what Paul meant when he said in Ephesians 3:20-21 as he prayed for us, *“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask and imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generation forever and ever. Amen.”*

L O V E



By Dr Ngeow Took Fah

I wonder who first said ‘Love is a many splendored thing’? I only knew it was the title of Dr Han Suyin’s novel, published in 1955. Actually she was better known for her literary skill than her medical practice as a GP at Jalan Ibrahim in Johor Bahru, and as a visiting lecturer in English literature at Nanyang University. Her novel was adapted later for a movie under the same title.

The great English playwright, William Shakespeare, was reputed for his comments on the subject of love in some of his books. For example, in ‘All’s Well That Ends Well’ the protagonist Rosalind said, ‘Love all, trust a few, do wrong to no one’. In ‘As You Like It’ Shakespeare pointed out the risk of love at first sight:

‘No sooner met but they looked,
No sooner looked but they loved,
No sooner loved but they sighed,
No sooner sighed but they asked one
another the reason.’

In reality, however, love is an overused word. We use it for whatever thing or

person that catches our eyes so that we desire or long to have. From God's perspective, biblical love is not about feeling or emotion, but attitude and action that seek the best interest of the other person, regardless of our feeling towards him.

Ancient Greeks recognised four types of love.

1. Eros, love between two persons of different sex.
2. Philos, friendship or brotherly love.
3. Storge, love of family.
4. Agape, God's love for us, self sacrificial, unconditional and without expectation of repay. We can only love our enemy with the help of God's Spirit.

God the Creator is God of love. He created Adam and Eve as an expression of His love for us. The Old Testament is rich in stories of His love. In Genesis 21:8-21, Hagar and her son were sent away to the desert by Abraham. When they finished the water they brought along, they cried over their helpless situation. God heard their cry and responded. He opened her eyes and showed them a well of water near by. He even promised to make the boy into a great nation.

God is particularly concerned with the plight of widows and orphans. When newly widowed Ruth, a young Moabite, wanted to follow Naomi to anywhere, she agreed because she loved and cared for her daughter in law. They went to Bethlehem where Ruth found job in collecting leftover grain from a field owned by Boaz. Ultimately she married him who was a

descendant of Rahab, formerly a prostitute from Jericho. God was in the centre of this close relationship, making use of people to help others in need, in accordance with His plan.

The Israelites lived as slaves in Egypt for 400 years. God heard their cry for deliverance and forced Pharaoh to release them by inflicting him with ten plagues. God commissioned Moses to lead the Exodus of His people to the promised land. Out of His love for them, day and night God provided the Israelites with food, water and protection all the way.

The subsequent history of the Israelites was nothing but a deplorable chain of repeating, recurrent rebellions against their Saviour. The country was weakened by evil kings, became divided and defeated by their hostile enemies. The Northern Kingdom fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC, the Southern Kingdom conquered by Babylon in 586 BC.

How did God keep in touch with His people during the turbulent period? He sent many prophets to Israel and Judah whose role was mainly to bring God's word to the people and warn them against worshipping pagan gods. Hosea was a notable prophet, though not as influential as the major ones like Isaiah and Jeremiah.

In obedience to God, Hosea married Gomer, despite knowing well her dirty history of adultery and unfaithfulness. He forgave all her past and present sins and got her to come home. God reaffirmed His love and offered

reconciliation. Thus the book is an allegory of God's constant and persistent love for the Israelites whose idolatry symbolised spiritual adultery.

How big is the love of God? The psalmist often acknowledged and praised the love of God in his prayer. e.g. Psalm 103 by King David.

'The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love' (v 8). 'For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear him, as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgression from us' (v11-12).

However, in the New Testament, the greatest gift of love to mankind from God, by His own design, is no doubt the incarnation of His son, prophesied in Isaiah 9:6 and supported by the most well known scripture John 3:16, 'for God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son, that whoever believe in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.'

We tend to emphasise more the love of God the Father and to overlook the love of the Son in obeying the Father, and in His self sacrificial love to save us sinners. John reminds us, 'for God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.' (V 17)

At the last supper, Jesus said to His eleven disciples, 'A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you so you must love one another. By this all men will know that

you are my disciples, if you love one another' (John 13:34).

What is new is the standard Jesus used. In the Old Testament, the standard was 'yourself' (Leviticus 19:18). Now the standard is Christ's sacrificial life for us. And He went on to elaborate, 'Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friend' (John 15:13). This is true love, agape love, or God's love.

Historically, the cross is the emblem of suffering and shame. John Edison in his concise book 'Understanding Bible Topics' explains lucidly the significance of the cross of Jesus from the theological perspective. There are three important features of his crucifixion: voluntary, vicarious and victorious. And the fulfilment of two important condition for full salvation: the redeeming of us from our sin, and the reconciliation to our God.

So our conversion is in fact a spiritual journey, starting at the old rugged cross and ending with rejuvenation of our heart of love. Could this be the experience of Saul on his way to Damascus?

Love may be feigned or pretended, commonly seen in politicians and salesmen. Their promises are hollow, coated with sweet words that hide their ulterior motives for votes or sales. True love not only manifests in outward signs but also in attitude and action. A classic description of true love is given by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 that points to true love as a way of life beyond a feeling.

Another area of confusion is between love and lust. Whereas lust is directed inward towards self, Godly love is directed outward towards others. Lust is motivated not by need but by greed, self interest, instant pleasure, and desire to be repaid. Godly love is opposed to our natural inclination and expects nothing in return. It is practicable only with the help of God to set aside our own desire.

Paul opines that spiritual gifts are given to individuals to serve the body of Christ, not for self advancement. Moreover they can only be effective and productive when exercised with love. But when perfection comes to us in the New Heaven and Earth, spiritual gifts will no longer be needed and eventually will cease. So Paul declared: 'Only these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love' (1 Corinthians 13:13).

There is no doubt about the triad of faith, hope and love being the favourite of Paul. He has mentioned it frequently in his epistles such as Galatians 5:5-6, Colossians 1:3-5, 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 5:8 and Romans 5:1-8. And he has firmly affirmed love to be the greatest Christian virtue without stating his reasons.

Personally, I think these may be the possible reasons:

1. God is love. 'Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in Him'. (1 John 4-16).
2. Love is essential for living a Christ-like life, bearing the fruit of the Spirit, where love sits on top of the nine Christian virtues. (Galatians 5:22).

3. According to Paul, without the motivation force of love, all spiritual gifts, prophecies, knowledge and charity work will be ineffective. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

4. Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Romans 13:10).

5. In the New Jerusalem, the old order of things has passed away. God's dwelling is with men. Faith and hope may vanish but love remains with us in our eternal life. (Revelation 21:3,4).

Addenda

Two more comments on love by Paul are included in the book of Romans. In Romans 12:9-21, he gives a list of do's for a life of love, emphasising overcoming evil with good and living in harmony with one another. In Romans 13:8-10, he regards to love your neighbour as a continuing debt. We are permanently indebted to Christ for His sacrificial love for us. The only way we can repay this debt is by loving others in turn.

Realisation of God's love for us awakens love in our hearts. Love for God leads us to commit ourselves to serve Him, to move us to obey His commands and to live a life of love as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us.



Teo's July 2023 Update

Dear friends,

Greetings and trust this email finds you keeping well in the Lord.

Early this month, while serving at the Food Pantry, I had the opportunity to have a very good conversation with an Iraqi lady who came to get some groceries at the church. Her level of English was quite good, having learnt English after she got to Canada. She was open to have a conversation with me and to share her story as I asked her questions. When the war broke out in Iraq, her parents took their children and moved to the UK but she and her twin sister were left behind in Iraq because they were already married then. Later she and the husband were divorced, and she moved with her two sons to Jordan where they remained for many years as refugees under the UNHCR. She then later moved to Canada about 4 years ago, with her two sons, who are now 18 and 21 years of age. Through many trials and difficulties, the three of them are now settled in Canada and she was excited to tell me that at the end of this month, she will be taking her Canadian citizenship test. When I asked her what she appreciated most about being in Canada, she immediately said she felt safe here. I can only imagine the trauma and hardships she must have gone through all these years of living in insecurity, including the war time in Iraq during Saddam's regime. When I asked her to relate to me some of the personal stories of what she saw during the Iraq war, she said sorry she

did not want to tell me because they were too painful to relate and she just wanted to forget that painful chapter in her life. During the conversation, as we talked about suffering, I also talked about God and managed to share the gospel message to which she was very attentive and receptive. I truly appreciated her openness and admired her for her resilience and strength, having gone through so much and yet staying so strong. We pray that she will settle in well and find God's peace.

Her story is perhaps one with a "happier" ending with a new sense of hope. Sadly today, there are so many millions of refugees and internally displaced peoples in the world. According to the UNHCR, there are some estimated 117.2 million people who are forcibly displaced or stateless in the year 2023. These numbers continue to increase with the largest groups comprising the refugees and the internally displaced people. These are those who have been affected by wars, protracted conflict, disasters, drought, and famine. Our hearts ache when we watch the news and see them on boats, living in make shift camps with their young children, hungry and malnourished, and lacking basic food, housing and medical amenities. Will we pause for a minute to pray for these refugees and internally displaced peoples in the world, that God will be merciful and that there may be some good resolution to this crisis. What we can do is so little compared to the needs, but I am encouraged by some of the work done by some of the churches and NGOs here to help refugees and we pray that the help extended to them

will be a practical gesture of sharing God's love and hope to them.

OM Ministry

The young man I sent to OM Pakistan is settling in very well and diving in straight into ministry and language learning. There is a missions school there where there are a group of young local believers getting trained for ministry and involved with evangelism and outreach. Two young Canadians will join the new ship Doulos Hope in September. Unfortunately, the ship had some major engine trouble and is still undergoing repairs in Singapore. The delay has affected the ship scheduling for her port visits in Malaysia and we pray these major repairs can be completed soon. Please also pray for more people to join the ships ministry as they need more manpower to ensure the smooth operations for both the ships. A sister going to serve in Israel managed to sell her house in preparation to go to the field soon and we pray for her adjustment to language and culture learning. I thank the Lord that there were also a few persons that went on a short term mission trip to North Africa and the Middle East recently and it is great to walk alongside them as they think about longer term missions as well.

Amanda and Ben moving to Hong Kong

Our older daughter Amanda and her husband Ben will soon start a new chapter in their lives! Ben was blessed to obtain a full scholarship to pursue his PhD studies in Hong Kong Chinese University and Amanda will start a new job with a Christian NGO whose

mission is to help the women who have been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. These women now make jewelry and Amanda will be involved with the marketing and promotion of the jewelry and products made by the women of the Myanmar based NGO. Please pray for Amanda and Ben as they transition to Hong Kong at the end of August and be based there for the next few years. We bless them as they make this change and shall certainly miss them. Thankfully we still have our younger daughter Leanne and Yang near us!

Thank you for praying for us. We appreciate your friendship and fellowship. Next month August will mark our 3 years being here with OM Canada. Please continue to also pray that we can raise more partners in prayer and finance. We are hoping to go back to Malaysia for about 2-3 months of furlough in December. Meantime, we will be happy to hear from our dear friends near and far, and to know how we can be praying for you as well.

Thank you and God bless,
Chris and Joo Ping

Fatal Attractions: Fidelity and Adultery

By Elder Dr Alex Tang

In Christian doctrine, the institution of marriage is revered as sacred, reflecting the divine relationship between Christ and His church. Consequently, adultery, which is defined as engaging in a sexual relationship outside of marriage, is viewed as a serious transgression. This tenet is firmly established in the Ten Commandments, where Exodus 20:14 tersely states, “You shall not commit adultery.” However, human relationships can be complex, and this commandment can be violated in many ways. This prompts a more detailed exploration of adultery from a Christian perspective, examining its types, underlying reasons, and the strategies to support individuals who have committed this act.

Unravelling the Types of Adultery

In the intricate web of human relationships and behaviours, the concept of adultery can take many forms. While distinct, each form represents a violation of the marital bond and trust expected within a Christian marriage. Understanding these types of adultery provides a foundation for deeper discussions around prevention, healing, and restoration.

1. *Physical Adultery*: The most manifest form of adultery, physical adultery, refers to a scenario when a married person partakes in sexual relations with an individual other than

their spouse. This act breaks the vow of fidelity and trust established in the matrimonial bond.

2. *Emotional Adultery*: Although less overt, emotional adultery is equally harmful. This form of adultery happens when emotional intimacy, normally reserved for a spouse, is shared with an outsider. It can lead to an emotional connection that violates the sanctity of marriage. Proverbs 23:7 emphasizes the role of thoughts and emotions, saying, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.”

3. *Cyber or Online Adultery*: The advent of technology has unveiled a new type of adultery. Emotional or sexual interactions over the internet can lead to the violation of marital vows, even in the absence of physical contact.

4. *Mental or Fantasy Adultery*: Jesus expanded the traditional understanding of adultery to include the realm of thoughts. In Matthew 5:28, He said, “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” This underscores the idea that even lustful thoughts can constitute adultery.

The complexity of adultery, as outlined in these various types, highlights the need for vigilance and awareness within a marriage. It reinforces the importance of continual nurturing of the marital bond and the commitment to both emotional and physical fidelity. Recognizing these forms of adultery is the first step in guarding against them,

demonstrating the necessity of open communication, trust, and mutual respect within a marriage.

A Deeper Look into the Reasons for Adultery

Adultery, while universally recognized as an act of betrayal, is rarely committed without underlying motivations or triggers. These underlying causes can often be traced back to individual struggles or relational dysfunctions within the marriage. Delving deeper into the reasons for adultery helps us better understand its roots and devise effective prevention strategies.

1. *Dissatisfaction*: One of the most common reasons for adultery is a sense of dissatisfaction within the marital relationship. This could stem from the feeling of being unloved, unappreciated, or neglected. This dissatisfaction can create a void that individuals might seek to fill through an extramarital affair, seemingly offering the missing affection or appreciation.

2. *Lack of Emotional or Physical Intimacy*: Emotional and physical intimacy is the lifeblood of any romantic relationship. When intimacy is lacking, it can lead to feelings of disconnect and loneliness. Emotional intimacy involves sharing thoughts, feelings, and experiences, whereas physical intimacy involves affectionate touch and sexual relations. Either can lead one partner to seek fulfillment outside the marriage.

3. *Poor Communication*: Effective communication is the cornerstone of a strong marriage. In its absence, misunderstandings, unmet expectations, and feelings of being unheard or misunderstood can cause a rift between partners. When a person finds someone outside the relationship who listens and understands them better, it can often lead to emotional and then physical adultery.

4. *Personal Struggles*: Sometimes, the roots of adultery are found in personal battles unrelated to the spouse or the marriage itself. This could involve struggles with issues like low self-esteem, addiction, past trauma, or a desire for validation. These struggles can lead individuals to make harmful decisions, like engaging in adultery to cope or escape. The easy availability of pornography online may primp a person towards instant self-gratification through sex intercourses and a slippery slope towards adultery.

5. *The Lure of Temptation*: The Bible speaks of the powerful role of temptation in leading individuals astray. James 1:14-15 states, “Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” Temptation, when not resisted, can lead to the path of adultery. The culture of acceptability of casual sexual encounters as a social norm eases our consciences regarding temptations.

It is important to understand that these reasons do not justify or excuse the act of adultery, but they do offer insights into the factors that contribute to such decisions. By addressing these issues proactively within a marriage, couples can work towards creating an environment that minimally fosters infidelity.

Proactive Measures for Prevention and Overcoming Adultery

Preventing adultery requires a strong commitment to marital vows, ongoing communication, and consistent efforts to nurture the marital bond. Ephesians 4:29-32 provides guidance: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what helps build others up...Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, and malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” The “Billy Graham rule” is a practice among some male evangelical Protestant leaders, in which they avoid spending time alone with women to whom they are not married. It is named after Billy Graham, who used the rule to guard against both sexual temptation and accusations of inappropriate behaviour or scandal.

Billy Graham reportedly refused to meet, travel, or dine alone with a woman other than his wife, Ruth. This rule has been adopted and adapted by others over time as a guideline for maintaining integrity and avoiding circumstances that might lead to infidelity or even the appearance of impropriety. However, it has also been

debated and criticised for potentially perpetuating gender inequality.

Maintaining a healthy marriage includes seeking spiritual growth individually and as a couple, spending quality time together, fostering open communication, and establishing healthy boundaries with individuals outside the marriage.

For those who have strayed into the realm of adultery, the path to redemption is through repentance and seeking God’s forgiveness. God disapproves of sin, but His love and compassion for sinners are unyielding. As John 8:11 illustrates, when Jesus addressed a woman caught in adultery, He said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin.”

Embracing Forgiveness and Restoration

In the aftermath of adultery, the path towards healing is paved with grace and forgiveness. Forgiveness reflects the grace we have received through Christ, and Colossians 3:13 reminds us to “forgive as the Lord forgave you.” It’s a process that requires an acknowledgement of the pain caused and a conscious decision to release any feelings of resentment or vengeance. While it’s a difficult process, it’s essential for healing and moving forward.

Restoration is the next step in the healing journey. While forgiveness can be extended unilaterally, restoration requires the commitment and effort of both parties involved. It involves rebuilding trust, love, and intimacy

within the relationship. It's a process that requires patience, dedication, and potentially, the assistance of Christian counselling. Restoring a relationship after adultery isn't easy, but it becomes possible with genuine repentance, changed behaviour, and the guidance of God's word.

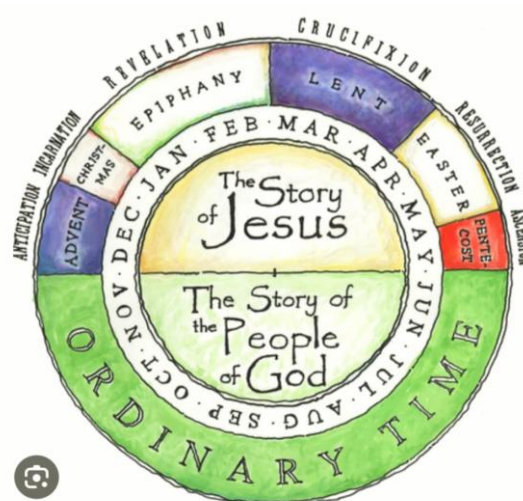
Conclusion

The Christian perspective on adultery underscores the significance of maintaining a God-centered marriage, advocates for forgiveness, and emphasizes the potential for redemption and restoration, even in overwhelmingly bleak situations. Adultery is not just breaking a marital vow but a transgression against God's design for marriage. Despite the pain and disruption caused by adultery, the Christian message offers hope. Through God's grace and unfailing love, healing is attainable. This mirrors the broader Christian message of redemption – that no sin is beyond the reach of God's grace and no brokenness beyond the scope of His healing power. Understanding the intricacies of adultery, from its types to the reasons behind it and the strategies for overcoming it, equips us to better protect, nurture, and restore the sacred bond of marriage.

Rediscovering the Richness: Why Churches Should Follow the Christian Calendar

By Elder Dr Alex Tang

Many churches are Easter and Christmas churches in that their



church calendar are centred only on these two events. The biblical festivals of the Old Testament foreshadow a grounded way of worship. In the fast-paced world we live in, it is essential for churches to anchor themselves in the timeless truths and traditions of the Christian faith. One way to do so is by embracing the Christian calendar, a liturgical framework that follows the life and ministry of Christ throughout the year. While it may seem like an ancient practice, the Christian calendar holds significant value and offers a multitude of benefits for churches today.

1. *Connecting with the Biblical Narrative:*

The Christian calendar allows churches to journey through the life

of Christ in a systematic and intentional manner. By observing seasons such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost, congregations are invited to reflect on the redemptive story of God's love for humanity.

Advent, the season preceding Christmas, prepares believers for the coming of Christ. It focuses on anticipation and hope, symbolizing the waiting for the Messiah. Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus, the incarnation of God's love and salvation. Lent is a period of self-reflection, fasting, and repentance, leading up to the remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection during Holy Week. Easter rejoices in the resurrection of Jesus, the triumph over sin and death. Pentecost commemorates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, empowering the Church to carry the message of Christ to the world.

2. Fostering Spiritual Formation:

Following the Christian calendar cultivates spiritual formation by providing regular opportunities for reflection, repentance, and renewal. Each season prompts believers to engage in specific spiritual practices, such as fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, that deepen their relationship with God.

During Lent, believers are encouraged to examine their hearts, repent of their sins, and draw closer

to God through prayer and fasting. The focus on self-denial and spiritual discipline leads to personal growth and transformation. Advent invites believers to prepare their hearts for the coming of Christ, reflecting on the hope, joy, peace, and love that Christ brings. These intentional practices foster spiritual growth and align individuals with the heart of God.

3. Unity and Communal Worship:

Adhering to the Christian calendar promotes a sense of unity and shared worship among believers. When churches worldwide celebrate the same seasons and feasts, regardless of culture or location, it reinforces the truth that the body of Christ is interconnected and transcends boundaries.

By participating in the same liturgical rhythms, believers join a global community in worshiping and honoring God. This shared experience unifies the Church and emphasizes its universal nature. It reminds believers that they are part of something greater than themselves and encourages them to support and pray for one another.

4. Honoring Tradition and Church History:

The Christian calendar is deeply rooted in the historic traditions of the Church. Embracing this calendar enables churches to honor the

wisdom and practices of early Christians who faithfully passed down their faith through the ages.

The Christian calendar has evolved over centuries, shaped by the rich heritage and teachings of the early Church fathers. By following this calendar, churches connect with the historical roots of their faith and gain a deeper appreciation for the enduring truths of Christianity. This continuity with the past strengthens the Church's identity and fosters a sense of reverence for the faith that has been preserved and handed down through generations.

Conclusion:

The Christian calendar offers churches a transformative opportunity to engage with the fullness of the Christian faith. By following its rhythm, churches can deepen their understanding of the biblical narrative, foster spiritual formation, cultivate unity and communal worship, and honor the wisdom and traditions of the early Church. Embracing this ancient practice enables congregations to be rooted in the timeless truths of the Gospel and equips them to navigate the challenges of the modern world with a steadfast faith. Incorporating the Christian calendar allows us to align our lives with the key events in the life of Christ. It helps us to experience the significance of Christ's birth, his sacrificial death, and his glorious resurrection in a more profound way. By intentionally

observing these seasons, we create space for God to work in our hearts and draw us closer to Him.

The apostle Paul encourages us to "keep the feast" in 1 Corinthians 5:8, symbolizing the celebration of Christ's sacrifice and victory over sin. When we follow the Christian calendar, we join in this collective celebration with believers worldwide, magnifying the power and beauty of the Gospel.

Ultimately, following the Christian calendar is not about adhering to empty rituals or traditions for the sake of it. It is about intentionally structuring our lives around the life of Christ, allowing His story to shape our own stories. It is an invitation to experience the depth and richness of our faith and to draw closer to God in a more meaningful way. As we journey through the seasons of the Christian calendar, may our hearts be opened to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit. May we embrace the invitation to reflection, repentance, and renewal, and may our worship be enriched as we walk in the footsteps of our Savior. Let us wholeheartedly embrace the Christian calendar and allow it to lead us into a deeper and more authentic experience of the Christian life.

Met With An Angel

By Kenneth Cham

My mother is an enthusiastic gardener. One of her favourite plant is the *Dracaena* – characterized by its thick, woody cane-like stems and long strap-like leaves. The plant can grow and reach heights of up to 6-10 feet tall. I knew where to find these plants growing naturally, at the outskirts of an oil palm estate in my hometown in Kulai. Hence, on 20 April 2019, during my mother's birthday, I decided to visit my hometown in Kulai, Malaysia to get some of these plants as her birthday gift. I started my trip in the afternoon when it was still cloudy. After having my lunch, I drove to the oil palm estate and parked my car in the nearby neighbourhood. Then I took a short walk to the outskirts where the plants were known to grow naturally. When I looked around the oil palm estate, I noticed that it was very quiet – no one was in sight. I decided that it was safe, and proceeded to pick a spot at a low slope beside the road where some *Dracaena* plants were growing. I stood on the slope, grabbed hold of a plant shoot by the stem and attempted to break it off from the main stem. As it turned out, it was not easy to break the shoot off.

Soon, the clouds in the sky started to gather and it became dark. Soft peals of thunder were heard and it started to drizzle. I knew I had to break the shoot off quickly, before the sky pours down its rain. I twisted and

turned the stem hurriedly, yet the plant shoot was still intact. As time passed by, the rain grew heavier and the slope that I was standing on became very slippery. After a struggle, I managed to pull off the plant shoot. However, I lost my footing and slipped down the slope to the road. I fell onto the road in the pouring rain. At that point in time, a strange young man appeared suddenly and stood on the slope top of the oil palm estate. He was in plain clothes – with a collared T-shirt and Bermuda pants. I looked up as he reached out his hand towards me, offering to lift me up from my fall.

“Saya mahu tolong awak.” he said to me in Malay – meaning “I want to help you.” I told him, “Tak apa.” which means “It's OK.” He insisted and continued to reach out his hand to help me. This time he said, “Saya kesian awak, saya mahu tolong awak.” It simply means, “I pity you, I want to help you.” Once again, I told him I was alright. After my response, he asked me where I was from. Sheepishly, I pointed to the direction of the neighbourhood where I parked my car. Then, the stranger pointed at the direction of some houses at the neighbourhood and told me that he was from there. I nodded, and whispered a “Thank you” to the stranger for his help. Immediately afterwards, I got up from the fall on the road, picked up the *Dracaena* plant I plucked out and made my way to the car. Glancing back to the place where I came across the stranger, I

noticed that he had vanished out of sight. Just as sudden as he appeared – he disappeared. It is an unforgettable encounter which I keep recalling in my mind. In the Bible, it is mentioned clearly:

“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.” Hebrews 13:2 (NIV)

“The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.” Psalm 34:7 (NIV)

On hindsight, my fall off the slope onto the road could have ended in an accident, if there was a car driving by at that time. I could have been hit by the car. Yet, I escaped unharmed. I may not have known it at that time, but the stranger whom I entertained may very well be an angel of the LORD. And he had a definite purpose; he was readily available to help me when I was in distress. All glory to our LORD!

What Happens When We Become A Christian?

By Kelvin Koh

We were all happy growing up as a child to adulthood. We have always thought and lived that we are the most important person in the world. That is **Selfishness**.

Then we get the shock of our lives when we become a Christian. For the first time in our lives, we were told, now somebody else is the most important person in our lives. God is now the most important person in our lives. **The Lordship of Christ**. What? We are no longer the most important person in our lives. If we digest that, it is called **Surrender**. If we cannot digest it, it is called **Conflict and Rebellion**.

How can somebody else be more important than us? What kind of life will that be? Somebody else will be making decisions for us. Somebody else will be telling us what to do and what we cannot do. **Compliance**, no more independence. **Ownership**, no more rights. **Crucified**, no more entitlements.

Hierarchy of Love. God, others and me last. Love God with all your heart. Love your neighbor as yourself. Not only is God going to be more important than me, other human beings will also be more important than me. Philippians 2:3 - Consider others as more important than yourselves.

Are we sure we want to live this kind of life? Are we sure we can live this kind of life? Is it liveable?

Our Children

By Kelvin Koh

When a baby is born,
It is like a kite,
There is a string attached.
The string is for us to discipline the
kite to fly higher and further.
The string is also for us to bring back
the kite.
But one day, the string will break,
And we will feel we have lost
domination, control and ownership of
the kite,
But the kite doesn't feel that way.
The kite feels independence, freedom
and self rule.

A child born to us was never our
ownership.
He or she was a child of God.
He or she was on loan to us for a
season.
We are stewards of this gift from God,
If we possess them, we are coveting
from God.
If we dominate or abuse them, we will
have to answer to God.
We give them the very best as we give
unto God, their Heavenly Father.
We hand them back to God,
For God to start another cycle with
them.
And life goes on,
Generation after generation.

Every child has his or her own journey
with their God, their Creator and their
Judge.

Testimony

Trusting God in The Storm There is Hope in Jesus Christ

By Anne B.C. Low



I come before you Almighty God with
a thankful heart for your faithfulness,
goodness and mercy upon my life, my
family and home. Thank you Lord, for
you are an amazing, awesome,
wonderful God. You are worthy of all
the glory and greatly to be praised.
Thank you for healing, preserving,
protecting, guiding me through trials
and challenges.

Thank you for your love, presence and
grace over me during my journey of
breast cancer.

I would like to share of God's mercy
and grace over me during my journey
of breast cancer, the 2nd time after 9
years since my 1st breast cancer in
2014. This time its on my right breast.
Going through my first experience is
hard enough. What more the second
time round.

Psalm 28:7 says, Trust in the Lord. The Lord is my strength and my shield. My heart trusted in Him and I am helped. Therefore my heart rejoices with my song. I will sing praises to Him forever.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Pastors, Elders, brothers and sisters in Christ, relatives and friends for their prayers.

Thank you Don and our lovely children and grandchildren for their prayers. They have all been a great help and support to me during this trying time.

Isaiah 43:2 promises that when we pass through the waters, I will be with you and through the rivers they shall not overflow you. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned nor the flame scorch. I am comforted with this promise.

It was during this time due to the Covid Pandemic situation around the world that had made it difficult for me to keep my appointment for a yearly review. I missed my appointment due to the lockdown in Singapore and Malaysia, for about 2 years. While waiting for the lockdown to be lifted, I had a mammogram done in JB in 2021. A small lump was detected. I was told by the Radiotherapist that I need not worry as it looks benign. I then left it as it was.

Immediately when the lockdown was lifted, I made an appointment to see my doctor in Singapore. It was somewhere in August 2022. An

ultrasound, mammogram and a biopsy was done. I was diagnosed with Stage 3 Breast Cancer. I was shocked and lost for words, knowing that I will have to go through the process once again.

When reality sank in I prayed to our Lord Jesus Christ for strength and comfort. I was then at peace, as I commit myself to the Lord for the coming journey before me.

I had surgery done on the 12th of September 2022. It was a mastectomy done on my right breast. More than 15 lymph nodes were removed. The lump had grown to 3cm, and it was of the aggressive kind. My doctor advised me on several options. I opted for a mastectomy. Praise the Lord! All went well.

I had gone through 6 Chemo Sessions and daily Radiation on Mondays to Fridays for 5 weeks. I have completed both and am now on medication Femara daily.

Thank God, for His presence during this journey. Knowing the discomfort and pain I was going through, the Lord is so so good. He sustains me all the way. I trust that the Lord will see me through once again. On the 24th of July 2023 I had a BMD (Bone Mineral Density) done. The report was good. I can now carry on with the Femara.

I was assured as Isaiah 40:31 says those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary. They walk and not faint. And

in 1 Peter 2:24 He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we having died to sin might live for righteousness. By His stripes you are healed. I am holding on to this promise. Jesus Christ has been so merciful. His presence is all I need. He is always present regardless of how we feel. Give Him your weakness and He will give you His strength. I learn to rely and depend on Him more each day.

And in Psalms 103:1-5 Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me. Bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases. Who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies. Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like eagles. I hold fast to this promise.

James 1:2-3 says My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, know that the testing of your faith produces patience. It is an encouragement to us believers to find joy and strength in the midst of trials and tribulations. He emphasizes on the importance of resilience and determination in the face of adversity. We should view hardships as opportunities for growth and spiritual maturity. Only through hard times can the testing of one's faith produce perseverance and resilience, which ultimately lead to stronger relationship with God.

Once again I want to thank our Almighty God for blessing me with the simple joys in life. The delightful moments of His goodness and the provision He gives. He blessed me with good health and a fine family. I can never ask for more.

My life is in His hands. They are indeed good hands to be in.

God has a purpose for our pain. A reason for our struggles and a reward for our faithfulness. So stay close to Him. 'The joy of the Lord is my strength.'

To God be the Glory!

NB: Contributions to Sinews newsletter, via email to spcheong88@gmail.com (in Microsoft Word format), in the form of articles, testimonies and original photographs (with captions) are welcome, but we reserve the right to edit them in the interest of HLCE. Views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent that of HLCE or the editor.

OA Ministry – Medical Trips





The 4 pastoral workers sponsored by HLCE received their Diploma in Biblical Studies from MTBC on 29.6.2023

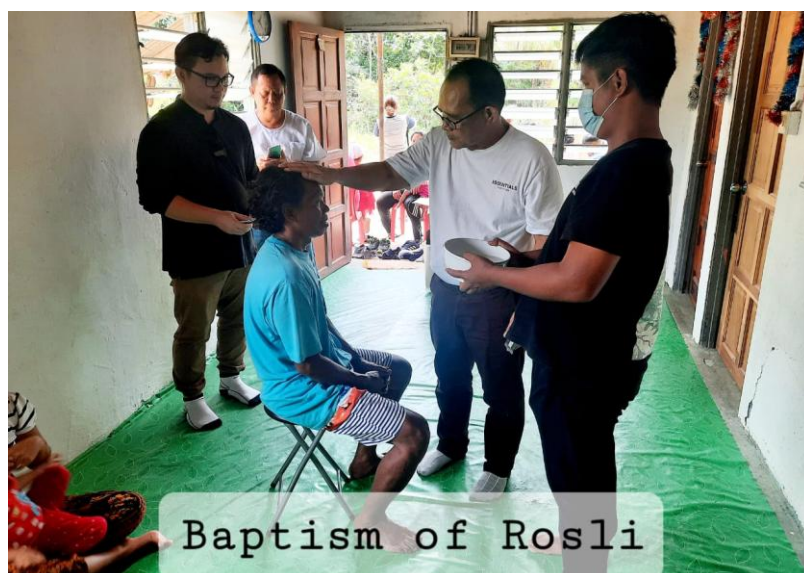
OA Ministry - Baptism



Kpg Guri 18/7/23



Nazeli A/L Molok



Baptism of Rosli



Rev Dr Lim Kar Yong is passionate about anything related to the New Testament. Because of this interest, he pursued his PhD in the New Testament, specialising in Pauline studies. He teaches at various seminaries in Malaysia and the region and serves as an Anglican priest with the Diocese of West Malaysia. He also finds time to research and write as well and has authored four books and numerous academic essays. His latest book, *Following Jesus: An Illustrated Guide to the Places in the Holy Land According to the Gospel of Mark*, features more than 180 photographs of the Holy Land in full colour.



Spiritual Formation Institute HLCE Seminar Series 2023

In the Footsteps of Jesus: A Biblical-Geography Journey

Date: Saturday 22 July 2023

Time: 9.30am – 12.30pm followed by lunch

Place: Berea, 11C, Jalan Gertak Merah, 80100 Johor Baru

Registration: Tel: 07-2243285/ Whatsapp: 012 7510623 <https://bit.ly/442cFqv>

This seminar, together with visual presentation, invites you to take an unforgettable journey to the various sites in the Holy Land as seen through the Gospels. We will unpack how an understanding of biblical geography and archaeology helps us dig deeper into the Bible and unearths fresh insights of the events in the life of Jesus.

Come and see, feel, and walk with Jesus in Galilee and Jerusalem. Let us read afresh those familiar stories in the Gospels and reflect on what it means to us as followers of Jesus today.





Elder Lee together with the technical team consisting of Deacon Chin Yee Choong, Foo Siang Tong, Elder Quek Tee Ken, presenting the Certificate of Completion and Compliance (CCC) for the Faith Hall to Rev Dr Chuah Seong Peng on 28/5/2023.



**Praise God for the issuance of the Certificate of Completion and Compliance (CCC) for the Faith Hall.
28/5/2023.**



Congratulations Dr Kartik Ravi & Rachel on your wedding!



Congratulations to Joel & Stephanie



20 May 2023: Wedding of Dr Kartik Ravi & Rachel Tan at St Regis, Singapore



The Marriage of Joel Tan & Stephanie Ong was solemnized at St Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur on Saturday, 8th July 2023