

What's Inside:



Smart People

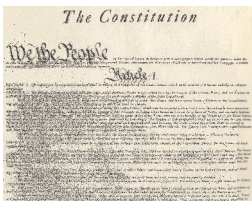
By John Lee

Gambling Addiction and Breakthrough
~ Family Crisis Ministry

17 Sep 2017 (Sunday)
9.00am to 10.00am @ MPH 1

F C M

By Joyce Tan



Encouraging Leaders

By Kenneth Tai



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JCKK children visit
Dialect Wednesday
Cell Group Meeting.



**Brother
Martin
Writes**

I **D**on't **U**nderstand **R**ationale why **I**ndividuals can **A**cept **N**oxious **S**mell. I was on the bus not too long ago and the bus captain stopped the bus and came among the passengers accusing us of carrying durians. Seems like hotels, aeroplanes and buses do not allow durians on board. I can totally understand.



Looks like the king of fruits is rejected by the authorities but well accepted by the people. An analogy here with the King of kings being rejected by the Jewish leaders but well loved by the masses.

Not everyone dislike durians. As you can read further on, some will travel the distance to eat this fruit.

Next, when we consider smart, we must consider responsibility and honesty. At most interviews, the HR can only look at the degrees and certificates and even then there are fake degrees and certificates. Apparently, you can hire a smart person who can turn out to be a very smart thief but that is the limitation of a society that looks at a person's qualifications instead of his character.

There are a lot of smart people who use their wiles for the wrong purposes. You have read about Fake Eggs, Fake Rice, Cardboard Buns and lots of other foods which are not only genetically modified but fake. Read all about other smart people who create ways to destroy the world in one of the articles further on.

Finally, recently a blogger got married in an allegedly highly sponsored wedding celebration at a six-star hotel. This caused a mini-controversy as some of her guests felt they should not give her a big ang-pow (cash gift) because her costs were mostly covered by the companies sponsoring her wedding. What do you think?

What does the ang-pow represent? A gift to your friend for her wedding or a loan to help her settle her bills. Some customs are notoriously famous for recording the amount of the ang-pow so that the same amount is returned when your turn comes around. In the West, guests give gifts, eg. wine glasses, cutlery sets, etc and thus there is no mentality of helping to pay for the wedding. Among my colleagues, when an invitation is given, they will

quickly check the internet for the cost of a table at the particular restaurant/hotel where the function is to be held and just give an ang-pow of a corresponding amount. What would you do?

There are a few possibilities. One, you just give according to your standard rate, regardless of the venue of the function. At first sight, this sounds like a very good choice. However, if the function is held in a cheaper restaurant, would you still maintain the same standard rate? Two, you give according to the closeness of the relationship, ie you give more to the ones who are closer related to you and less to others. Are you guided by the cost of a table at the venue of the function? Three, you give according to the cost of a table at the location of the wedding, helping the newly weds to settle the bills. Finally, you don't give at all because they invited you and they should be honored that you turned up for their wedding celebration.

You might pull me aside and ask me what does all these mean. Well, it is related to giving in church. Notice that the offering is after the sermon. So do you give more if the sermon is good and less if the sermon is boring? Do you give to God or to the church? Some churches are already so well off financially that people feel they do not need any more money. Perhaps you consider yourself doing your friend a favour by following him to church, so he should pay you and feed you instead of the other way around.

God does not need your money but he wants you to be closer related to Him. So if you are closer related then you should give more. *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also* (Matthew 6:21). Those who are further from Him may not feel the desire to give more but to ask for more.

Romans 12:8 (see next article) lists giving (*contributing to the needs of others*) as a spiritual gift. How many of us actually ask to have this gift? Most of us prefer to have the other gifts, leadership, encouragement, tongues, etc. In my 64 years, I don't remember anyone asking for the gift of giving. I guess this is one gift that the Holy Spirit must give to you without you asking for it.

Once you have the gift of giving, all your pains and worries will be gone. You will not have heart pain when you give to the church. You will not worry if there is a delay in getting back your interest-free loan.

"Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?" (Romans 11:35) can be simply put, God is no man's debtor.

Martin Cheah

LEADERS NEED ENCOURAGEMENT TOO

Leadership is listed as one of the gifts in Romans 12:8 (NIV), *“if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is **leadership**, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”*

Just because some have and use this gift does not mean they can do it on their own. They need others using their gifts as well. The first gift mentioned in the Romans passage is encouragement.

Leaders tend toward discouragement because they see more of the problems than most. They are also the target of criticism when things are not going well. Some are not satisfied because their personal preferences are not acted upon and let the leader know it. A number of times Moses had experienced discouragement while leading with God's direction. Moses knew how needed encouragement is, and that was the reason he spoke words of encouragement to Joshua.

Some of us may have realised that JCC is now operating differently compared to the past. Things are intentionally done out of necessity due to the size and value of the church building. For example, we may have encountered some inconvenience from the new financial guidelines relating to ministry expenses; and some may wonder about the necessity for facilities usage guidelines. After the few reported high-profile cases of mismanagement by a local mega church and other charities, the authorities have begun scrutinizing the effectiveness of the corporate governance practices and internal guidelines of churches and charities. JCC will strive to remain as a close-knit family church, but we have moved up to a different league, and we can no more operate like a small 'kampong church'.

JCC Constitution Article IV lists down, among many other things, the Council's responsibilities, which includes:

- a. To guide the spiritual life and activities of the congregation, including all organizations related to it, and to ensure that everything is done in accordance with the Word of God and the faith and practices of the Lutheran Church.
- b. To ensure that an effective program of Christian education for all ages is conducted within the congregation.

- c. To encourage and develop the practice of Christian stewardship by all members of the congregation including active participation in the affairs of the congregation and grateful financial support of the work of the congregation and of the Lutheran Church in Singapore. It shall promote the spirit of free-will offerings by all members and permit no funds to be raised by methods not in harmony with the New Testament.
- d. To encourage and in a helpful way to support the pastor in fulfilling his duties and in so doing to visit the sick and those who have become indifferent, to assist the poor and distressed, and to maintain a vigorous program of outreach into the community.
- e. To be concerned about the spirit of harmony within the congregation, and if differences arise to seek to restore harmony and goodwill.
- f. To arrange with the Bishop for proper leadership during the sickness or absence of the pastor.
- g. To be responsible for the use of all properties, facilities and equipment, and in no case to permit their use for programs or activities not in harmony with the principles of Christian witness.

The enemy comes to steal, kill and destroy, and one way it does this is to attack the church leadership and even the ministry leaders, and by so doing, it hopes to weaken the church.



Encourage our leaders. Of course, they may get a big head and become prideful like anyone else, but most need an honest encouraging word.

What can you do? Look for the things that you sense are the leading of the Holy Spirit in the ministry around you, and encourage the leaders (with the testimony of how it has ministered to you.)

Consider dropping them a note or giving them a call. If we encourage others, we are acting in obedience to the teachings of the Bible. But on the other hand if all a person knows is to criticize and complain, it does not only discourage, but it makes the complainer negative in his/her outlook.

Hopefully, with a better awareness, our members can better understand the need to cover our leaders with prayers, work alongside to support them and speak words of encouragement to them.

Tai Kim Keong



Got this chart from a WhatsApp message:

Comparison between the Salvation Gospel and the Kingdom Gospel

The good news	Salvation : Jesus came to save us from hell and from this perishing world to take us to heaven	The Kingdom : Jesus came to defeat the devil and restore all of creation to be under His rule
Salvation	Escape	Restoration
Worldview and Beliefs	God is holy. The world is sinful and lost. A person's soul is saved if he accepts Christ as his Savior. After that, life consists of two parts : spiritual/sacred and non-spiritual/secular. Spirituality is an internal personal experience maintained through personal devotions. This world is not our home. Our destiny is heaven.	God created us in His image, to reflect His character/glory. All of life is sacred as God created all. Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. He is establishing His Kingdom on earth. Everything is to be brought under His rule. All who surrender to His Lordship will be part of His Kingdom. They are empowered by His Spirit to live out His design in all areas of life as they remain one with Him.
Focus	Us : our salvation	Jesus : our King

Spirituality and Concern	Self-centered : Inside a person and inside the Church. Our relationship with God. Our heart and the eternal future of the soul	Other-centered : Love God and neighbors. All of life here, now and forever : law, government, politics, business, art, science, family, sports, education, media.
Church	Building, congregation, meetings	God's Kingdom Community
Mission	Save souls for heaven	Work with God for His Kingdom to advance on earth
Workers	Pastors, seminary teachers, missionaries, evangelists	Every person who is a citizen of the Kingdom
Activity	"Spiritual" : Personal devotions, Evangelism, Church planting, Church growth, Church services, Church programs, Cell groups. "Non-spiritual" : work, sports, hobbies, entertainment	Life as God designed it to be - living under the Lordship of Christ, living out and discipling nations in the truths, culture and values of the Kingdom, being salt and light influence wherever we live and work.

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A Simple Pleasure



Some people go to distant places for their holidays. Others prefer the convenience of a staycation in Singapore. Is there any in-between choice?

Well, a group of us decided neither to travel far nor stay at home; we chose a nice Saturday (26th August) to hop across the Straits of Johor for a full day of eating, durian tasting, *makan angin* and shopping. We joined the trip among friends and travelled across the 2nd Link in two big buses.

We often ask God for big favours, and give praises to Him for wonderful miracles. However, we should not forget to give thanks to God for opportunities of unsophisticated enjoyment too. Our God is a God of big things and of small things.

We give thanks to God for:

- 1) Blessing us with fine weather.
- 2) Blessing us with smooth passages through immigrations in Singapore and Johor both ways. There was not a big crowd or long wait on our forward journey. On our return journey on Saturday

night, we were pleasantly surprised that both immigration checkpoints were almost empty.

- 3) Blessing us with a relaxing time of fellowship.
- 4) Blessing us with convenient and safe journeys.
- 5) Blessing us with many little things that we have the habit of putting them out of our mind because we are taking them for granted.



I came across this in the blog “My Durian Life” ¹:
“Life is really like durian. Sometimes it stinks, but if you take time to appreciate it, you can enjoy it.”

I Thessalonians 5:18 says, “Pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances.”

Never forget to give thanks to God for the freedom to enjoy the simple pleasures that are cravings by people who are deprived of them.

John Lee

¹ <http://mydurianlife.blogspot.sg/2017/05/bible-intrepretation.html?m=1>

DO WE PRAISE OURSELVES AS SMART?

Which is the smartest of them all:

Chimpanzee, Dolphin, Elephant, Parrot, Crow, Dog, Pigeon, Octopus?



These animals have been claimed by people to be smart, but they never claim themselves to be smart.

Self praise is no praise. So if humans claim themselves to be smart, it is self-praise that does not confirm any value. However, **did someone else (i.e., God) tell us that we have become smart?**

God said, "The Man has become like one of us, capable of knowing everything, ranging from good to evil. – Gen. 3:22a

The above animals are smart in their own ways. It is not self-acclaim, but acclaim by humans, that even pigs are smart:



"Researchers who have studied pigs have learned they have excellent long-term memories, solve mazes easily, can comprehend a simple symbolic language, love to play and play-fight with each other, can learn to operate a joystick to move an on-screen cursor, and use a mirror to find hidden food."²

Humans have become smart – becoming capable of knowing good and evil. Unfortunately, our smartness may stop there. Nobody (perhaps, only we ourselves) tells us that we are smart to be capable in applying our knowledge of good and evil. We are smart to know that a knife is sharp and can help us in our work (good) and cause harm (evil), but our smartness stops at the knowledge level and does not extend to the application of the knowledge.

² <http://healthypets.mercola.com/sites/healthypets/archive/2015/08/22/10-most-intelligent-animals.aspx>

Smart homes with smart appliances • smart warfare with smart weapons and smart bombs • smart consumerism with smart cashless systems • smart lifestyles with smart IOT (Internet of things) • smart environment protected by smart cameras • smart entertainment with smart games, smart glasses that give our eyes super vistas • smart genetic manipulations to produce smart genes • smart cities served by robots where humans can take a backseat from operations • smart adoption of Big Data analytics for smart solutions • smart this and smart that – **nowadays the word “smart” has become a ubiquitous adjective in our vocabulary to raise the human ego.**

Behold! Are we becoming too much of being smart alecks for our own good? Have we been held to ransom by our smartness that makes our life more fast-paced, more stressful, more nervous and more fragile?

Humans are being displaced, not by aliens (from another universe), but by androids (machines of our own inventions). Will robots become slaves to people, or people become slaves to thinking machines?



It is little wonder that big and powerful countries are in a race to develop Artificial Intelligence (AI) because normal human intelligence is inadequate to serve the human race. In the beginning, we may be in control of machines; but as machine intelligence evolves, will it happen that one day humans think less and leave most thinking to some AI monster that makes us mentally docile and subservient to all its thinking and decisions, including starting WW3?

Such fears were prompted by a statement from Vladimir Putin that “artificial intelligence is the future, not only for Russia, but for all humankind ... It comes with colossal opportunities, but also threats that are difficult to predict. Whoever becomes the leader in this sphere will become the ruler of the world.”³

As we are too preoccupied with the interminable race to up the level of our smartness, we become too involved with the immediate satisfaction (“good” and enjoyable) that our smart inventions provide but fail to be vigilant over the flip-side details of potential implications. We are missing the wood for the trees.

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/sep/04/elon-musk-ai-third-world-war-vladimir-putin>

Concomitant with the extremely complex and rapid development of modern engineering, computer bugs present an inescapable challenge to human smartness. Computer bugs are like biological bugs – some can be relatively minor but some can be particularly nasty with catastrophic consequences. It just took an instance of a control-software error (in a case a few years ago) for the Bay Area Rapid Transit (in California) to shut down the system several times within 3 days, with attempts to correct the program error worsening the problem to boot!

Human smartness can be applied to make lives more comfortable (with smart gadgets) and safer (with smart surveillance equipment), but without the smartness to know what is good to invent and what is good to forgo, it may just take an error of stupidity for smart humans to send themselves to extinction by a mere press of a button, or even an auto-trigger, on one of their smart inventions.

When America invented the Atomic Bomb, nobody predicted that human survival would one day be held to ransom by the greater evil of the fission of atoms moving on to power the fusion of atoms to produce the Hydrogen Bomb.

Smart as humans are in inventions, they cannot give a perfect guarantee that they won't lose control to the momentum of AI advancement or the power of "bug-rule" – when an "inadvertent" bug leaves human passengers in a self-driving car (literally and metaphorically) helpless as the vehicle makes all its own moving, stopping and speeding decisions.

These are the days when in the midst of flattering ourselves for our smartness of knowledge to invent human-replacing talents (a.k.a. robots and intelligent android applications) we need to be smartly discriminating between good and evil. A vehicle gaining speed can throw us into an exhilarating experience tempting us to go for more of it; unfortunately, a loss of human control of the machine, surrendering reflexively to the AI-comandeered momentum, can send us on a dreadful spin or to a disastrous landing all of a sudden after a long breakneck drive of excitement.

Smart cities that are filled with all possible technological wonders are pretty charming to people who look in, but it is really the people who dwell within who must be truly smart to have a foolproof way to wrest back control of their human interests in the event of large-scale technological disasters (such as power outages, nuclear misadventures, machine running amok, etc.) unless they are intent on leaving their human welfare at the hands of the invented

systems that make the cities smart. Look at the ugly turmoils that drench the world, caused by human decisions to apply their human intelligence and human inventions. Human “smartness” for self-defeating is obvious.

Once upon a time, humans made fire by rubbing stones. They travelled on foot or on animals. The ancient methods of sending messages have evolved into the present ubiquitous mobile technology with which we can speak to anyone on the other side of the world instantly.

A lot can be said about tremendous human progress in living conveniences. Obviously, when we make progress, it is unimaginable for us to want to go back to our old ways of inefficiency. It wouldn't sound right for anyone to say, “Stop, let's stop progressing!” Today, we can't live without our mobile phones that seem to stick to our skin like glue.

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina shattered more than 1000 mobile phone base stations in Louisiana and Mississippi. In 2011, a tsunami similarly wrecked numerous mobile phone base stations in Tōhoku, Japan. In such situations, panic set in as the people's primary dependency on the modern technology for communications were suddenly cut off. Rescue efforts were seriously hampered as lives were paralysed when the “indispensible” communication system failed utterly in one fell swoop.

Can we imagine cyber-sabotage, electrical storms and such things that would have an abrupt and extensive devastating effect on lives that have been conditioned by smart humans themselves?

Certainly, I am not advocating that we regress to primitiveness. My point is that while generically progress is worthwhile, and stagnation or decline are anathema, pursuing smart progress restricted in essence to the proliferation of technologies without the genuine smart handling with God-given wisdom can prove to be man's greatest folly.

For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” (1 Pet. 2:6)

The wise inherit honor,
but fools get only shame.

Proverbs 3:35

Man seeking progress not by God-given wisdom is putting himself to shame because he has neglected

God's cornerstone when erecting the effusive technological superstructures on egotistical foundations.

Sadly, man's knowledge of good is mixed with knowledge of evil and he is unable to separate the two. The good knowledge for inventions to enjoy has been hijacked by the knowledge of evil to imperil himself. This paradox, or struggle between seeking good and scuttling by evil, is due to the seed of sin sown when Adam and Eve chose to rebel against God by eating from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thereby giving up the great promise they had for being created in the image of God with dominion over all other creatures. (Gen. 1:26-27)

There is still hope. Read Isaiah 59:

"Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God ... No one calls for justice; no one pleads a case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments, they utter lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to evil. They hatch the eggs of vipers and spin a spider's web ..."

It is not that God cannot save, or that He cannot hear our cries. The problem is with our sins, convoluted like a spider's webs.

Despite our hopelessness in ourselves:

- There is hope for darkness and mourning to be turned to a day of light and rejoicing if only we have the longing for the day of redemption (59:9-15a)
- There is hope in the strong arm of the Lord to deliver us, as God is readying Himself to aid the Godly (59:15b-21)

God will reveal His glory to the ends of the earth. (Habakkuk 2:14)

John Lee

FAMILY CRISIS

MINISTRY

“Hello! Help! Is there anyone out there? What am I going to do? I need the money. I do not know who I can go to. Who should I talk to? Help me, please help me!”

On 17 September 2017, Jurong Christian Church (JCC) had the opportunity to invite members from the Family Crisis Ministry (FCM) to share their testimonies on the various forms of addiction such as gambling, gaming, drinking and activities that had



led to heavy debts with money lenders/loan sharks resulting in suicidal tendencies, family problems, divorce, mental/ nervous breakdowns, desperation, drunkenness, bankruptcy and the list goes on. The Multi-purpose Hall 1 (MPH) was filled with church members listening intently to the testimonies.

I could sense the thinness of the air when realities and life experiences were shared by the speakers. The stories hit many aspects of life with heart-wrenching episodes which we thought were only possible in the movies. No, the stories are real. I listened with a heavy-heart and was encouraged when they gave thanks to God for being able to walk out of their situations with the assistance from FCM through the love of God. Amen!

Let's pray for the FCM team that they will have the wisdom and strength from God to continue the counselling for others in such situations; leveraging on the learning lessons from their experiences to help others. Did you know that FCM is self-funded and the time that they are willing to give comes from the sacrifices of their sleep and family in gratitude to God for making their lives whole again?

As you read on, imagine how the power of God could change the lives of these people through their experiences and in turn, encourage those in need to take the first step to reach out for help. Allow me to take you through a series of thought processes as the

stories unfold. Didn't Christ do the same to reach out to those in need? ☺ There will be no pictures of the speakers shown and pseudo names will be used.

Bobby was jailed in Thailand for 20 years. He was caught in the airport in Thailand. As he was in need of money to repay all the debts, he agreed to carry gold bars for a syndicate. What he did not know is that beneath the gold bars, he was actually carrying Heroin. He was caught for trafficking drugs. Bobby's world collapsed and he was devastated. He was alone in a foreign country with no help from anyone.

He shared that his family never gave up on him after he returned to Singapore from his jail term. However, Bobby said that he got hooked on to gambling in the Casino and landed himself in huge debts again. It was then that he sought help from FCM and his debts are now almost cleared.

He gave thanks to Jesus and advocated that we need to rely on God in our lives. He said that only with Jesus, we can be happy people. As he concluded in Mandarin, he hoped that those in need will come forward to receive help and not to bury the pains and carry the burden alone.

Alex is a businessman. When his business hit a financial crisis, he started to borrow money from money lenders. The money did help him solve payments on salaries to his employees and provided interim closure to the bills for his business. His woes were concealed and he continued his business.

What he did not realise is that he relied so much on borrowing that he still ended up in debt for his business. Alex shared that there was a time when no money came out from the ATM and he felt lost again. He sank into depression and he realised that it was a vicious cycle. He could not walk out of it. It was then that his friends referred him to FCM. He started climbing out of his situation with FCM's help. He now shares his story with others telling them to raise their problems to seek help. Do not wait for help to come to you.

Mr and Mrs Wong were married for 17 years. They have two kids and have their own jobs now. They are serving in FCM to help others. When they started talking about their past, you would not have imagined that Mr Wong was gambling his life and family away on soccer betting and rolling his credit cards to tie over the debts from borrowing of money from friends and family members. He reached a stage where he ignored his friends and did not return the borrowed money from them and those he loved.

He said someone told him that he cannot do this anymore. He was destroying his life and his family. He lost his integrity and he left the burden of looking after the family to his wife. He did not share with his wife and covered up his habits and addictions.

What Mr Wong did not know is that the toll on his wife was tremendous. Mrs Wong started drinking heavily and gambling at Casinos. She started borrowing money for her debts as she could not concentrate on work and the family. She said she had no friends to help her. She could not tell her husband. Their marriage and relationship was on the verge of breaking and divorce.

The pressure of mounting debts on household bills and expenses on their children spiralled out of control and she snapped. She found herself at the top of her roof, at 15th floor, wanting to jump down. It was then that she received a call from her sister-in-law to think about her children. She was not solving the problems if she had decided to end her life. She was just passing the problems to her children.

It then dawned on her that her sister-in-law was right. She awoke from her own feelings of despair and irresponsibility as a mother. She came to her senses and sought help for her gambling addictions and marriage.

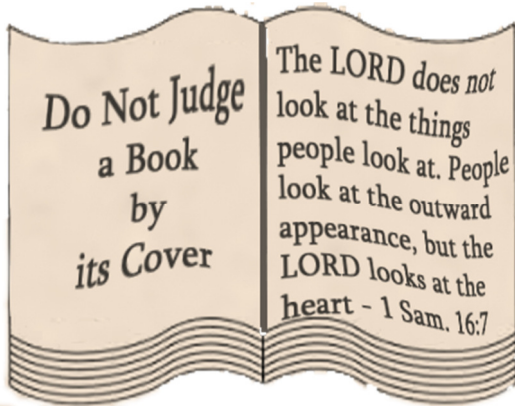
They are now believers in Christ. Mr and Mrs Wong got their marriage back and started working to pay off their debts with the help from FCM in making them realise the importance of life and God. They are serving the ministry in FCM together and have settled their debts.

As we applauded the success stories, Reverend Anthony closed the session. We prayed for FCM and those in the ministry. Reverend Anthony also reminded us to stay close to God and not let sin tempt or destroy us.

FCM is now reaching out to those who require help and support to speak up and contact them. If you or know anyone who needs such help, take the courage and start calling now!

We give thanks for the love of God. This is the Love that can be found nowhere except in Him. To God be the Glory!

Joyce Tan



Do not judge a book by its cover. We all know this, but in life we do find people who play judges based on others' appearances. Sometimes, unconsciously, we may be guilty as well.

When you are in dire straits, you need to turn to someone of help. Most likely, the first thought is to draw attention to your plight from someone who is well-dressed, who looks to be of good social stature and who has all the ap-

pearances of being most likely willing to lend a hand.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), the person who readily stepped forward to help a badly injured man was not a priest (who was supposed to be regarded as one of good heart by virtue of his religious standing) or a Levite (one highly respected in the society). These two who came by the injured man just walked by, ignoring the man's plight. Obviously, the needy man (a Jew) would least expect to get help from someone (a Samaritan) who would usually shun people of his race. In the end, however, the "least dependable" person (the Samaritan) became the most reliable helper that the injured man should be grateful for, rather than those to whom he had attached much fraternity in good times. The Samaritan was a friend in need and a true friend indeed!



On 22nd May, a homeless man was his usual self hanging around the streets doing nothing. I wonder what images of the man passers-by would form in their minds that they wouldn't deign to give him a second look. The homeless man would seem to deserve despise, of little value to society in his penniless condition ... in contrast to the well-groomed, busy-looking and decent-looking people dashing around for their respectable businesses.

Then something very bad happened. A huge explosion! It was a bomb! As shrapnel flew, badly injured victims screamed for help and thousands of people rushed for safety. Where was the homeless man? Rather than being a nobody who just hanged around the streets seeking alms, or going by instinct to run to safety and escape from the melee, he became a hero. His name is

Steve. He immediately sprang into action to be among the first to render first aids to the victims of the bomb carnage. Why did he do that? In answer to a reporter's question, his short and sweet answer tells us a lot about not judging a book by its cover (i.e., judging a person's value or character by his appearance): "Just because I'm homeless doesn't mean I haven't got a heart and I'm not human still."

In our midst, people who are judges of others but not of themselves are not unheard of. In any group characterised by whatever description (race, colour, religion, social status, wealth, etc.), there is bound to be black sheep; and this includes the groups that we ourselves are in. Stereotyping is a bad-habit-indulgence by some people who think of themselves more highly than they should. We have doctors (black sheep) who turn away poor patients in urgent need of treatment; but then we also have good-hearted doctors (white sheep) who live by their Hippocratic Oath to render medical assistance to all and sundry without expectation of rewards whether in their off-duty or on-duty times. We have domestic servants (black sheep) showing bad behaviours to vent their frustrations; but we also have news reports of good servants (white sheep) performing admirably beyond expectations in outstanding acts of selflessness for the sake of their employers. On the other hand, we have employers (black sheep) guilty of obnoxious behaviours to their innocent domestic servants too.

Nowadays, travelling by public transport is an easy way for us to be in a gathering of varied people groups in close proximity to one another. From time to time, I observe great examples of unselfish behaviours from those who are smelly from sweat as well as those who are fragrantly perfumed in their attire. If people focus attention away from physical looks, they will see in each and every one (regardless of our stature) good qualities deserving of respect – notwithstanding the fact that all of us have our personal flaws.

John Lee

I am just completing a book by Steve Cioccolanti entitled: **FROM BUDDHA TO JESUS**. Steve was born in Thailand. At twenty, the former Buddhist was born again as a Christian. In this book, he tries to show the similarities between Buddhism and Christianity.

Buddha told a story (parable) comparing people to the lotus. Some lotuses are above water, some are at the same level as the water, some are beneath the water, and some are at the bottom in the mud. People above the water are smart people who can listen and learn and grow. Those at the same level as the water have average intelligence. Those beneath the water have little intelligence and take a lot of effort to learn. Finally those in the mud are ignorant and unwilling to learn. Buddha classified people into 4 categories.

The author claims that this story is similar to the parable of the Sower, where people are also classified into 4 types.

Buddha taught 4 great truths. Firstly, in life there is suffering and no one can escape. Secondly, the cause of suffering is sin (karma). Thirdly, the goal of life is to escape the law of karma. Fourthly, is to discipline the flesh by following many rules.

The author eventually realized that Buddha was searching for a way to escape the suffering that results from accumulated karma. Buddha pointed to the way. Jesus said, "I am the Way" (John 14:6)

The author also mentioned that evangelist always preach Grace to sinners and Law to saints instead of the other way around, this result in saints who feel condemned and sinners who pray the "sinner's prayer" without an ounce of repentance.

Buddha pointed out that people who have karma will go to one of the 8 levels of Hell. Level 1 is for those who kill animals, insects, other humans or self. Level 2 is for those who cheat and steal. Level 3 is for those who engage in sexual immorality, pornography, adultery, homosexuality, etc. Level 4 is for those who lie, curse, tell vulgar jokes, talk non-stop or talk too much. Level 5 is for those who drink alcohol or use drugs. Level 6 is for those who indulge in vices, like gambling.

I don't need to elaborate further because everyone seems destined for Hell unless they can find a way of escape. *If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* – Romans 10:9

Martin Cheah



A large group of children and adults are posed for a group photo in a room with wooden paneling. Many of the children are wearing orange hats and white shirts with blue accents. Some children are sitting on green plastic chairs, while others are standing. An elderly woman in a patterned dress is seated on the right side of the group. The background shows a doorway and more people standing.

