

KINSHIP

There is a saying in Chinese, “家家有本难念的经 Trad. 家家有本難念的經”. Every household has its own story to tell and every family goes through its problems. (Idiom) It is no surprise that mine came in the most unexpected and somewhat wonderful way. Giving thanks to God!

¹² “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. Exodus 20:12

My cousin and I (both Christians) embarked on a journey with our parents and auntie to visit our relatives in Hatyai (Thailand) in early October 2019. The objective is to visit my mother’s eldest brother and his family there.

My uncle has not been well and according to my eldest Thai cousin (a neurosurgeon by training). He miraculously survived major failures in his organs eight years ago. He needed 18 doctors to attend to him then. It struck me that my uncle could not attend my grandmother’s funeral because he almost did not make it to stay alive. I was just thinking how devastated he could have been as he could not see his mother (for decades) on her last breath.

I remembered my dad challenging me on this verse below and indicated that Christianity asked people to leave their parents and families. They asked for money as donations too. What kind of church and religion do that? Those were the days as I looked back, I couldn’t provide a decent reply to such questions as a teenager and a young Christian. You see, my dad said he read the Bible and went through scriptures of other religions too. It was a difficult situation then.

²⁵ “Large crowds were now travelling with Jesus, and He turned and said to them, ²⁶ If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even their own life – such a person cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And whoever does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:25-27

I give thanks to God that I was posted to an Anglican school and had the chance to start my journey with Christ; learning about Him in my own pace through the “ups and downs” in life.

I am also thankful to God for my parents, family and friends that I have/had all these years, especially those who are still with me or at least in contact with me. Some left or kept their distance from me as they could not agree with my

faith and even the choices that I made in life. On hindsight, I am glad to have known Jesus Christ. This is because situations changed and people do too.

So, will I be able to answer such questions if I am asked again after so many years? Well, perhaps not in a theological manner and showing years of biblical studies behind me. I think and know that I could at least provide a reasonable and simple answer. What relevance is this to the trip I had with my parents in addition to a prayer on my bucket list that I hope to be able to travel with my parents again and take care of them?

I learnt that this must be taken in context on the “Cost of Discipleship”. There are similar versus which would give a better perspective on what this means.

³⁷ “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” Matthew 10:37

²⁵ “Whoever loves his life will lose it, but whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” John 12:25

It is to put God as priority in our lives and it does not mean that our parents, children and other people are not important in our lives. Sure, we should continue to live in the world and not be of the world. We will still fall and rise up again for God. We can always go back to Him because God has given us the chance to do so the moment that Jesus died on the Cross and was resurrected. He gave His life for us so that there is nothing else in this world that could offer us anything greater than His Love for us. Of course, there are more things involved on this subject matter which will include leaving behind our old self and putting on the new self in the Spirit of God. What do we want to do about it?

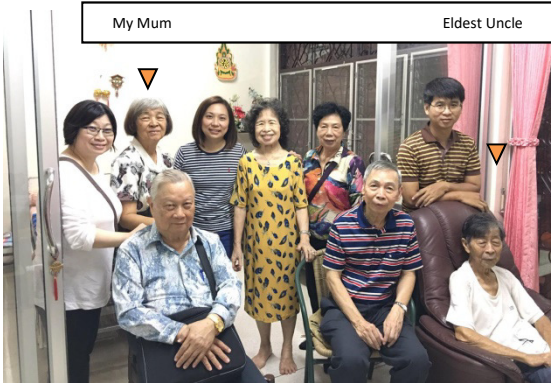
⁹ “Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” Colossians 3:9-10

We have been given this chance. Sometimes, I recall my parents asking me, “Eh! How come you didn’t go to Church?” What a difference when I hear that from them versus, “How come you are still going to Church?” Imagine if my parents read this article?! ☺☺



I realised that being with them matters as their daughter. The trip helped to show what I could do as a Christian and a daughter to them in my life. It does

not matter if I am accomplished or successful or not. (Well, I think it does help though success is quite subjective! At least, I am still doing ok, I think? ☺).



It was heart-warming to see my Thai cousins, cousins-in-law and their children (for those who could travel back from the different parts of Thailand/ overseas to meet

us) on this trip. Arrangements were made that we visited my eldest uncle and auntie every day when we were in Hatyai. It was one of the best trips I had with my family so far!

We do not know if there will be future trips like this one. The seniors are not well and a few of them have difficulty walking. It is our hope and prayers that they will continue to stay in touch and visit one another when possible (especially for those in Singapore).

My Thai Eldest Cousin, his wife & eldest daughter



My Cousin & her father (my mum's 2nd brother)



I reminisced the time when I told my dad that he gave good advice as he mentioned that girls should be independent financially and emotionally, especially in this current world. It does not matter if you have a family or not,

girls should learn to be strong and do good at all times. If there is a chance, I would have added that it was even better because by knowing Jesus Christ and being a Christian, it changed my life. There is always hope despite the failure of men and women in any circumstances in life. What would your choice be in the face of God's love for us?

The greatest reward came when my mum mentioned on the trip that one day, maybe one day, she will go to Church! Imagine the joy when my cousin and I heard that. It was a remark out of the blue and most unimaginable outside temple grounds! Humph!

I have not seen such smiles from my parents for a long time; amidst the grouchiness and nagging which happen so often. Yes, parents will be parents no matter how old you are. ☺

Everyone of us have our stories to tell. Many of you I believe, are like me, keep many things to ourselves. I am praying that you will be able to share your life stories with the Church (via The Vine too) someday. ☺

For many of you, who are in similar situations, do not give up! It is going to be tough. Yes, it is and it will continue to be. I waited 30 years just to hear and see such moments. I am unsure how long this will last. Have faith and continue the good works in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You may have your struggles as we go through the various stages in life. Do continue to pray, serve God with your gifts/ talents and be assured that one day, just one day, there will be that "moment" when you know that God has been working through you to reach out to your loved ones for their salvation.

It just takes us to share who Jesus Christ is with them with your life. It is for God to do His work through us!

Giving thanks for the kinship. God bless!

Joyce Tan