

# THE WINEPRESS

*O taste and see that God is good*



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REFLECTIONS ON  
COMMUNITY LIFE

## PRAYER FOCUS FOR SEPTEMBER



1. Please pray for the Holy Spirit to continuously uplift our JCCians in weekly Sunday Services.
2. Empowerment of Wisdom, Unity and Humility upon our leadership - Council, HOM, MLT and Cell leaders.
3. God to provide a new Dialect Pastoral Staff.
4. David & Goliath Preschool - More enrolments and favour upon our principal and teachers preparing for the transition
5. Goshen Initiative: JCCians to rise up and to touch base/care for the community
6. Discipleship: Be One, Make One, As One - Every Jccian to be willing to invest time to support each other's spiritual growth.



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## YOU ARE NOT ALONE

BY REV ANTHONY LOH

As chaos erupted at the airport with people rushing to exit the country, the world watched in shock at the human tragedy triggered by the fall of Kabul to the Taliban upon the pull-out of the American forces.

I think that it was not because the Afghan army wasn't able to fight, but because their sense of being abandoned killed their fighting spirit. It instantly revealed their deep personal insecurity.

The spirit of abandonment is a lethal force that can attack anyone.

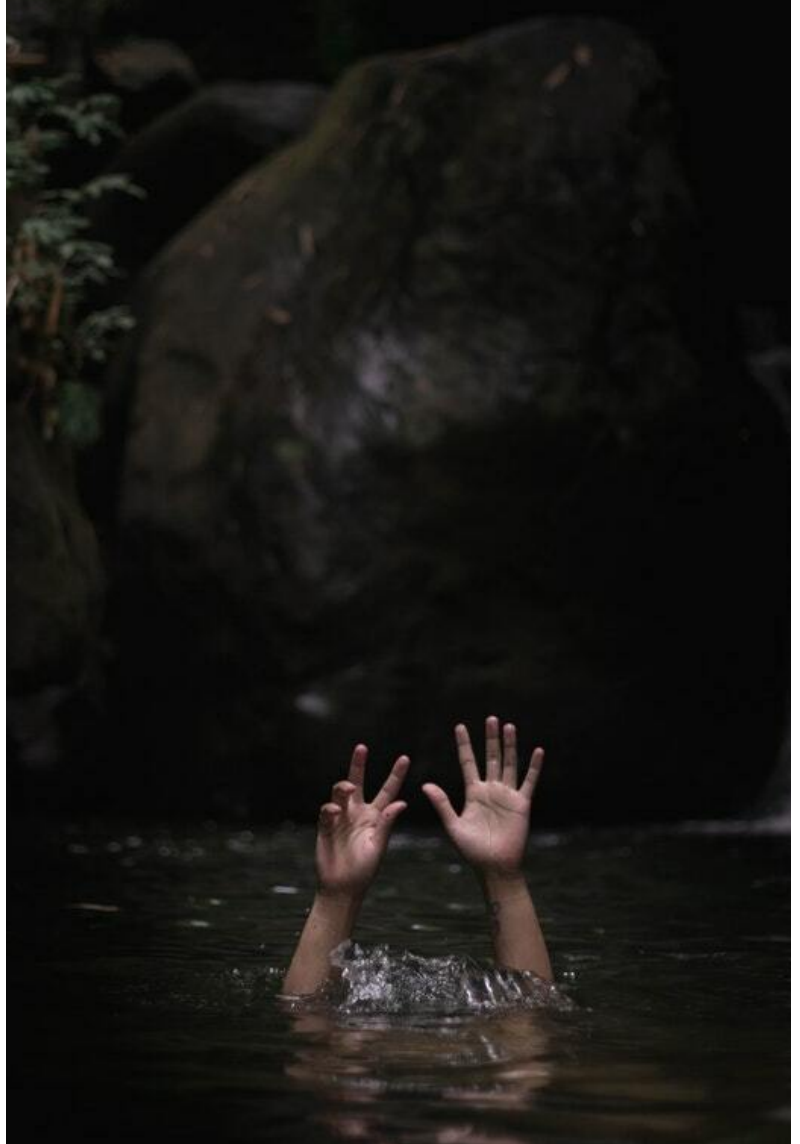
Our thoughts and prayers are with the people in Afghanistan, for their safety, for protection from evil and for peaceful existence to return.

At the same time, we feel a sense of general despondency at the events unfolding in the world which tell us the dangers all peoples are facing with no guarantee of peace and security.

*Eph 6:12 tells us that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."*

We can't take things for granted. This is true as well in spiritual life. The spirit of abandonment can attack at any unexpected time and is a potent force capitulating us to defeat without the enemy even lifting a finger.

David was threatened by his own people when the



enemies came and took away their families. (1 Sam 30:6)

Psalm 13 reveals David's darkest hour when he felt abandoned by God.

1 Kings 19:4-14 tells us about Elijah facing a crisis, with him at one point feeling alone. When the word of the LORD came to him, he replied,

*"I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." (1 Kings 19:10)*



A lot of examples can be found in the Bible revealing how even people of God succumbed dangerously to both physical insecurity and spiritual insecurity upon feeling being abandoned.

Do we too experience any sense of abandonment (feelings of insecurities) in our lives today?

Such abandonment attacks may come from our family members, at workplace, in school and even in the church. The pandemic that started one year ago also continues to show potential to crack our spirit.

Is there a solution when we face struggles with emotional hurt?

### 1. Finding Strength in the Lord

*“David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters.” (1 Sam 30:6a)*

*“But David found strength in the LORD his God.” (1 Sam 30:6b)*

David didn't let his crisis crash him.

### 2. You are Not Alone – Know that God is still in Charge

God reminded Elijah that he was not alone. In fact, there were 7000 that the Lord had set apart for His purpose. (1 Kings 19:18) It was also in God's plan to bring Elisha in to help Elijah.

God always has a plan for us under all circumstances. He never abandons us.

### 3. Acknowledge that God's Thought and Plan are Higher than Ours

In the Joseph story in Genesis, Joseph could have thrown in the towel while incarcerated for 2 years in jail. He could have bitterness against God when his family abandoned him despite the promise of a vision from God. He could have questioned the goodness of God when betrayed by Potiphar's wife. Yet, he persevered and allowed God to lead him when there were no immediate answers to his crisis. Finally, he was able to forgive his brothers when he acknowledged God was the master painter of his life!



As we all struggle in one way or another with the pandemic, let us watch out for one another. Join the CG so that we are not alone. Serving the Lord with gladness via the Goshen Initiative or other works of ministry connect you with God and with fellow brothers and sisters.

Every JCCian can not only be a blessing to each other but also impact the people around us when we faithfully journey with our Lord. Let us work passionately for God's kingdom while the Lord's return is not far away.



## THE LETTER OF JAMES FROM THE JERUSALEM CHURCH

BY REV FREDRIC LEE

JCC will be having a sermon series on the Epistle of James over 5 Sundays from 29 Aug to 26 Sep. The adult CGs will be doing Bible Study on this very practical and relevant book.

The biblical letter of James reads like it has been written to us today. This eternal and living Word of God is the powerful grace we need to face trials and temptations in living out our faith in this difficult time. His letter is full of pastoral wisdom to anchor the lives of Christians in the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Bible scholars reveal James's familiarity with Jesus' teachings on the Sermon on the Mount as the foundation of his exhortation to the Church.

Although James was a brother of Jesus and had seen His miracles and heard His teaching, he had not believed until after Jesus' resurrection (1 Cor 15:7; Acts 1:13-14). We read about Jesus' family who

thought that he was out of His mind (Mark 3:21; cf. John 7:5). James had learned that his presumptions about his own brother, Jesus, had led him to turn against the truth. Did the Jews similarly reject Jesus because their presumptive knowledge of the Messiah had blinded them to God's presence and action right before their eyes?

Thus James calls the proud, the rich, and the "wise and understanding" (3:13) to repentance from pride, hypocrisy and self-confidence before the good and gracious Father who chose to give us birth through the word of truth.

James's transformation opened him to serve the Lord in the Church with greater capacity. We see this when the Apostle Peter acknowledged James as the **leader** of the Jerusalem Church in Acts 12:17. At the Apostolic Council in Acts 15, James was the final and decisive voice. When the Apostle Paul returned

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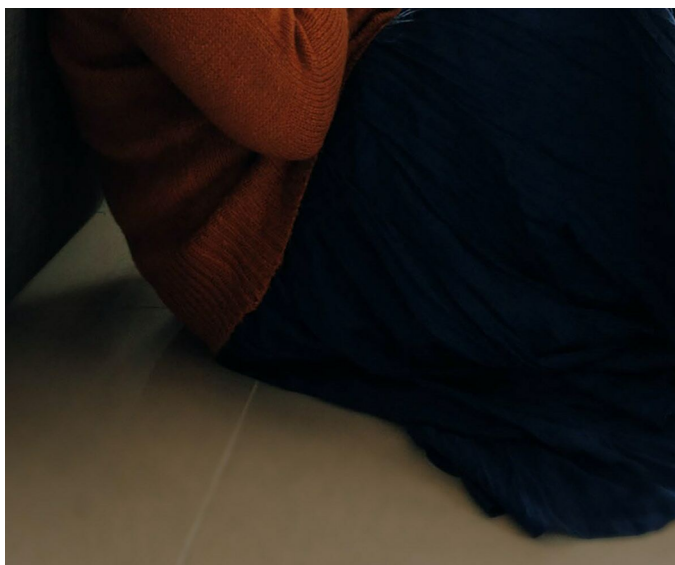
to the Jerusalem Church at the end of his third missionary journey, he reported to James and the elders (Acts 21:18-19). James is ranked with the **apostles** in Gal 1:19, and is mentioned as one of the **pillars** of the Church (Gal 2:9).

Bible scholars concluded that James is one of the earliest NT letters, dating to the period after the persecution of the Jerusalem Church under Herod Agrippa (AD 44, Acts 12:1-5) and before the mass entrance of the Gentiles into the Church c AD 50. This background of the letter helps us to understand why the first Christians of the Church needed this letter of God's Word to teach them to live out their faith in practical and God-honouring way.

**"They were tempted...to relapse and accommodate their life to the life of the world that pressed on them from every side. For them, accommodation to the 'world' meant, of course, accommodation to the Judaism from which they had escaped, Judaism with its distorted piety, its encrusted and inactive faith, its superficial and fruitless hearing of the word, its arrogant and quarrelsome 'wisdom,' its ready response to the seduction of wealth, its mad thirst for liberty. The danger of apostasy was for members of this Church anything but remote and theoretical; it was immediate and real (Jas 5:19-20).**

**In a Church beset from without and within, faced with the necessity of constant correction and discipline, it is small wonder that the love of many grew cold, that the Church was troubled by inner dissensions, that men were ready to speak against and to judge one another, that...the first glad days were in danger of lapsing and being forgotten."**

**(Lutheran Bible Companion, Vol 2: Intertestamental Era, NT, and Bible Dictionary; Gen Ed. Edward A. Engelbrecht, CPH St Louis, p683.)**



We too are facing many kinds of trials, and being tempted to compromise our faith. How can we obtain wisdom to overcome them? Is the wisdom of our experience and life enough? Within the Church we are facing conflicts and the problem of believers falling away. How do we persevere without being destroyed by sin? How do we become stronger disciples and grow deeper in Christ? James instructs us with pastoral insight by God's grace and wisdom.

May we be richly blessed in this study of God's Word.



## MEANING OF LIFE

BY JOHN LEE

### A Philosophical Question

The story is told of a widow who lived a hard life, looked down by others. Through toil without complaining she raised up two kids, seeing them through their education and upbringing. The children graduated from university. As their careers blossomed, they were able to let their mother enjoy a good life.

Yes, the widow finally managed to enjoy a good life but not for long. Age caught up and illness took her away.

This type of story is often embraced by human **wisdom**, with nihilistic savour, to question the meaning of life, enjoining it with a fixed “response”, appended with a sagely advice:

- Question – “What is the meaning of life?”
- Response – “It doesn’t make sense for people to live through toil for much of their time, get to enjoy life for a short time thereafter and then bid farewell.”
- Advice – “Live well and eat well (indulge yourself with pleasures as much as you can) because when death knocks at your door, everything will just be taken away.”

“Everything is Meaningless”

“Everything is Meaningless.” (Ecc 1 NIV)

Wisdom, toil and pleasures are all meaningless. (Ecc 2 NIV)

Some sentiments resonate from Ecclesiastes:



- Pessimism towards life.
- Live for the present – who knows what the future holds?
- Cynicism – No good people in the world; people do good with improper motives.

The writer of Ecclesiastes was nearing the end of his life and in a state of despair and disillusionment when he wrote the book with likely (even if unintended) effect of rubbing the depressive mood onto his readers. However, it is not unusual for people to run into a late-life existential crisis themselves and feel their spiritual slump fomented by their own disappointments and regrets.

The writer of Ecclesiastes was no ordinary person. He was Solomon, the king. Being blessed with great wisdom, wealth and honour (1 Ki 3:12-13), he tried many things. He studied science and agriculture, researched the arts, commissioned prodigious buildings, occupied himself with entertainments, explored philosophy ... but found no contentment. His lamentation that “Everything is Meaningless” indeed gives us food for thought on where the true meaning of life lies.

### A Time For Everything

Ecclesiastes (esp. its first two chapters) bears a lot of negativity about life. However, looking behind the façade, there is some positivity (esp. in Chapters 3 and 12) where Solomon became more sanguine when seeing life from God’s perspective.

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Ecclesiastes 3 (NIV) tells us that there is “A Time For Everything.”

Change is not the only constant in life. Another constant is the fear of change, with people revering familiarity. Yet, the supreme constant is God’s unchanging will. Looking at the ebb and flow of events in the world, we sense changes – with seasons and opportunities, joy and sorrow, harmony and conflict, life and death – in *kairos* time determined by God to conform us to His unchanging will. Man’s part in the whole divine scheme is:

- “to be happy and to do good while they live” (Ecc 3:12) and
- “to enjoy their work, because that is their lot. For who can bring them to see what will happen after them?” (Ecc 3:22)

With sanguinity, Solomon affirmed: “I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him.” (Ecc 3:14)

### Reflection

In the early years, Solomon loved God, applied his wisdom to make many good decisions for his people, was respected by many nations, and Israel prospered

under his rule. (1 Ki 1-11) Unfortunately, in later years, he grew insensitive to God and messed up his life with his foolish ways.

Ecc 12:1 is a pertinent pointer from Solomon’s life experience and a reminder to all to keep their reverence of God:

*Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, “I find no pleasure in them.”*

### Conclusion of the Matter

“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.” (Ecc 12:13-14)

TLSB: “To avoid a meaningless life, one needs a right relationship with God, i.e., justification based on God’s favor toward us on account of Christ and received through faith. God has given His Word, and through it we have the ability to know His Commandments and promises. More important, we can know Him and how to avoid a meaningless life now and in eternity.”

# DE Bible Study: Genesis to Deuteronomy

Date: 5 September - 24 October 2021

Time: 9am – 10.30am

Venue: Jurong Christian Church MPH Level 1 (limited to 50 pax)

This course is centred on the stories in the first five books of the Bible (Genesis to Deuteronomy). It covers topics like the Creation, the Fall, Noah, the tower of Babel, the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph), the Exodus, Sinai and wanderings in the wilderness. Notes will be given for each lesson.

- Sep 5 - Creation to the Fall
- Sep 12 - The Fall to the tower of Babel
- Sep 19 - Abraham
- Sep 26 - Jacob
- (The story of Isaac is covered under Abraham and Jacob)
- Oct 3 - Joseph
- Oct 10 - Exodus
- Oct 17 - Sinai and the Golden Calf
- Oct 24 - Wanderings in the Wilderness



Scan to register or go to [jcc.sg/DEBS-Sep21](http://jcc.sg/DEBS-Sep21)  
Workshop fee is subsidised by JCC.



Rev Dr John S H Tay is the Dean of the Faculty of Biblical Studies in the Bethany International University. In 2004, he retired from St Andrew’s Cathedral, where he had been Dean and Vicar since 1996. Before that, he was an academic staff of National University of Singapore for about 22 years, as well as Professor and Head of Department of Paediatrics (1988-1995). He is married to Ivy, and they have two children and eight grandchildren.



## CONTEXT:

A SIMPLE LESSON SUMMARIZED FROM VARIOUS INTERNET RESOURCES

BY MARTIN CHEAH

*“When reading the Bible, always look at the context of the verses. When you take the 'text' and interpret it out of its 'context,' all you are left with is a 'con!' So don't be conned. Read everything in its context.” – Joseph Prince*

The expression “A Text Taken out of Context Becomes a Pretext” has been around a long time. “Context” simply means to understand what the Bible is saying in comparison to the surrounding passage. To develop a biblical pretext means to give a pre-conceived notion of what the phrase means. Most of the bad pretexts about the Bible come from reading a verse out of context of the surrounding passages.

When you read your Bible, there are three main things you want to get out of your reading. What does the text say? What does the text mean? What does the text have to do with my life?

A common problem to all Bible readers is to not understand what the Bible is saying. If you are wondering what a particular Bible passage means, first of all pray. The next logical thing to ask is, “What is the author trying to say? One of the best ways to figure it out is to refer to the Lutheran Study Bible and if you don't have one, then read the passage in the context of the surrounding passages.

A renowned scientist is frustrated with the popularity of misinformation. In an interview, he tells the press, “My research is meaningless if taken out of context!”

The next day, the public is taken by storm as headlines spread that “Renowned Scientist Claims That His Research is Meaningless!”

Three examples of verses taken out of context:



*“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)*

Taken out of context, this verse suggests that whatever I want to do I can accomplish it if I just believe! But if we read the surrounding verses, we discover Paul is talking about contentment, not achievements. He's actually saying that God gives him the strength to be content despite the circumstances.

*“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant.” (1 Corinthians 13:4)*

This passage is associated with weddings so much that we may forget Paul isn't just referring to romantic love. In the preceding chapter, he instructs the Corinthian church to work together as a community and respect others' gifts.

*“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14)*

This is **not** a universal promise to all believers in all times. This verse starts in the middle of a sentence - that should give you a clue that it is being taken out of context. This promise is given specifically to God's covenant people Israel.

*“For me context is the key - from that comes the understanding of everything”. - Kenneth Noland*





The Combined Council was officially installed on Sunday 1 August 2021. We get to hear from some of their testimonies, what their service entails and the reason for their motivation.



## ENGLISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN: CHONG WONG MUI

I was elected by the English Council as its Chairman this year. Personally, in serving together with the Council members, I see my main role to be that of guiding JCC to strengthen the various ministries so that we can live out our mission to be a Christ-like church. In the Combined Council, I am in the Property Committee which looks after matters related to church property.

I believe that JCC has many strengths which are built up over many years. We have members and ministries that are serving the people across the various age groups - from children, youth, young adults, adults to senior citizens. We have other

ministries that focus on worship, preaching, outreach, students in the schools through the Boys' Brigade and Girls' Brigade, the media and marriage preparation for couples.

We can build on what we have, to be a people of God that will bless many more people. We can do that by adopting the strategy of helping all JCCians grow in discipleship and to make disciples - "Be One, Make One, As One".

It is my desire and hope that JCC can adopt a framework for the disciple-making process. It will take a few years for us to build a culture of disciple-making. The Council will deliberate on this and reach out to the leaders of the Youth, Young Adult and Adult ministries in 3Q 2021. Once we have gathered buy-in, we will start the process by working with the cell groups and other leaders in 2022.

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## MY DAYS IN JCC AND AS COUNCIL MEMBER

BY JOYCE TAN

I became a Christian since my secondary school days in Anglican High School. It was through supporting Teck Chai in his Boys' Brigade (BB) ministry that I got to know more about JCC. I became a member of JCC when Teck Chai and I got married and I moved from the East to the West of Singapore.

I was introduced to the Mass Media Ministry (MMM) as a writer (not so much as an Editor) by Ronnie. It is wonderful to see how God transformed "The Vine" into "The WinePRESS" and now MMM has a team of more than 15 serving God alongside the Techannels transforming our service to God in JCC. To God be His Glory!

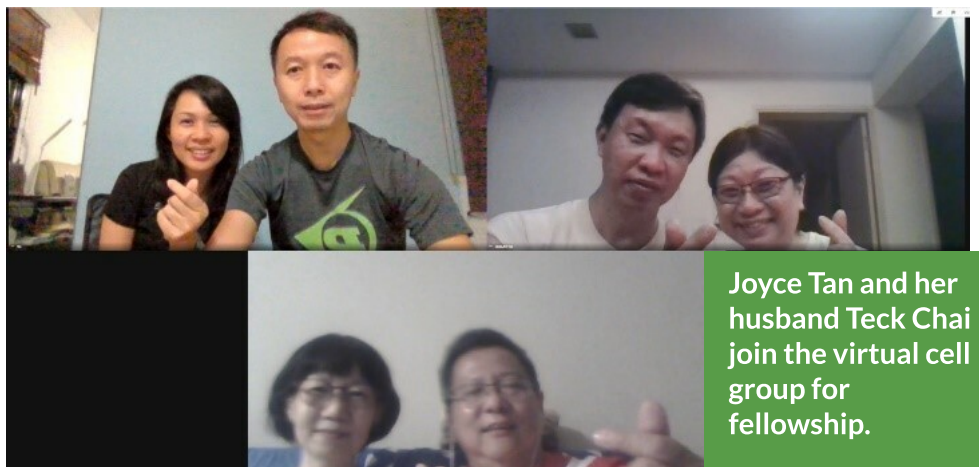
For a few years, I was praying and observing the Cell Groups (CG) at JCC and did not know which CG to join. One day, Tony approached me to join the Abundance CG. The CG is such an encouragement to me. As one of the Core Team members supporting the CG, I have learnt to serve together with brothers and sisters-in-Christ in areas that I never imagine I would! God is such an influence in my life as a Christian going through the throes of change and realities of life in areas of my family, career, education and friends.

In one of the AGM meetings 5 years ago, I was seated at the front row in the Sanctuary. I was in a peaceful and calm state when a thought passed through my mind: "HR in JCC!"

Was it God's voice speaking to me? Not taking it

seriously, I brushed it off. To my surprise, Se Ping and Beng Lay approached me to pray and think about serving in a unique capacity in JCC as a Council member. I was stunned as I had struggled with experiences in Church and as a Christian who is working in the world, yet not supposed to be of the world. I had the opportunity to pursue HR after a series of learning and exposures in various areas. I could not imagine what I was called for! Servanthood is key as a Council member and it is what differentiates our corporate work from that of serving God! It was God who first loved us and by His Grace, we can be who we are, serving and glorifying His Name!

I am now in my 4th year as a Council member, supporting the Combined and English Councils as



Joyce Tan and her husband Teck Chai join the virtual cell group for fellowship.

Secretary for the last few years. I have also been serving in the HR & Admin Sub-Committee which has members from the English and Chinese Councils. This year, I am given the support to lead this Sub-Committee after relinquishing my role as Council Secretary. I give thanks to God for the opportunity to raise the HR standards in JCC with cognizance of labour laws, guidelines and market practices. The work continues as we strive to incorporate efficient frameworks, enhanced



processes and Code of Governance. We aim for a better understanding of HR in a simplified and easy-to-apply approach in JCC that is appropriate to the new normal now!

With Frank and Wong Mui as the Chairpersons of Combined and English Councils respectively, we are working hand in glove on strategic plans at Council

and ministry levels. I am thankful to Se Ping as my mentor under the Joshua Culture 23 initiative. A new horizon has appeared as I am now taking up the role as representative from the Council to the Children's Ministry.

Pray for the Council as we serve together with all of you! God Bless & Stay Safe!



## MY SERVICE IN THE COUNCIL AND PRESCHOOL

BY JUSTIN TAY

I left EFC and joined JCC in 1996 when I was 13 years old. Under the BB programme, I could earn an extra 8 points if I participated in the DTP and worship service. Since I was going to another church anyway, I might as well kill 2 birds with 1 stone and earn some extra points along the way. So, I ended up in JCC.

Currently, I spend a disproportionate amount time with David & Goliath Preschool (DGP). I am thankful to God for brothers and sisters who have agreed to take on this new challenge despite the odds: Adrian, Benedict, Serene, Joel, Bernice, Huiling, Ethan, Dolly, Kylie, Samantha and Shoo Mei.

This is, without a doubt, my most challenging ministry ever: There have been some 'interesting' challenges every 1-2 weeks; and when we solve one problem, another pops out like a whack-a-mole game. At some point, I learnt that our team's experience and skills simply cannot solve some of these challenges, especially the human issues. It is really by God's grace that we managed to overcome each challenge.

During this COVID-19 period, I am also thankful for the opportunities to serve and learn in these



Justin and his wife Serene serve on DGP's Management Committee.

initiatives: Project S3P, JC23 and the Youth Fireside Chat.

We embarked on these initiatives with this fundamental belief guiding us: at the end of the day, it is about **people**. When we are about to die, I believe that we will primarily think about **people**. And when we live again in His glorious presence – we will be with **people** and God. If '**people**' features significantly at the end of the equation, shouldn't the earlier part (of the equation) also consist of **people**? It is about impacting lives, developing **people**, building genuine relations centered on Christ. That would truly last. It is therefore not surprising how Jesus spent most of His life on earth. Only by focusing on **people (and God)** can we effectively prepare the way for the Lord and for His harvest.

One of the biggest challenges we face at the council and ministry level is lack of young blood. I think we

have the people. We need to allow Him to stretch us all (youth, young adults and adults) further in faith and spirit, not in our own strength. Encourage our people to give our best fruits to Him and see what He can do with that. Let Him surprise us like the boy with the 5 loaves and 2 fishes, like king David, etc. God will not short-change us. He will honour those who honour Him.

*2 Samuel 24:24 But the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.*

Let's press on in in our Christian service, JCCians. Life is beautiful in Christ.



## A FOOT-SOLDIER AND COMMONER

BY TONY KOH

I came to JCC with my family in 1996 when my younger daughter, Diana, was one year old. My Lutheran roots were established in

Queenstown Lutheran Church (QLC) where I was brought up as a member of the 26th Singapore Boys' Brigade Company. It was there that I had the opportunity to rub shoulders with then Junior Officer (OIC) Rev. Terry Kee who later became the 2nd Bishop of LCS for 12 years (2009 - June 2021).

I see myself as being endowed with strengths of a foot soldier and commoner by default. I count it a privilege and JOY ("Jesus-Others-You") to be able to serve the Church. Over the years, I have served in roles in BB, Sunday School, Dialect Service Projection Team, mission trip to Cambodia, QLC Joint Batam mission trip, ABC Cells, JCC Fund Raising Committee, JCC Council and ABC 1 Core Team.

In 2019, at the invitation of then Council Chairman, Se Ping, I was nominated as a Council Member. I am

thankful for the big-hearted acceptance and embrace offered to me by fellow Council members. Even before I joined the Council, my faith had been buoyed by the love of many brothers and sisters whom I had opportunities of working with. To name a few: Alan Soh, Janet Cher, Se Ping, Ronnie, Thomas, Cheng Teck and of course the pastoral leadership team, including Deacon Peter who ministered to my in-laws and mum with his unceasing and tireless efforts.

I share much joy with fellow Abundance Cell members on seeing how this Cell Group has multiplied. We are blessed with our "gung-ho" Samantha, our "GEMs" - Joyce, Lawrence and Grace as Core Team members and our ABC2 shepherd Patrick, for whom I am thankful that he is such a gentleman and always there to serve with his expertise and "Never Say NO" attitude. We look forward to sharing this "joy of faith" with new members over time.

As a humble foot soldier, I serve God with gladness and will continue to contribute my strengths as an elected member of JCC Council in my second consecutive term (Year 2021-22). GOD BLESS and TO GOD BE THE GLORY!





## COUNCIL EFFORTS IN HR, TECHANNELS AND GOSHEN

BY BRYAN TAY



I joined JCC in Nov 2018 and became a JCC member in Dec 2019. My Christian journey since teenage days has been enriched by Charismatic and contemporary Brethren influence. And now, I am Lutheran!

Currently, I work with the TEChannels and the Goshen Initiative committees to spearhead JCC's drive in creating "community bridges" and adopting technology for outreach and people engagement. In the Combined Council, I am a member of the HR & Admin sub-committee.

One **critical impact** that I would love to achieve in JCC is to **build a Learning Church**. Many organisations fade off because they focused too heavily on the present while neglecting efforts in passing on or building new capabilities that are critical to their continued survival, let alone growth.

As God's people, we ought and are already equipped to do better. We have a Mighty God!

**A learning church is a growing church:** Learning to

deepen our understanding of God's Word, learning to love others as ourselves, learning to serve those in need, learning to pass on what we have learnt. For we do not want to have future generations that "knew not God".

All this will not happen by chance. As a team, we need to make concerted efforts to plan, organize, lead, monitor progress and make adjustments as we push on. In the coming months, TEChannels committee will be focused on developing online learning resources while the Goshen Initiative committee will be launching several new "community bridges" for JCCians to demonstrate God's tangible love to those in need.

As one Body of Christ, let us GO! Shout His Excellent Name!

## LCS COURSE FOR CREDIT PROGRAMME

**LUTHERANISM 101: HOLY BAPTISM**  
3 CREDITS, 8 SESSIONS

Dates: Every Saturday from 11 Sept - 30 Oct 2021  
Time: 10:30am - 12 noon  
Venue: Using Zoom Conferencing Software  
Cost: \$10, Textbook (shown on the right) - \$12.50



Rev Richard Chiu  
Yishun Christian Church (Lutheran)

Quick, Usable, Comprehensive, Concise

## Lutheranism 101 HOLY BAPTISM

**What You'll Learn About:**

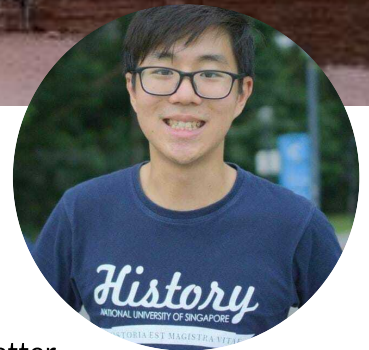
- Rebirth in water and the Word
- A place in God's family
- Just how wet to get
- Infant baptism
- The gifts given
- and much more!





## THE ALPHA TO THE OMEGA

BY SAMUEL CHONG



# AΩ

### Introduction

Through this series, we hope to bring readers through the history of Christianity using the 26 letters of the English alphabet.

Each letter will feature a person/ place/ event/ item

that helps us better understand the Bible, the history of the Church until today and how our lives have been impacted.

We hope that you will have a better appreciation of the historical context surrounding biblical events and those thereafter, and see how God moves throughout history – His Story.

### B is for Babylon

*“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.” - Psalm 137:1 (KJV)*

#### What was Babylon?

Babylon was the capital of two distinct Babylonian empires, the second being featured prominently in the Bible. The term “Babylon” is also often used to refer to this second empire.

#### The Babylonian Empire(s)

The Old Babylonian Empire (c.1894 BC – 1595 BC) was founded by Amorite migrants to Mesopotamia. It reached its zenith during the reign of Hammurabi (c. 1792 BC – 1750 BC), whose legacies included major construction work that expanded Babylon into a great city with an efficient bureaucracy and taxation system, and the Code of Hammurabi (c. 1750 BC) – the longest and best-preserved legal text from the Near East. The empire disintegrated

quickly after Hammurabi’s death and came under the rule of successive foreign peoples, most notably the Neo-Assyrian Empire (who also conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel, see 2 Kings 17). Nonetheless, Hammurabi was upheld as a model ruler, and even a god, by many subsequent kings in the Near East.

The Neo-Babylonian Empire (626 BC – 539 BC) arose nearly a millennium later, after the official/general Nabopolassar took advantage of political instability in Assyria to launch a revolt and drive the Assyrians out of Babylonia, restoring its independence in 626 BC. The Babylonians soon allied with the Medes (an ancient Iranian people) to defeat and conquer Assyria in 609 BC. When Nebuchadnezzar succeeded Nabopolassar as king in 605 BC, he became the most powerful ruler in the known world at the time. Nebuchadnezzar II initiated many great building projects such as the Ishtar Gate, canals, and purportedly the legendary Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar II

*continued on the next page*



was also famous for his campaigns in the Levant, especially his conquest of the Southern Kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 24). Like with Hammurabi, the empire fell into political instability after Nebuchadnezzar's death in 562 BC. Power eventually landed with Nabonidus (an influential courtier) and his son Belshazzar (Daniel 5).

The Neo-Babylonian Empire met its end at the hands of Cyrus the Great from Persia to the east. Cyrus had overthrown the Medes and established the Achaemenid Empire, thereafter invading Babylon and overthrowing Nabonidus and Belshazzar in 539 BC, turning Babylon into a satrapy (Daniel 6:1-2) and positioning himself as a legitimate successor to the ancient Babylonian kings (e.g. Hammurabi).

### Babylon the City

While the Babylonian Empires were vast and powerful, the capital city of Babylon was also famed for its splendour. It was perhaps the first city to reach a population of over 200,000 and was probably the largest city in the world at some point. Its famous gates, ziggurats (i.e. temples) and canals added to its prestige. The city was also cosmopolitan, as conquered peoples were brought in as political hostages but also for their expertise (Daniel 1:1-5).

After being rediscovered by Europeans in the 18th century, Babylon underwent extensive excavations in the 19th and 20th centuries. The ruins of Babylon were designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2019.

### Babylon in the Bible and Church History

Babylon featured extensively in the Old Testament – Moses and the prophets had foretold Israel's exile, the books of Kings and Chronicles detail the Babylonian invasion, and the Book of Daniel records the history of the Jews in Babylon. Certainly, God had used Babylon as an instrument for His Will. Nonetheless, Babylon earned God's wrath due to its violence and rejection of Him (Isaiah 47, Jeremiah 50-51). Furthermore, God was ultimately faithful in bringing His people back to Israel as He promised.

In the New Testament, Babylon was used as a metaphor for worldliness and evil. Peter wrote his first epistle from "Babylon" (1 Peter 5:13), very



The Neo-Babylonian Empire at its greatest extent under Nabonidus (r. 556-539 BC).  
*Image credit: IchthyovenatorSémhur*

likely a reference to Rome whose Christians were experiencing persecution. Babylon would also feature prominently in Revelation, namely the Whore of Babylon that is closely associated with the Beast in Chapter 17. This "Babylon" has been associated with various powers such as Rome or the Roman Catholic Church (a personal view held by many of the Reformers).

Negative associations aside, Christianity was introduced to Mesopotamia during the 1st and 2nd Centuries AD. Babylon was a seat of a Bishop of the Church of the East (i.e. Syriac Rite Christianity) and a small Christian community lived there until recently, as most Iraqi Christians have fled due to incessant war and intense persecution.

### Rivers of Babylon

The Rastafari song "Rivers of Babylon" is based on Psalm 137:1-4. Rastafarianism uses "Babylon" to refer to any governmental system which is oppressive and/or unjust. The "rivers" in the song likely refer to Babylon's many canals. The 1978 cover by Boney M. is perhaps the best-known version of the song.

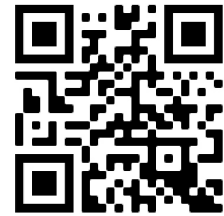
*All information taken from the relevant Wikipedia articles.*



# Community Life Emphasis - Cell Group

God has put a big spiritual family in JCC through our baptism! We thank God for the opportunity to grow and serve Him together, especially in the Cell ministry!

No man is an island. As part of Community Life Emphasis Weeks 2021, we strongly encourage you to be part of a group of believers whom you can be accountable to and share life with.



Please respond to God's Word  
by using the QR code or link -  
[jcc.sg/communitylife](https://jcc.sg/communitylife)



## COMMUNITY LIFE

COMPILED BY JOHN LEE

Here are some FAQ with answers courtesy of various Internet sources:

**Is the word "community" in the Bible?**  
(<https://tinyurl.com/u27fwj7e>)

The essential meaning of the Greek word *koinonia* embraces concepts conveyed in the English terms "community", "communion", "joint participation", "sharing" and "intimacy". *Koinonia* can therefore refer in some contexts to a jointly contributed gift. The word appears 19 times in most editions of the Greek New Testament.

**Why is Christian community important?**  
(<https://tinyurl.com/y35mjscd>)

Christian community is a big deal. It's important for our happiness and growth. And it's not an optional part of the Christian life. When we are in close relationships with other believers, we have people to pray for us, support us, encourage us, exhort us and serve alongside us.

**What does the Bible say about Christian community?** (<https://tinyurl.com/79tut4nc>)

Scripture says that's because we're better together than we are alone (Romans 12:4-5). It can be hard for some of us to commit to community, especially with the world going through a pandemic. But community is God's desire for us—and a sign of a mature faith.

**What are the benefits of joining a Cell Group?**  
(<https://tinyurl.com/hbcfhava>)

- In the CG, there is more opportunity to share our minds. Members realize that others have similar problems. People often think there is something uniquely wrong with them. When they hear that others have similar struggles, they feel relieved and encouraged.
- God doesn't expect pastors and teachers to do all the ministering. He has given each of us gifts and talents to encourage, teach, and challenge one another. Small groups provide



the perfect setting for Christians to minister one to another.

*"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."  
(Hebrews 10:24)*

- We strengthen each other's faith. In his letter to the Romans, Paul taught us that when we see the faith in another believer, it encourages us in our own faith.

*"... that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith."  
(Romans 1:12)*

- There is nothing like a word of encouragement when someone feels hopeless or discouraged. Group members support one another, both during meetings and outside them.

*"We can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."  
(2 Corinthians 1:4)*

- Group members hold each other accountable. This can be done in a friendly, informal way.

*"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."  
(Proverbs 27:17)*

- Members pray for one another.

*"For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."  
(Matthew 18:20)*

- Group members can help each other in hard times. People often feel isolated, alone or abandoned when facing grave health, emotional or financial problems. Small group members can provide a "safety net," supporting one another in hard times.
- Friendships start in small groups.

**Are you already in a Cell Group, or planning to join one?**

You provide your own answer. =)



**51<sup>ST</sup>**

**COMPANY**  
SHUQUN PRIMARY  
SCHOOL

**EVERY  
GIRL A  
LEADER**

**GB FORTNIGHT 2021**

**25 JULY - 12 SEPT**

[givenow.gb.org.sg](https://givenow.gb.org.sg)



Charity Reg. No. 0172  
UEN No.: S61SS0001A

**DONATION CHANNELS:**

GBS Donation Portal  
Appeal Leaflets  
Donation Cards

The Girls' Brigade Fortnight is an annual donation drive that supports our effort to help every girl in the 51st Company (Shuqun Primary School) fulfil her fullest potential – so she can be filled with hope for today and bring hope to others tomorrow. Your donations will support each girl in her holistic and godly growth.



## WHY ON EARTH WOULD I JOIN A CELL GROUP? BY BRYAN TAY

Over the last few weeks, we have heard so much about living the Community Christian Life. We have even engaged a consultant to help the church leadership identify issues, make proposals and conduct coaching sessions with the view of helping each Cell Group (CG) Leader initiate action plans in specific areas of building community life.

Before we talk about CG, consider how society works in general. We know that each family in a society contributes to the overall culture, growth and achievements of that society. Each family strives to take care of its own members, looking out for one another and helping out in times of need. Parents sacrifice themselves, even their lives to provide for their children. Siblings may fight and quarrel, but when external forces endanger any family member, they unite to defend their safety, rights and well-being.

### Is the Church less important than society?

Now consider this parallel. The Church is the society. Each Cell Group is a family in that society. We are the Body of Christ powered by a multitude of Cell Groups.

- *The life of a body (JCC) is in its blood.*
- *The vitality of a body springs from each and every cell group (CG) in the body.*
- *Healthy cell groups contribute to efficient function of each member (Ministry).*

- *Each member of the body performs its role to fulfil its mission (Great Commission).*

From the pulpit, our pastors make a clarion call: “**Join a Cell Group!**”

But the data gathered in August 2021 reveals the following:

- 58 adults belong to a CG
- 54 young adults and youth belong to a CG

This means that **less than 50%** of the English congregation belong to a Cell Group. More critically, the strength and vitality of the JCC body is well below par.

### Points for Reflection

- How can the JCC body function properly with only 50% of its cell groups working?
- As a cell in the JCC body, what are you doing or what can you do to contribute to its vitality?
- If you do not do your part, no other cell can fulfil the role that God has intended for you.

As an earthly citizen, I proudly declare that I belong to Singapore. And I belong to my family, a closely-knit unit that resides in Singapore. So, as a Kingdom citizen, I proudly declare that I belong to Jurong Christian Church. And I belong to a

*continued on the next page*



closely-knit Cell Group (BCG3) that resides in JCC, where I can give and receive encouragement, share weal and woe, find strength and comfort that whatever life throws at me, I will be supported not only by my earthy family, but also by my brothers and sisters in the Cell Group. For that matter, JCC and the entire Body of Christ.

Why should I settle for any less? I am glad to be in BCG3. You should join one too.

*“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” - Hebrew 10:24,25*



## BLOOM WHERE PLANTED

BY JIEMIN TAN

I am the cell group leader of S.A.L.T (Serve, Act, Love, Testify). This is a praise sharing on how God watched over me and reassured me when my anxiety over being left out of promotion in my job was eating me up from inside.

I have been a social worker since 2010, and in my current organisation for almost 6 years. I have experienced different management teams. Regardless of the change of leaders, my motto has been to be faithful towards my work and clients as I strive to be the best social worker and supervisor I can be.

However, I would feel disappointed each time there was a promotion of a colleague with me being left out. I often struggled to congratulate the colleague while harbouring doubt about my own performance. This year particularly, I felt bitter in realising that I



Jeimin (seated right) celebrating Christmas with her colleagues.

had been in the same designation for the past 6 years while my juniors were rising in their positions.

Despite annual salary increases and been given different portfolios and opportunities, I felt that my work had gone unrecognised. Questioning my own competency and strengths, I wondered about my supervisor's objectivity in her performance appraisal of me especially when assessing candidates for promotion.

At one point, I felt greatly insecure. Whenever an agency assignment was not given to me despite my expression of interest, my mind would have a lot of questions. For example, how does management

make the decision to assign the portfolio? Should I be more thick-skinned to lobby strongly for what I want?



Jiemin, 2nd from right, celebrating life with her newborn and social work colleagues.

During a cell group bible study, the following verses spoke right through my heart and situation:

*“For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” – James 3:16-17*

I reflected on my job anxieties, “selfish ambition” and unhealthy feelings of enviousness. Instead of a pure heart considerate of the organisation and submissive towards authorities, why was my heart filled with jealousy, bitterness and insecurity?

I could only share my feelings with my husband, for I did not know who else would be able to relate with my situation as a working mother having the desire to excel and progress in her career.

Finally, the day came when I had a scheduled Zoom time with my supervisor. I plucked up the courage to air my thoughts frankly. It turned out that she was

expecting me to bring up the topic of promotion. While prior to the conversation I had prayed to contain my emotion, I still ended up crying badly in front of the Zoom screen as my supervisor asked about how my feelings were when I first heard about the latest promotion exercise. For a good 10 minutes I tried to look away from the screen. Thereafter, my supervisor shared

her own experience of waiting for the right moment to be promoted. She shared that she had also been in her current designation for many years, as a Senior Social Worker. Being a full-time working mother, she could empathise with my disappointment and my thought about “why not me?”

She clarified that when I was first hired, I was already placed on the fast track for progression despite not having any experience in the family service centre. This showed that the organisation already recognised my potential. It also meant that I need more time in my present position before the next move to a higher tier of responsibilities. Besides, the organisation considers my part-time status, workload and my bandwidth. Assuring me that I do not have to doubt my competence, she enquired on whether I would be ready for a higher position due to the responsibilities that come with it, given that I will



be delivering my no. 2 early next year.

At that moment, I realised that God had used my supervisor to speak life and truth, answering my doubts without dismissing my disappointment.

More important was a question I needed to seek God's counsel: Do I really want a higher role at this stage or would it be more sensible for me to wait it out

for another season when my family life commitment does not affect my bandwidth for responsibilities as an agency leader?

I may not yet have the answer in terms of when I would be ready to welcome a promotion. However, I am certain that God's timing has been perfect and His ways are higher than our own. He placed people to speak into my insecurities and instructed me by His Word when I laboured under my ill-conceived dissatisfaction over my job position in my current season as a mother/part-timer. God also revealed to me that I still have the issue of wanting to gain approval from the world despite the approval that He has already given me since the day I was His child.



Jiemin, with her husband Jonathan at English Sunday service, seeks Christ for answers in her life and career.

Romans 12:4-8 reminds me that "in one body, we have many members and the members do not all have the same function."

I need to recognise the unique strengths and talents that God has given me, I do not need to compare myself with others but continue to be faithful with what He has given me and bloom where I am planted.

I want to encourage other part-time working mothers like me who might be struggling with career progression issues while striking a balance between family and professional life. At times, ruefulness may crop up over missing promotion opportunities, but there is the satisfaction of fulfilment in family life that matters to us.

God has His best plan for our lives and is worthy of our praise!





Group photos taken during Phase 2.



## AGAINST ALL TEMPTATIONS

BY LIM TSU ERN

This cell group called AAT (Against All Temptations) is made up of a bunch of similarly-aged rambunctious individuals who mostly grew up together in Jurong Christian Church as second-generation Christians following in our parents' faith. Through our years together, with the love and attention rained – not showered – upon us from our cell leaders Samuel, Suren, Jason, Peh Ern, Joseph, Stephanie and Mervyn, we got to grow our own convictions about God and His work in our lives.

When AAT members came into university-attending age, we had to disband temporarily since many of us ventured overseas in our pursuit of higher education, and our numbers here at home were too dismal to make much sense in sticking together. Members then split up into other cell groups or got drafted into leadership-focused groups of that time.

As our members returned to Singapore after completing university studies overseas (mostly in

Australia), we all felt the strong urge to come back together and to continue growing in Christ as the AAT we knew we once were.

Come 2015, AAT was revived with a meal at Jason's place. Today, we have grown in size, with most of us of marriageable age and bringing our partners into the fold along with other new members who are new to JCC as well.

In 2021, AAT is a peer-led cell that retains its rambunctious character of old. The personalities of our members range from the reserved, to bouncing-off-the-walls type, and everything else in-between. We love God, and each other, deeper than deep.

Do join us! AAT as a whole is greater than a sum of its parts, but a greater sum of parts makes a larger whole – so what are you waiting for? Get in touch with us!

## OPEN TALK WITH GOD



By Bryan Tay

Dear Lord,

Why do we need to give Tithes and Offerings? I don't really earn enough to even feed myself and my family. There are so many bills to pay. Can I be excused for a period of time? Or can I just give a small amount once in a while? Or can I give either tithes or offering?

My precious child,

Everything belongs to Me. I don't need your money. It is about your heart, that you trust Me with your life and finances. By sacrificing a portion of your income, I want to remind you to rely on Me to meet your needs. And it makes you more aware of the needs of others too.

**YOU CANNOT SERVE GOD & MONEY**

### Are you robbing God? HERE'S WHAT GOD IS SAYING TO US

Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.  
But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?'

**In tithes and offerings.**

You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. Bring *the* whole tithe into *the* storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says *the* Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw *open the floodgates of heaven* and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

Malachi 3:8-10

Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the **firstfruits** of all your crops.

Proverbs 3:9 (NIV)

Remember this: Whoever sows *sparingly* will also reap *sparingly*, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should **give what you have decided** in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:6,7 (NIV)







# CELEBRATE NATIONAL DAY 2021

(With thanksgiving and a fun puzzle)

On Aug 9, 2021, Singapore celebrates her 56th year of independence. The pageantry is subdued due to the pandemic situation. Still, in our hearts we know that we have a lot to thank God for, especially when we count our blessings despite everything:

We thank God for our achievements from August 9, 1965 until now.

We thank God for the **FREEDOM** to **WORSHIP** Him.

We thank God for the **PEACE** we enjoy, with His **MERCY** and protection.

We thank God for many individual **BLESSINGS**.

Echoing Ps 67:4, let Singapore be **GLAD** and sing for **JOY**.

The LORD is high above all nations (Ps 113:4a) and we give Him all **PRAISE** and **GLORY**.

We pray for the government to continue to rule the nation with **JUSTICE** and **EQUALITY**,

“that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all **GODLINESS** and **HOLINESS**.” (1 Tim 2:2b)

The winds of change are blowing at the global landscape.

As Christians, we maintain our **FAITH** in God.

For great is his **LOVE** toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.” (Ps 117:2)

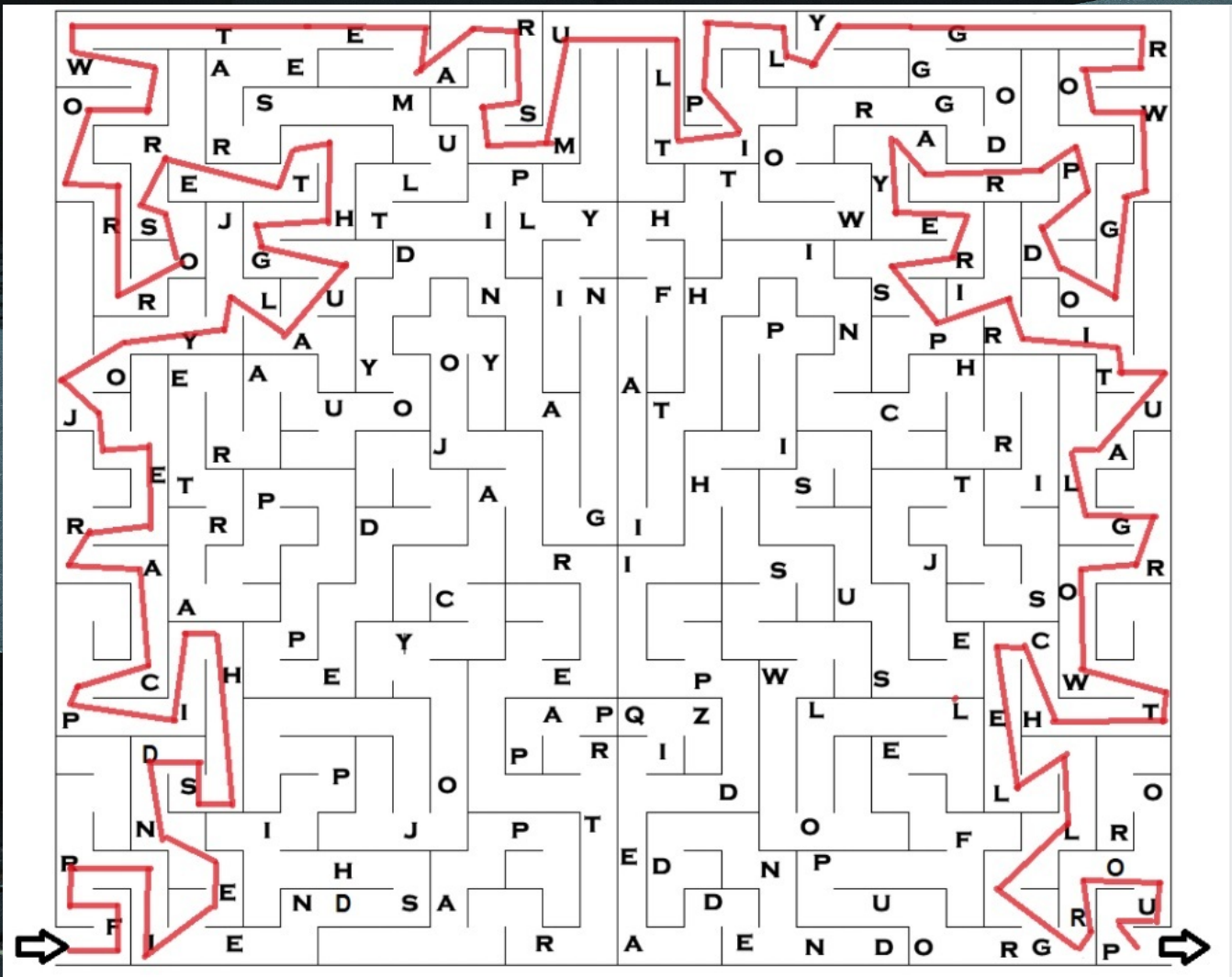
Each of the above 15 highlighted words appears twice in the word puzzle below. Shade them in the puzzle to find a hidden National Day message. (Two words have been shaded for you.)

K	P	T	L	E	B	Q	P	O	I	O	K	P	T	L	E	B	Q	P	O	I
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Y	S	Y	S	L	E	E	S	I	O	Y	Q	R	I	I	S	L	H	M	Y	S
Z	O	Z	O	S	A	N	I	F	J	O	J	A	Z	X	F	E	O	B	Z	O
G	E	G	E	Q	U	A	L	I	T	Y	O	I	G	M	R	S	L	W	G	E
L	J	L	J	U	S	T	I	C	E	H	Y	S	L	E	E	S	I	O	L	J
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F	O	F	O	S	A	N	I	F	J	O	Y	P	D	C	D	N	E	S	F	O
A	V	A	V	T	L	E	N	A	L	O	V	E	P	Y	O	G	S	H	A	V
I	O	I	E	I	I	S	E	I	P	E	A	C	E	Y	M	S	S	I	I	E
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J	F	Z	F	A	I	T	H	I	F	O	S	A	N	I	R	A	I	S	J	L
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V	J	E	I	N	R	O	L	A	T	P	C	T	S	S	A	R	E	I	V	A
E	N	D	N	E	S	R	A	C	H	R	E	Y	K	S	D	C	D	N	E	I
P	G	O	G	S	H	Y	D	E	O	I	G	M	R	S	L	W	O	K	P	J
B	N	D	N	E	S	R	A	C	H	R	E	Y	K	S	D	C	D	N	D	L
R	E	Y	K	S	D	C	D	N	D	B	N	D	N	E	S	R	A	C	H	G

 SOLUTION to Biblical Community Maze in July WINEPRESS

What are the characteristics of a Biblical Community?

- In a Biblical community, people are connected in friendship and mutual care.
- In a Biblical community, people share joy and laughter, sorrow and tears.
- A Biblical community seeks to multiply and grow.
- In a Biblical community, people are connected to God in prayer.
- In a Biblical community, people encourage one another in spiritual growth.
- A cell group is an example of a Biblical community.







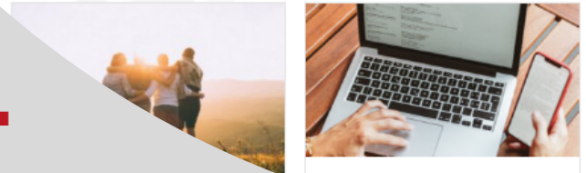
# SAY HELLO TO OUR BRAND NEW JCC WEB PORTAL



## Jurong Christian Church Invites You

Wherever you are, you can join our online services by registering on this website. Jurong Christian Church is happening online, and available for everyone interested in joining, wherever you are.

### Latest Announcements



New Church Website and

### Have you visited our brand new JCC web portal?

It took 5 months of hard work by the TEChannels team and the vendor to create it! This portal serves the English, Chinese and Hokkien congregations. And we did not simply build a website. We created a whole new, communicative web portal for outreach, communication and learning!

#### So what's new?

Our new web portal has inbuilt features and functions to engage users in an interactive manner. In addition, privileged information and access rights are reserved only for JCC members. Users can get information updates, socialise with one another, enroll in online courses and much more.

Go to [www.jcc.sg](http://www.jcc.sg) and sign up as a member today!

[SIGN UP HERE](#)

Happy exploring...start connecting!

#### Membership has its privileges

Here are some exciting features that you should begin exploring:

- Create private Cell Groups for communication and sharing of materials
- Connect and socialise with any other subscribed member
- View Church events on the Calendar and make bookings
- Join Sunday online service directly from home page
- Enroll in Christian educational courses
- Create and publish courses to benefit others (for Approved Instructors)