



GRACE News

- A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH LIMITED -

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Editorial

RELATIONSHIPS AS WORSHIP

It has been five years since Grace News was re-launched as a full-colour printed newsletter, and we hope you have benefited from some of the articles featured. As always we are open to suggestions, comments, and especially contributions! Please do get in touch (email address below).

We mark five years with a new focus this year on strengthening family ties. This is one very visible area of our lives where we as Christians can show our distinctiveness and glorify God by the way we conduct ourselves in relation to others, whether in our individual families or in the wider church family. We kick off by taking a look at marriage and singlehood, the benefits and the challenges and the ways we can worship God through all our relationships, irrespective of our marital status.

Turn to pages 2 and 3 to read about four couples in GBC, all at different stages of their marriages, and benefit from their frank sharing about their journeys with each other thus far. On page 4 Seah Yen Goon speaks to singles to find out how they view their singlehood, and on page 5 Effie Wong shares some advice on how to seek help for those who may be struggling through a difficult stage in their marriage. Don't miss our interview with Desmond and Wendy on the unique challenges that the mission field presents to married life, and finally on page 8 check out some views of the recent ABC video presentation *What Did You Expect?* by Paul Tripp.

Wishing all our readers a blessed New Year in 2013.

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MARRIAGE & SINGLENESS

Pastor Arnold Wong

There are a lot of myths and fables associated with marriage and singleness. One may be portrayed as bliss and the other as a curse – you can pick which applies to which! God's word gives us the real truth about both. What the Bible says about them often runs contrary to popular beliefs.

God's original purpose for marriage is found in Gen 2:18-23. In Eve, God created a companion to help Adam. Marriage is meant to meet the need for fellowship, companionship, help, and comfort which all human beings require and crave.

When each marriage partner is operating at full capacity according to the way God intends, marriage becomes a relationship that can bless the couple and others. Among God's expectations, wives are to respect their husbands and the husbands are to love their wives (Eph 5:33). This combination of love and respect can produce a dynamic relationship with great potential for blessing. Some couples work better as a team than on their own

as individuals. In fact, Godly marriages can lead to Godly families that can eventually bless an entire nation (Ps 128).

Therefore, marriage is intended by God to be something good.

This brings us to singleness. The truth is that singleness is also held in high esteem by God. Not everyone will be married for any number of reasons, eg Matt 19:10-12. Being married or being single is a gift from the Lord (1 Cor 7:6-7). Singleness has its advantages, just like marriage does. Singleness can allow a person to serve the Lord without the added stresses that can come with marriage and family (1 Cor 7:32-34).

Both marriage and singleness are a blessing. People who are married and those who are single are equally important and valued by God. ***There is no 'second class of Christians' based on marital status.*** The most important thing in life is not finding a mate or being a mate – it is being and doing what God wants you to be and do. Ω

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Grace News interviewed four couples at different stages of their marriages to understand the realities of marriage and how Christ has and is featured in this lifelong journey. We hope that through these short anecdotes you will be able to trace the loving hand of the Father, as He weaves together couples for the praise of His glory.

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”
Genesis 2:24



Honeymooners – Kang Wei & Xiuhui

Kang Wei and Xiuhui got married last year.

At this early stage of our journey together, we are adjusting to living as ‘we, not I’ in all aspects, especially in speech, use of time and decision-making. We are learning to share our lives with each other while also learning about each other’s living habits.

We struggle to become more independent from our own families, holding fast to each other. However, the difficulty in securing a place of our own makes it challenging for us to cultivate good family habits and manage our household responsibly.

We believe that it is important to communicate with each other, pray together and consult with other Godly couples.

“If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.”



Family with Teenagers

– Jonathan & Eng Meng Yao

Jonathan and Eng Meng were married on 3 Nov 1990, 22 years ago, after a courtship of seven years! Their children are Isaac (20), Johann (18), and Krystal (11).

With our children ranging from pre-teen to young adults, we face some challenges in our desire to strengthen familial bonds. We have to intentionally find time and ways to keep our hearts connected to one another and to the Lord. As parents, we look out for God-given windows of opportunity to minister when helping our teenage children in their walk with God. While we will always be their parents, we have to make it a point to be their friends too.

As a couple, when faced with challenges we:

- pray unceasingly and hold on to God’s promises;
- remind each other that God is our parenting partner – we have divine help!;
- continue to deepen our marriage relationship while parenting;
- aim to develop oneness in our hearts, not just closeness (physical presence is not enough).



Empty-Nesters – David & Lena Chan

David has been married for 32 years to Lena who is the love of his life! They have three lovely daughters, who are all living apart from them.

Now that we are 'empty-nesters' we need to adjust to one another. Because I am retired and Lena is still working, there is a reversal of roles between us. I started to do more domestic chores. We have to learn to communicate more over matters that do not involve the children and are learning to fall in love all over again.

The one constant in our marriage is the part Christ plays. From the very start, we agreed that our marriage should involve three parties: Christ, Lena and me. Gal 2:20 and 2 Cor 5:17 provide the foundation of our relationship with one another based on our personal relationship with our Saviour, Jesus Christ. I believe Eph 5:21-33 is the best blueprint for a happy marriage.

Over the years there have been ups and downs in our relationship. We have had our fair share of quarrels. We do face temptations placed in our marital relationship by the evil one. I am guilty as being the one who succumbs readily to some of such temptations, but by the grace of God and my understanding wife, I have been victorious in overcoming them. It is important both parties learn to forgive one another (Col 3:13-14).

"Marriage is more than your love for each other. It has a higher dignity and power, for it is God's holy ordinance, through which he wills to perpetuate the human race till the end of time." Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1943)



Golden Wedding – Eric & Cheryl Chan

Eric and Cheryl just celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. They are 77 and 75 respectively and have three children and seven grandchildren.

Looking back 50 years, we can say that we have learned two lessons: one is not to 'side-line' our spouse, and the other is not to depend on our own strength.

In the first half of our marriage, Eric was spending far too much of his spare time in Christian work and Cheryl was focusing all her attention on looking after and raising our three children. Not doing activities together and not spending time as a couple caused us to unconsciously drift apart towards our own separate worlds.

The second lesson resulted from our paying only lip service to the importance of family devotions. It was not until we were shaken by life-threatening illness that we really got down to reading the Bible and praying together. The Lord taught us many lessons, and through the Scripture Union notes *Encounter with God*, comforted us greatly. We began to grow spiritually as a couple. The concurrency of these two mistakes set our marriage on unstable ground, even subject to collapse, but for the mercy and grace of God.

We're now on the last lap of our marathon. It is not due to irony but to the providence of God (Rom 8:28) that our marriage turned around for the better due to cancer, which visited both of us. We have never looked back these last 20 years, and continue to focus on finishing the race, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith – not just for our own sakes, but also for the encouragement of the next generation, especially our seven grandchildren. 'Tis grace hath brought us safe thus far, and grace will lead us home. Thanks be to God. Ω



“It just happened, and I’m now happy and satisfied,” is a common response of some singles who shared their views on singleness. These are mature Christians who did not plan to be single but accepted singleness as from the Lord. They see singleness as an opportunity rather than a problem, and they participate fully in church life. Oftentimes they are the sole caregivers of their aged parents and needy siblings.

It was not long ago that singles were perceived as being unattractive or social failures if they remained unmarried upon reaching the ripe old age of 35. Parents and close friends were so concerned that they prayed and tried to match-make for them.

In Genesis, we read that God saw that everything He had created was good. However in Genesis 1: 18, He said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Hence marriage is God’s general will for His human creation.

However, after the Fall, the search for a suitable life-mate and the possibility of having a happy marriage became tainted by sin. Christians who remain single give their reasons as personal choice, circumstances and obedience. 2 Cor 6:14 on ‘not being yoked together with unbelievers’ is their guiding principle when looking for potential spouses.

Does this mean Christian singles do not experience struggles or temptations? They can feel isolated, insecure and lack a sense of belonging. They feel that they could disappear and no one would notice or care. The other extreme is the danger of too much independence, which can lead to self-centredness and unaccountability.

They need to be connected to a community of friends who are there for each other no matter what happens – prayer, fellowship, visits, encouragement, support, accountability and practical help. Christian communities and church can and should be a place for singles to be connected through a network of members and ministries. It is also a place where singles can care and be cared for, encourage and be encouraged, serve and be served. Singles can have a family in the family of God.

Both married couples and singles can serve God equally. However, singles have the added advantage of being able to serve the Lord with undivided devotion and without distraction. Like the Apostle Paul, they are free to do and go as the Lord leads. Bee Ngoh, Lily and Cleo have been serving in different parts of Asia for more than 10 years and are well-loved and respected by local communities in those countries

The highest calling of a Christian is to be a disciple of Christ. Our identity, fulfillment and contentment come from living obediently before God, whether single or married. Ω

Since arriving in GBC back in 2009, it has been a privilege to be involved with singles and married couples both informally and formally. In this article I would like to share thoughts and information to help couples know what is available.

Informally, seek out and be exposed to couples who are good examples of a God-honouring marriage. It can be a lot of fun and profitable to get to know and learn from one another over a meal or serving in a ministry together. Become infected with the good things they have in their marriage and build life-long friends along the way.

Formal counselling can happen in the form of the preaching and teaching of God's word in Sunday worship services, Adult Bible Class, marriage seminars, retreats, etc. It is also available through appointments with the pastoral staff, elders, and mature ministry leaders. This

may be a good place to start. Alongside the pastoral staff, elders, and ministry leaders are professional Christian counsellors available as the need arises. Confidentiality is a key component of counselling at all levels.

Premarital counselling is available for pre-engaged and engaged couples. The intent is to help couples build a Biblically-based marriage. At this time, the material covered may vary from one pastor or elder to another. Pastor Arnold and I hold five to six sessions with each couple as part of our premarital counselling.

It should be noted that premarital counselling by an approved resource is a prerequisite for Dr Poulson or Pastor Arnold to solemnise a marriage.

Spiritually healthy marriages happen when couples intentionally prepare themselves. Be committed to God and to each other in love. You are not alone. God Himself, and many at Grace Baptist, are available to pray, prepare, help, and support couples. **Ω**

Check out the following websites for more resources (eg, sermons, blogs, videos, discussions) on how to build up our marriages:

1. <http://www.desiringgod.org/>

- Go to Topic Index and under Family, you will find topics such as Dating and Singleness, Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage.

2. <http://www.ccef.org/>

- Christian Counselling & Educational Foundation's website includes issues raised in their counselling work: look for issues relating to Marriage under Resources, Topic, Marriage & Divorce, etc.

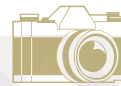
You can also refer to our church's website (www.gracebaptistchurch.sg) for a list of books on marriage (go to Care Group, Recommended Reading, Marriage). A highly recommended book is: *Love That Lasts: When Marriage Meets Grace* by Gary Ricucci

What's up? Family Ministries

In the middle of 2012 a team started working on plans to integrate family ministries at GBC. The goal is to unite individuals, families, and generations together through ministries that build lives and families in the Lord. Stay tuned and be ready to go and grow.

[Editor's Note – you can read more about this important ministry in the next issue of Grace News, due out in April. Don't miss it!]

EVENTS



Ordination Service 📅 3 Nov



The church prayed for and rejoiced with Ps Tan Lay Tock and Ps James Lee at their ordination service.



Ps Tan Lay Tock and his wife Esther.



Ps James Lee, his wife Shareen and daughters Chun Jing and Ke Jing.

Christmas Service 📅 25 Dec



(Clockwise from top left) Miriam, Gerald, Eric and Ian reading from Genesis and Isaiah on the fall of man and God's promise of a Saviour. Give glory to Immanuel!



How wonderful when we worship God with all our hearts.

Baptism and Transfer 📅 17 Nov



We joyfully welcome three new members to the GBC family: (L-R) Samuel Ngo via baptism, and Jacqueline Chua and Albert Chong via transfer.



Radical Thinking, Radical Living: Youth Camp 2012 📅 4-8 Dec



This year's camp had a larger number of younger participants – a sign that our Youth Ministry is growing! Pray that the youth will continue to maintain their bonds after this camp and grow together in fellowship with Christ.

Our Church Building: Repair? Rebuild? Or? 📅 9 & 16 Dec

"Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind."
1 Peter 3:8



One of the four townhall sessions conducted to brief the church on what has been done thus far and to seek input on the direction to take. Please pray with and for the church leadership as together we seek God's will on the future of our church. If you have any feedback or suggestions, please email future@gracebaptistchurch.sg.

Ladies Ministry: Count Your Blessings 📅 17 November

Over afternoon tea Mrs Poulson shared with the ladies how she met Dr Poulson, their courtship, their call from God to come to Asia, and their 60 years of faithful service on this tiny island. One session is definitely not enough!



One of the many gifts that Mrs Poulson treasures is a beautiful quilt made up of hand-sewn squares from members in appreciation of the Poulsons' love and faithful service, presented on their 40th year in Singapore.



Tea with Mrs Poulson!



"Just before I left the States, a dear older missionary said to me, 'Remember dear, as you go forth, they are not necessarily wrong the things you see, just different.' That got me through a lot of these (culture shocks)!" – Mrs Poulson had the audience in stitches as she recounted some of the culture shocks she faced when she first arrived in Singapore on 24 August 1953, after a six-week journey on a Norwegian freighter.

"They are better off ten thousand miles away in the will of the Lord than right next door out of the will of the Lord."

– Mrs Poulson's mother-in-law strongly supported the Poulsons' decision to come to Asia.

"Please pray that the Lord will always keep us true to His Word. Give us strength to continue to serve Him until He takes us home...As you pray for us, pray also for your other pastors and their wives: we are humans, have the same temptations, trials, testing that you face, maybe to some extent we are even more of a target for Satan to attack..."

– Mrs Poulson's prayer request.

Marriage Anchored in Mission



Ngiam Xing Yi

An Interview with Desmond and Wendy



Desmond and Wendy have been married for 15 years and have been serving faithfully in Indonesia since Jan 2004. They are currently back in Singapore for a one-year sabbatical, although Desmond still travels to Indonesia once a month to preach and has other preaching engagements both locally and overseas. Desmond is also using this time to finish his dissertation for the Doctor of Ministry (D Min) programme in Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Massachusetts, USA, which he hopes to finish by May 2013.

"If we want to proclaim that the Son submits to the Father, we must strive to love and submit to each other."

How has your marriage been influenced by the mission field?

It is important for both of us to have the same vision and burden to anchor our marriage. When we both want to serve God and serve each other, we can then work hand-in-hand through the struggles we have.

Knowing that our words and choices set an example for those watching us is enough for us to want to do what is right. We usually resolve our quarrels quickly so that others will not be stumbled. If we do not have peace, we cannot deliver the message of peace. If we want to proclaim that the Son submits to the Father, we must strive to love and submit to each other.

Could you share some experiences to encourage GBC?

Our ministry is proclaiming the Gospel. We give ourselves to people but have little left for ourselves. The danger is to focus so much on ministry to others that we forget that our first ministry is at home. We work on this problem by intentionally making time for each other. If you get the family front right, the battle front will be won. A strong marriage sets a Godly example in a society filled with broken relationships and draws people to Christ. There will always be fights in a marriage, but these are actually opportunities for us to strengthen our relationship. We love because Christ first loved us. We serve because Christ served His church. 📌

What did you Expect?

- Redeeming the Realities of Marriage

A series of video talks presented by Paul Tripp and screened over 8 weeks in Adult Bible Class (ABC).



..... *Review by Martin & Wendy Chan*

This ABC workshop addressed some of the wrong expectations couples have that lead to trouble in their marriages. Tripp described marriage to be a relationship between two flawed people in a fallen world, but with a faithful God. Because of sin, marriage is always a war between the kingdom of self (what I want) and the kingdom of God.

The central theme was that “a marriage of unity, love, and understanding is not rooted in romance, but in worship”. Romance is the fruit of a good marriage, not the cause. Only when we worship God as Creator, Sovereign, and Saviour will we ever love our spouse as we should. To worship God as Creator is to rejoice in how God purposefully made our spouse different, physically as well as in upbringing, experiences and culture. To worship God as Sovereign is to recognise that God purposefully placed us together for our good

and according to His perfect timing. To worship God as Saviour is to remember how He loved us sacrificially. We should therefore find no greater joy than in serving our spouse sacrificially, regardless of their sin or circumstances. Tripp warned that sin causes us to worship the created instead of the Creator. People are unhappy when they attach their fulfillment and happiness to the marriage or the spouse, rather than to God.

God’s purpose for marriage is also for the couple’s sanctification. Each partner is an agent of God for the other’s growth in holiness. Hence when God shows you the sin of your spouse, do you turn such moments of ministry into moments of anger? Do you settle for quick solutions instead of getting to the heart of the matter? Our response should be that of divine love – so that our spouse may become more Christ-like under our influence. Ω

Review by Emily Seck.....

As much as this was a ‘marriage class’ open to curious singles like me, the truth is that the basic principles from every lesson actually apply to ANY relationship.

We learn that as human beings created by God, we are made to worship. We either worship God or self, and there is always a war between these two kingdoms. This can manifest in pride in the way I want things done, thus granting no leeway to others and not acknowledging God’s sovereignty. Or I could be irritated at how someone speaks or acts, when actually the problem is that I do not accept that God has purposefully created him/her to be different, and I need to learn to worship my creator God.

Having been rescued by my Saviour, in order to love others as God intends me to I must worship Him as Saviour.

To quote one of the lessons, *“If you do not worship God as Creator, Sovereign and Saviour, you will turn moments of ministry into moments of anger because you will make everything about yourself and will settle for quick situational solutions instead of getting to the heart of the matter.”*

I hope that as Christians, we will worship God, trusting in His sovereignty, loving His creation and humbled by His amazing grace. That’s LOVE that transcends all, regardless of any ‘relationship status’ by which we are labelled. Ω

