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CANAAN LAND 

Are We Back to Square One?

TO ACHIEVE DIFFERENT MILESTONES IN LIFE, WE need to start from somewhere. Often, that “somewhere” is – SQUARE ONE, the starting point. If a plan fails, we may need to go back to square one. For example, you wanted to make a lot of money, so you saved up a lot, invested in a business, and then gambled all your money away. Now, you’re back to square one. You tried to diet but always end up back at square one. After the opposition party lost the election, they had to go back to square one and come up with new policies and ideas. If the client does not accept our proposal, we will be back to square one. If we are back to square one, we have to start from the beginning again.

“Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness, because he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature—for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil.”
Hebrews 5:13-14

When we should have been on solid food long ago, we start back from square one on baby’s milk. As a result, we are inexperienced in God’s way. We want to gain knowledge but we refuse to grow.

The editorial team encourages our readers to flip through the pages of this magazine slowly to allow the written messages and stories to touch lives. We hope you will move forward and not have to go back to square one over and over again.

As our nation celebrates her 60th year of independence, let us make it our goal to solidly pray for our beloved country. 🇲🇾

Goh Chee Beng



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Free Movie Screening: *New Year Wish*

ON JUNE 23, 2017, MORE THAN 200 people attended the free movie screening, *New Year Wish*, held at Dream Centre, Petaling Jaya. This was made possible by a special arrangement between *Asian Beacon* and Hooray Movies Sdn Bhd. The movie in Mandarin with sub-titles in English and Malay was released in selected cinemas across Malaysia on Jan. 26.

The two main actors, Alan Yun and Nicky Pountney, were present together with five production team members, including the film's director and producer, Lee Sai Yew.

The movie begins with the scene of a little girl, Tian Tian, telling her mother about her ability to see angels. Her parents, Dr Liu and Maggie, are the ideal couple who share a dream of building a family clinic. One day, Dr Liu was hit by a car when he pushed to save a pedestrian from being run over by the car. He went into coma



and shocked by the tragedy, Maggie went into depression. During this critical moment, Tian Tian became her mother's guardian angel, caring for and comforting her. The story also revolves

around the themes of love, friendship, family and marriage. The message is that blessing and hope await those who persevere in their love and dreams.

At the screening, Lee shared with the audience how he came up with the script, especially tapping on his experiences in counselling for the emotional scenes. The movie took two and a half years to make. The heartwarming movie features singer Jackie Chen, who was also present at the screening to sing the theme song.

Light refreshment was served to all during the break. The cast and production team members took time to meet the audience, sign autographs on the DVD pack which was sold after the show.

We are grateful for special guest YB Hannah Yeoh, who gave a short speech on family values before the show began. We are also grateful to DUMC for allowing us to use their facility and sponsoring the refreshment. 🙏



TOP LEFT: Part of the crowd watching the show.

TOP RIGHT: *Asian Beacon* with some of the production team members



BOTTOM LEFT: Singer Jackie Chen performing live after the show.



BOTTOM RIGHT: From left, Alan Yun (Actor), YB Hannah Yeoh, Nicky Pountney (Actor), Lee Sai Yew (Director), Jackie Chen (Singer)

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Keep going, Rev. Loh!



Asian Beacon advisor Rev. Loh Soon Choy.

PROSTATE CANCER AND A HOST OF ailments can't stop Rev. Loh Soon Choy from preaching at All Souls Church in Cameron Highlands. Please continue to pray for his health.

Asian Beacon Volunteers



FROM LEFT: Volunteers Otto and Amy, *Asian Beacon* editor and secretary Goh Chee Beng and Patrick Leong respectively.

Prayer for Christian Media

ON SEPT. 6, REPRESENTATIVES FROM *RHEMA RADIO*, *His Broadcast Network*, *Soul Space* and *Asian Beacon* met in Petaling Jaya to pray for the Christian media in Malaysia. This monthly prayer gathering is an initiative to seek God and to foster closer collaborations among the various media platforms. If you have a media ministry and would like to join us, please write to hello@rhemarad.io



FROM LEFT: Jason Ding (Station Manager, *Rhema Radio*), Adeline Lum (Content Manager, *Rhema Radio*), Veronica Ng (Founder, *His Broadcast Network*), Wei Yin (Chief Administrator, *Soul Space*), Goh Chee Beng (Editor, *Asian Beacon*), Justin Anand (Social Media Manager, *Soul Space*), Andrew Coomby (Media Director, *Soul Space*)

ASIAN BEACON IS CONSTANTLY looking for volunteers to help in various areas, such as social media, editorial work and events. Currently, we have two volunteers – Otto, a student, and Amy, a housewife who help upload articles onto our website. Come join us in this ministry of transforming hearts through the written word.

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A SECOND CHANCE IN LIFE

Double SEA Games Triathlon Gold Medalist Kimbeley Yap made an inspiring comeback.

WRITTEN BY ANNA TEOH / INTERVIEWED BY C.B. GOH

EIGHT CYCLISTS WERE SPLITTING WAYS TO THEIR respective homes after training for the SEA Games. One of them was Kimbeley Yap. She had another two kilometres from Sri Hartamas, Kuala Lumpur, to her Damansara Perdana home in Petaling Jaya when suddenly, a car hit her bicycle from the back. According to a witness, Kimbeley flew seven feet in the air, landed face down on the vehicle and rolled down to the road. Kimbeley was in and out of consciousness after the hit.

PETALING JAYA: Double SEA Games gold medallist Kimbeley Yap was injured in an accident at the Penchala Link while cycling home on Wednesday. It is learnt that the bicycle she was riding on was rammed from the rear by a car believed to be a Toyota Harrier...*(The STAR Online, Wednesday, 28 May 2014 | MYT 12:21 PM)*

That was the morning of May 28, 2014.

THE MAKING OF AN ATHLETE

Born in Labuan, Sabah, and growing up in Miri, Sarawak, Kimbeley recalled waking up at 4 a.m. for swimming training, eating most of her meals in the car. Her life revolved around swimming, school and tuition.

At the age of seven, she bagged her first win at an inter-school tournament; two years later, she represented Sarawak in the inter-state competition. Her talent and dedication did not go unnoticed – when she turned 13, she was offered a spot at the Bukit Jalil Sports School. With her family’s support, she moved into the boarding school in Kuala Lumpur, and trained with the national swimming team for her first ever SEA Games in 2001 held in Kuala Lumpur where she brought home a bronze medal at 16 years.

Three years later, following a casual suggestion from a friend, she ventured into her first triathlon of a 1.5 km swim, 40 km bike ride and 10 km run. Despite controversy in the media and skepticism that a swimmer could actually compete in a triathlon, the following year, Kimbeley carried the hopes of Malaysians all the way to the finish line. At the 2005 SEA Games in Manila, Philippines, she became the first Malaysian triathlete to win the gold medal!

At the following 2007 SEA Games in Thailand, she successfully defended her gold medal, proving to her critics that her earlier gold medal was not a “first-time lucky



strike”. In competing both locally and abroad, she has won numerous medals over the years. There was always another race to try and win, and that gave her meaning in life.

CHANGING COURSE

Her accident on the morning of May 28, 2014, changed everything, and tested her faith in God. The accident altered the course of her life. As photos of the accident scene surfaced on social media, family and friends gathered to pray and show their support for the family. Kimbeley suffered concussions, deep lacerations on her limbs where her shin bone was exposed, a fractured tibia on her right leg and a deep scar across her forehead. For these, she was in induced coma for eight days and hospitalised for a month.

During recovery, she had to use a walking stick to move around and could not even stand for more than five minutes at a time. Physiotherapy had to be done while lying down, and it took six months of rehabilitation and a full year before she recovered. However, none of her vital organs was damaged, and no surgery was needed.

For an athlete like Kimbeley, injuries are common and often treated as a mere nuisance but this time, the injuries brought her life to a halt and set her reeling into self-pity and depression.

Kimbeley recalled vividly the moment her father handed her a mirror. She looked and could not recognize the person in the mirror. There was a huge and deep scar across her



forehead and she immediately thought of getting a skin specialist to fix the scar. Instead she was told to give it time to heal. Every time after that, when she looked in the mirror, all she could see was the scar.

CHANGING PERSPECTIVE

“Is God punishing me?” This was the recurring thought in her mind. Noel Maniraj Chelliah, her then boyfriend (now husband), challenged her to renew her perspective of God. He assured her of God’s character – that He is not a God who punishes His people; no, God does not work that way.

Upon further consultations with the doctors, she learned it was a miracle that she survived the accident. A motorist, who happened to be an emergency doctor, was passing by the accident scene. He had just completed his long night shift and was on his way home. He had driven past the accident scene when he felt a tug in his heart and turned back. While waiting for the ambulance, he had gently cradled her neck and this simple act alone had prevented her from becoming paralysed neck down. Her injury was two millimetres away from paralysis! Knowing this gave her the will to recover.

In the face of these apparent miracles, she regained her faith in God and a newfound determination to live. She learned that it is not God’s punishment, but God’s purpose in all things. And there, she purposed in her heart to make an inspiring comeback.



CHANGING PURPOSE

Three years on, today, Kimbeley works with people to help them be stronger, move better and enjoy being fit. She is a Movement Specialist at DailyMuscle, a fitness company she runs with her husband. When asked if she has found her purpose in this experience, the down-to-earth lady replied, “Not yet... but there have been glimpses.” She has been told, “Your accident is going to impact a lot of women out there.”

For this year’s 2017 SEA Games in Kuala Lumpur, the physically-fit Kimbeley received a call to join the Malaysian contingent. She was reminded that this might be her last SEA Games but strangely, she found that her heart was now set on other pursuits. With a future to look forward to, now married and running her own business which is her passion, she heard a voice inside that said, “There is so much more in your future to pursue instead of going back.” And so, she turned down the invitation to compete again, choosing instead to fix her eyes on a future that will impact lives.

Today, her scars no longer scare her but serve as a reminder that God is in charge of her life. 🙏

A Homemaker: No time off, No medical leave & Driven up the walls

UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

BY LIM SUE-ANN

I once asked God this question: What is the purpose of life? At that time I was not married, but I knew that the normal cycle of life was work, get married, start a family and grow old. Was this all life had to offer?

Seven years later and I am in the home-making, child-rearing phase of life. I have four children between seven years and seven months, and my dreams of climbing the corporate ladder, serving in ministries, studying theology, adventure travelling and other grand plans had come to a slow and shuddering halt. My wants (even some of my needs) were put on the back burner 'until further notice'.

The jokes about the "motherhood career" being unglamorous, with no time off, medical leave or being driven up walls were all true. You could be up every other hour in the night, having one child throw up all over the bed, another wanting to be breastfed and another accidentally wetting the bed simultaneously at 3.30 in the morning.

On the other hand, the encouraging words I have received from wise and experienced mothers assure me that raising children is one of the most beneficial and satisfying work a woman could have the privilege of doing. This is also absolutely true.

However, through mundane daily routines of being a stay-at-home mum interspersed with sometimes chaotic and scary moments and deeply emotional (and hormonal) stress, God, being the faithful, loving father He is, has shown me His heart.



FROM LEFT: Sue-Ann with her 8-month-old Isaac and 5-year-old Sofia.

If my little imperfect heart can love my children so deeply, how much more does my perfect Father in heaven love me? If I would stop at nothing to protect my children, what more would God do for me? If I would sacrifice all for them, imagine what God would and have done for me?

The way I gaze at them when they sleep, doesn't God do the same over me? If God could give up His one and only beloved Son for me, what more would he withhold from me? The patterns of my life reveal so much of God as a good, good Father. The more I consider this innate propensity and capacity in us to love our children, the more I am convinced that I am truly

loved by my heavenly Father, who is perfect in every way.

So I started to realise that the call of motherhood in my life was not a phase that I needed to 'ride out', 'get over with' or 'roll with the punches'. It was really the call itself. The grand task was for me to train and discipline them, primarily to sow God's truth deeply into their lives so that 'when they grow old, they would not depart from it' (Psalm 22:6). God has a purpose and a plan for each of these little ones, and He chose my husband and me to be their parents. It is either God thought I was a super-capable woman or that I could do all things through Christ who strengthens me. It's probably the latter.



Sue-Ann and her husband, Ronnie together with their four children. FROM LEFT: Baby Isaac, 2-year-and-six-month-old Ruby, 5-year-old Sofia and 7-year-old Jade.

If my little imperfect heart can love my children so deeply, how much more does my perfect Father in heaven love me?

As the years move on, I am now only starting to learn that this not-so-exciting job of being a homemaker has really been one of the most exciting years of my life. Truly, life with God is one of great adventure. I have met as many, if not more, people through the lives and activities of being a stay-at-home mum and the opportunities of sharing the message of Jesus are just as plentiful, if not more. In these moments, I recall that the harvest is plenty but the labourers are few.

Raising these children in God's way is a tall, tall, order – not just a joy or an honour but a privilege. Somehow, God thought He could trust me with these little ones who are unconditionally loved and precious to Him.

A disciple doesn't just learn but lives out the Word and invests in the lives of people. Investing in the lives of people starts with investing into the lives of your children, household and people nearest and dearest to you. While we need to be the salt and light in the kingdom of God, the light has to shine the brightest at home. Until God issues me a new mandate in life, this is where I belong and strive, not to be the mother that I want to be but to be the mother that God wants me to be.

On some of those rare nights when I have the time to gaze into my children's sleeping faces, tears of thanksgiving

come to my eyes as I marvel at God's handiwork. That He would give this child to me?! There are so many things He doesn't have to do for me but He does. As a friend once told me, "Things that matter to us, matter to God."

Now, time is not my own, and has become a scarce commodity. I found that I had to choose wisely what I was going to do with my time – or what was left of it. I was reminded to "...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33). In my heart, I had started to question God – what was my calling? Surely this was not 'it'.

After I had my fourth baby, I found myself trudging along. Meeting the needs of the children became the primary concern. Devotional times were still done but round-the-clock feeding took its toll. On some days, I felt rather overwhelmed and quite conveniently forgot the life lessons and promises that God had already taught me along the way. To make matters worse, I fell sick twice with the flu virus and was struck with sciatica for two months – a debilitating condition. It rendered me helpless and I could hardly walk, sit or drive, much less carry our new baby. It was during this time that God spoke the loudest to me – or rather, I strove harder to listen.

Looking back now, having these

children in the space of seven years is nothing short of a supernatural event – made possible only by the grace of God and His favour.

God has been gracious and faithful enough to keep me close to Him throughout the years since I had my first daughter. At the start, He even told me that He would help me in the 'day-to-day operations in my life'. To date, God has kept that promise and a multitude of many other promises. He has answered most of my prayers and always heard my cries for help. He is truly a good, good Father and an amazing provider.

During our last cell gathering, my pastor urged us to define "success" and threw us a bold question: "Do you think you are successful?" In the eyes of the world, I would say "yes". I have everything I could ever dream of and more. But was I successful in God's eyes? I don't know as meeting God's standards would be a lot harder. But I've learned about the Father's heart when my own heart strings are tugged by my children. 🙏

Sue-Ann is a mother of four young children and works part time in the telecommunication industry. She loves reading and singing and dreams to travel the world. She resides in Kuala Lumpur together with her husband, Ronnie.



PURSUING MY DREAM

BY GINA YAP LAI YOONG

Gina Yap's dream of being a novelist has come true. Showing some of her best-selling books she has written.



WHEN I FIRST TOLD MY PARENTS THAT I wanted to be a novelist, they were not too enthusiastic. I had the impression they were not confident of writing as a career that could actually pay the bills, even more so in our country. Of course, my parents didn't say so outright. It was in their facial expression and lack of smile that I read as their disapproval. I understood that they were genuinely concerned.

Later, I discovered that my parents were not the only ones who felt that becoming a writer was something you do on the side rather than a full-time career. Everyone else (my relatives and even some of my friends) thought so too. Most argued that since I had a keen interest in languages, I should have pursued a career in education instead – become an educator, they suggested – as anything was better than a penniless writer. All of them had good reasons to dissuade me from my literary aspirations, everyone except Grandma.

“Be what you want to be,” she said, “As long as it makes you happy, all will work itself out.” She also reminded me of my obligations to my parents. Grandma gave her blessing for me to pursue my dreams as long as I kept my feet rooted to the ground. She pointed out that as a working adult, there will be bills to pay, monthly financial support for my parents, as well as other

personal necessities such as insurance and car installments. I'd have to make sure all these are covered when I choose to do what I want to do in life in the pursuit of my dreams. Words of wisdom indeed!

My mother once said to me, “Don't be a journalist. You'll end up sitting outside VIP's houses, waiting for them to come out just to get one statement for the headlines. The measly salary is not worth the time and effort.” My father said nothing. My academic result was not good enough for me to pursue medicine, engineering or even law. I wasn't sure if I was qualified for Form Six.

In the end, I chose advertising. It was the closest thing to writing that would pay the bills. It's a commercial field, which means the salary scale is competitive; therefore, I would have a job that provides financial security. I comforted myself with the thought that ‘at least I could be a copywriter’. I would still be living my dream and earning a living through writing – just not as a novelist.

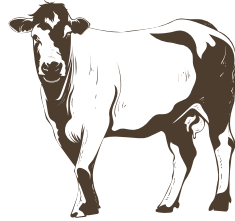
Of course, I was deceiving myself as well as those around me. How could I ever be happy and contented by just writing advertisements to ‘con’ people into buying things they don't need? I was good in what I do but I knew where my passion lies. So, while keeping my daytime job, I set out to write my first novel.

I remember how it happened. I would write an hour or so a day after work and longer hours on weekends.

Soon, I had a full-length manuscript. I picked a local publisher and sent my book proposal without expectation – well, I was expecting rejection letters. But the first publisher I chose liked the idea. In less than two months, my debut novel was on the local bookshelves all over the country. My dream of being a novelist has come true. A verse came to mind right after: “Take delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4).

Oftentimes, we want to do things our way. We think we know best and anything driven by passion would not go wrong. We forget our earthly obligations. In the Bible, God tells us to honour our parents. We do that by listening to them and their advice, negotiating with them about our decisions, and surrendering our passion to God. Always trust that His plan and timing is perfect. When we delight in Him – serve Him faithfully and do the things He desires us to do – He will give us the desires of our heart. For God is not only interested in who we are and what we do as His children, He is also interested in the desires of our heart. 📖

Gina Yap Lai Yoong is a published novelist with six books available in major bookstores in the country. Her bestsellers, the Ngeri trilogy (written in Malay), has been on the bestseller list many times. She is also a creative writing coach and mentor, a speaker at literary festivals as well as festival organiser. Gina currently helms the Malaysian Writers' Society as President. More info about Gina at www.ginayaplaiyoong.com



FROM MILK
— to —
SOLID FOOD
Literally!

Eat to live – or live to eat?

BY ANNA TEOH

HERE IN MALAYSIA, WE ARE BLESSED WITH some of the best gastronomical pleasures the planet has to offer – endless combinations of tastes and textures in a multicultural melting pot (no pun intended). It is hard to imagine that we once gained sustenance from a single source – milk. At which point did we realise there was more to life than milk? And how did we come to enjoy our favourite foods?

The great apostle Paul urged believers to grow in their spiritual walk, using the illustration of progressing from the consumption of milk to solid food. In an attempt to understand the process of spiritual growth by method of reverse analogy, I decided to have a fun chat with three of my first-time mom friends on how their children grew through this fascinating developmental stage.

Esmeralda Ng

mother to Danielle, 11 months

How did you know when it was time to give your child solid food?

As she became more cognizant of the environment, she wanted to explore her surroundings. When she turned six months old, I started mixing vegetable purées and juices into her milk, such as broccoli, spinach, asparagus, and potatoes. At nine months, she expressed curiosity when she saw us eating different varieties of food at the dining table. She would sometimes turn her head away from her purée, while staring and drooling at us.



What was your child's response to the new varieties of food introduced?

As I had started her off by introducing vegetables to her diet, she acquired a taste for veggies. And when it came time to try solid food, she took to chewing and swallowing her food well, which we consider a huge blessing. She is still developing her own likes and dislikes; she loves durian – just like her dad!

Anna Chuah

mother to Le Chen, 2 years 9 months

How did you know when it was time to give your child solid food?

When he was about five-and-a-half months old, he was already teething and would start salivating while watching us eat our food. He would point his finger to indicate his interest in our food. He has always been good at communicating his needs to us!

What was your child's response to the new varieties of food introduced?

He looked forward to joining us at mealtimes, and was adventurous in trying new varieties of food. I prepared porridge with anchovy soup, mashed potatoes, carrots and minced broccoli – and learned that he dislikes pumpkin



and sweet potato purée. I am very happy that he eats well, and especially loves fruits. My rule of thumb is, we don't need to go out of the way to customise our kids' meals – maybe just use less salt and sugar. At 11 months old, he started rejecting porridge and other mushy foods, and pointed at our rice!

Silvia Goh

mother to Asher, 3 years 7 months

How did you know when it was time to give your child solid food?

Actually, he didn't seem keen to start on his own, so when he turned six months old, I introduced him to homemade apple and carrot purees. He continued to prefer breastfeeding until about two-and-a-half years old, when I sneakily decided it was time for weaning – by putting a bit of chillies on the breast! :)



What was your child's response to the new varieties of food introduced?

He wasn't an immediate good eater – which, I was told, is a stark contrast from when I was his age. There were some foods and fruits he loved, and others that he completely rejected. He was on homemade purées until one year old, which was when he started showing more interest in rice and what we were eating. As he wasn't a fan of mushy foods and porridge, we progressed directly to rice with soups.

I HAD A NICE TIME LEARNING MORE about the home life of my friends, and their everyday joys of motherhood. Children – ever ready to learn, ever eager to grow – can teach us a thing or two about spiritual growth.

1 | GROWTH IS A NATURAL PROCESS

As the child's body grows, it requires more complex nutrition from a variety of foods to nourish and support the proper development of organs, bones, ligaments, and muscles. We might find that what used to sustain us – a verse or a sermon – is no longer enough. In life, nothing is stagnant, and it is human nature to always seek to progress to the next stage. It is only unnatural if we do not grow.

2 | GROWTH IS A PERSONAL PHENOMENON

Every child's growth happens at his or her own pace. Sometimes we go through dry seasons where things move a little slower, while at other times we experience growth spurts. God is always at work in our hearts. We need not compare ourselves with others because each of our stories is unique. Just like the mothers, God delights in watching us learn life's lessons, consume His word on our own, and put what we've learned into practice.

3 | GROWTH IS A COMMUNITY EFFORT

As the children observed their parents enjoying solid food, they too wanted to try it for themselves. The environment encourages exploration. Faith may be a personal thing, but the company we keep sets the bar for what constitutes our norms of spiritual maturity. A strong faith-based community nurtures our desire to experience God in a deeper way for ourselves. Indeed, the spiritual journey is not meant to be walked alone.

Hebrews 10:24 says, "...let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

So, do you eat to live, or live to eat? Perhaps in the spiritual sense, it ought to be a little of both – solid food is necessary for growth, which leads to a more fulfilled life, while pursuing spiritual truths is deeply satisfying in and of itself as it draws us closer to our Creator. 🙏

HOLISTIC APPROACH OF HOMESCHOOL PROGRAMMES

BY HENG WEI YEE



WHEN IT COMES TO education, today's parents have many more choices besides the national education syllabus offered by public schools. With the mushrooming of private and international schools all over Malaysia, parents can choose from a variety of curriculums for their children. In a quiet industrial corner in Kota Damansara lies a small private Christian academy run by an all-Christian team. Recently, I was

given the opportunity to speak with the principal of this school.

Miss Melody Lee is the cheerful principal of Young Achievers Academy (YAA). An educator with years of experience, she is familiar with the programmes typically offered in private schools. Many of us would have heard about the popular Cambridge IGCSE, but what about Christian homeschool programmes such as ACE (Accelerated Christian Education), Alpha Omega Publication LIFEPAAC, K2, Sunrise and

Eduseeds, just to name a few.

As someone who came from the public school system, the homeschool system was rather unfamiliar to me, so I was rather surprised to hear there are quite a number of local students doing the homeschooling programme. Homeschool is rather unique in Malaysia, though. Unlike how homeschool curriculums are taught overseas, homeschool students in Malaysia tend to go a private school or centre to study.



Parents who chose the homeschool programmes have found them more enriching than other programmes because they do not just focus on the academic achievements but on the personal development of the students.

do not just focus on the academic achievements but on the personal development of the students. These Christian homeschool curriculums also focus on instilling moral values in students besides developing their social, outdoor and living skills.

Melody herself clearly saw the results of the holistic method of homeschool in her children as well as the graduates of YAA. Students are more open and confident compared with their peers who studied in a different environment — they tend to be more well-rounded in their character attributes as well as their development in critical thinking and logic.

However, despite being such an enriching programme, it's not all a bed of roses for the school.

ROUGH WATERS

Melody shared that one of her biggest concerns is that they are currently not registered with the Ministry of Education as the school management does not comply with certain criteria. In order for the school to be registered and recognised, it needs Bumiputera participation and there cannot be any religious (Bible) studies or chapel services during school hours. Unfortunately, Bible studies and chapel services are the core of the Christian school. To get the Ministry of Education's nod, these essential

activities have to go.

Another concern is the misconception some people have on the homeschool programme itself. To those who are not familiar with the syllabus, they may think that these programmes are meant for slow learners who require to study on their own and at their own pace because they are unable to cope with a classroom environment. Some also believe that the homeschool programmes are meant for special needs children!

Homeschool programmes face stiff competition among one another as well. Melody said that over the years, there has been a decline in enrolment for the AOP's LIFEPAC programme compared with Eduseeds, which prepares students for the IGCSE. Parents tend to choose programmes that prepare their children for an internationally recognised qualification accepted by colleges and universities worldwide. American homeschool programmes like AOP's LIFEPAC are usually recognised only by Canadian and American universities, limiting a student's choice when it comes to selecting a university. There is also a lack of promotion for such homeschool programmes compared with courses like the Cambridge IGCSE.

With a wide variety of options available now, education in Malaysia is no longer just a straight path via the public school system. While private schools offering homeschool programmes may not be registered with the Ministry of Education nor recognised by them, they will remain an option for Malaysian parents today. 🏠

According to Melody, the homeschool system has been in Malaysia for some 27 years. Being a parent herself, she chose to put her kids in the homeschool programme as well for the simple reason that it takes a more holistic approach to education.

HOLISTIC EDUCATION

According to Melody, parents who chose the homeschool programmes have found them more enriching than other programmes because they



Heng Wei Yee is passionate about teaching, language learning and writing. She is currently a teacher in a private homeschool in Klang Valley.

OUR WORSHIP



WHEN WE OFTEN TRAVEL OVERSEAS, MANY TIMES WE COME across fellow Malaysians at the international airport terminals and you are then filled with a sense of patriotism. The next natural inclination comes to verbally connect with your fellow citizens, which usually turn into a lovely camaraderie born out of our national identity through speaking our language and unique lingo.

Likewise, our worship as a Body of Christ in Malaysia should have that sense of camaraderie that comes from using the language and lingo we know. Unfortunately, we are always cruising on the altitude of foreign worship cultures, styles and trends, and falling short of our very own patriotic identity, sound and most definitely our own worship lingo.

While foreign worship has set the benchmark in areas of skills, songs and visual appeal in the last few decades, the fallen nature of the flesh often gravitates toward the visual appeal and appetite – how we look, how we portray and are being portrayed in every visual aspect of worship, almost a

copy of what had been often a reference point.

Though these have tremendously influenced worship teams in our upgrade of skills to be audibly excellent, it has robbed our sense of patriotic worship identity for the nation where we have been placed in.

Those who live according to the Holy Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The Spirit always has a bigger purpose and perspective concerning our purpose, function, appointment and calling for His people in the place where they live.

IDENTITY

BY PATRICK LEONG

What continues to be the gap in our worship identity today is the result of the general education system that has divided the races in the last two decades.

Acts 17:26 says: “From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth: and that he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.”

This Scripture verse talks about the identity of every single person born at a specific time and place. As we are born in this beloved nation, we are to not only love this country, but to represent all that this country represents through the language, culture and lingo. As Christians, this takes to a literal embodiment in the form of a sacrificial offering in prayer and worship concerning matters and the state of our beloved nation. This is the destiny of the worship from this nation and for this nation that we as worship pastors and leaders are responsible for. To realize that the worship we produce has a sense of an identity from our very own nation, land and churches.

In the general social structure of society, what continues to further contribute to the degrading of that identity, especially between Christians and the rest is a result of the general education system that has divided the races in the last decades. Drastic changes and declining education standards in government schools have forced parents to independent and private educational facilities, such as homeschools, that have warrant a social divide among the various people groups.



The lack of social integration that was once the social fabric of past generations, has led to a communication breakdown creating a void especially between us and the majority people group or the general society.

This raises an urgent concern to how we are to bridge the truth of the gospel with them when we seem to be drifting further and further into our independent clicks, subjecting ourselves to the dangers of being ineffective and irrelevant.

In my previous article in the April-June 2017 issue (The ARMOUR OF LIFE), titled “Without Prayer, Worship Is Meaningless”, prayer is crucial in receiving new songs, and new sounds that is reflected through our language and lingo from this land and for this land. The more we become ignorant of the social status and state between the role of the church and the general community, worship becomes an exclusivity to ourselves without hope for the

majority in the days leading up to a potential revival in Malaysia.

This will be the day, the moment when TRUE REVIVAL happens in our nation and we who are responsible in leading and engaging worship must realize such a divine destiny, preparation and call as worshippers who must align to the purposes of our nation.

Let us lead on platforms and in services through our own songs with a spirit of an expectation for revival that begins with rediscovering our own identity in sound, language and lingo that is aligned to the season, time and place concerning our purposes in worship for our nation.

There is always a bigger picture and perspective in Acts 17:26. For the day will come when ALL people groups in this nation will hear and know the truth that begins with their familiarity in language, lingo through their own respective people groups.

Rediscovering our worship identity has to begin now. 🙏

DEVELOP YOUR MONEY FILTER



BY RAJEN DEVADASON

Our news is awash again with naïve unfortunates caught in different Get-Rich-Quick schemes (GRQs). The purpose of this column is not to make fun of them but rather to guide all of us in developing a personal economic framework or mental money filter to help us sift through good, bad and ugly money-making proposals.

THE ALLURE OF GRQS IS understandable. With the spiralling cost of living, more and more of us find ourselves creaking, bending and sometimes collapsing under the sheer burden of making ends meet.

This situation is exacerbated by the endless onslaught of advertisements and commercials streaming seductively structured messages aimed at one outcome – separating us from our hard-earned, overstretched income!

Thankfully, as with most of life's challenges, God has provided us a way out that hinges on sound advice or wise counsel^{1,2}.

In my professional opinion as a Malaysian Securities Commission-licensed financial planner, the three steps needed to develop a money filter that serves us well are:

1. Recognising how true wealth is created
2. Understanding the basics of financial planning, economics, business and investment
3. Acknowledging how vulnerable our greed makes us

HOW TRUE WEALTH IS CREATED

Regular people like you and me with regular talents and regular goals regularly amass true wealth by following this irregular formula:

We spend less than we earn; we save and invest the difference; and we do so for a long, long time.

Let me break down the formula for you: to spend less than we earn, a certain level of desire and discipline is required.

First, we must crave economic

success. Doing so is not necessarily selfish because we could commit to blessing our families and those causes we care about with the abundance that God channels through our lives. (God is the source of all untainted financial abundance³.)

Second, as it becomes more and more expensive with each passing decade to raise a family, we have to grow our income-building capacity every passing year.

Third, our income always comes in two forms: our active income and our passive income.

We toil for our active income. Usually, the harder and smarter we work, the more money we make. Not surprisingly, time and experience help, which is why a typical 45-year-old makes more money than a typical 35-

year-old who in turn earns more than a typical 25-year-old!

If we are wise enough to NOT spend everything we make, we will then have money left over to funnel into savings and investments to generate passive income for you.

The inflow of passive income into our lives as interest, dividends, rent and distributions starts off as a tiny trickle. But if we resist the temptation to spend our returns, and if we, instead, reinvest them, the process of compounding over time transforms our trickle into a stream and later into a veritable deluge.

Fourth, this process takes decades. There is no genuine shortcut for the vast majority of us, which is a blessing because extensive studies on the subsequent behaviour of lottery mega winners show that most people cannot handle a sudden surge of wealth into their lives.

Such ostensibly lucky individuals often attract hordes of fair weather friends who help them squander their money. Once those winnings are spent, the so-called winners are left bereft of resources but with material appetites they never learnt to meet through personal effort.

WHAT ARE THE NECESSARY BASICS?

Those who gravitate to or are sucked into GRQs are attracted by unsustainable pie-in-the-sky promised returns; anyone who knows business understands that!

In contrast, the minority that resists the siren call of fast, easy money is more likely to grow wealthy slowly, surely and systematically.

Systematic wealth creation requires us to master some basic lessons on personal finance, which is encapsulated in timeless principles of wealth accumulation and life success. Here are just three principles:

1. Delayed gratification
2. Buy low, sell high
3. Pursue mastery over 10,000 hours

Exercise delayed gratification by choosing to spend less than you earn by limiting the luxuries you reward yourself with in your earlier years of

Exercise delayed gratification by choosing to spend less than you earn by limiting the luxuries you reward yourself with in your earlier years of earning.

earning. If you delay the gratification of your utterly normal, completely understandable wants through the exercise of discipline for a better tomorrow, you will end up better off than most people who constantly give in to immediate gratification.

Also, commit to useful investment strategies, such as dollar-cost averaging (DCA), to invest in a rational, non-emotional way that lowers your long-term acquisition cost of investments, which makes it easier for you to sell in the future at a healthy profit.

Commit one or two decades of your life to sink at least 10,000 hours in reading, studying, thinking about and acting upon the four interrelated disciplines of business, investment, economics and financial planning. A good starting point would be to build up a library of useful books on those subjects. (You're welcome to use my free ebook *26 Books to Take YOU All the Way to the Top!* as your starting point. You may download it here: <http://www.freecoolarticles.com/giftcentre.htm>)

Each of us needs to build up our maturity by learning to look at the world as it is, full of opportunities but also replete with pitfalls⁴.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH GREED?

An increase in maturity automatically graces us with increased patience. Each of us should also actively develop our patience. You see, a key problem with all GRQs is evident in the third word of Get Rich **Quick**.

When we were young, our parents taught us the fundamental importance of patience. So much so that all of us know – down to our DNA

– that patience is a virtue and greedy impatience is unwise and ultimately damaging.

Those who are liable to fall into gambling or GRQs are in a huge hurry to make it big without first laying the needed foundations of patience, sacrifice and self-knowledge.

I realise merely reading this column in *Asian Beacon* is not going to bring about dramatic change in anyone's approach to money management. But I also know from experience there will be a few readers who have been burnt by GRQs or who are merely frustrated by their lack of economic advancement. They are the ones most eager to change their behavioural patterns to metamorphose into economic successes.

If you are among that number, I wish you every success in developing a healthy, viable mental money filter that vaccinates you against future GRQs and transforms you into a mature money manager. 🙏

References

¹ NIV **Proverbs 11:14**, "For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers."

² KJV **Proverbs 11:14**, "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety."

³ NASB **Proverbs 10:22**, "It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich, And He adds no sorrow to it."

⁴ NIV **Hebrews 5:14**, "But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."

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《新年愿》： 让你我成为别人生命中的天使

新年总会带来新愿望，生活处处充满希望。当我们相信的时候，奇迹总会发生。

BY JOYCELYN LOH

成为别人生命中的天使，而不是只等待别人成为我们的天使

《新年愿》的导演——李世耀想要透过电影来传达，其实愿望原来不是自私的。愿望不仅是为自己，也可以是为别人的，就像电影中的恬恬一样帮助人，成为别人的天使。“我们相信每个人都能成为别人的天使，开始关爱他们、影响他们的生命。”

在短短的电影中，反映了许多现今社会的常态以及许多家庭所面临的挑战，当中包括亲子关系、夫妻关系、年轻人感情问题、下一代面临人生抉择时的挣扎等。由Jackie Chen (Friends)所演绎的电影主题曲——《我的天使》更是让人观看此电影后有更深一层的省思。

用心感受家人所给予的付出；爱，与其被动，不如主动。

本身既是辅导员的李世耀与太太，俩人透过多年的辅导经验，发现其实现今家庭所面对的问题，来来去去其实都是一致性的。

“所以，如何能更有效地帮助人呢？我们相信就是预防胜于治疗。现在的年轻人已经渐渐失去了对身边人，例如师长、父母、家人等的珍惜和感恩。因



此，盼望透过电影，以一个没有那么沉重的方式来帮助他们，提醒所有人要学习珍惜我们生命中的天使——父母、师长等。同时，也帮助人重新回到关系里。关系是需要刻意去经营的。关系需要我们很多的爱与付出。”

另外，电影中的其中一位演员——Alan 袁锦纶认为，爱是生活中不可或缺的。“如果没有了爱，所有的关系都会变质。对我个人而言，3“F”是非常重要的。第一，家庭 (Family)；第二，健康 (Fitness)；最后才是经济

(Financial)。若是一个人只是一直赚钱、赚钱、赚钱而失去了家庭和健康，就只会落入穷得只剩下钱的下场，就像电影中的陈伯。”

不仅如此，另一位演员——Nicky Pountney也认为，家庭和关系是非常重要的。“在现实生活中，我本身是4个孩子的爸爸。参与这次的演出再次提醒了我，与孩子建立关系、花时间和他们相处是至关重要的。我们的一生不应该只是一直忙碌和专注于赚钱而已，而是要成为家人的聆听者和陪伴者。”



亲情堆砌梦想，真情点燃希望

尽管在生活中不会一帆风顺、事事顺心，但是透过电影中的小主角恬恬让我们明白到，不要放弃在生活中活出爱。恬恬在母亲失落、无助时，鼓励并安慰自己的母亲，“天使要刚强才能帮助别人。”相信这是当孩子在充满关爱的环境下成长时，才能给予的相对自然回应。

《新年愿》此部电影也向社会传达了一个非常重要的信息，那就是家人比什么都重要。家，若要看见改变，改变需要从自己开始。改变是需要付出代价的。但若一个家，丈夫不愿改变，妻子也不愿改变，就只会剩下家变。👉

Angela陈美娥：以慈绳 爱索牵引，回家真好！



BY JOYCELYN LOH

怡保出生的 Angela陈美娥，在家中排行第四。自幼性格极度内向的她，就连当初报名演员班都是朋友帮她拿表格、填妥后交上的。但 Angela就这样被公司叫去面试，最后甚至被录取。

Angela 忆起《难得一家亲》这部戏的艰辛拍摄过程，让她几乎每天都无法睡觉。“那几年拍的剧都是哭戏，因此那段期间都情绪非常低落。”

正所谓人生如戏，戏如人生。Angela的演艺事业就像电影所上演的一样，因这一句话，让她从主角打成三线演员。同时，自己的健康也亮起了红灯，多年累积而来的压力将陈美娥困进了抑郁的漩涡。

人的尽头，神的开始

认识多年的朋友，Paul Wong 曾经向陈美娥分享福音。然而，陈美娥一直以来都只抱着听听就算的心态。但在一次走投无路之际，在晚宴中再次遇见了这位讲耶稣的朋友。“当时，我在中国投资的一



部电影遇到了危机，我所有的员工都跑掉了。”对于电脑能力有限，甚至需要有助理帮忙才行的陈美娥来说，这简直就是晴天霹雳。

正当自己束手无策时，心中一直有把声音一直催逼陈美娥，一定要去找在晚宴上遇见的Paul Wong。“我记得晚宴回家后的那个晚上，心中一直有一把声音催逼我，使我无法入眠。所以，我下定决心要去找Paul Wong。”

其实陈美娥是用了极大的勇气才能踏出这一步，拨电话与Paul Wong约谈。“当时我一个女人，要我约Paul出来，向他敞开心扉所遇见的问题并寻求帮助，对我而言是一件非常挑战的事，更何况我们并不是常见面的朋友。”

上帝的安排是奇妙的，陈美娥一通电话就成功与Paul约谈了。“我和Paul一见面，故事还没开始讲，我的眼泪就一直流。后来，透过这位朋友的帮助，让我

所面对的危机开始变成了转机。”

耶稣是又真又活的神

当然，这位一见面就说，“我的耶稣很好，我的耶稣很好”的朋友也约了陈美娥去参加教会崇拜。带着应酬心态的陈美娥应约去参加了教会崇拜。尽管一踏进教会，心中就被从神而来的平安充满，陈美娥却没有当下接受耶稣成为她个人生命的救主。但她向耶稣敞开心扉，带着单纯的心，跪在自己的床边向耶稣祷告。“神啊，我不是很认识祢，我很害怕，所以祢要牵着我的手，不要放开，让我更多认识祢。”就是这样单纯的信心和简单的祷告，上帝垂听了。陈美娥从那一天起，生命中慢慢地、一点一点地起了变化。她在日常生活中每天都经历上帝的奇妙和恩典。

“你知道吗？如果你没有亲身经历，你就无法知道和体验这位上帝的真

实。祂确实确实是又真又活的神！生命中的大小事情，神都知道，祂也带领我去经历祂为我所存留的奇妙的和美好。”

上帝透过不同的人事物，让陈美娥知道自己上帝所疼爱的宝贝。从发现自己身上有骨刺、脊椎受伤到寻找医疗和痊愈，全都在上帝的安排和预备中。不仅如此，耶稣的爱也让陈美娥走出了抑，信仰也帮助她走出了多年的灵界捆绑。

“走神的路需要经过训练来装备自己。因此，我开始在这一整年阅读属灵书籍、读经、学习祷告和亲近神。每个星期带着喜乐回来教会，盼望接下来自己的生命能够被上帝使用，所有所做的事情都要为耶稣而做，包括自己的事业。”

踏入娱乐圈20个年头，尽管在途中曾休息一段很长的时间，然而对陈美娥来说，这条路自从遇见了耶稣之后，有了新的开始，相信往后的生命不再一样。✚

“CHECKLIST” BEFORE DATING

By Desmond Kok



WE HAVE CHECKLISTS or to-do lists for our day-to-day work, family, study, etc. How about a

checklist before starting dating?

Personally, getting into a courtship is easy. The tough part will be “a failed relationship” that leads to brokenness and bitterness.

So, what do we need to do before starting dating?

Let us start with two letters, ‘P’ and ‘C’.

P = PURPOSE

- **Dating? Is it a need or want?**
 - Very often, starting a courtship is based on our need to ‘feel good’.
 - How would you determine that the feeling is good and we are mature enough to enter into a relationship?
 - What is the purpose of starting a relationship?

- What is your foundation in the courtship?
- If you rely on your feeling in the courtship, it will fade away because feelings are never a reliable source for a stable relationship.

• **Why I need to date?**

- Do I understand the meaning of love?
- What can I offer to this relationship?
- Am I influenced by movie-based relationship?
- What is my motivation?
- If you cannot answer the questions, I suggest you continue to search until you find an answer to these questions.

C = COMMITMENT

- Somehow, I do not agree when people use their courtship as a stepping stone for another

purpose. Courtship is not a stepping stone; it involves a unique relationship and builds a deeper level of relationship.

- Some have commented that we should not commit ourselves during courtship. If that is a case, why not stay at friendship and not enter into courtship?
- We are living in an era of dysfunctional families, absent fathers, controlling mothers and family issues. All these involve relationships. Relationships can be encouraging and painful.
- Hence, are you able to commit yourself in this courtship?

Food for thought: At the end of the day, we should not cause hurt in any relationship. Let us build relationships that bring positive impact! 📖

Desmond Kok is a pastor, and a fan of MU football team. He loves to travel, enjoys photography and reading.

WHAT TO EAT?

Why are there more health issues today? Has the definition of food changed? **JOANNA LEE** muses on going back to the basics, which may help us exercise our abilities to train our senses through eating well.

AT A MAMAK TABLE this morning after a walk up a hill, our conversation turned to food and its modern horrors. This one involves chickens. You know, the birds bulging out of cages stacked in rickety lorries next to us on highways, and how these poor birds die during the long journeys under sunshine and rain. The dead ones at the bottom of their cramped prisons are covered in feathers and faeces. “They sell these dead chickens off to wholesalers for cheap,” my friend said. “And because of the way they died, they have a lot of toxins.” Her friend who had witnessed and told her this story has stopped eating chicken at restaurants.

Curiously, in Leviticus 22:8, we are told not to eat dead animals. A few years ago, some friends had heated discussions about the Levitical dietary instructions’ relevance for today. I decided to investigate this issue and stumbled on Dr David Macht, a renowned toxicologist who had published a study under Johns Hopkins University titled, “An Experimental



Pharmacological Appreciation of Leviticus XI and Deuteronomy XIV” (1953). What I remember about his studies was how fish without fins or scales, considered as “unclean”, were proven to be more toxic than the “clean” fish with fins and scales. Fascinating. I then began to wonder if God cared for our health through what we eat. Even the father of western medicine, Hippocrates, said, “Let thy

food be thy medicine and thy medicine be thy food.”

In light of the current health issues, especially among children and people in their 30s and 40s, what can we do to care for our health? Eating in ‘moderation’ seems to be the safest thing to do.

Here’s further food for thought about eating after pondering over food with concerned friends, reading on



the source of your food. Learn what the GMO fuss is about. Pray for wisdom to seek truthful, reliable knowledge.

3 Fasting helps to sharpen our senses. Did you know that soldiers who fast actually have sharper senses? That helps them in war. Fasting has many medical benefits too. I think it may also help us check ourselves for gluttony. (I'm the chief sinner here, even with my small appetite!)

4 Be strong and courageous to make the change. If you desire to take charge of your health, there is no other way than to be brave to confront the truths (you may not like what you find) in order to be set free. Feeling less tired with improved moods after eating better might motivate us too.

Looking at Macht's study on toxicity among many other studies out there proving the scientific reasons behind God's many biblical wisdom for health, could there be hints of knowledge and wisdom that have been lost through the ages about God's original health and hygiene practices for us to enjoy the blessings mentioned in Deuteronomy?

Being healthy, not longevity, should be our end goal so that we can live out our purposes, or while searching for them, unhindered by health issues as far as possible. This could well be the "abundant life" we long for. 🙏

researches on food's effect on our guts and listening to doctors and nutritionists.

1 Eat foods that are food – God has designed our bodies to receive what He has deemed as food. It's all in Genesis and Leviticus. We have our own convictions but the fact is, certain foods are predisposed to carry toxins

and pathogens that may cause us to be sick. Second, avoid processed foods. Jamie Oliver has campaigned against fake meat in fast foods and restaurants. Which leads us to the next point...

2 Learn as much as we can about eating healthily. Educating ourselves remains one of the best bets towards healthy eating. Learn to read food labels. Ask about





“A LOVE FOR PEOPLE, A SERVANT HEART, AND A WHOLE LOT OF PATIENCE”

What I've Learned As An Intern At YB Hannah Yeoh's Office **BY LOW WIN LI**

'Being politically inclined is one thing, but being politically ignorant is unacceptable.'

THE MENTION OF HER NAME usually evokes admiration, an anecdote of how she's different from other politicians in Malaysia, or for some others, confusion as to who she is.

I first heard of YB Hannah when her book, *Becoming Hannah: A Personal Journey*, was published. At that time, I was just about to enter college, and did not possess much knowledge about the world of politics. What I knew about politics then was that I did not want to be involved in it.

Last year, YB Hannah was one of the invited speakers at an annual event held by my law school. She shared about how she first got into politics, and took questions from the crowd. Before the talk, the only thing I knew about her was that she was a politician who happened to be a Christian. But that day, I was completely blown away by how she held herself with such grace, and how transparent she was in sharing her testimony. That was my first impression of YB Hannah – her admirable faith and conviction.

After the event, I emailed her office to enquire about internship openings. As I was planning to take a long break before completing the final year of my law degree, there was nothing to lose. I realised that my previous biased view of not wanting to be involved in politics was only because I had looked at the glaring flaws of the system, and



FROM LEFT: Win Li with YB Hannah Yeoh.

failed to pay attention to the initiatives on ground that could really help the community.

Recently, YB Hannah was one of the invited speakers at the Generation Now Youth Conference 2017. She shared her life journey – pre-, during, and post-joining politics. During the Q&A session, a comment she made hit me: “Being politically inclined is one thing, but being politically ignorant is unacceptable.” It caused me to rethink my own perception of politics, and how I have viewed my home country over the years. I thought to myself, if I really want to help build the nation, how can I afford not to stay updated with

current affairs? I have allowed myself to buy into the ploy that everything is “unclean” to the extent that I have overlooked those with vigilant pursuits, however rare they may be.

YB Hannah spoke further on the prevalence and pitfalls of social media usage among our generation. While it is a good way to connect and spread positivity, it is also a platform for internet trolls, hate comments and cyber-bullying. Instant access to information, unfortunately, also carries the threat of misinformation. Thus, discernment is needed. She urged young people to use social media as a platform to share opinions and speak up – in love. We cannot necessarily control what comes at us, but we do have some form of control over what comes out of us.

YOU CAN HAVE THE WHOLE WORLD, BUT LOSE YOUR SOUL

Corruption – a common word used casually to describe politics. This particular thought dawned upon me: As humans, is there not a tendency to fall into temptations, whether in the political field or otherwise? Although leaders of the country ought to be held to a higher standard of transparency and character, society tends to treat these public figures as gods instead of fellow human beings.

Among the memorable experiences we interns shared are the occasional heart-to-heart talks with YB Wong Chen (whose office is just right above YB Hannah's). One such conversation found us discussing corruption. What I found interesting was that YB Wong

Chen stayed on in politics by reminding himself of his end goal and purpose. I was also impressed by how transparent he was about one's vulnerability to corruption and temptation. The idealist approach is to never be in a situation that tempts one to fall prey to corruption while the realist approach is to have a heightened awareness of corruption and yet, stand firm against it.

PEOPLE ARE THE JOY AND BANE OF OUR EXISTENCE

Among the main things we dealt with on a day-to-day basis at the Subang Jaya office are the welfare programmes introduced by Selangor. It was interesting to see all kinds of people troop into the office – from those frantically seeking help to those who felt entitled due to the sheer casting of their vote. It was also interesting to see the type of issues and complaints we received, an experience which taught me the importance of approaching the right departments to solve specific issues and not just expecting the ADUN to solve everything.

There are 56 ADUNs (Ahli Dewan Undangan Negeri or state assemblypersons) in total (shamefully, I had no idea prior to this!). In law school, we learn about the three branches of government – the Federal, Executive and the Judiciary – but we have not seen them in action. In Malaysia, issues of the federal government – such as education,



Giving out buah kurma at the Ramadan Bazaar.

transport and immigration – are dealt with by our Ministers of Parliament. The state government's representatives are the ADUNs; they deal with issues such as land, places of worship and welfare. With exposure and experience, it slowly became easier for me to direct residents' problems to the right government departments.

A LOVE FOR PEOPLE, A SERVANT HEART AND A WHOLE LOT OF PATIENCE

In conjunction with the Hari Raya celebrations, YB Hannah and YB Wong Chen's office visited several bazaar ramadans to hand out *buah kurma* (dates) to the public. Tailing YB Hannah really kept me on my toes, as she works at a quick and 'no-nonsense'

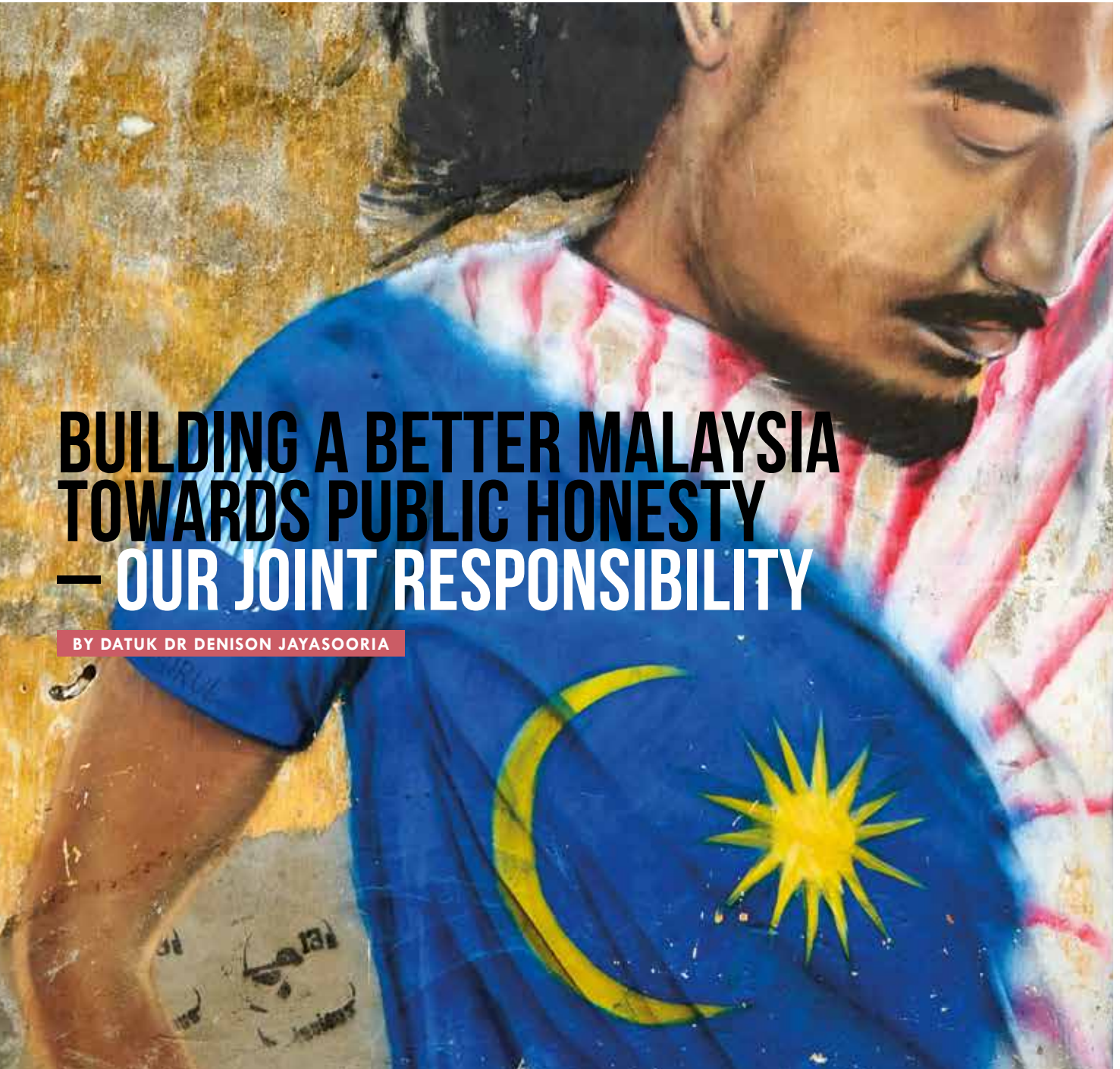
pace. I remember being told to look a little more alive! I wasn't sure if I should have laughed – which resulted in an odd giggle. It was nice to see more than a handful of people in the community being so accepting of our gesture of giving out the dates, which somewhat stood as a reminder of how God will not be able to rebuild a nation if we are divided.

Another aspect I enjoyed during my internship was YB Hannah's focus on mental health issues. The recent partnership of the Subang Jaya ADUN's office with Befrienders Malaysia seeks to give the public easier access to obtain help as well as promote awareness and acceptance of mental health issues. Since the collaboration and publicising of this service, the number of phone calls received has spiked. A talk led by Dr Chua Sook Ning (of RELATE Malaysia) on depression shed light on how Asian communities are used to bottling up our emotions, that it is understandably tough for us to admit that we are struggling. It is heartwarming to see actions being taken to overcome the taboo of seeking help; it is time for us to take a stand and not fall victims to our own minds.

I have learned a lot over the past few months, not just knowing my motherland better; I've also learned more about my own character. Love has taught me more than judgment ever could. May we all continue to be politically awakened for our nation! 🙏



Giving out buah kurma to MPSJ officers.



BUILDING A BETTER MALAYSIA TOWARDS PUBLIC HONESTY — OUR JOINT RESPONSIBILITY

BY DATUK DR DENISON JAYASOORIA

MALAYSIA IS UNDERGOING some of the most changing times as a people. As we approach our 60th independence celebrations, we are faced with many questions about political leadership and the need for integrity and honesty in the public office. The conduct of public officials in what they say and do or don't say and don't do is creating negative consequences which are impacting the level of public trust negatively.

CRITICAL CONCERNS IMPACTING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

We are constantly bombarded with information on the 1MDB, which is both a controversial and politically sensitive issue. It is a real divisive matter that has negatively impacted how citizens view their leaders. There is an urgent long overdue call for an independent resolution of this matter so as to ensure all wrongdoing is punished in accordance with the law in order to restore confidence in society, especially

in the light of foreign government action of misuse of funds according to their laws. We cannot hide away from this matter, which now clearly needs some public resolving.

Issues pertaining to elections, such as the Election Commission and the current redelineation exercise, must be undertaken in an environment of public trust where there is transparency and no political advantage for any one political party. In society too there is frequent politicisation of



ethnicity and religion, which is further challenging our consensus position of the Federal Constitution, which guarantees religious freedom and equality to all citizens. These are being undermined in the public arena and many politicians, especially from the Federal government, are silent about this matter. Constant reassurance of the Federal Constitutional principles of balance is essential for harmony in Malaysian society.

One major effort by the Federal Government to address inter-ethnic and inter-religious strife, and to foster greater harmony in Malaysian society was the establishment of the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) on 25 November 2013, which completed their task by end-2015.

This council undertook a comprehensive strategy of town hall meetings, roundtable discussions, in-depth review of critical issues and concerns and drew up a comprehensive report of findings, recommendations and action plan. The questions before us are: What

...the key to a better Malaysia is holding political leaders accountable and ensuring that there are independent public institutions...

has happened to the national unity blueprint and report prepared by the NUCC? Why has this not been released and the findings implemented? This is further impacting negatively public opinion, especially on the political leadership. The NUCC's discussions created a high sense of hope that critical issues will be resolved through the enactment of a National Harmony act and that an effective mediation mechanism will be established.

CITIZENS' ACTION FOR A BETTER MALAYSIA

In my most recent publication entitled "Citizen's Action To Enhance Democracy In Malaysia", I note that *Bersih* is "the largest people movement and most dynamic civil society action in people mobilisation for democratic reform in Malaysia" (page 1). The motivation for this is both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 20 on freedom of peaceful assembly and also the Federal Constitution article 10 (b) on rights to assemble peaceably. This action by citizens is the clearest public expression of protest within a democratic society. *Bersih* has demonstrated that ordinary people have the courage to walk the streets in peace in the defence of democracy in Malaysia. There is an urgent call for institutional reform in establishing independent mechanisms to enhance elections, good governance, transparency and accountability. In this context, the Federal Constitutional principle of check and balance must be enhanced. Often, it is the executive arm that seeks to dominate the legislature and the judiciary.

The need for institutional reform must be central in public discussions, especially to ensure the independence of mediating institutions such as the Elections Commission, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Agency, the Human Rights Commission and the Enforcement Agency Integrity Commission.

In this context, five aspects need review – the nature of selection and appointment of the people, the security of tenure of those appointed, the legal provisions for investigation, the provisions to hold those found violating held publically accountable and finally, public access to all the findings. One possible way forward is the bi-partisan parliamentary select committee system that will provide oversight to these four independent mechanisms. Therefore, the key to a better Malaysia is holding political leaders accountable and ensuring that there are independent

public institutions which can provide the needed check and balance to undo the current erosion of public trust.

CHRISTIAN CITIZENS IN DEMOCRATIC REFORM

While we are Christians by religious conviction, we also have multiple identities. In this context, we are citizens of Malaysia who are mandated by the Bible to be obedient to national laws, pay taxes and pray for the leaders. Our mandate is not blind submission but one as intelligent persons to review the policies and programmes, have a watchful eyes on wrongdoing as an effective watchman at the tower and be found faithful to God in all that we say and do for the good of our land.

On this 60th Independence Day, let us continue as loyal, responsible, patriotic citizens of Malaysia who will stand up for democracy, equality, religious freedom, justice and fairness by upholding the Federal Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We must have the courage to speak up against wrongdoing and protect the interest of the nation. We must be fearless for truth and justice. May God help us as we build a better and more accountable Malaysia. 🙏

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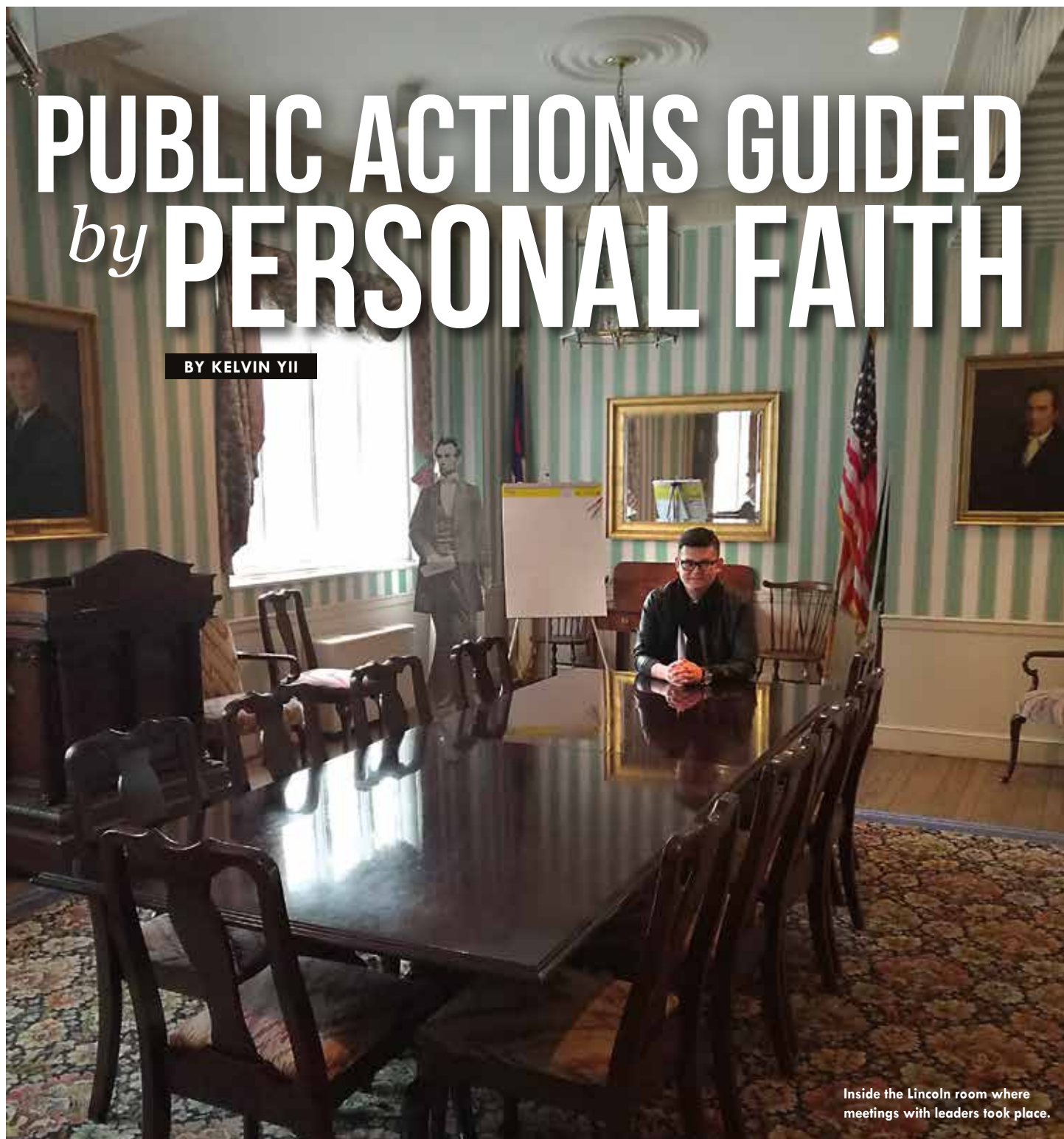
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PUBLIC ACTIONS GUIDED *by* PERSONAL FAITH

BY KELVIN YII



Inside the Lincoln room where meetings with leaders took place.

I WAS RECENTLY BLESSED WITH THE PRIVILEGE TO join a month-long diplomatic exchange to the United States, together with 15 young delegates from 5 ASEAN countries. Organized under the umbrella of the U.S. Department of State, the purpose of this exchange was for us to learn the best practices of legislative processes and governance, with the hope of bringing the knowledge gained back to our home countries.

While in Washington, D.C., I had the opportunity to attend Sunday service at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, situated just a few blocks away from where I was

staying. It was a simple yet meaningful time. Hymns were sung, prayers were recited and the faithful studied the Word together. Later, I was told that this was the church Abraham Lincoln had chosen to be rooted in while serving as the 16th President of the United States. I had even sat on the exact same pew he used to sit on!

It intrigued me to learn that during special prayer services, Lincoln would often sit in a side chamber as he placed himself and the nation in the hands of God – seeking justice and imploring mercy, recognizing his need for grace. Born and raised in a Baptist family, Lincoln was skeptical



The Sunday morning congregation listens attentively in the auditorium adorned with stained glass artwork.



The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church.

of the faith when younger; but along the way, he developed distinct personal beliefs. He eventually read the Bible regularly and remained committed to God and morality till the end of his life.

In the world of politics, many advocate for the separation of the church and state, and rightly so. A diverse, multicultural and multi-religious community ought not to be governed by the religious laws of an elite majority, which may result in the oppression of the beliefs of the minority groups.

However, the separation of religion from politics does not necessarily mean the separation of our personal faith

from the politics we practice. The fact is, all our actions are influenced by our values, guided by our belief systems; and these values are often moulded through our faith. In the case of Abraham Lincoln, his fight for justice could very well be a reflection of the depth of his maturity in faith, in having the senses to distinguish between moral good and evil.

"But solid food is for the [spiritually] mature, whose senses are trained by practice to distinguish between what is morally good and what is evil." (Hebrews 5:14 AMP)

William Wilberforce, a politician and social reformer who was very influential in the abolition of the slave trade in the British empire, is another example of a man grounded in his spiritual vision while in the political arena. Upon conversion to Christianity, he intended to leave his Parliamentary office, but was advised not to by his mentor, John Newton – who instead challenged him to serve God in the public sphere. Wilberforce went on to live out his faith



Draft of the Anti-Slavery Act, by Abraham Lincoln and church leaders.

and morality, and promoted good causes more effectively than any other figure in history.

Maturity of faith is tangible. It is reflected through the simplest actions of our hands, and not just the confessions of our mouth. As much as I believe that my beliefs should not be shoved down the throats of people of different faiths, the values of my faith should be reflected in the politics that I do, and the politics that I practice.

This is true for all of us, in the different spheres God has called us into. We each are to distinguish between what is morally good and evil in our world – and that should be the guiding light for the steps we take. We have been redeemed, not to walk with chests puffed high to look down upon others, or to ignore the pains of the world – but to be guided by values of love, justice, truth and righteousness; which have always been demonstrated through the ministry of Jesus.

"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16 NIV) ✝

Kelvin Yii is currently serving as the Special Assistant to both Members of Parliament for Bandar Kuching and Stampin, Sarawak.

MEAT

A Must for Maturity

BY DR LIM POH ANN

TODAY, THERE ARE TWO categories of churchgoers. There are pew warmers, whose mindset is this: “What can I get by coming to church?” In contrast, some ask, “How can I contribute?” These mature believers have a desire to serve God and others.

Spiritual immaturity is not just a current phenomenon. Long ago, some believers were supposed to be teachers but they could only feed on milk, not solid food. Instead of teaching others, they remained inward-looking, immature and gullible.

“There has been enough time for you to be teachers—yet you still need

someone to teach you the first lessons of God’s message. Instead of eating solid food, you still have to drink milk. Anyone who has to drink milk is still a child, without any experience in the matter of right and wrong. Solid food, on the other hand, is for adults, who through practice are able to distinguish between good and evil.” (Hebrews 5:12-14)



What can we learn from this passage? Spiritual maturity is not necessarily related to age (number of years in the faith). What distinguishes the men from the boys is the degree of hunger for truth; our attitude motivates us to study God’s word, irrespective of age.

Thus, there is a great need to seriously study God’s word—renew

our minds—so that we do not conform to the world, we can present ourselves as a living sacrifice, and discern God’s will for our lives (Romans 12:1-2).

WHY WE NEED SOLID FOOD

The word has to cut deep into our lives (Hebrews 4:12) and show us areas that do not please Him—sins or weights that impede progress (Hebrews 12:1).

There is no shortcut to *sanctification*. As Jesus prayed: “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17).

How can we know what pleases God unless we study His word in order to know the truth? How would we know that ogling at the opposite sex with lustful thoughts is tantamount to adultery unless we are familiar with

Matthew 5:27-28?

Believers should not be dim-witted like a mule but be sensitive to God's instructions (Psalm 32: 8-9). "Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:104-105).

Another cogent reason why we need solid food is that deception has become so prevalent during these perilous end times.

Jesus warned us, not once but four times, in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24) that false christs and false prophets will arise and deceive many believers.

Paul warned the church elders at Ephesus that, after his departure, fierce wolves would prey on the flock (Acts 20:29).

Later, this seasoned apostle warned young Timothy that people with itching ears will find teachers to suit their passions rather than listen to sound teaching (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Jude had to contend for the faith as false teachers had secretly slipped into the church, perverting God's grace by turning it into a licence for immorality (Jude 3-4).

The above warnings show us why we need to be vigilant against deception. The great preacher, C.H. Spurgeon, said: "Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right."

Many fervent but gullible believers will be fooled by false prophets and teachers these last days as these wolves, well draped in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15), are not easily spotted out.

DETECTING FAKES

How do we detect counterfeit currency? The correct approach is to begin studying the characteristics of genuine notes. Once we have mastered this, we can easily spot out the fake ones. Similarly, in the spiritual realm, we have to be well-versed with the truth before we can overcome deception.

Thus, believers have to ground ourselves on solid food ("meat") from Scripture so that we can distinguish truth from half-truths and lies.

Though discernment is a distinctive quality of mature, spirit-filled believers (1 Corinthians 2:12-16), this ability to distinguish between good and evil does not come automatically. Though we may have the 'mind of Christ', we still need to fill it up with the truth. The Holy Spirit can only draw upon the repository of truth in our minds (John 14:26).

We need to "study to show ourselves approved to God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

To "rightly divide the word" implies that we do not "cherry pick" portions we find attractive and agreeable and downplay the harsh and objectionable parts. If we pick and choose from Scripture what we think is good, we are distorting the biblical message.

"Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right."

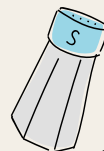
By dwelling on the whole Bible, we do not focus on half-truths or emphasise one truth at the expense of another equally fundamental truth. Paul, while addressing the elders at Ephesus, said that he did not shrink from declaring to them the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

The following are two examples of the danger of dwelling on half-truths.

Firstly, thinking erroneously that God is always loving, gracious and merciful may prove disastrous when we are confronted by God the supreme judge at the end of life's journey or when Christ returns (Hebrews 9:27, 1 Peter 4:7,17).

Love and mercy are important attributes of God. But He is also a God of justice and righteousness. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you" (Psalm 89:14).

Secondly, are believers free from the law? In a sense, the answer is 'yes'



in that we need not arduously keep the law in order to get to heaven. We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). As Scripture says, "You are not under law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

However, it does not mean we can do whatever we like. We are still held accountable under moral laws as revealed in the Ten Commandments. Jesus categorically stated: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them" (Matthew 5:17). Paul affirmed that, though believers are saved by faith, it does not mean we can overthrow the Law, which is still upheld (Romans 3:31).

It is through the in-depth study of God's word and constant practice that we develop discernment. Spiritual babes, who merely dwell on the fact they are saved through faith and repentance, are unlikely to develop discernment (Hebrews 5:12-14, Hebrews 6:1).

If we think, having received God's grace, we can be complacent and just rest on Christ's imputed righteousness, we are seriously mistaken. The Christian life is not passive but active.

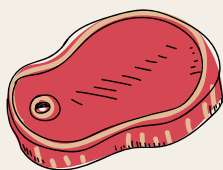
Just as an infant's diet has to progressively shift from milk to solid food, so too must believers grow in spiritual maturity through effort and experience.

Peter tells us to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. We are to add to our faith the following qualities: goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, mutual affection, and love in order that we may not be ineffective or unfruitful. By doing so, we confirm our call and election and will never stumble (2 Peter 3:18, 2 Peter 1:5-10).

Spiritual babies need milk. Solid food, on the other hand, is for adults, who through practice are able to distinguish between good and evil.

In order to mature, believers need solid food (meat) for sanctification and victory over deception. 🍖

Dr Lim Poh Ann is a medical practitioner. He is the former editor of *Asian Beacon* (Dec. 2008 - Oct. 2011). He can be reached at his Facebook page, www.facebook.com/AskDrLim, and blog, *Porridge for the Soul*: <http://bit.ly/1ijiXHp>



TO MY EX-CHURCH

LAST SUNDAY, I PAID YOU AN overdue visit and took a good, hard look around.

Although I have spent 80% of my 25 years on earth in your halls, these days we feel like strangers.

Where I once worshipped exuberantly at the front row, now I shrink in the back, away from the glances of people I once knew.

Where I sat up and took diligent sermon notes, now I slump and fiddle with my phone, unable to absorb anything.

Where I mingled with countless social groups and dashed from meeting to meeting, now I drift awkwardly without purpose.

These days, we feel like strangers.

BUT I REMEMBER WHEN I LOVED YOU

I grew up in your Sunday School classes, passed my awkward teenage years in your youth group, found my anchor in you through life's seasons. I fell in love with your boys, and felt at home in your social groups. I was sheltered in your solid teachings,

secure in the reality you created for me.

My short life revolved around you. So naturally, I wanted to give back to a Body that had given me so much. I loved you, so I served you.

From the moment we were old enough to understand the concept of responsibility, you told us that we each had a part to play in the Body of Christ. At 13 years old, I began to shoulder mine.

Here are some of the parts I played over the years:

I taught in Sunday School, organised youth camps and weekly activities, led Bible studies and prayer groups, ushered at Sunday service, worship led, mentored younger kids... the list goes on. If an event came up, you'd find my name would be on the volunteers list. If someone needed to talk, my number was available to all.

On and on it went for over 10 years. Sure I'd get overwhelmed sometimes – when I was unequipped to handle your crises and politics, or when my to-do List outnumbered the hours I had in a day.

But your harvest was ripe and the

workers so few. And if it didn't start with me, who would do it?

So I'd pick myself up from the slumps and soldier on. I didn't hate you, but it was years before I realised you were slowly chipping away at me.

And so, though it came as no surprise, putting a stop to my life with you was like watching a horrifying car crash happen in slow motion – then come to a grinding, bloodied halt.

WHAT IT TOOK TO CHANGE THINGS

At 22 years old, my idyllic student life was over and I plunged into a career in the "real world". A career that involved 15-hour workdays and weekends. I stopped having time for family, friends – and for you.

As transitional periods would have it, my 150km/h life hit one speed bump after another.

A bad career move. Long hours and office politics. Family tensions and a nasty breakup. Crash, smash. Within five months, my life plans were left in ashes. I learned to drink my stress away, and bury my sorrows in work.

Whenever I came to you, I felt small



and unsure. I had questions about you, the God you worship, and the reality you built for me. But when I asked, you met me with silence and offers to help me “pray about it”.

So I started to step back from you.

I took a break from the worship ministry. I stopped leading your Bible studies. When you asked me to lead this cell group, I said I had no energy. When you asked me to write that annual report, I said I had no time.

AND THEN YOU STOPPED ASKING.

Once upon a time, I used to fret about you. Who would take care of you? I asked, feeling the weight of guilt alongside my burdens.

But someone advised me: “If you say no to God, He will find others to do your job.”

So I took that advice, and found it to be absolutely true. Others stepped up to serve you – and suddenly it didn’t matter that I wasn’t around anymore. Old friends stopped checking up. Younger friends forgot I existed. Life went on.

To you, it made no difference

whether you were served by me or the next person. What a relief. What a slap in the face.

Knowing this, I made the decision over a year ago to leave behind the church I’d known and loved, quietly and in shame.

MY LIFE TODAY LOOKS LIKE THIS.

It’s not that I’ve completely given up on this church thing. Even though it isn’t you, I’ve found a new church.

I chose a big one, so that I can easily disappear in the crowd. Every week, I arrive 15 minutes late so I can sit at the back. I have yet to make any friends, join any groups, or volunteer for any cause. It’s as if I’ve gone back to drinking milk after eating – not just solid food – the full 10-course meal.

I’m terrified of committing anything to her, lest I let her down the way I did you.

I’m beginning to be okay with my failure. I think I need some time to be selfish in my own walk with God. From being one of the most promising young church leaders, today I stand among the questioning, the back-slidden, the

left-behind.

And believe me, I’m not lonely among those in my age bracket. Plenty of other millennials have left you behind for reasons that count far beyond mine, also wondering if you had noticed.

HERE’S THE INTERESTING THING.

Although my career has left me in the rubble, I’ve found some nuggets of gold nonetheless.

It’s given me the chance to meet people who are so unlike the Christian template I had always known – gay people, transsexuals, the homeless, the beaten and broken. Those who are “of the world”, as you used to say.

Strangely, they seem to meet me at a deeper level than you ever could. They may not have answers, but they have sat and wept with me in the darkness. They accept me exactly as I am, and not for what I can offer them.

On that Sunday as I gazed quietly at you with that dull ache in my chest, I wished you did, too. 🙏



C

IHAVE ALWAYS KNOWN THAT HAVING GOOD HABITS in life is important. Just that I didn't know exactly why, except for the fact that I don't have to think much about my habitual actions as I go about my daily life.

By virtue of its definition, a habit is simply a process by which our brains convert a sequence of actions or tasks into an automatic routine. Examples of that are instances when we comb our hair, brush our teeth, drive our cars and put on our socks! Interestingly, a lot of my creative ideas materialise when I am in my daily shower! Initially, I thought I was one of those odd ones until I heard others saying this as well.

We don't think much about our actions because we do them automatically. Turn on the tap, wet and shampoo our hair, soap our body, rinse away the soapsuds, wash our face with cleanser, towel dry our hair and body and out we go.

Normal stuff each day, right? Then I began to observe a pattern over the years that many of my creative ideas, insights and thoughts come from that habit. There were times after

... if we can inculcate some great spiritual habits with automatic routines, our minds can be freed up to be spiritually creative and receptive in our life.

my showers when I would quickly write my thoughts down before I forget them. I notice the same when I drive. My smartphone with a voice recording feature is a great tool to have in place of the notepad, especially when my hands are on the wheel!

I learnt recently that habits are simply the wonders of our brains designed by God in such a way that they drive



BY CHRIS KAM

CREATING GOOD HABITS

us to be more productive and efficient. When tasks and behaviours are automated, meaning we do them without much thinking and effort, we free our brains for other creative work. We don't usually think about them until something disrupts that pattern. Even my habit of going to the gym is programmed into my brain with the ultimate reward of an endorphin rush that my body looks forward to. This is a good habit to have in order to push me towards greater body fitness. When I skip my gym sessions, there is that uneasy and discontented feeling. Pianists understand this principle in their daily discipline of practising their scales. This fundamental habit and skill must be in them before they can be great musicians because it frees up their brains to be musically creative and expressive without worrying about hitting the right notes.

But what about spiritual habits? Working on the same principle, if we can inculcate some great spiritual habits with automatic routines, our minds can be freed up to be

spiritually creative and receptive in our life. Some great spiritual habits are our daily quiet time with the Lord, which allows us to learn intimacy with Him. Cultivating a habitual heart of thanksgiving removes the complaining spirit in us. Regular church and cell group attendance encourage accountability and growth. Consistent service in ministry increases our capacity in our spiritual gifting and call.

Often, I see Christians struggle in these basic habits. Much of their energy is spent on pushing themselves to do them. For example, in something as simple as attending the regular church celebration, they struggle to make time knowing that it is the right thing to do, yet are not disciplined enough to make it regular. Even if they end up going, much of their energy has been expended by the time they get to church and the whole exercise becomes an obligation rather than a time of anticipation and intimacy with God. No wonder the Christian life is so burdensome. Multiply that into the various Christian disciplines of daily devotion, tithes and offerings, cell group, ministry, etc., no wonder so many are ineffective for God because their minds are not freed up to be creative in the way they can grow in intimacy with God and love for others.

In many sense, good and bad spiritual habits are well illustrated in Romans 7:7-25 on the colossal struggle between the spirit and the flesh. "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." (Romans 7:15) Good habits feed the spirit and bad habits conversely feed the flesh. In the simplest of terms, in our daily lives, if we are not feeding the spirit through good habits, then we are feeding the flesh through bad ones.

Victorious Christian living is premised upon having a stronger spirit that will force the flesh to succumb to what the Spirit desires for us. This is the fruit of the Spirit, especially in self-control. Fleshly desires are what the Bible calls carnal, worldly or unspiritual. Many are not aware that their spiritual growth is stunted as a result of bad spiritual habits inculcated over the years. Hebrews 5:14 gives us a clue of a great spiritual habit of studying and applying God's word that guards us from falling away: "But solid food is for the mature, who by **constant use** have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."

Systemic cultures grow out of the keystone habits in every organisation. By encouraging healthy habits, an organisation grows strong. Good habits of every member are foundational to the life of the church. Can I encourage you to spend some time to reflect your past year on this matter? If you can be brutally honest and examine all your habits to see what feed your spirit and flesh and determine whether to keep, drop, enhance or even add a new one, you will be working towards a more fruitful year.

Remember, habits take time to form, so do persevere until you know it is almost automatic. We have often been told we are creatures of habit and it is so true. The most basic of all spiritual habits must include our daily devotion and prayer, our weekly celebration and cell group, our tithe and offering, and most of all our time with our loved ones.

These habits free us with an inadvertently greater energy to be creative, productive and fruitful in many other areas of our life because the important and vital basics are covered. 🙏

A woman with long dark hair is shown from the chest up, looking into a mirror. She is wearing a crown of white daisies. Her hands are visible, holding the edges of the mirror. The background is dark, and the mirror reflects her face and hair. The overall mood is contemplative and artistic.

UNIQUELY BEAUTIFUL

BY SHEELA VIJAYAN

BEAUTY THROUGH THE AGES

Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all? Most little girls would have grown up hearing this and stare into the mirror, trying to be a Disney princess. Fast forward a few years and Disney princesses are now replaced with Barbie and her almost-impossible-to-achieve curves. A few more years down the line, and they would want to emulate the pop star or movie actress of their time. Oh yes, there is always a mirror in front of a girl but sadly, most girls do not like what they see in the mirror. Instead, they try to trick the mirror into showing something else, and that something else is whatever that is currently trendy.

DANGERS OF CONFORMING

The problem is just how fickle the mirror on the wall can be. Let's look at the body image trends over the past three decades. In the '90s, the petite and waif look was in with Kate Moss being the 'it' girl. In the 2000s, the tanned and buff look of Gisele Bundchen was the name of the game. Fast forward a decade later, and it's back to curves with J Lo and Nicki Minaj. If we widen this spectrum of time to include seven decades earlier, the trends were even more confusing. Which then leaves us with this question: How does this affect the self-confidence of women everywhere?

Tanned Asian women are bombarded by advertisements that a fairer complexion is more attractive. Our Caucasian counterparts are given the opposite message: that a tanned complexion is a healthy one. One moment, straight and flat-ironed hair is the trend and the next, curls are in. Jasmine from *Aladdin* has black hair, Ariel from *The Little Mermaid* is a redhead while Elsa of *Frozen* is blonde. So, what colour from L'Oréal's shelves should we go for? Oh, the wheel of beauty keeps going round and round. How do we keep up?

We depend on the constantly changing voice of the masses to tell us that we are beautiful enough and good enough. We are bombarded by deceptively veiled advertisements telling us that our worth is tied to our looks and worse, what our capability.

Thankfully, there is a Voice that assures us otherwise:

"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."¹

Here, God's words are a powerful anchor for women. He reminds us that our inner beauty is more valuable than our outer beauty. Our inner beauty is able to surpass the test of time and the war against crow lines and wrinkles. With so much pressure on women to age gracefully (or not age at all), these verses are a refreshing contrast. In His wisdom, He asks us to forsake the ideals of the world because chasing them would leave us empty and constantly falling short of their standards. Rather, He encourages us to seek after what is of great value to Him. That doesn't mean we dress shabbily. Rather, it just takes the pressure off to constantly look like Barbie.

Often, teenage girls fall prey to the lie that they should dress scantily and wear loads of make-up to attract the guys. This may further influence how they behave with boys and leads to issues such as sex before marriage, pre-marital pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Young girls are being told every day that their worth depends on their looks. Is it such a surprise then that they succumb to anorexia and bulimia? The struggle doesn't end here because these issues, if not dealt with, carry into womanhood and even motherhood. Therein lies the risk of mothers passing on the same mindset to their daughters. The cycle continues.

It is more important than ever for parents to cultivate the right mindset in their young girls – that their value goes beyond and beneath their looks, and that their beauty is not defined by what the masses say. Often, the voices and opinion of the masses are contrary to who God says we are, and have the potential to hinder us from living out our full potential. Perhaps, more than ever in these times, we need to speak out the words in 1 Peter over them as a shield against the world's teachings.

YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL

Christina Aguilera sings "I am beautiful, no matter what they say. Words can't bring me down". It is empowering and shows how words have the potential to impact our self-esteem. In this loud world, may we seek comfort from the words of our heavenly Father who says that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

It doesn't matter if we are 5' or 5'9", it doesn't matter if we are a size 6 or a size 12, it doesn't matter if our hair is black or blonde or red – God has a specific plan when He made us that way. Kate Winslet shared an empowering story on how she faced rejection due to her size before getting the starring role in *Titanic*. She didn't fit the mould that men had cast, but she fought back. In her acceptance speech at the BAFTA Award in 2016, she said, "Look at me now!" Yes, what a tragedy it would be for *Titanic* fans if Kate had chosen to accept the words of men and walked away from her destiny. Diversity and not conformity is what makes life truly colourful.

AND GOD SAID

So today, let's celebrate how we are made, for we are uniquely, specially, fearfully and wonderfully made. They say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. To all girls and women everywhere, who is our beholder today? Perhaps today, we need to stop looking at the mirror and start looking up. And by doing that, we can rest in these words that have been spoken over us from the time we were created: "... and it was very good."² 🙏

¹ 1 Peter 3:3-4

² Genesis 1:31



Sheela Vijayan is currently working in her church, Grace Assembly. She enjoys singing, reading and a whole lot of Nutella.

HOW TO STAY CONNECTED TO GOD IN A NOISY WORLD

By Cheryl Lim Shu-Li

NOISE AND THE influence of pop culture are all around us – be it in our daily doses of YouTube, and Instagram messages and Facebook news feed. Our friends talk about the latest scandals in Hollywood and the latest releases on Spotify. The world never stops moving, never stops talking and overstimulation is the result.

All these pose a threat to our walk with Christ. However, we can overcome that disquiet more easily if we can keep these things in mind.

PUT GOD FIRST

We cannot overcome noise in our lives without putting God in His proper place in our lives. Matthew 6:33 says we should seek first His righteousness and all these things will be given to us as well. Once God is God first in our lives, everything else will fall into place, including what goes on in the world around us.

God also makes it clear in his Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7) that “you shall have no other gods before me”. Like it or not, we can’t completely cut out the noise from pop culture and the news. What we can do is manage their place in our lives. And the biblical way of doing this is to follow God’s order of priority in our lives.

CARVING OUT SPACE TO STAY RESTED IN GOD

Should we forget the quiet, still pastures our shepherd, Jesus, has prepared for us to lie on, it’s not too late to carve out that time and space to rest in God. Society tells us that busyness is good, but God says rest is equally good – even God rested on the seventh day of creation!

One way we do this is to switch of our devices sometimes – this may



simply be for the sake of our sanity. God, after all, did not create us with a handheld device stuck to the side of our heads (in other words it just isn’t natural to be constantly connected). Although technology is a gift in this age, enjoying it fully comes first from handling it well.

DEVELOPING A PERSONAL EXPRESSION OF WORSHIP TOWARDS GOD

We should also develop a personal worship towards God that draws us back to that carved-out space so that our rest in Him is no mere ritual.

In today’s highly-individualised society, the way each of us worships God might be different, depending on our personalities. Sure, there are the usual structures in place for us to participate in congregational worship in the church, but what does personal worship look like on the other six

days of the week?

Some may prefer to keep a prayer journal, others might prefer singing a song in worship, or simply spending time in His presence while others need a Bible plan to stay on track. Some have worship playlists to play and sing along to while driving to work.

The point of growing a personal devotion to God that fits our personalities is not just to make sure it’s something we can stick to, but when it is individually designed for our own personal use, it also tends to come from a much truer place in our hearts. After all, John 4:24 says that we are meant to worship God in Spirit and in truth. Sometimes, that may just mean being authentic. 🙏

Cheryl Lim Shu-Li works in immigration by day, and moonlights as a writer. She enjoys films, books, music and theology.



SUNDAY CHAT

It was a sunny Sunday morning when I met Mohd Zan.

“Hi, miss! Pergi church?”

“Yup.”

As he drove, I retrieved my notes from my bag, flipping frantically trying to get some last minute studying done.

“Ade event ke?”

“Oh bukan, I ade exam”

“Wah, exam ape?”

“Erm...Bible”

Silence hung between us, each unsure of how to proceed with the conversation. So I continued reading, he continued driving. After a while, I realised nothing was entering my brain, and that it would probably be a more enjoyable ride for us both if I were not too fixated on yet another task, failing to engage with the human being right next to me. I am Mary, I am Martha.

“You biasa pandu hari Ahad ke?”

“Tak, I ganti je hari ni.”

I learned that this scrawny, haggard-looking young man is a full-time driver, clocking hours from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week. He speaks in a simple, open, matter-of-fact tone, and displays a high level of attention to detail. He can't be any older than 25. Picking up passengers wherever his trips lead him, he stops only for quick meals or to get a short nap when he feels tired. He doesn't want to put his

passengers in danger. It sounds like he isn't eating well, but I refrain from asking further.

“You tidur dalam kereta ke?”

“Haha, kadang-kadang dalam kereta, ataupun masjid la.”

Mosques along his way make a temporary refuge to catch 15-minute naps. Here, open doors welcome the weary. It struck me how when we Christians meet one another, the first thing we ask is, “Which church/denomination are you from?” Just as a form of casual conversation, perhaps, to get to know the other person better. But maybe the better question to ask would be, “How are you today?” Skip the pleasantries.

As he dropped me off at the gates to church, I thanked him and out of habit said, “See you again!” but in retrospect realised the probability was highly unlikely, and he finally broke into a tired smile as he said, “All the best in your exam!”

MONDAY MORNING SURPRISE FROM MY UBER DRIVER

Mr Ng is a typical Malaysian uncle who somehow manages to keep his whole house in all the pockets of his car. When I got in, balancing my hot latte that just burnt the roof of my mouth, phone and overflowing handbag, he greeted me by name and with a wide smile.

At the traffic light, he started rummaging through a stash of little bookmarks balanced atop the vanity mirror, and handed me this bookmark. Really going the extra mile – thankfully just figuratively, and not literally!

“Have a cheerful Monday, Anna”, he said as I bid him goodbye.

Malaysia is beautiful because of Malaysians like him. 🇲🇾



Dear Goldie



Dear Goldie,

I am a committed Christian and am now in university. I met a girl in the same year as I am. We get along smashing; I can talk to her about things I am interested in. She is also a Christian – we go to the same church. I am courting her and would like your advice about doing some planning for the present and future.

Eager

DEAR EAGER,

I assume you are thinking this friendship may lead on to something more so you are wise to ask for advice and to plan ahead.

PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

Have you ever asked yourself why you want to get married? You may give many personal reasons. But have you considered what is God's purpose for marriage? Marriage was invented by God. He gave Adam a companion and helpmate to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 2:18). Together they are to take care of God's creation and to produce offspring (Genesis 2:15, Malachi 2:15). So God not only wants to fulfil your needs, He also wants your marriage to fulfil His purpose, i.e. to reflect the relationship of Christ and His bride (Ephesians 5:22-24). This means your headship, love and sacrifice for your bride and your bride's respect, submission and help for you should demonstrate Christ's relationship with us His beloved (Ephesians 5:25-30). Marriage is therefore not only man-centred but God-centred.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Like you, Tek and I were in the same church youth group. As ordinary friends we got to know each other through interacting in activities where we were in a natural environment to observe each other's beliefs, characters, attitudes, work ethics, values, habits, etc.

How did we know this is the one? We prayed for God's guidance. By involving Him, He led us step by step. Interacting and observing each other over a period of time revealed that we agreed on important issues like our commitment to Christ, desire to serve Him, etc. We agreed that he is the head

of the family, to love, protect, provide, sacrifice and I would respect, submit and help him. We accepted advice from parents, pastors and elders. It would be wonderful if you can find a mentor who will help to see that the two of you will walk together in agreement in the important issues (Amos 3:3).

BOUNDARIES

After being ordinary friends for a few years, Tek and I started dating and courting but marriage was not on the immediate horizon for us as he had already graduated and was going back to Melaka and I was going to US to finish my B.A. We were careful not to become physically intimate, beyond holding hands and kissing because we knew that if we had to stop the friendship later (especially after a year of separation), we could part as friends, with no sexual involvement to regret. As the man you should take the lead in setting boundaries of intimacy. Do not push the responsibility to her thinking "I will go as far as she lets me". Be open and honest by facing this squarely, then help each other to keep the mutually agreed guidelines. Too many people are influenced by the prevailing culture which propagates relationships that start with sex. When the physical is emphasized the social, mental, spiritual aspects will be neglected. This is not good preparation for marriage. So spend your time learning to communicate your feelings, thoughts, viewpoints, etc. You need to be able to argue, debate, negotiate, resolve conflicts (going through several quarrels), etc. A fulfilling and successful relationship can be sustained and thrive only when a couple can communicate effectively. In our 52 years of marriage we are still learning and improving in our communication thus strengthening our

relationship.

GOD'S STANDARD

God says our bodies, His temple should be holy and pure. Sex is God's gift and is good, right and beautiful within marriage. Outside marriage fornication is a sin. Therefore be careful not to stir up the emotions, for once aroused it is difficult to stop the snowballing process which leads to more and more intimacy. Determine from the start that you will make yours a godly relationship. I was most impressed when a couple who signed the marriage papers in the government registry decided to wait until the marriage was consecrated in the presence of God in a christian ceremony before they moved into the same house and consummated their marriage. They wanted to honour not only the government's law but God's law.

MANUFACTURER'S MANUAL

I just bought a new vacuum cleaner and was eager to start using it, but not before I read the Operating Manual. Similarly, God who made us has His instructions in His Manufacturer's Manual. Do not wait until a relationship breaks down before you consult the Manual. For best results, follow it from the beginning. 📖

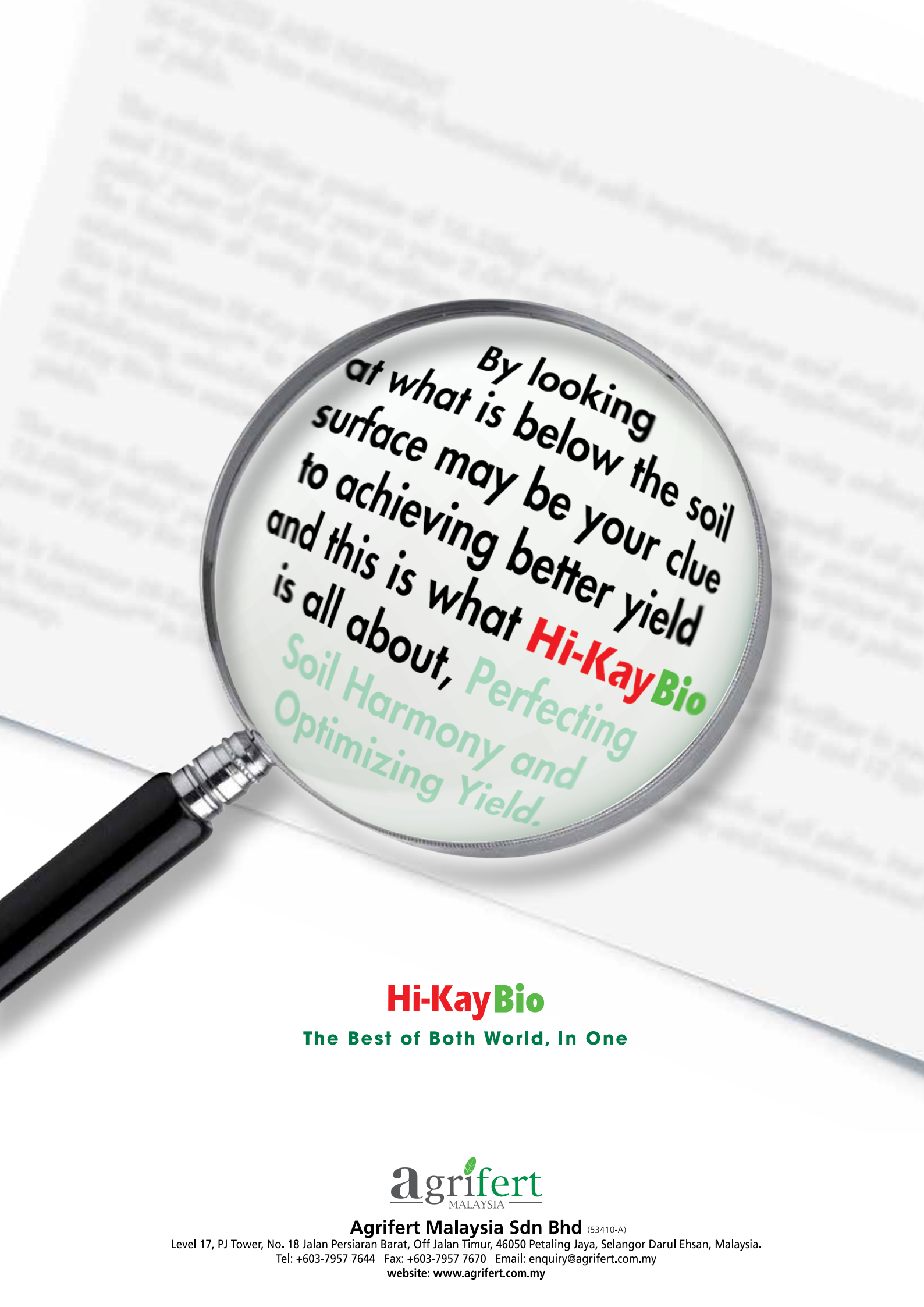
Goldie

Goldie has her own blog www.deargoldie.com

Do you have an issue you need advice on?

Write to *Asian Beacon's* Goldie Chong at aboffice@asianbeacon.org for her godly counsel.

Selected questions may be featured in this column. If you leave an email address, you will have your question answered, whether it's published or not.

A magnifying glass with a black handle is positioned over a document. The lens is focused on a specific paragraph of text. The text inside the lens is larger and clearer than the surrounding text on the page, which is blurred. The text inside the lens reads: "By looking at what is below the soil surface may be your clue to achieving better yield and this is what **Hi-KayBio** is all about, Perfecting Soil Harmony and Optimizing Yield." The words "Perfecting Soil Harmony and Optimizing Yield" are in a light green color, while "Hi-KayBio" is in red and green.

By looking at what is below the soil surface may be your clue to achieving better yield and this is what **Hi-KayBio** is all about, Perfecting Soil Harmony and Optimizing Yield.

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