

June 2022

THE WINEPRESS

O taste and see that God is good



What's inside?

2

FATHER'S DAY

4

BEWARE OF SPIRITUAL
SCAMS!

6

DISCIPLESHIP & THE
KINGDOM

9

ALPHABET SOUP: HUMBLE
YOURSELF

11

ALPHA TO OMEGA: LALIBELA

19

MY EXCUSE: "I DON'T KNOW
NON-CHRISTIANS."



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FATHER'S DAY

BY REV ANTHONY LOH

On the third Sunday in June, we celebrate Father's Day in honour of our fathers for the important roles they play in our lives.

"Anyone who tells you fatherhood is the greatest thing that can happen to you, they are understanding it." – Mike Myers

What then is fatherhood? Let me quote some of the things that Martha Bolton says:

"Fatherhood is ... getting to go anywhere you want for Father's Day, getting to drive there, and even getting to pay the bill!

"It's getting up in the middle of the night to see what the noise was outside, when you'd rather stay in bed and hide, like everyone else.

"It's carrying sleepy kids into the house when you're too tired to even carry yourself in.

"It's praying for, hoping for, and anxiously looking forward to the day when your kids will be out of the house and on their own... and then trying to postpone that day as long as possible when it approaches."

It is clear to all that fatherhood is a heavy

responsibility. A father loves and takes care of his child, and often willingly and sacrificially goes out of his way to spend time with the child and serve the child's needs.

To all dads and grandfathers in JCC, we want to say we appreciate you for all that you do!

The Old Testament also gives us a picture of the exalted position of fathers (husbands) in families. The Hebrew word translated into English as "husband" actually means "lord," "master," "owner," or "possessor." (Gen. 18:12; Hos. 2:16).

High position is not for bragging rights. Importantly, the man's high position in the family carries high responsibilities as a good father to his children (1 Tim 3:4) and a good husband to the children's mother (Eph 5:25).

The importance of a father (as well as a mother) is underscored by the divine authority that is imposed on children in the Fifth Commandment, which states: "Honor your father and your mother ..." (Exodus 20:12)

The importance of a father is also in his responsibility for the spiritual well-being of the family. In ancient days, the father functioned as the priest of his family, offering sacrifices to God on their behalf. (Genesis 12:8; Job 1:5) Later,

because of sin, the familial priesthood (father-priest) faded out. While the father's spiritual role was redefined, he continued to be the religious leader in the home. This involved the training of the children in godliness.

Proverbs 22:6 - "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

In modern societies, both parents increasingly share equal amounts of effort in raising successful children. Still, the father does feature strongly in his duties as family protector (ensuring no harm comes to any family member), as economic provider (at least being able to meet basic needs) and in many converging roles of moms and dads.

Last but not least, only fathers play the vital role as a good male role model, children being great imitators.

Two Scripture references reveal two examples of role models – one bad and one good:

- 1 Kings 15: 25, 26 - "Now Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in the second year of Asa King of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. (26) and he

did evil in the sight of the LORD, and **walked in the way of his father**, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin."

- 1 Kings 15:1-3 - "(1) In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah the son of Amaziah, king of Judah, became king. (2) he was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. his mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. (3) and he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, **according to all that his father Amaziah had done.**"

It is very challenging to be a dad.

If you are a father, God knows your struggle to be a good dad. With daily prayers, lean on Him for strength to manage whatever problems you face.

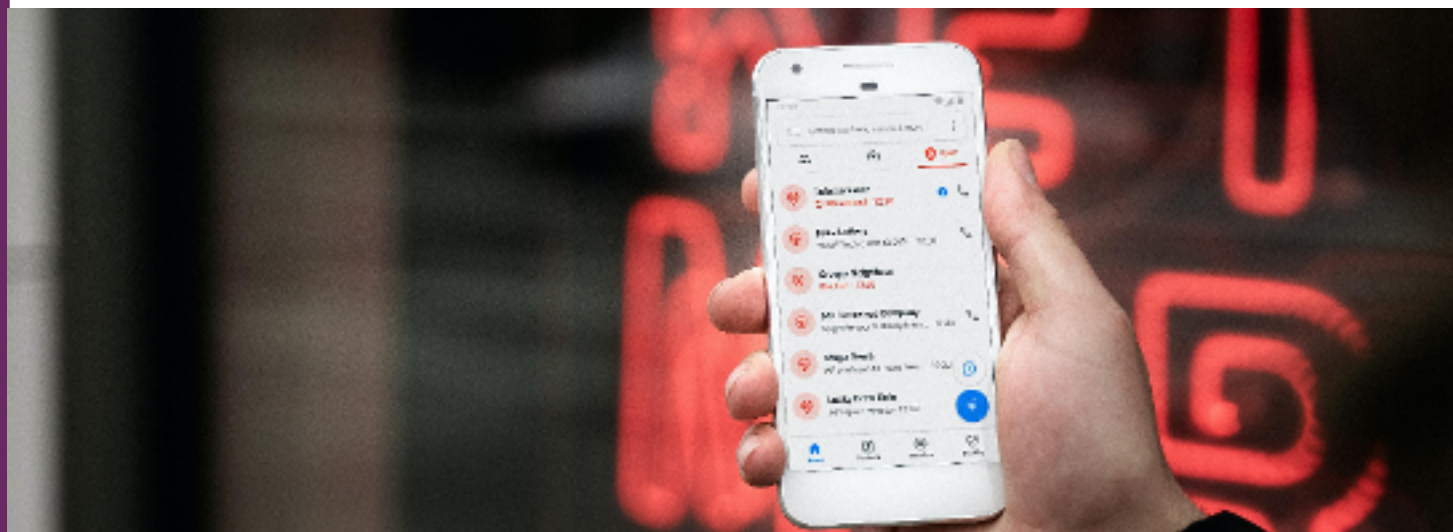
If you are a child, do not complain about your father's shortcomings. Think of all the good that he has done. Keep him in your daily prayers. Not to forget, support him with loving hearts and it will make him better.

Blessed Father's Day for all JCC fathers and grandfathers!



PRAYER FOCUS FOR JULY

1. JCCians to grow in intimacy with Christ who shapes our entire spiritual formation.
2. JCCians to be moved by the Spirit of God to step up as Disciples of Christ and Disciplemakers.
3. CELL MINISTRY - Iron sharpens iron. Pray for the cell ministry to flourish as cell members spur one another to grow in Christ.
4. OUTREACH - Pray that more JCCians will respond to the calling from the harvest field and make their positive impact on the community via the Goshen Bridges.



BEWARE OF SPIRITUAL SCAMS!

BY JOHN LEE

Phishing scams, love scams, job scams, investment scams, etc. – with many variants for each type. Victims include even people who are normally smart and alert.

We might express astonishment at the victims' gullibility. We shouldn't be too sure of ourselves. When crooks become increasingly sophisticated, it just takes a moment's inattentiveness for us to be hooked. Apart from money-related deceptions, our caution should extend to the spiritual domain as well.

A shrewd salesman can sell a refrigerator to an Eskimo. A crafty spiritual snake-oil seller can easily sell his "holy miraculous elixir for all ailments" to any distressed listener with captive ears. Even Apostle Paul was astonished at how quickly his erstwhile disciples were confused by preachers who perverted the gospel. (Gal 1:6-7)

False preachers claim to preach the gospel but, instead, abuse it for personal gain. They masterly "justify" whatever falsehood with the claim of "It is written..."

Imagine the following conversation you have with a false preacher who quotes scripture "correctly" (but improperly):

Preacher: Come to my church, leave your kith and kin, trust your pastor (the chosen one) with your possessions. My church is safe sanctuary where you are protected from the coronavirus and all harms, so you can be mask-free, hold hands and hug one another without fears as you look towards the approaching end of days with confidence.

You (puzzled): Am I to forsake my kith and kin??

Preacher: **It is written**, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple." – Lk 14:26

You: It does not make sense, for **it is also written**, "Honor your father and mother" (Eph 6:2) and "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength ... Love your neighbor as yourself." (Mk 12:30-31)

It is great that you are not deceived by the imposing claim of “**It is written ...**” and are able to counter the deception like what Jesus did when He was tested by Satan in the wilderness, “**It is also written ...**” (Mt 4:1-11)

A PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF LUKE 14:26

Let’s look at a few English translations of the Lukan passage:

- “Those who come to me cannot be my disciples unless they love me **more than** they love father and mother ...” (GNB)
- “If anyone comes to me but loves his father, mother ... or even life – **more than** me, he cannot be my follower.” (New Century Version)
- “If you want to be my disciple, you must, **by comparison**, hate everyone else ...” (NLT)

The comparative sense in the love-hate contrast is evident from the translations, especially the NLT.

This comparative sense is also attested to by Lk 16:13. We know that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil; but surely, by common sense, the “hate” used in Lk 16:13 cannot take the word’s ordinary literal sense of abhorrence.

JCCIANS, BE ON GUARD!

Fraudsters orating sugar-coated lies can be more entertaining than honest ministers of God’s Word preaching plain-vanilla truths.

False preachers schooled in the art of persuasion using generous quotes of Hebrew and Greek may mesmerise you into exalting their erudition and even trick well-educated listeners by their conjuring skill with words.

Even if we don’t understand the original biblical languages, we can use authoritative Bible Study aids and compare notes to satisfy ourselves that the truth we accept stands the test of coherence across the whole of Scripture.

In a CNA report on 4th Mar 2020, a young university graduate shared her experience with the controversial Shincheonji Church in Singapore. Read: <https://bit.ly/3rNGh8i>.

About November 2021, a follower of a cult turned up in JCC. After several visits, she established WhatsApp contacts with some Chinese section’s members by her deceptive candour in wanting to join a fellowship. Thankfully, she was found out in time before she could cause more harm. Just a moment before being booted out, she even asked for direction to the English congregation.

Heed the fear (warning) of Apostle Paul:

“But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.” (2 Cor 11:3-4)

As a self-check on our alertness, we can ask ourselves whether we can be confident to spot it whenever someone preaches “a different gospel” — New Age gospel, prosperity gospel, gospel of works for salvation, etc.





DISCIPLESHIP AND THE KINGDOM

BY MARGARET LEE

Jesus presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3 (ESV)

Luke tells us that Jesus spent His last forty days before His ascension teaching His disciples to focus on the priority of the Kingdom. In other words, we cannot claim to be followers of Jesus if we are not passionate about His Kingdom.

For a long time, churches have been preoccupied with raising churchgoers rather than Kingdom citizens. As a result, the quality of discipleship is shallow. Church attendance, for example, has plummeted dramatically since the onset of the COVID pandemic, and many Christians are not returning to church life or Sunday gatherings. While we cannot say with certainty there is a clear correlation between church attendance and commitment to Christ, there is a cause for concern in how we have been making disciples.

Somehow, we prefer a discipleship that suits our schedule while not disrupting our life. We prefer a discipleship that makes us happy and self-satisfied rather than one that challenges our

life's priorities. We prefer a discipleship in which we can keep everything but not completely give ourselves over to Jesus.

It is a spurious faith if following Jesus does not lead us to pursue Him and seek His Kingdom.

Discipleship is not for the church, but for the kingdom.

In the church, we make disciples, but not for the sake of the church. Instead, we raise up disciples to serve the Kingdom of God. Following Jesus has the power to transform us. If we are becoming more and more like Him, we experience an increasing awareness of God's plan to save all people. And, because Jesus intends to create all things new, we become change agents who actively put our faith into action.

The call of Christ is to heed the cry of the world.

We are His people chosen to proclaim the good news to the poor and the weak and the hurt. The good news is not simply that God loves them. Instead, the good news is that God is the liberator and that we have been sent to heal the broken-hearted, set captives free, and shatter the chains of those in bondage.



FOLLOWING THE GOOD SHEPHERD (DIGESTING A SERMON BY REV FREDRIC LEE)

BY JOHN LEE

Rev Fredric Lee's sermon on Good Shepherd Sunday (8th May 2022) is some spiritual food to chew on – the Bible theme of Jesus as our Good Shepherd in whom we trust.

Based on my reflection, points from the sermon are reproduced below with paraphrasing. If you wish to listen to the full original sermon, you may access the link to YouTube video at JCC website.

BACKGROUND

Rev Fredric explained that the Festival of Dedication (also known in Hebrew as Hanukkah) provided the background in which Jesus dealt with the issue of following the right shepherd in John 10.

Under the influence of Greek culture and habits, many Jews compromised their faith. With the involvement of corrupt priests, the Greeks desecrated the temple. They outlawed Jewish rituals, burned scripture scrolls and erected a pagan idol in the temple. All this led to a war (the Maccabean Revolt) around 165 BC which succeeded in taking back the temple, cleansing it of pagan pollution and rededicating it with the celebration called Hanukkah.

ALERT TO UNGODLY INFLUENCES

The Jews were foolishly led by bad shepherds into pagan idolatry. Rev Fredric warned that even today we must be alert to ungodly influences from bad shepherds in the appearances of charming personalities. Many of them claim to be good shepherds and are very appealing on the Internet. Deceptions ingeniously pedalled have induced some curious youths to experiment with a hodgepodge of errant religious or superstitious thinking and practices associated with traditional cultures or modern trends.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD REJECTED BY THE JEWS

*Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."
(John 10:11)*

The Jews knew that the LORD their God is their Shepherd. (Ps 23; Isa 40:10-11; Eze 34). They questioned Jesus' messiahship because Jesus' suffering did not fit their idea of a king in regal mien politically and militarily.

continued on the next page

Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me ... I and the Father are one." (John 10:25-30)

The Jews picked up stones to stone Jesus, accusing him of blasphemy. (John 10:31, 33) They did not listen to Jesus' voice because they were not the Shepherd's sheep. They had already seen the miraculous signs that Jesus performed in the name of God the Father. It was not a lack of revelation but their lack of faith that kept them in darkness.

KNOWING WHO WE SHOULD NOT LISTEN TO

Knowing who we should not listen to is as important as knowing who we should. Our enemies who are invading our lives and destroying our destiny are invisible. (Eph 6:12)



Jesus' claim to be God, the Good Shepherd, is validated by the evidence of His resurrection.

Bad shepherds aligned with powerful forces are extant in social circles, workplaces, educational settings, the virtual world of the Internet, etc. They influence us to reject Jesus as the only Good Shepherd whom we can trust.

WHY FOLLOW THE GOOD SHEPHERD?

We follow Jesus because He alone is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father

except through Him. (John 14:6) The Son in heaven reveals the salvation of all who trust in Jesus, the Lamb of God. Salvation belongs to our God and to the Lamb. This is the chorus of the multitude in heaven praising the Lamb of God our shepherd for our salvation. (Rev 7:10, 17)

FIRST PART: WORD & SACRAMENTS

The first part of following the Good Shepherd is the Lord's initiative, with His voice calling His sheep. Jesus says, "My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me."

Rev Fredric highlighted that Jesus reveals Himself first in the Gospel. Then He saves us in the waters of baptism. Then He sustains us with His body and blood which we partake in the sacrament of the altar.

The Word and the Sacraments are the means of Grace by which the Holy Spirit enables us to receive Jesus as our Good Shepherd. He actively leads His sheep where salvation is worked out. (Psalm 23)

SECOND PART: OUR CHRISTIAN DUTY

The risen Christ called Peter to follow Him, care for and feed His sheep. (John 21). It is also His calling to us to love and care for one another. (Jn 13:34; 1 Jn 3:16-18).

The Good Shepherd says, "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." (Jn 10:16)

Thank God that the disciples followed Jesus to search for His sheep all over the world and they found you and me. Now all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, belong to a single flock in one pen. We must follow Jesus to go bring the other sheep still out there who are lost and beleaguered without the Good Shepherd.

The closing declaration from Rev Fredric: "We, the flock in JCC, want to bring the lost sheep to the Good Shepherd."



UMBLE YOURSELF

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." - James 4:6 (NIV)



This is probably one of the hardest things to do. It is also probably the last thing that we would remind ourselves in daily living. We can take pride in almost everything we do, our jobs, possessions, heritage, talents, social networks and even children's achievements. We compare ourselves against the "have nots" or "lesser beings" and feel good and comforted that we are not in their shoes. If we are not careful, we may even forget God and start to believe that we have attained everything solely through our own hard work and determination. God's Word reminds us that such thinking signals the path to downfall. His promise is clear. If we humble ourselves and pray and turn from our wicked ways, He will hear us, forgive our sins and heal our land.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICAL LIVING?

God has promised great things to the humble. He will give them favour. He will lift them up. He will give them wisdom, riches, honour and life. Are all these not the things we desire in our lives? God's game rule has been clearly laid out. We ignore it to our own peril. Humility is not an in-built mechanism in our lives. In fact, the exact opposite is true. Because of sin, pride has crept in to fill our

What does God say about this?

Pride brings a person low, but the lowly in spirit gain honor.

- Proverbs 29:23 (NIV)

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

- Romans 12:3 (NIV)

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

- 1 Peter 5:6 (NIV)

lives. Pride is the enemy of humility. It was pride that caused Satan to rebel against God because he wanted to be God! We need to guard our hearts and minds against being proud, especially when success in life is viewed through a worldly lens.

Make no mistake: **Pride destroys both the rich and poor.** The better endowed people may be proud because they have better-paying jobs,

greater job titles, better education, more assets and higher social status. The less privileged ones may also be proud because they think they can endure hardship and are more resilient in life. Regardless, all of us are equal in the eyes of God. We need to bow before God, knowing that unless we abide in Him, we are nothing, have nothing and cannot do anything that is pleasing to Him.

REFLECT AND RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

1. Recall an experience when you acted or thought proudly. What was the outcome?
2. Make a list of things that make you feel proud when compared to other people. Lay it before God and seek His forgiveness for your pride.
3. Take action to change a specific "proud" behaviour to demonstrate humility. Keep at it until the change is permanent.

LET'S THINK & TALK STRAIGHT

BY BRYAN TAY

*"A son honors his father, and a slave his master.
If I am a father, where is the honor due me?
If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the LORD Almighty."
Malachi 1:6*



Do we really have no time? Especially to serve God? Maybe let's us not use such a "big" term as **"serving God"**. Because "serving" somehow gives us the excuse to say *"God, I don't think I am ready or able to serve You... I am not so good at this or that like so-and-so... and I may not be faithful enough to serve regularly... so I'd better not get involved because I may drop-off halfway and inconvenience others."* and the list of excuses goes on. These are all the devil's lies.

So let us just say, *"What do you think you can do to help share the load of showing God's goodness to others and helping them know that there is a God who is real and loves them deeply? That they are missing out BIG TIME on what you are enjoying as God's children?"* Do you even feel the need to do this?

Why do we treat church like a social club at a distance and church activities like school CCA?

If we don't, then something is really wrong deep inside us. Yes, let's not mince our words. Our outward actions towards God, His Kingdom work and others is a reflection of our internal spiritual state. If I may say: Our outward malfunction is a result of our spiritual dysfunction. God says "Obedience is better than sacrifice." (1 Samuel 15:22 [NIV]). Sometimes I even wonder what we have been sacrificing. Let's search our hearts. Repent of our lukewarmness and return to our first love: Love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

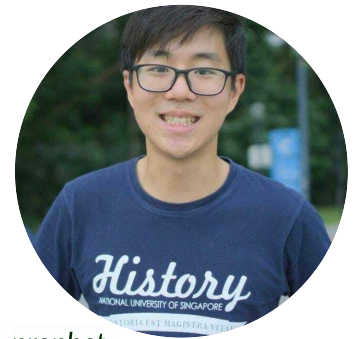
GOD IS ASKING

1. What has caused you to be so desensitised to God and His Kingdom work?
2. If you were to die tonight, what would be your greatest regret towards God? Start doing something now to avoid that regret.

I welcome your comments, thoughts and sharing on this reflection. Write to jccwinepress@gmail.com. We will publish your contribution in the next issue.

AΩ ALPHA TO THE OMEGA

BY SAMUEL CHONG 



L is for LALIBELA

"The [Ethiopian] eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus." (Acts 8:34-35)

WHAT IS LALIBELA?

Lalibela is a town in Ethiopia renowned for its rock-hewn monolithic churches, dating back to the 13th century during the reign of King Gebre Mesqel Lalibela, the town's namesake. It is a large and important site in Ethiopian history and culture, and a good showcase of the history of Christianity in Ethiopia.



Biete Giorgis (Church of St George), rock-hewn in the shape of a cross, by "Rod Waddington", Wikimedia Commons

ORIGIN: A NEW JERUSALEM

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is the predominant Christian denomination in Ethiopia. It is an Oriental Orthodox Church – a group of Eastern Christian churches adhering to a Miaphysite view of Christ, i.e. in the one person of Jesus Christ, divinity and humanity are united in one nature without separation, confusion, alteration or mixing, where Christ is consubstantial with God the Father. The word "Tewahedo" means "united as one", in reference to its Miaphysite doctrine. (Protestants, as do

Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians, hold instead that two natures, divine and human, exist in the person of Jesus Christ, i.e. Dyophysitism)

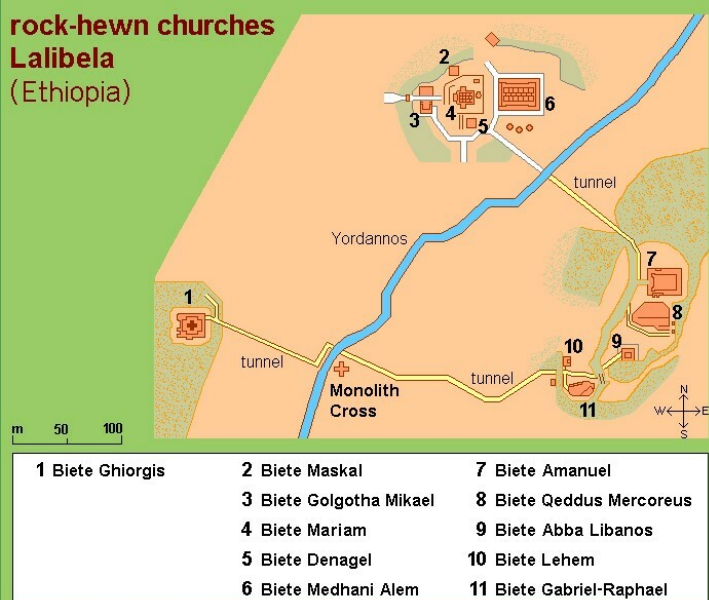
The Ethiopian Orthodox Church traces its origins to the Apostles. The Book of Acts provides the account of the Ethiopian eunuch being baptized by Philip the Evangelist (Acts 8:26-39). Ethiopian church tradition further states that Matthew and Bartholomew undertook a mission to Ethiopia.

Christianity became the established church of the Ethiopian Axumite Kingdom (early 1st century – c.1137) in the 4th century. Frumentius, a Phoenician slave-turned-missionary, was said to have introduced Christianity to Ethiopia and eventually baptized the Axumite King Ezana, who made Christianity the official state religion. The Axumite Kingdom entered its decline by the 7th century and was eventually succeeded by the Zagwe Dynasty around 1137. All this time, the church in Ethiopia was administratively part of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria in Egypt.

Gebre Mesqel Lalibela ascended the Zagwe throne in 1181. Shortly after, Jerusalem was conquered by the Muslims forces of Saladin in 1187. One account says that King Lalibela subsequently saw Jerusalem in a vision and then attempted to build a new Jerusalem as his capital, to re-establish a holy site on earth. Another account says that Lalibela had at one point actually visited Jerusalem, from which he got his inspiration. The rock-hewn churches form part of this "New Jerusalem" and are traditionally dated to Lalibela's reign.

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rock-hewn churches Lalibela (Ethiopia)



Area map of Lalibela by "Holger Behr", Wikimedia Commons

Archaeology has, however, revealed that the churches were built between the 10th and early 12th centuries AD, with perhaps only the last phase carried out during the 13th century AD, under Lalibela's reign.

"AND ON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH"

As it was meant to be a "New Jerusalem", many features in King Lalibela's new capital were given Biblical names. The river flowing through the town was named the River Jordan.

The rock-hewn churches were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978. UNESCO identifies 11 churches, assembled in four groups. The churches in each grouping are connected by a system of tunnels and trenches. Bete Giorgis, the 11th church, is located independently and connected to the others via trenches.

All 11 churches were carved out of solid rock from top to bottom. Of the 11 churches, 7 are free-standing and 4 share a wall with the mountain out of which they were carved. The churches are also a significant engineering feat, for the builders exploited an artesian geographical system that brought water up to the top of the mountain ridge on which the town lies (at 2,480m), in order to fill wells.

Some of the more famous churches are featured below:

Image	Name	English Name	Notes
	Biete Giorgis	House of St. George	Shaped in a cruciform plan.
	Biete Golgotha Mikael	House of Golgotha Mikael	Contains replicas of the tomb of Christ, and of Adam, and the crib of the Nativity
	Biete Medhane Alem	House of the Saviour of the World	Home to the Lalibela Cross Believed to be the largest monolithic church in the world

EUROPEAN TOURISTS

The first European known to have seen these churches was the Portuguese explorer Pero da Covilhã (1460-1526). In 1487, Covilhã and another explorer were tasked by King John II of Portugal to learn where spices could be obtained, and to discover the land of the legendary Christian king Prester John, believed to be in Ethiopia. While the other explorer died on the way to Ethiopia, Covilhã made it to India (a hub of the spice trade) via Aden and sent information back to Portugal on how to round Africa by sea and navigate its east coast up to India (this was eventually accomplished by Vasco da Gama in 1497-98). When Covilhã learnt of his compatriot's death, he took up the mission to Ethiopia.

By this time, the Zagwe Dynasty, which built the churches, had been overthrown by the Solomonic Dynasty about 200 years before (c.1270). The Solomonic Dynasty claimed lineal descent from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1-13). Covilhã was well-received by the Emperor of Ethiopia and given lands, but was refused permission to leave until his death. Covilhã was eventually joined by Francisco Álvares in 1520, a Portuguese missionary and explorer. Álvares wrote an account of his travels in Ethiopia, including detailed descriptions of Axum and Lalibela. Awed by the churches, Álvares wrote: "I weary of writing more about these buildings, because it seems to me that I shall not be believed if I write more ... I swear by God, in whose power I am, that all I have written is the truth."

THE LAST EMPEROR

Covilhã's arrival in Ethiopia marked the beginning of Portuguese-Ethiopian relations which culminated in the formal invitation for the Portuguese to aid Ethiopia against hostile Muslim sultanates backed by the Ottoman Empire. The sustained Portuguese presence led to an influx of Jesuit missionaries into Ethiopia.

Portuguese and Jesuit influence in Ethiopia continued for about a century which broke the

connection with Egypt. At one point the Emperor Susenyos I formally submitted to the Pope and made Roman Catholicism the official state religion in 1622. This was met with heavy resistance by the Ethiopians and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, leading to civil war. Susenyos was forced to abdicate in favour of his son Fasilides, who promptly restored Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity as the state religion and expelled the Jesuits in 1633. For the next two centuries, Ethiopian Christianity remained largely isolated from Europe and the rest of the world.

The Ethiopian Empire would stay largely intact until the Scramble for Africa by the European colonial powers in the 1880s. While Ethiopia was never colonised by a European power, the Italians carved Eritrea out as a colony in 1882. The Italians under Mussolini would later invade and occupy Ethiopia from 1936-1941. Ethiopia would regain its independence in 1944.

In 1930, Haile Selassie I was crowned Emperor and would become a defining figure in modern Ethiopian history. He attempted to modernise Ethiopia through a series of political and social reforms, including the abolition of slavery. His internationalist views also led to Ethiopia



Emperor Haile Selassie I in Full Dress Uniform, 1970

becoming a charter member of the UN, and a founding member of the Organisation of African Unity (known as the African Union today). Haile Selassie also played a prominent role in further reforming the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. He ordered more translations of the Bible into

Amharic (the language spoken by most Ethiopians) and improved the education of clergy. In 1959, the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria granted the Ethiopian Orthodox Church autocephaly with its own Patriarch (i.e. highest ranking bishop).

Haile Selassie was deposed by a Marxist-Leninist military junta (the Derg regime) in 1974, and was assassinated the next year, ending 700 years of Solomonic rule. The Derg regime disestablished the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as the state church, nationalised church property, and had the power to appoint new Patriarchs. Despite the years of turmoil (and Communist rule) that followed, the majority of Ethiopians remain adherents of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church today, and the churches of Lalibela have remarkably remained intact.

LALIBELA TODAY

The churches of Lalibela are a pilgrimage site with spiritual, symbolic and religious significance for Ethiopian Orthodox Christians. The site continues to be used for daily worship and prayer, and the celebration of festivals like Timkat (Epiphany) and Genna (Christmas). It also serves as a home for clergy.



Detail from Ethiopian icon showing Gebre Mesqel Lalibela, 15th century

Several recent conservation and restoration projects have been implemented at Lalibela, but have been flawed in execution. With funding from the European Union, four shelters were erected in 2008 to cover 5 of the churches in an attempt to provide temporary protection until a more long-term solution could be decided upon. The shelters have remained far longer than they were meant to and now threaten to collapse onto the churches due to their heavy weight, among other factors.

CONCLUSION - A UNIQUE BRAND OF CHRISTIANITY

The rock-hewn churches of Lalibela showcases Ethiopia as a unique case study in the history and development of Christianity. Despite being one of the oldest Christian states in the world, Christianity developed in Ethiopia without European colonisation and missionary efforts unlike in most parts of the world. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, as the state church for much of Ethiopia's history, was nonetheless impacted by the politics of its day like its counterparts in Europe, such as during the period of Portuguese influence, and in the aftermath of Emperor Haile Selassie's downfall.



Let's see what you remember!

[Click here or the image to take a short quiz.](#)

All information and images taken from the respective Wikipedia pages unless otherwise stated. For further reading, do check out the following Wikipedia articles:

1. [Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church](#)
2. [Gebre Mesqel Lalibela](#)
3. [Rock-Hewn Churches, Lalibela](#)
4. [Pero da Covilhã](#)
5. [Francisco Álvares](#)
6. [Haile Selassie](#)



POOLING TOGETHER

BY MARTIN CHEAH

Are you stressed out when your colleagues or friends want to pool their resources together to bet on 4D, TOTO or the Big Sweep? Do you worry when they threaten that they will all resign when they win and leave you all alone? Do you join them for the “fun” of it?

In the last 39 years when I was working in a manufacturing company, almost every time we had a celebration meal together, someone would propose that we buy the bill number or the 4 digits of the cost of the meal because they thought that it might be the lucky number. When I got a new car, some would cajole me to buy my car number. Once a year when TOTO offered a big win on a special draw, they would eagerly pool together their resources to buy some system numbers at the very lucky TOTO outlets. By their calculations, if they placed more bets, the chances of winning would be better. Logically, yes! (But better by how many decimal places of a percentage?)

They would then print out a list of the numbers they bought and assign it to one of the members to check the results. They enjoyed the “hope” of winning a windfall overnight and resigning from their dreary jobs.

They were very kind and wanted me to join them so that when they all resigned, I would not be left alone to do all the work. They would ask me repeatedly to join them. “Only \$10,” they said, a small investment for a big win. Sometimes I did

wonder, “Lord, are you going to leave me all alone here?”

Over all these years, if I remember correctly, my colleagues did win once. Each got about \$15 to re-invest in another round of chance and lose it all completely.

In the later years, they stopped asking me because they knew I would not join their bid for a big win of 6 Winning Numbers with a 1 in 13,983,816 chance of winning.

Psalm 62:10

“Do not trust in extortion or put vain hope in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.”

Usually when you see a snaking queue of punters at a TOTO line, you will notice that they are more often the vulnerable, the poor or the foreign workers. Would you take money from them or give money to them?

If you had been spending \$10 per week on games of chance for 39 years, you would have spent \$20,280. What was your biggest win in these 39 years? Was it able to net off your expenditure? Even so, what did you do with the winnings? Easy come, easy go? Splurged it on a big party for your buddies?

Instead, why not trust God for your sufficiency?

continued on the next page

2 Corinthians 9:8

"And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

Ecclesiastes 5:10

"Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless."

Proverbs 13:11

"Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it."

1 Timothy 6:9-10

"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs."

UNLUCKY NUMBERS

BY MARTIN CHEAH

We watched the movie TOPGUN: Maverick recently and here are some interesting facts. In the first movie, Tom Cruise flew the F-14 Tomcat fighter jet. In this latest movie, he flies the F18

Hornet. However near the end of the movie, his Hornet was shot down but he managed to find a Tomcat in enemy territory and escaped in the plane shooting down two enemy fighter jets while on his way back to crash land on his aircraft carrier.

When checking through the list of American fighter jets from F-1 to F-23, I realized that there is no F-13 aircraft. Could this be due to the American superstition with the number 13? Triskaidekaphobia is the name of the phobia for the fear of number 13.

- F-1 Fury
- F-2 Banshee
- F-3 Demon
- F-4 Phantom
- F-5 Freedom Fighter
- F-6 Skyray
- F-7 Sea Dart
- F-8 Crusader
- F-9 Panther
- F-10 Skyknight
- F-11 Tiger
- F-12 Lockheed
- F-13 – skip
- F-14 Tomcat
- F-15 Eagle
- F-16 Fighting Falcon
- F-17 Cobra
- F-18 Hornet
- F-19 – skip
- F-20 Tigershark
- F-21 Kfir
- F-22 Raptor
- F-23 Black Widow

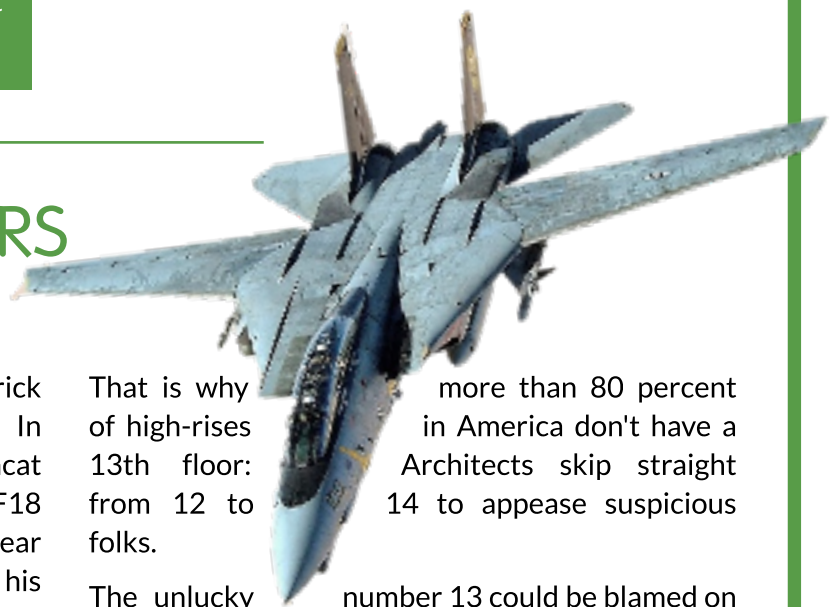
That is why of high-rises 13th floor: from 12 to folks.

The unlucky Judas, who the Last Supper, and everyone knows how well that turned out.

For Asians, the number 4 is considered unlucky as its pronunciation in Chinese and Japanese sounds like Death. So there are some buildings without a 4th floor and many people would not like to have homes with number 4 in its address.

Have you posed for a photograph where there are 3 persons in it? The superstitious person will avoid standing in the middle position. With such irrational fears, we will be unable to move but 2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV) says: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

Finally, you may realize that there is no F-19 fighter either. According to internet sources, it could be due to the designation assigned to a stealth fighter jet which has not been designed yet.





ANOTHER GENERATION HAS ARRIVED

BY MARTIN CHEAH



I don't remember who took this photo over 30 years ago. What I have is truncated on the left side with Nancy's face not shown. Does anyone have a wider view of the above photo? Some of the babies in the photo include Lim Tsu Ern, Debra Cheah, Isaac Yee and others.

Last Sunday (27th March 2022), I was back attending the onsite English service with bro. Kong CS (JWCG member) after a 2-year absence due to the COVID restrictions. We sat at the last row. From that vantage point, I realized that a new generation has arisen when I saw the son of Amanda & Leon, son of Benedict & Joey and the daughter of Isaac & Abby and many, many more.

In 2052, if Earth is still around considering all the wars and carnage man has put it through, I will be

looking down from Heaven and seeing these babies as Young Adults, a new generation faithfully serving God. This is my hope. However, it is up to this current generation of Young Parents to take up the role to "train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6)

What can an old parent share with our Young Parents? Read the Word to your children as bedtime stories and end it with the blessing from Numbers 6:24-26. Too young to understand? "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12). The Word is a mysterious and powerful force.





ABUNDANCE CGS: COMBINED FELLOWSHIP ON 4TH JUNE

BY TONY KOH

Despite the two years of pandemic, members of the Abundance CGs (comprising ABC1 and ABC2) are able to stand steadfast on their faith.

With the relaxation of the Covid rules, we had a combined pot-bless meal and fellowship on 4th June. The atmosphere was great as we also took the opportunity to celebrate the birthdays of members whose birth dates are in the month of June.

"After a long pause from physical gatherings due to Covid, it was delightful to meet the whole CG physically once again. I thoroughly enjoyed the fellowship over the tasty food. I appreciate the warmth and hospitality from everyone and am looking forward to another session of great conversations and food. May God use us to spur each other on this journey of faith." – Naomi

All the CG members agreed that nothing beats meeting up physically. Such a physical gathering was also a precious opportunity for us to extend our warm welcome to new members.

Thanks to bro. Jim Lee for his devotional sharing

from the text Eze 37:12-13, exhorting us to trust in God who is sovereign LORD of all, who is able to resurrect dry bones and bring restoration to the distressed. He is in control of all situations and able to bring up life from the deepest pit.

We give God all the glory, because of His love and faithfulness.



Celebrating 4 June babies...



MY EXCUSE: "I DON'T KNOW NON-CHRISTIANS."

EXTRACTED AND CONDENSED FROM THE GOSPEL AND PERSONAL EVANGELISM BY MARK DEVER

When asked why I don't evangelize, I always excuse myself because of my lack of speaking ability in other tongues, whether Chinese, Indian, Malay, Japanese, Korean, Thai, etc. However, my number 1 excuse when language is not the problem is isolation from unbelievers. Since retiring and being homebound, isolation from people is the most common excuse for lack of evangelism. This is the excuse of choice for mature Christians. If you have been a Christian for a while, then you're probably busy with service in the church and spending your time discipling younger Christians, heading a ministry or fellowshiping with church friends.

Many times, we psych ourselves out about sharing the gospel with someone? "People don't want to hear." "They won't be interested." "It probably won't work.", "I doubt they'll believe.", "They will curse me."

Paul said to the Corinthians, "Who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7). Why do we think someone wouldn't respond to the Gospel? Haven't you found that God saves some of the most unlikely converts (eg. The Ethiopian eunuch)?

WHY DON'T WE EVANGELIZE?

1) Pray. We don't pray for opportunities to share the gospel, so how surprised should we be when they don't come? If you're not evangelizing because you think you lack opportunities, pray and be amazed as God answers your prayers.

2) Plan. We must plan to make time to build relationships or to put ourselves in positions where we know we'll be able to talk with non-Christians. We plan for so many less important things; why not plan for our evangelism?

3) Accept. We have to accept that this is our job. Just acknowledge that sometimes we don't evangelize because we think it's not our job. It's the job of preachers, or someone else who is trained and paid for it. We have to accept responsibility for evangelism as we might be the closest Christians to a particular unbeliever.

4) Understand. Your conclusion that you are not gifted for a particular task does not absolve you of responsibility to obey. You may conclude that evangelism is not your gift, but it is still your duty.

5) Be Faithful. Maybe we are more concerned

continued on the next page

about people's response than God's glory. Good manners are no excuse for unfaithfulness to God.

6) Risk. Maybe you don't evangelize because you're shy. You don't really enjoy talking to others that much, especially about things that may upset them. Maybe you would rather let someone else do the evangelizing. But could you invite unbelievers to a meeting where they will hear the gospel? We must be willing to risk in order to evangelize.

7) Prepare. We should prepare ourselves by knowing the gospel and studying more.

8) Look. I don't consider the reality and finality of death, judgment, and hell. So, I don't notice the reality of the person and their plight before me. We must not only close our eyes in prayer for opportunities, but we must then open our eyes to see them.

9) Love. We are called to love others. We share the gospel because we love people. And we don't share the gospel because we don't love people. If we would evangelize more, we must love people more.

10) Stop. If you will realize that conversion always accompanies proclaiming the gospel and the Spirit's work, then you will stop trying to do the Spirit's work, and you will give yourself to proclaiming the gospel.

11) Consider. When we don't sufficiently consider what God has done for us in Christ, we lose the heart to evangelize. We reveal ourselves as being cold to God's glory. As Jesus said, "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34). How much evangelism do we find flowing out of our mouths? What does that suggest about our love for God?



NEW REINFORCEMENT FROM GERMANY IN THE ILSM

BY ANDREAS LATZ & HO TIAN YUEN

For a few months now, the International Lutheran Seafarer Mission of Singapore (ILSM) has been fully staffed again. Pastor Andreas Latz from Northern Germany has taken up the ministerial work in Singapore's ports, which reopened since 8 March 2022. Andreas is successor to Deacon Mike Hoffmann, and labours together with co-worker Ho Tian Yuen.

Andreas had worked in Germany as a seafarer's pastor in the ports on the North Sea, and brings with him a lot of experience in accompanying

seafarers. As a pastor in the partner church of the LCS, the Lutheran Church in Bavaria in southern Germany, he was blessed and sent out by Mission EineWelt from Neuendettelsau in a solemn sending-out service on 16 January 2022 for the work in Singapore.

Perhaps it was good timing or God's guidance, the resumption of ILSM activities could not have happened sooner. Since mid-April, or after Easter, the entry and visiting restrictions on the part of the port authority in Singapore were reduced, and

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with the energetic support of Ho Tian Yuen, the permission to enter all ports of Singapore was quickly gained.

In the meantime, the ILSM team had presented itself to almost all English and Chinese speaking congregations in various Lutheran church services - including the small Thai congregation in Golden Mile Complex. We shared reports on our work with the seafarers.

Not to be forgotten, however, are the fishermen who have just so little legal protection. The ILSM maintains its own centre in Jurong Fishery Port, which was newly built two years ago, and the interior of the centre has been improved through generous donations. Unfortunately, the fishermen are not yet allowed to disembark. Hence, contact with give-away bags happens via the ship's railings for now.

Together with all the seafarers' churches and the MWS, efforts are being made to ensure that the fishermen can now also visit THEIR centre and experience it as a place to relax and unwind.

In the Proverbs of Solomon it says:

Speak up for those who can't speak for themselves. Speak up for the rights of all those who are poor. Speak up and judge fairly. Speak up for the rights of those who are poor and needy.

Proverbs 31:8-9

This is a task and obligation given by God. We will not slacken in the accompaniment and care of the seafarers and fishermen.





DIALECT PARENTS' DAY CELEBRATION

BY MARTIN CHEAH

5th June 2022. The Dialect Ministry organized a Parents' Day celebration with food distribution after a two-year hiatus due to COVID restrictions. Seline bought the gift (2 bottles of bird's nest drink) for each parent and delivered it to church. She also arranged for the bento set which she ordered to be delivered to JCC at 4:00 pm on that day.

Some of the team members gathered to practise a song presentation for the elders. With only 2 rounds of practices, they nailed it. However, some could not turn up on the actual day of presentation due to various reasons, including COVID.

Just before the Sunday, jitters were rife among the DLT as they were fearful that the planned 60 gifts and bento sets might be under forecasted if there was a sudden influx of guests. Furthermore, rain was forecasted for Sunday which could deter the elders from attending service.

On the day of the celebration, the singers and musicians arrived at 1:15pm and went through a final round of rehearsals for the song presentation. Some then assisted to pack the gift into individual bags for distribution during the service. Suddenly, there was a heavy downpour at around 2:00 pm as forecasted. By 2:30 pm, only a handful of worshippers had arrived. But just as suddenly, the rains stopped about 15 minutes before the start of service and the Sanctuary started to fill up.

Anxiously, some of the team started to count the people in case we did not have enough gifts and bento sets for them. Thanks be to God everything went smoothly and there were sufficient for everyone.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

God has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.