

Lest We Forget: The Crusade

By Dr Ngeow Took Fah

‘For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds’ (2 Corinthians 10:3,4).

In this passage, the apostle Paul uses military terminology to describe the warfare against sin and Satan. And in Ephesians 6:14-17, God’s mighty weapons consist of prayer, faith, hope, love, His Word and Spirit. In the face of real guns and bullets from the enemies, will He also protect us and give us victory?

The world we live in is in deep trouble. The war between Russia and Ukraine seems to be unending. Jews, Christians and Arabic Muslims in the Middle East continue to face annihilation and mass killing to the extent of genocide. Are you perplexed, confused, frustrated and furious with God for the sin of disregarding the sanctity of human life, the gift of Your creation?

Jerusalem has always been a holy city to the Jews and Christians, since the days of the patriarch Abraham. In Islam, it is ranked as the third in holiness after Mecca and Medina. Being holy, the position of Jerusalem is especially precarious, subject to repeated incursions, violence and destruction of property. Its vulnerability comes from lack of natural barriers, its population never completely conquered, not interested in defending homeland, with constant bickering and infighting.

In Palestine, people live in perpetual fear, fear of increasing Islamisation

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and shrinking of their territorial land provided under The Balfour Declaration 1917. It was Pope Unger II who understood their despair and called for Christian kings, princes, barons and all sorts of dignitaries from Western Europe to unite and work out the formation of the First Crusade. Marching and singing 'Onward Christian Soldiers' they left for the Holy City, Jerusalem, thousands of miles away, keeping the twin objectives in their hearts, the liberation of the city and the cessation of Muslim advance.

Historically, crusades were a series of religious wars instituted, supported and sometimes directed by the Christian Latin Church in the Medieval period. They survived about two hundred years, with each episode lasting a couple of years because of logistic constraint.

First Crusade 1095-1100. Besides winning the war and liberating Jerusalem, four crusade states were created, namely Jerusalem, Antioch, Tripoli, and Edessa. Six thousand Jews and thirty thousand Muslims were killed. Many synagogues were burnt. Anti-semitism began raising its ugly head.

Second Crusade 1147-1149. Involved princes of France and Germany. Little was achieved because of disunity between the Roman Empire with its capital in Rome and Latin as the common language and the Byzantine Empire, the Eastern part of

Roman Empire with Constantinople as capital, Greek language and Orthodox Christianity for religion. Outwardly, the two parts appeared to be in harmony.

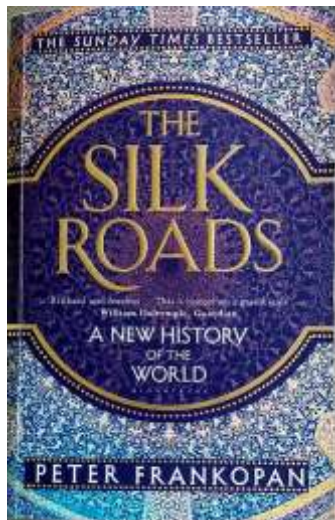
Third Crusade 1187-1192. Three National leaders participated: Richard the Lionheart of England, Philip II of France and the mighty Frederick Barbarossa of German Holy Roman Emperor. Even with their involvement they could not turn the table. Jerusalem surrendered to Muslim force led by Saladin.

Fourth Crusade 1202-1204. Venice the port became the cornerstone of the group, transporting the warriors across the Mediterranean Sea. Sacking of Constantinople and selling of her treasures all over the Middle East made it the worst of the top four Crusades. Ultimately, the city was defeated by Turkish Muslims and the Byzantine Empire ended in 1453.

All other Crusades were disqualified on grounds of inadequate training, indiscipline, crimes committed, and rampant diseases. What was often left out from the list was people's heart. As reiterated by Chinese philosophers: those who have won the heart of the people win the land 得民心者得天下。 For Christians, they were also bound by the requirement in 1 Samuel 16:7, 'man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'

I can think of a similar situation when the Jewish leaders of the law and Pharisees rejected Jesus' offer of help despite His earnest plea to them. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you. How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing' (Matthews 23:37). So some of the crusaders might have been dropped because of insubordination.

My knowledge of the crusade deepened after reading this book by Peter Frankopan, an Oxford scholar on 'The Silk Roads, A New History of the World'. The book is richly illustrated with 22 chapters covering a wide range of subjects, besides President Xi's pet topics on BRI (Belt and Road Initiative).



A few days later, my interest in world history was further boosted by the chance discovery of this academic paper 'Muslim Diversity and Lost in the First Crusade'. I could not believe my eyes when I read that it was published in June 2022 issue of the Journal of Islamic and Civilisational Studies, by UTM (the University Technology Malaysia) in Skudai.

Defending Crusade regardless of outcome: Before we can enter the

Holy City triumphantly like Jesus Christ, or otherwise, we must take into consideration these factors:

1. A controversial question has no definite answer. Data can be adjusted, even manipulated.
2. Both sides have supporters.
3. Both also have disunity problem.
4. Poor in spirit means helpless in dealing with temptations from wealth and power, ending in corruption and fall of the regime.
5. Too much power vested in the Pope whose soul searching after losing is superficial at best and undermining colleagues at worst.
6. Bear in mind that to conquer is one thing, to keep the territory is another.

Any second chance for crusaders? Most unlikely because geopolitical changes are frequent and no government is prepared to redraw borderline to its own disadvantage. After all these years of turmoil, both the Holy City and Constantinople still remain in Muslim's hand. So what shall Christians all over the world do?

'Stand up, stand up for Jesus
 Ye soldiers of the Cross
 Lift high the royal banner
 It must not suffer loss
 From victory unto victory
 His army shall He lead
 Till every foe is vanquished
 And Christ is Lord indeed.'

FROM A PASTOR'S DESK

A Man After God's Own Heart

By Rev Dr Chuah Seong Peng

Acts 13:22

God testified concerning him: *"I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do."*

According to Paul, this is the testimony of God on King David's life. It is probably one of the most inspiring epitaph one can get. David was a shepherd boy who became a warrior and a powerful king. He consolidated the tiny nation of Israel to become a powerful kingdom of the Middle East. With all his accomplishments, Paul chose to pay tribute to him with this epitaph, which to me is most inspiring but can also be most perplexing. Why?

When we look at David's life, it was not one that was godly and perfect to receive such an approval of God for his heart and life. David's life as a warrior was one full of bloodshed. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and plotted the murderous killing of her husband. He had many wives. He was a negligent father who failed to discipline his children. His family ended with tragedy and strife among the children, with his own son coming after his life.

And yet Paul tells us, *God testified concerning him: "I have found David...a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do."*

How could God commend a man with such kind of records and background?

The answer, I believe, is the grace of God. Yes, David was not a perfect man. His life was full of faults and failures. He had committed many sins. Yet over the long haul, he had sought to be righteous, and his heart's desire was to do God's will. He was truly repentant of his shortcomings, he asked for forgiveness and made restitutions and corrections for his mistakes. God saw this and credited him as *'a man after my own heart'*. It is not that he was perfect, but his heart was right – it has the right desire, a longing to follow God and do what pleases Him. This was the kind of man God was looking for when He chose him to be king over Israel. God knew his heart to be one such as this.

So, do we qualify to be a man like David – one after God's own heart?

You may find this question difficult to answer affirmatively because it is too lofty a goal for us. I have good news for you, for this is what God's loving heart and His enabling grace in His kingdom is about. When God calls us into His kingdom, He is looking for men and women whose hearts' desire are to follow Him completely and do His will. God is not looking for a perfect man or woman. He is looking to make us perfect in His Son, Jesus Christ in His kingdom by His grace.

When He looks at our life, He is not expecting perfection. Being a Christian doesn't mean we do not sin anymore. We will still sin, but sin will no longer

be a prominent pattern of our life. Sin has lost its dominance over us. We are not sinless but sin less as we live with Jesus as our Saviour and King. This is because as Christians, we are new creations, born again of the Spirit when we believe in Jesus and give our hearts to follow Him in His kingdom. We are a new child of God and the Spirit lives in us. When we sin, the Holy Spirit convicts us and causes us to repent, to come back to the joyful fellowship with God. The Spirit also helps us to overcome our sin. All these are because of the grace of God that enables us and strengthens us all the time.

So, do we qualify to be a man like David – one after God’s own heart?

The answer is yes. Not because we are qualified to do so on our own. We qualify because of the grace and love of Christ for us on the cross. Jesus Christ, the only perfect man on earth, went to the cross to die for our sin and qualified us to become a man or a woman whose heart has been transformed to follow Him and do His will by the Spirit.

Therefore, as we go mission with God, let us be like David, a man after God’s own heart and respond to the call of the kingdom and follow Jesus wholeheartedly to do the will of God. Let us trust and obey God as His kingdom disciples and share this good news of the kingdom to everyone for His glory.

SUPA Camp 2024: Kingdom Quest

By The Children’s Ministry



This was the third year that the Scripture Union Primary-Age Camp, affectionately called SUPA Camp, was held at our church grounds. On 6-7 July, we welcomed 67 children aged 7-12 years old from churches across Johor Bahru, non-church going families and a handful from other states.

We thank God that Scripture Union was able to bring this camp, usually held at Tapah, Perak, all the way down south to allow children to explore the riches of the Bible, to listen, to meet and to follow Jesus Christ. Praise God for the 5 Scripture Union staff and 18 volunteers cum camp leaders (almost half from HLCE!) who devoted themselves to the children throughout camp.

With this year’s camp theme being ‘Kingdom Quest’, camp leaders guided children to dig deep into the book of Mark and to commit to memory the camp verse:

Jesus said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself

*and take up his cross and follow me.”
(Mark 8:34b, ESV)*

Through interactive bible teaching sessions, the children explored who is this King of the Kingdom, why He came to earth, what He did on earth and what it meant to follow Him. The two workshops on ‘Choosing friends’ and ‘How to get wise and godly counsel?’ imparted essential biblical guidance as children navigate a world with competing demands and influences. Moreover, each praise and worship time was thunderous and energetic with the children’s voices singing praises:



I am a priceless treasure
God knows me, God hears me
God is my comfort
I am His and there’s nothing better
Forgiven and chosen forever
I am a treasure!

Indeed, we pray that the children will know that they are important and valuable as treasure in God’s eyes. May they respond by following King Jesus by trusting in Him as their Saviour.

Hear directly from some HLCE children about their SUPA Camp experience!



By Tiffany Siow Enxi

In Session 1, I learnt about the Gospel. In Session 2, I learnt that Jesus has authority to forgive sins and in Session 3, I learnt that Jesus reigned by dying on the cross and coming back to life. In Session 4, I learnt that we can depend on Jesus like a child.

Now that I have learnt the above, I will share the gospel with others.

The best part of the camp was the small group activities as they were a lot of fun.

I am thankful to my teachers at camp.

I would like to go for the next SUPA Camp and I would tell my friends to go for the next SUPA Camp because I want my friends to learn about God.

By Giselle Wang Ruo Xi

After what I learnt at camp, I will pray to God.

Even though I only attended the 2nd day of the camp, to me, the best part of the camp was the “Happy Kingdom” activity because it was fun.

I am thankful for the teachers and friends.

I will go for the next SUPA Camp and of course, I will tell my friend to go for the next SUPA Camp because it is fun! But my friend is always studying.

By Zeke Teo Kai Shun

In Session 1, I learnt that the Gospel is the good news about Jesus. In Session 2, I learnt that Jesus has authority over everything including sin and in Session 3, I learnt that Jesus died for our sins. In Session 4, I learnt that Jesus rose from the dead and has power over/defeats death.

I would now be thankful and faithful in God.

The best part of the camp were the games in between the learning sessions and the ones at the end. They were fun, exciting and made learning very engaging. King's Treasure game was fun, exciting, strategic and interesting. I learnt how to strategize and work together. Happy Kingdom activity was fun, cool and taught about decision-making and money management.

I am thankful for the fun activities and learning sessions.

I would go for next year's SUPA Camp but I'd be 13 years old then. Maybe I would tell my friends to go for the next SUPA Camp because I

am kind of not that "sociable" on things like this.

By Anderson Wong

In Session 1, I learnt that the Gospel is the good news about Jesus. In Session 2, I learnt that Jesus has authority to forgive sins and in Session 3, I learnt that Jesus died for our sins. In Session 4, I learnt that Jesus rose from the dead.

I would now love Jesus, worship him and read the bible. Not go to hell.

The best part of the camp was the games. In the Happy Kingdom activity, I got to 'gamble'.

I am thankful for Teacher Egbert.

I would like to go for the next SUPA Camp and I would tell my friends to go for the next SUPA Camp so that they can know about Jesus.

By Etzell Jansen Sulisthio

The one thing that I've learnt is that we need teamwork.

I was put into a team with a lot of people which I did not know, so I needed to know how to mainly cope with them, adapt to their preferences and to work with them.

So, one thing I learnt is teamwork and courage!



Holy Lighters, did these testimonies touch your hearts and bring encouragement to your souls? 😊

Children are precious and significant in His sight. They are a blessing from God and a gift for us to raise and nurture.

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

If you love being with children, we urge you to prayerfully consider being a part of the Children's Ministry. Join us as we nurture, minister and share about the wonders of our great God to the next generation! You will be blessed journeying with them as they grow in wisdom and stature as Jesus did.

The Hokkien Service

20TH ANNIVERSARY

By Grace Soon

A Reflection on this Ministry.

Praise the Lord for this blessed ministry, a place made available for the Hokkien speaking believers to gather to worship and the pre-believers to hear the Word and come to faith in Jesus.

Reminiscing the Hokkien Service's story, I give praise and thanks to our Lord for His love and grace that none shall perish, but come to salvation in Jesus. Therefore some 20 years or more ago, the Lord laid upon the heart of the late Mrs Yeo Swee Kheng the burden to reach out to the non-English speaking parents and relatives of HLCE members. I am blessed to serve together with Mrs Yeo, she was caring, forgiving, and patiently ministering among us.

As a pioneer partner with Mrs Yeo in this ministry, I consider myself her 'armour-bearer'. Together we made many visits to the Hokkien speaking seniors. We started with a humble beginning, by bringing them for a simple refreshment and sharing of the gospel in the living room of Berea, the church office. Eventually, other Hokkien speaking believers from another church came and joined us, and volunteers came in to help, that's when we decided to have a proper worship service, in Hokkien songs

and sharing of short messages, in Berea. We held the services at 4pm, the same time as the English service which was held in the HLCC building. We completed sharing different passages from the whole Gospel of John.

Fast forward, when HLCE moved to the upstairs hall in the Hillville aged care home, the Hokkien service moved to the cabin adjacent to Hillville.

In October 2012, when HLCE moved to our present Faith Hall, the Hokkien service followed likewise, using the basement of Faith Hall. And we have our weekly services at 4pm, except for the first Saturday of the month.

We thank the Lord for leading us step by step. Perfect timing as most of the attendees are residents from the Hillville Aged Care home. The location is good and easily accessible for them. Presently, there are about 15 residents, believers and pre-believers attending the service.

As I browsed through the photos of the previous anniversaries, I give thanks to the Lord over all these years, for the friendship forged with the many elderly Hokkien speaking seniors who came to faith in Jesus, worshipped with us and in His time have moved on to eternity. There were faithful volunteers helping us in different capacities in this ministry. Some have since then relocated out of JB to their children's homes, while

others moved to the heavenly home. Nevertheless, a faithful group remains serving till today.

I thank the Lord for faithfully watching and leading over this ministry. There are 11 of us committee members and is headed by our 'charismatic' pastor, Rev Gan Kim Choon. The uniqueness of this committee is that only 3 persons are able to read and write Chinese. The others can speak the Hokkien dialect but only read the Hokkien words in its romanized form. Praise the Lord for giving us this ability, to lead in worship, caring for the many elderlies who attend the service. We celebrate the Holy Communion monthly using the two in one sealed elements. The sharing of the Word are given by different Chinese churches' pastors, Rev Gan and occasionally by brethren in our midst.

The years passed by so fast, and by God's grace we celebrated our 20th Anniversary on July 13, 2024. This year we invited the Hokkien Gospel singer Mr Raymond Looi, from



Singpetra Mission Ministry. He had ministered in the Hokkien service in 2011 and 2016. He sang and spoke with full of enthusiasm, referring to many scripture verses, indicating our need to receive Jesus in our hearts, the peace that Jesus can fill our hearts. These build up to the theme of his sharing “The Greatest Blessings”. There was also a song presentation by some of the Hillville residents. 98 persons were present at the service. Among them 14 are pre-believers, mostly invited by our regular friend from the Chinese speaking church.



We pray that the seeds of the Word sown that evening, will eventually take root in the hearts of the listeners.

The celebration ended with a fellowship dinner held at the basketball court, which was also attended by some of our church leaders.

All praise and glory to the Lord for giving us another year to celebrate and thank Him for His faithfulness.

The Senior Citizens' Fellowship Mid 2024 Reflections

By Grace Soon

During the 2021 Church AGM, a senior member, mentioned that the Senior Citizens, should have more fun and fellowship. I believe the SCF did, after we started to meet physically, after the lifting of the Covid-19 SOP.

We have our monthly physical gathering in Berea, with the vision and mission of the fellowship in mind. The SCF comes to seek, to grow in relationship with God, to support senior adults in their faith, helping them to stay active spiritually, mentally, socially and physically, challenge active seniors to provide spiritual comfort and care to their peers who are physically and emotionally afflicted.

For those who are new to HLCE, here is what happens at the Senior fellowship. We begin with refreshments, an exciting wide spread of Malaysian delights catered from sister Amar Kaur. Beside these, some members constantly surprise us with their culinary skill of cakes, kueh², fried bee hoon, while others bought favorites, like curry puffs, cucuk bawang, you tiao, and fruits too. Of course, all these must go with our ever favorite hot black local coffee. There is so much joyous fellowship over foodies time, with much catching up with one another, getting more acquainted with newer members and friends who have been coming to join us.

Following which we have time of worshipping the Lord and prayers. We sang our favorite hymns led by brothers Sin Chuan, Peter Yip and sister Caroline Lee, in alternate month.

The hymns we sang were from The Praise Hymnal. Sometimes, the worship leader also gave a short sharing on the stories of the hymns and its writers. Then heavenly sound of the boisterous singing filled the air, as we all enjoyed singing hymns which are seldom sung in church. After which, we settled down to listen to the speakers for the month.

The first meeting for this year, Rev Benjamin Ho encouraged us to “Press On Towards the Goal”, expounded from the book of Philippians.

February, we took a break because of CNY.

In March, we had a talk given by our late Elder Dr Alex Tang, entitled “Finding peace in letting go” .



Letting go of: 1. Material Possession, 2. Relationship, 3. Control.



Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” This verse is the key word for the talk. The topic attracted many people, even the younger ones. 54 people attended the fellowship. I think it was strange, this was the first time Dr Alex recorded his talk in his hand phone. Later he gave me the recording to share with others.

After this talk, I fixed another appointment with Dr Alex to speak to us on the topic of “ Sacred Friendship, Walking Each Other Home”. He agreed to it and he was only available in July. Sadly, Dr Alex walked home to the Lord on 5th of May. The SCF shall miss him greatly as he had been our encouraging speaker over the years.

In April, Pastor Ivan Seah, spoke on “The Meaning of Christ Ascension to Heaven”. His sharing came at a relevant time, as we celebrated, Easter, Christ resurrection 18 days ago and His ascension is in 22 days time.

In May, Rev. Tan Meng Poo shared with us “The Joy of the Lord is Your Strength” from the book of Nehemiah 8:10.

June and July, the seniors have an enjoyable time of learning and participating during the 2 talks brought by Mr Edwin Tay, Physiotherapist, from Neuhope Physiotherapy.

The first talk was on “Osteoarthritis “. Edwin gave us good information on this subject. He not only demonstrated the exercises for osteoarthritis with the rubber band but also gave us the bands to try out. 67 persons attended the talk.



Edwin’s second talk in July was on “Falls”, 60 persons attended the talk. There were so much laughter and excitement as we participated in quizzes he gave us relating to the subject on falls. Prizes were given to those who gave the correct answers. At the end of the session, Edwin distributed to all of us a pair of non-slipped socks. I thank God for Edwin’s generosity in all the freebies he gave us in the two talks with us.

He demonstrated on “How to get up from a fall”, and two of the seniors role played on the three processes : 1. Prepare, 2. Rise , 3. Sit.



I pray the SCF will continue to draw seniors to come together to encourage one another in our journey on earth.

Lastly, I would like to share this short abstract taken from the book: The Coming of Age, with the seniors.

Growing, ripening, aging, dying — the passing of time is predestined, inevitable.

There is only one solution if old age is not to be an absurd parody of our former life, and that is to go on pursuing ends that give our existence a meaning — devotion to individuals, to groups or to causes, social, political, intellectual or creative work. In old age we should wish still to have passions strong enough to prevent us turning in on ourselves.

One's life has value so long as one attributes value to the life of others, by means of love, friendship, indignation, compassion. ~Simone de Beauvoir

(Book: The Coming of Age [ad] <https://amzn.to/48wmqQ1>)

(Art: Photograph of Georgia O'Keeffe by John Loengard)



Teo's May 2024 Update

Dear friends,

Three months have gone by quickly since coming back to Canada in early March and we thought we share some brief updates and prayer points.

1. Our permit to work in Canada will expire in July and we have applied for an extension of our work permit under OM Canada. The process for extension takes about 3 months and we pray that God willing, we will be granted the work permit extension so as to be able to continue to serve here based in Canada.

2. I met with the Afghan man whom I used to do Bible Study with before I left for Malaysia but unfortunately, he has moved further away from where I live and has now got a new job. He seems quite busy and will not be able to meet him as often. I am happy for him that he has received his approval for his Canada permanent residence permit and he hopes to bring his family over soon.

3. I met with two other young Afghan believers and was hoping to connect them together to start a small fellowship group. However, this seems to be a challenge as one of them is not keen to meet up. Both of them have had a similar story of being a refugee in

Indonesia for some years and then subsequently came to faith in Jesus while in Indonesia and they were later sponsored by a church to come over to Canada to start a new life. Pray for them in their settlement and adjustment to a new life here.

4. I have been trying to connect with an Iranian doctor whose wife comes to the Food Pantry to get groceries. He is finding life in Canada difficult as he is not allowed to work as a doctor. I had tried a few times to meet him for coffee but he seems a little shy to meet up. Please pray for his adjustment to a new life here and over time, I may be able to build a relationship of trust.

5. I was invited by a supporting church to help out at their English conversation class once a month. Many of those who attend the class are from mainland China and doing their second masters program. The English conversation class has been an effective way to reach out to them and a few of them have begun to join the Alpha class.

6. In June, OM will be having three fund raising events for the ship ministry in 3 different cities in the province. I will be helping out at two of these events. Please pray these events go well and be able to create a greater awareness of OM ministries and mobilize more workers for missions.

7. In June, I will also be involved with the MSI Canada retreat where the President of MSI Professional Services will be the speaker and we also get to receive some updates about the NGO work in China. Please pray for this retreat to be a blessing to all the participants and for MSI as they continue to reach China for Christ.

We appreciate you taking the time to read our updates and to pray for us.

Thank you for your faithful support and encouragement.

Blessings,
Chris and Joo Ping

Meeting Together

By Kenneth Cham

I remember the late Uncle Justin as my father's friend and a church friend. When I was much younger, I recall he would visit our family and generously gave us Christmas gifts. On certain occasions, my father would invite him over to our home for a meal and fellowship with us. Sometimes, my parents would also bring him out for a treat at a favourite coffee shop in town. Uncle Justin was just like a family to me.

One characteristic trait that stood out for me about Uncle Justin, was his enthusiasm in attending our church service and activities. He would faithfully attend our Sunday church service every week. Sometimes, I could even see him serving the church by distributing the church bulletins at the doorway. And on certain special occasions, such as the Christmas lunch organized by the church, Uncle Justin would join us in fellowship as well. After all these years, I can still remember where Uncle Justin stayed - his home in Johor Bahru town was approximately 9.5 kilometers away from the church building. Every Sunday, he would take a public bus from his home and

alight at a bus stop along a busy highway. From the bus stop, he would then walk approximately 2.5 kilometers to the church building. He would travel to and fro in this manner every week. There were several times after church service, I could see him walking and making his way back home while I was driving past. At those times, I would gladly stop by and give Uncle Justin a ride home in my car. Sometimes, I would drop him at the nearby bus stop so he could catch a bus home. I am sure some of our church friends who happened to see him along the way, would also do the same and offer him a ride. Uncle Justin's life had been a great blessing to me personally, and to my family. If his life and deeds could still speak, these are the words from scripture I can clearly hear to this day, "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:23-25 (NIV)

From here, I understand that we must not give up meeting together as God's people. We can meet at our

regular church service; Cell Groups (which are smaller Bible Study groups meeting at various homes); special occasions such as Christmas gatherings, caroling trips, Good Friday or Easter Sunday. And like my father and family, we can also meet at our humble home for a simple meal and fellowship. When we meet together, we have the opportunity to encourage one another toward love and good deeds. We can journey along our Christian lives on earth with our fellow brethren, helping each other out whenever we are in need. We can learn to love one another, as Christ had first loved us. Moreover, our eternal God has promised His presence to be with us whenever we meet together.

Our Lord Jesus had said, “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” Matthew 18:19-20 (NIV)

It is an excellent promise of God, who is faithful to fulfil all that He had spoken in His Word. In the New Testament of the Bible, we read of a similar incident of the Apostle Paul’s vision of the man of Macedonia, “Paul and his companions traveled

throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” Acts 16:6-10 (NIV)

When the Apostle Paul obeyed the voice of God and traveled to Macedonia into the city of Philippi, we understand that God worked miraculously in the lives of the women there, and particularly in the life of a woman named Lydia, “From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women

Faith and Suffering

By Kelvin Koh

who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us." Acts 16:11-15 (NIV)

Today, God is still at work when we do not give up meeting together. It reminds me of a song that we often sing at church, "As We Gather." The first stanza sounds as follows,

*"As we gather may Your Spirit work within us;
As we gather may we glorify Your name;
Knowing well that as our hearts begin to worship;
We'll be blessed because we came."*

The Holy Spirit invites us to come into His presence and the fellowship of His people. We'll be blessed because we came, in Jesus' name.

Our faith will be as strong as our sufferings. Faith will be tested with sufferings. Faith and sufferings are conjoined twins. One cannot proceed without the other. Sufferings build faith and faith builds sufferings. I have not known a man of faith that had not suffered. And I have not known a man of sufferings that had no faith. Faith is vulnerable. Suffering is also vulnerable.

Abraham was credited to be a man of faith. He had his fair share or should I say unfair share of sufferings. Because of his faith, he had to relocate his entire family from Ur of Chaldeans to a missionary and nomadic life. He had to leave the comfort and convenient life of living in a brick house with running water and toilets in a modern city to living in a tent without the convenience and comfort of running water and toilets. And he had to move from place to place without security and purpose. He didn't even know where he would be next, at the mercy of the harsh environment, weather and the lack of water for his family and his livestock and unfriendly and suspicious neighbours. He was squatting here and there, offending the original occupants.

He suffered waiting for 25 years for a promise from God, that God was in no hurry to fulfill. How many times did

Abraham thought in 25 years that God was scamming him. He was promised a son but every physical evidence was against him. It was not logical, not rational, not reasonable, not evidence based and not scientific. He was reaching 100 years old, from 75 years old. Sarah was passed child bearing age and menopausal. Was God torturing him, playing with him, cheating him, deceiving him and pranking a joke on him.

And he had to deal with 2 powerful kings who were interested in Sarah his wife, without which there will be no son. You can imagine the nervous tensions and sufferings he had to go through twice in danger of losing his wife. He was so insecure and desperate that he resorted to lie that Sarah was his sister in case they killed him to get his wife. Only with God's miraculous interventions did he get back his wife intact. But the sufferings of emotional turmoil, fears, anxiety and insecurity, no one can understand.

Then quarrels and conflicts with neighbours over water source was a constant suffering. Crisis of warfare and fightings to protect and rescue his immediate family and relatives.

He even attempted the rational, logical, reasonable, evidence based and scientific way to the problem by impregnating his maid and produced a

son, only to be rejected by God. What a poor and pitiful fellow.

Finally, after 25 years of suffering waiting, travail waiting, grueling child birth labour pains, a son was born to him. Not too late was not an acceptable phrase, because it was very late, maybe too late and unreasonably late for Abraham. **Faith means waiting forever for a promise that is not going to happen in human measurements.**

Then, God had to destroy His promise, by asking Abraham to kill this son. This son he waited painfully for 25 years with physical and mental torture and pain and sufferings for 25 years.

God is mad or insane or what. Abraham is starting to think what kind of a God is this. A narcissist, a nihilist or a lunatic or a psychopath? He experienced the audacity of God. Maybe, even the cruelty of God.

By then, I believe he has somewhat become a zombie. He is like the clay that the Potter has processed: hitting, thumping, throwing, kneading until there is no more air (bubble) in him. Compliance, crucified, dead, buried, non resistance, totally surrendered, perfectly obedient and entirely sanctified, he has become.

Whatever God cooked, he will eat. Thy will be done. Meek and lowly, broken spirit, contrite heart, humble, fearful and

obedient servant. All, the results of 25 years of torturous sufferings, inward and outward, mental and physical, spiritual and emotional. 25 years of refining fire to purify the silver and gold has changed, moulded, mellowed and transformed Abraham. Abraham was weak and vulnerable just like us. What made him stand up in Heaven's Hall of Fame was the contributions of the torturous, audacious, insane and unreasonable sufferings God subjected him to.

Was it worth it? Only for the both of them, God and Abraham to answer? It is after all their journey. But I sense that God gained a faithful and loyal companion who will do and be anything for Him. And Abraham gained a master whom he can trust his life and death into, without concern. And the two of them live happily ever after. Will you be the next Abraham?

Mencius Mengzi (Chinese: 孟子; 372–289 BC)

By Kelvin Koh

“So it is that whenever Heaven invests a person with great responsibilities, it first tries his resolve, exhausts his muscles and bones, starves his body, leaves him destitute, and confound his every endeavor. In this way his patience and endurance are developed, and his weaknesses are overcome.”

400 years before Jesus, a Chinese philosopher already noticed that unless a human being has experienced extreme and desperate calamity and sufferings, he cannot achieve greatness.

Most of us are stubborn sheep. God will wait until we are desperate. Then we will do anything for God. And welcome to the club of ultimatum. Where we will do anything for God and nothing is too hard to do for God, because we have surrendered our ultimatum to God. Meanwhile enjoy our waywardness. When we are not desperate enough and we have not come to an end of ourselves and we have not touch rock bottom we will take obedience to God lightly and frivolously.

WHAT IS A CALLING?

By Kelvin Koh

It is sad that we have to leave God with no other option but to push us to the road of extreme desperation by taking away from us our dearest, our nearest, our closest and our most precious.

When life breaks us and all hell breaks loose, only then will we cry to God, Lord have mercy on me for I am undone. Until then we will be so high and mighty and we think we are sovereign like God and omnipotent like God and we can do anything.

Unless a horse is broken, he is useless to his owner and he will not submit and obey his master. But once broken, he will let his owner to ride him and bring him to where he wants. God will use pain as a teacher and sufferings as a mentor to train our soul and mold our character and personality.

Like the porter and the clay, he will beat and slam the clay, hit, squeeze, apply all sorts of pressure and mould it and fire it in a kiln of extreme temperature to produce a vessel of noble use.

We can complain that life is only a bed of thorns. Or we can rejoice that this life of thorns also have beautiful roses.

A calling is a call from God to be at the right place, at the right time, saying the right words, doing the right thing, behaving like the right person, to the right people, for the right Master, for the right reasons, for no conditions, for no strings attached and for nothing.

A perfect servant. How many coincidences before it can be considered a miracle? A calling from God always ends as a miracle.

A calling has the following criteria:

To a specific place

To a specific people

To a specific time

To bring a specific message

To do a specific task

To behave in a specific behaviour

To please a specific Master

To be non judgemental

To do it with no conditions

To do it for nothing

And to do it with no strings attached.

These can only be achieved when the branch abides by the vine in the secret closet where no one is looking and no one knows, in contemplation

with God in solitude, silence and stillness.

It is the quiet time one spent with God that can make one so sensitive to the leading and calling of God. For apart from Me you can do nothing. For apart from God we will do all the wrong things, be at the wrong places, be at the wrong time, saying the wrong words to the wrong people, behaving with the wrong behaviours, for the wrong reasons, with judgements, with conditions, with strings attached, with agendas and for a reward and for a wrong master.

NB: Contributions to Sinews newsletter, via email to spcheong88@gmail.com (in Microsoft Word format), in the form of articles, testimonies and original photographs (with captions) are welcome, but we reserve the right to edit them in the interest of HLCE. Views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent that of HLCE or the editor.

Reflect and see where we are.



OA Ministry



Medical service at Kpg Sg Gayung on 27/7/24



Medical service at Kpg Jemeri, 27/7/24



Conducting Sunday School to the children at Kpg Jemeri, 27/7/24



Ong See Haw & Grace ministering to the children at Kpg Sg Gayung, 27/7/24



Handing over 18 copies of Alkitab to Ps Alak for the believers on 27/7/24



Meeting with the pastoral staff of the OA Ministry in Rompin area, 27/7/24



Baptism of a believer at Kpg Jemeri on 27/7/24



Team of 12 from HLCE for the Medical & Children's Ministry at Kpg Jemeri on 27/7/24

**PRAISE & WORSHIP
SESSION**



**SUPA CAMP 2024
(GROUP PHOTO)**



SU STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

