

# Seasons of Life

## Passing the Baton: Disciples in a Troubled World

Issue #01 | May 2023

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What Young Christian Adults Really Need  
Daily Consecration: Seeking God at Home  
Discipling Generations: A Two-Way Street  
We're Always a Work in Progress  
Faith At Work  
Show and Tell

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## Passing the Baton

After two long years of social distancing, it is more apparent than ever that a tight-knit, Spirit-led community is the vital pulse of church. A church cannot thrive without flourishing relationships—in particular, those undergirded by spiritual guidance, mutual learning, and grace. The Bible makes it plain: Just as the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” neither can the head say to the feet, “I have no need of you.” (1 Corinthians 12:21).

How can these discipling relationships be nurtured and cultivated within a multi-generational community like SJSM? “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” (Proverbs 27:17). Our members carry unique life experiences, offer distinct talents, and are on our own spiritual journeys. As a church, how can we help one another to better navigate a world rife with shifting moralities?

This issue of Seasons of Life (SOL) delves into what discipling one another in families, cells, and ministries looks like against the tumultuous backdrop of today. In Focus provides the timely assurance that we should not be gripped by the fear of life that paralyzes, but by the fear of the Lord that empowers. We also hear from various mentor-mentee pairs, parents, young adults, and youths who spur each other on to cling steadfastly to this truth. Finally, Know the Word anchors the theme of discipleship in Scripture, by examining the mentorship between Timothy and Paul.

We hope that readers will be encouraged by these testimonies to reach beyond personal comfort zones and self-imposed barriers, and remain plugged into the church community where opportunities abound for mutual learning and discipleship. Above all, we pray that these discipling relationships and interactions will be overlaid with Christ-like love, which binds SJSM in perfect unity (Colossians 3:14).

**Eleanor Que**

On behalf of the Editorial Team



# The Fear that Leads to Life

Michael Tan

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Everyone struggles with fear of some kind, Christians included. Add to that a world that seems out of control whether in the form of worsening natural catastrophes, financial crises, global health threats like the COVID-19 pandemic or wars and the threat of wars, fear and its evil twin, anxiety, can easily take over and rob us of peace.

And as much as the Bible repeatedly exhorts the believer to “fear not” - in KJV, this phrase or “be not afraid” appears 103 times, we find ourselves succumbing to it easily and some even require professional help when it becomes all too consuming and a mental health issue.

The truth is, there is also only one fear the Bible is unequivocal about - that of fearing God. It is not only the antidote for fear that plagues us arising from the world around us, it is the true essence of life itself!

## The fear of the Lord

While the fear of the Lord is often mentioned in the Old Testament,

particularly in Proverbs, it is less commonly spoken of in the New Testament. How does one reconcile this term with the love and grace that seem to characterise Jesus’ perspective of the Kingdom of God that He initiated in our midst?

There are several Hebrew and Greek terms behind this same “fear of the Lord” that correspond to modern day stances Christians take - from deep respect and reverence to an element of quaking fear (think Isaiah when he saw the throne of God in Isaiah 6, or John’s awe in the book of Revelation) at the thought of facing the ultimate Judge to whom all will give an account one day. I understand it to mean fearing God because of His resolute intolerance of sin and evil, of idolatry ie. chasing after false gods in our lives and also of loving and worshipping Him for who He is, our great and holy Creator God. It is a posture of heart and mind that continually bows and defers to His commands and will for our lives.



## Walking in the fear of the Lord

*...fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long.*

(Deut 6:2)

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

(Prov 1:7)

An upright and godly life begins with fearing God, from Whom flows knowledge, wisdom and instruction. It is a life lived in consonance with God's law, bringing great peace and making us less susceptible to falling or stumbling (Ps 119:165). It will take us all of our earthly lives to progress toward this epitome of perfectly fearing God and walking in His law but persevere we must for great are the rewards!

And we should not see these verses as merely exhortations to our own human efforts to fear and obey God. Rather, they are promises of what God has already graced those who desire to follow Him whole-heartedly. He enables us, through the Holy Spirit, to aspire to a life marked by deep love and reverence for Him and complete trust in His Word and sovereignty.

## The promise of life

*The fear of the LORD leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.*

(Prov 19:23)

*The fear of the Lord leads to life; then one rests content, untouched by trouble.*

(Prov 19:23 NIV)

God's Word recognises the woes that plague man, not least of all a restive spirit due to festering discontent. This may stem from coveting what we do

not have, anxiety about tomorrow or fretting over things not going our way etc. It also means a distrust in God - that He is able to provide what we need, sustain us through the difficult times He permits in our life and that He knows best.

The verses here promise that when we fear Him and walk closely with Him in His ways, there will be joy, godly contentment and satisfaction. It is a transformed mind and perspective acknowledging that God takes pre-eminence, that His will for us is good, perfect and acceptable (Rom 12:2b). Therefore, we will experience a true abundant life in Christ.

### **The promise of overcoming**

It gives me no small discomfort when we regularly pray for blessings and seek deliverance from afflictions with no thought of asking God first for His purposes in allowing them and how we ought to respond.

What if God's greater purposes are fulfilled by the denial of what we consider a blessing or sustaining us through a grievous trial instead of delivering us? Proverbs 19:23 does not promise the child of God who fears Him the total absence of both harm and trouble in the Christian's life for that is incongruous with Scripture in its entirety.

*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take*

*heart; I have overcome the world.*

(John 16:33)

If our Lord Jesus, the Son of God, wasn't spared the ultimate trials and tribulations a man could face for obeying the Father's will perfectly, why would we think otherwise for our own journey as His disciples? The more we seek to walk faithfully in the fear of the Lord, the more this fallen world with its attendant values and methods antagonistic to Him, will assail us. We should neither be alarmed nor disheartened; instead, we should rest assured that we will grow in maturity and be overcomers in Christ Jesus who conquered sin and death!

**“What if God's greater purposes are fulfilled by the denial of what we consider a blessing or sustaining us through a grievous trial instead of delivering us?”**

### **Fear Him first!**

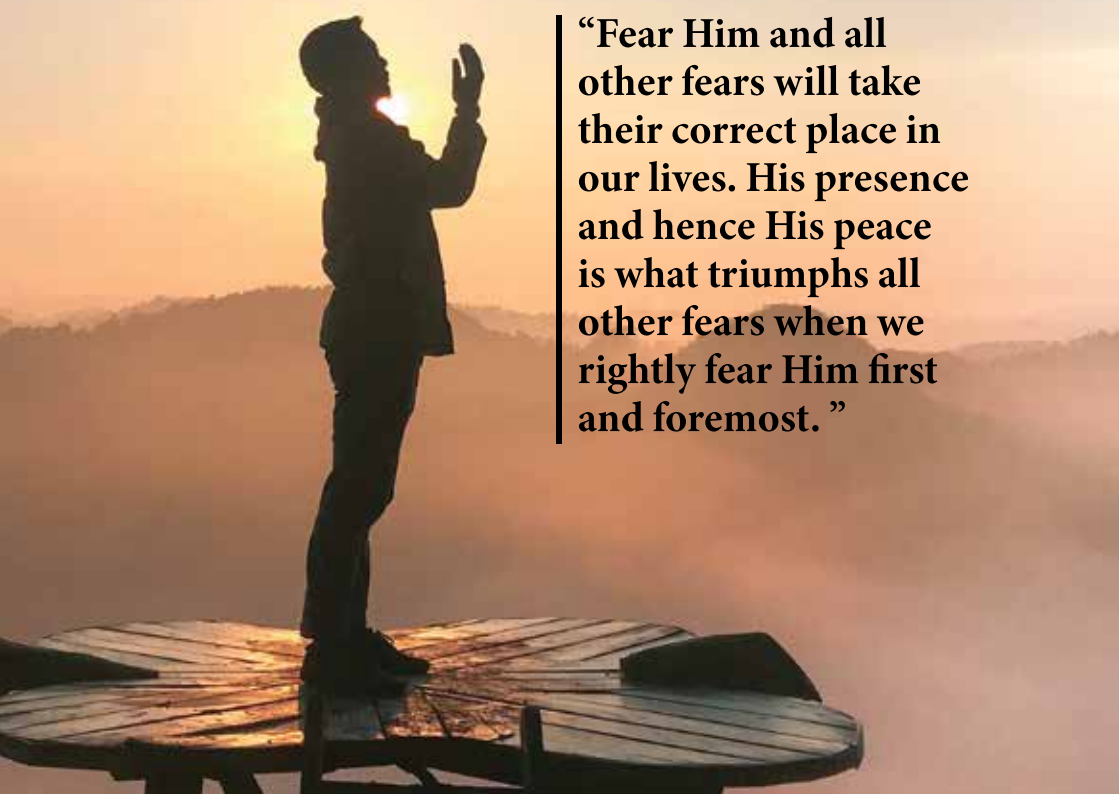
*Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!*

(Ps 31:19)

This modern life we live with its myriad pressures and temptations inevitably gives rise to fear and anxiety but hallelujah, the fear of God and all its bountiful promises of wisdom, great peace, rising above circumstance, living with purpose and power is a given too! The Christian lives inside out while the carnal man lives outside in. We guard our hearts by guarding our walk with God through always revering and fearing Him first in our life. Then everything else will take their rightful place. That is what God promises to those who fear Him.

May I encourage you that each time you sense fear arising, run to God

and cry for His intervention. Remind yourself of His immeasurable goodness and greatness, His love for us, His promise to never leave nor forsake us and His assurance that He will carry us through. While on the human level, fear will get through to us from time to time, it is resting in the fear of God, the One who is Sovereign, who loves us, who will see us through all things if we abide in Jesus and who will also be the One we meet for judgement one day. Fear Him and all other fears will take their correct place in our lives. His presence and hence His peace is what triumphs all other fears when we rightly fear Him first and foremost.



**“Fear Him and all other fears will take their correct place in our lives. His presence and hence His peace is what triumphs all other fears when we rightly fear Him first and foremost.”**

# What Christian Young Adults Really Need

Bradley Yam

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## Facing challenges as a Christian young adult in a turbulent world

It seems harder and harder to be a Christian these days. My first fledgling steps into young adulthood, and the working world, was fraught with more challenges than I expected. I hardly had any time for myself, and productivity above wellbeing seemed to be the mantra at work. Making matters worse, I was moving back to Singapore, and reintegrating into the church community felt like navigating a maze. I could not figure out the right forum to meet people in the church community. I also wanted to live out faith authentically: to continue growing in the knowledge of God's love, and out of that, to also figure out what Christ had to say regarding the contemporary issues facing Christians in Singapore. These are issues such as: living in a culture that is driven by materialism and technology, our response to issues of sexual and gender identity, and our responsibility to steward our natural environment. But more than just

answers, I sought a community of people to live out the answers with.

## An initiative born out of a shared vision



*During the very first discussion for YAGUI, many young adults came together to share their hopes for the community in SJSM.*

While I would avoid generalizing my personal experience to every Christian young adult, I found that my peers in church resonated with the sense of overwhelming challenge of this life stage, but also with the overwhelming opportunity to begin living well, given our newly gained independence and fresh visions of what a life inspired and grounded in





the love of Christ could look like. The imperative to craft a new vision and not just return to our business as usual was emphasized as the world started to come out of the pandemic that had changed life as we knew it. It was out of these conversations and these desires that YAGUI (*Young Adult Ground Up Initiative*) started to take shape.

In some ways it is easier to define YAGUI by what it is not. YAGUI is not a ministry. It is not meant to serve a clear and well-defined need or target group. YAGUI is also not a worship service. It is not meant to administer the sacraments or gather a congregation together for worship. Neither is YAGUI a meeting or committee. We do not have members or take regular attendance. It is not meant to replace anything in the church structure, but instead to complement what is already there. YAGUI is a space, or if you like it, a gathering point, focused on

Christian young adult issues where anybody interested in young adult issues are welcomed, regardless of age. YAGUI is a place where you can find macro-community (as in, beyond the cell group) and share a vision of living well together, under Christ, in the world. This explains the “Young Adult” part of the name — not that the space is meant only for young adults, but that the focus is on the challenges facing Christian young adults living out their faith in today’s world.

### **Growing at a steady pace**

While there is a core team that anchors the monthly Saturday evening meetings, the format and goals of these meetings are kept purposefully open to encourage any and all members of the church community to use the space to contribute their part of the vision to the whole. In this sense, YAGUI is a bit like a potluck: the feast is shared by all and created

by all, each participant bringing their own flavour.

I believe that the diversity of perspectives is needed to face the diversity of challenges, and that together we live out more truly the image of the body of Christ, in which each part led by the Spirit is uniquely gifted, and uniquely informed.

Frankly, these are early days. We have only just begun meeting as a large group, and the fruit is only budding. But I am encouraged at the pace at which YAGUI has grown and developed quite independent of any single individual's bidding or initiative, which is a sign to me that God is working in and through all of us who are involved, and that we each have something to offer. This explains the "Ground Up Initiative" part of the name, meaning that the way we are organised is flat, flexible, and friendly — everyone is a leader.

**"I believe that the diversity of perspectives is needed to face the diversity of challenges, and that together we live out more truly the image of the body of Christ, in which each part led by the Spirit is uniquely gifted, and uniquely informed."**

## **YAGUI is by no means a cure-all**

I may at this point have misled you into thinking that YAGUI is the answer to the challenges I face as a young adult. It is not. There have been other young adult fellowships and ministries in the past that arose as a response to the needs of the time, YAGUI will come and go as it is needed, it is not a special new formula. The truth is that I don't think the challenges faced by young adults are unique to young adults at all — they are the same issues faced by the church as a whole. Young adulthood is just a unique time of transition and instability in which these issues are highlighted, and there is an opportunity to break from the ways of the world and live faithfully in light of God as important life decisions are made around lifestyle, community, and relationships.



*Held on 12 Nov last year, YAGUI's community night initiated a fruitful time of fellowship between SJSM members of all ages.*

**Challenges can only be overcome when we come together as one body of Christ**

Making significant life decisions to follow Jesus does not happen in isolation, although sometimes it can

feel that way. The isolation happens for several reasons on several levels. First, we can feel isolated from our peers because we as individuals are already neck deep in the turbulence of instability and transition. Second, we can feel isolated from our traditions or the wisdom of our elders. Especially if the adult and youth communities are so segregated that being a youth can feel almost like belonging to a different church. Third, we can feel isolated from the younger youth community because our life experiences begin to diverge, and we are too busy or burnt out to continue our leadership roles in the youth community which are almost part-time jobs in themselves.

The truth is that these discussions about how to live faithfully and flourishingly as a Christian need to be made in the context of, with the support of, and in service of the whole church.

We need our peers to go through life's various stages together. We need our elders to give us wisdom, guide us with the benefit of their experience, and shed light on the road of faith ahead. We need our younger brothers and sisters to energize and challenge us, and remind us that we need to be exemplars, leaders, and culture-makers for the sake of all those who will come after us.

In short, what the young adults really need is a Church that is one; one like God, brought to complete unity. This

is Jesus' prayer in John 17.

*"... That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."*

(John 17:21)

For through the oneness of the church, the surpassing love of God for the whole world through Jesus might be made known to all, and that God in all his love would be glorified.

**"The truth is that these discussions about how to live faithfully and flourishingly as a Christian need to be made in the context of, with the support of, and in service of the whole church."**

*Bradley is a cradle SJSMer. He loves playing around with computers, reading books on all kinds of subjects, particularly philosophy and religion, and would love for anyone to reach out for a chat!*



## Daily Consecration: Seeking God at Home

Eleanor Que



What image does the term ‘family discipleship’ evoke? For some, it would be a rosy picture of a nuclear family setting aside sacred time to pray, worship and share weekly devotions. Yet for many, turning this idealised notion into reality may be a far more challenging feat than expected. Life is inevitable and interminable chaos often gets in the way. Family members may show up distracted, in conflict with one another, or exhausted from their own daily lives. How can parents press on, even when their attempts to instil spiritual discipline in their children fall apart?

Hing Loon, Gwen and their three children Josher (16), Eleos (13) and Shawna (10) sat down with SOL to share about their discipleship journey as a family. While the family grasps the importance of inculcating spiritual rigour in their daily lives, they also recognise that there is no set formula for successful discipleship. From their experience, it is apparent that what matters more is how families adapt spiritual routines to their various schedules and unique dynamics.

### Growing Struggles

Between the ages of 7 to 9, the Lo children were each assessed by an IQ test. These test results subsequently flagged out certain developmental issues which necessitated further diagnostic tests. Gwen shared candidly, “The long and short of it is, each of them had a distinct diagnosis which required some sort of professional intervention - be it psychotherapy or medication.”

It is easy to imagine how the behavioural idiosyncrasies of attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) and Apraxia (a neurological disorder characterised by the loss of ability to execute skilled movements despite the desire and physical ability to perform them) have caused tension and conflict within the family. Yet, instead of receiving their children’s diagnoses as a fixed sentence, Hing Loon and Gwen embraced them as ways to enhance their understanding of each child - their strengths, weaknesses and areas of potential. With this knowledge, they were able

to calibrate their parenting styles accordingly and impart respective coping strategies that enabled the children to reach their fullest potential.



The couple acknowledged that other parents may have varying views on how to manage children with such diagnoses. This too was the case for them when they initially disagreed on whether to follow through with the recommended professional interventions. However, following

much reflection and mutual prayer, Hing Loon and Gwen came to the consensus that their children receiving appropriate medical interventions including medications would be the most appropriate option for their family.

“Interceding for healing is important, but there is also a need to discern a balance between the spiritual and medical aspects. Prayer and medical treatment can work together.” From a pragmatic point of view, Gwen also noted that medical treatment concurrent with adjustment of parenting styles, significantly reduced their children’s unpleasant memories and eased their negative parenting experiences. The increased frequency of positive and pleasurable moments strengthened the parent-child relationships and quality of communication such that there were windows of opportunity to teach their children instrumental self-management skills. Overall, this boosted their family morale. Hing Loon and Gwen could then focus on embedding familial spiritual disciplines into their daily routines.

**“Interceding for healing is important, but there is also a need to discern a balance between the spiritual and medical aspects. Prayer and medical treatment can work together.”**



## Deepening Roots

Consistently maximising the pockets of time the family had together was key - namely, commutes, mealtimes and bedtimes. The family makes it a point to start most mornings together. During their car rides to school, Hing Loon and Gwen would encourage their children to take turns to pray for themselves and for one another. At the end of each day, family members share about their respective days over dinner - the good, the bad, the mundane. These precious dinner table conversations have provided a safe space for discussions and spiritual learning points to be gleaned. Mutual prayer requests are also exchanged before bedtime.

Rather than a Sunday one-and-done, the family purposefully manifests Christian living through daily consecration in the little things.

Assessing that their children have

matured and are at the age for better discussions, Hing Loon and Gwen have also recently reinstated regular family Bible study sessions. Not only are the technical bases covered (i.e. how to read the Bible, why the Bible is structured the way it is), application-based devotionals were also selected to demonstrate how relevant scripture is in today's context. As of late, the family has been reading the devotional series "Jesus in Our Generation", which delves into topics such as racism, money, technology, and vanity from a Christian perspective.

In their wisdom as Christian parents, Hing Loon and Gwen have implemented these spiritual exercises to grow their children in the ways of the Lord. But how have these practices impacted the children's individual faiths? For Josher, the family devotions enabled him to navigate relevant yet touchy subjects through the lens of a Christian mindset. Eleos, on the other hand, found the habit of starting each day with prayer

meaningful, as it helps him deepen his connection with God. Last but not least, Shawna benefited from learning Bible study basics that are crucial, but often glossed over. It is evident from this that the intentionally cultivated spiritual disciplines have been integral to their Christian faith.

## The Path Ahead

The Lo family's experience is a story of how spiritual formation of one's children can and ought to be prioritised while considering each child's unique needs and profiles, exemplifying Deuteronomy 6:6-7 - "and these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

In spite of this, Hing Loon and Gwen understand that their journey of family discipleship is far from over. As their children grow older, new sets of difficulties and needs emerge. The couple recommends that parents remain observant and curious about their children's struggles, and investigate persistent issues that they do not seem to outgrow. But ultimately, Gwen quips, "we take each stage as it comes". It helps that this journey was not, and is not, walked alone. The couple continue to constantly pray for each other, particularly that they will be united as parents in handling the kids. Their cell has also been a valuable source of support, with like-

minded parents praying together and sharing ways to cope.

Even as they work on laying a firm foundation for their children's spiritual journey, it is clear that parenthood has nurtured in Hing Loon and Gwen extra portions of patience and love. It is their prayer that this journey of discipleship will continue to yield spiritual fruit in abundance - an overflow which blesses the community beyond their family.

**"Rather than a Sunday one-and-done, the family purposefully manifests Christian living through daily consecration in the little things."**

*Hing Loon and Gwen have been married for 18 years and are regular attendees at E1. Hing Loon serves as the Before and After School Care (BASC) management chairman, while Gwen is part of the SJSM Nursing Home management committee. Their three children Josher, Eleos and Shawna attend Heartbeat and Teen Encounter.*

## Discipling Generations: A Two-Way Street

John Cheong and Tricia Kuan

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Some of us might feel like we are running the gauntlet of life's challenges. As we struggle to stay afloat in an ever-changing world, we're so preoccupied with getting to the finish line that we neglect what should be one of our bigger priorities during our time on earth – standing firm in our faith.

**"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."**

- 2 Timothy 4:7

Paul's proclamation in 2 Timothy is one that not many can lay claim to with confidence. But there's something that makes the task of keeping the faith far easier, and it lies in a concept we are no strangers to – intergenerational discipleship.

As the body of Christ, we are responsible for shaping a nurturing community, so that we can come before the Lord knowing we have accomplished all we have been called to do in good faith.

Mentorship is one way SJSM's multi-

generational community has been able to foster thriving relationships. Seasons of Life speaks to two mentor-mentee pairs about their journeys together.

### Connecting with each other

When Lee Shi Pian, 21, first stepped up to head the youth's music ministry, she jumped at the chance to have a mentor who could guide her through the new challenges at hand.

She met Lau Ming Li, a former member of the music ministry core team, who told SOL that her eagerness to become a mentor stemmed from her own desire to be mentored as she grappled with living out her Christian identity over the years.

It's been a year since Shi Pian and Ming Li were first introduced, and their mentorship journey has been going strong, even with an age gap of nearly two decades.

Meanwhile, Joshua Zhang, 23, and Simon Bogut, 58, have been journeying together for the past three years.

Unlike Shi Pian and Ming Li, who were introduced through Pastor Allen Lim, Joshua and Simon connected through a mentorship initiative run by Fellowship – a group formed by the youth ministry to help male teenagers grow in the faith together.

### **Bridging the gap between generations**

Despite his initial hesitancy to mentor youths due to his age, Simon felt prompted by the Lord to give it a go.

He and Joshua met every two to three months to eat at coffee shops, trek long distances or simply sit and share about their lives. During these meetings, they prioritised listening and praying for each other, said Simon.

Although they now see each other less frequently due to their schedules and Joshua's national service, they make up for it through texts and calls.

Being able to exchange thanksgivings is something Joshua always looks forward to, as it shows how God is actively working in both of them, he said.

Shi Pian and Ming Li started by meeting once a month over meals. Beyond discussing the ups and downs in Shi Pian's role as a ministry head, they also delve into other aspects of life such as family and studies.

It's important to be intentional in a mentorship, said Ming Li, adding that she previously "failed" at mentoring

other women due to a lack of time set aside to meet regularly.



"When it's reached a certain stage of familiarity and trust, the frequency that you meet can be more flexible... but sometimes schedules are just really difficult to sync, so do what works for both of you," she said.

After becoming more familiar with each other, Ming Li and Shi Pian were able to meet less frequently and still maintain a steady relationship.

When they can't meet, they send messages to each other with questions, prayer requests and updates about their lives.

Shi Pian said that being mentored by someone from a different life stage was not as large a barrier as she initially thought it would be. In fact, it was a blessing in disguise.

"I treasure having someone with much more experience and knowledge than



me, and who values who I am and what I have to say. When she shares or responds to me, it's thoughtful too, so I know she's present."

"That makes me feel safe, and it's created a solid base for our mentorship," Shi Pian added.

For Simon, mentoring Joshua has been a great source of encouragement and motivation.

"What I really appreciate and thank God for is Joshua's authenticity and willingness to share about his life... I too have learnt from him, and I can clearly see the Lord's guiding hand in all of this," Simon shared.

Although bonding with an older mentor was challenging at first, Joshua felt they were still able to understand each other as God was in the center of their relationship.

### **What mentorships bring to the table**

Besides connecting on a spiritual level, receiving rich insights and advice from somebody who has gone through life's valleys is something Joshua has benefitted from.

"Simon has influenced me to give thanks to God more, surrender and acknowledge Him in everything I do, and show humility and encourage the people around me," he said.

Shi Pian said an intergenerational

mentorship allowed her to learn from someone who had not only seen and served more than she had but could also challenge and keep her accountable.

Ming Li consistently points her back to God in every conversation, and greatly contributed to the stability she felt during her first year in her new role, said Shi Pian.

However, she added that while intergenerational mentorships are invaluable, they are not necessarily essential for everyone. Knowing the purpose of a mentorship can help one determine who to seek out as a mentor.

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### **Being open and building trust**

Intergenerational discipleship allows compassion, understanding and love to flow between both parties, said Ming Li.

"It can go a long way towards avoiding and mediating misunderstandings or conflicts between generations. The Church stands more united and God

is glorified," Ming Li said.

Mentorship doesn't have to be complicated or structured either, said Shi Pian. In her experiences of being mentored by Ming Li and mentoring another youth, she found that what matters most is commitment, vulnerability and humility.

Simon encourages new mentors to build trust with those whom they are discipling. It is crucial to be open, humble and non-judgmental, he said.

Likewise, Joshua advises youths to remember that mentors come from a place of love and care, and they should be open to accepting rebukes and corrections from their mentors.

He added: "It's a dynamic relationship, so it's not about one side receiving and the other always giving. At the end of the day, both sides should spur each other on towards living a life that honours God's word."





## We're Always a Work in Progress

Annabelle Ang-Bok

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*The Marriage Enrichment Retreat (MER) is a valuable pit stop in the couple's journey of lifelong sanctification. Because our memories are faulty, our devotion inconsistent, and our motivations questionable.*

Daniel (44) and I (40) have been married for 14 years. We met in 2004 while serving in the same worship band in our church youth/young adults ministry, and since 2018 we have been serving together in SJSM. Our daughter, who turns eight this year, takes drum lessons and talks frequently about serving in church as a family some day. So it may seem odd that we were almost desperate to find childcare arrangements just so we could attend the MER from 4 to 5 November 2022.

### **The Reality of Fallenness**

Don't get me wrong, it wasn't because our marriage was on the rocks. We're mostly happy, but we have a tendency to try to 'forgive and forget' (at least on the surface, because that's the right thing to do), and 'just move on'

from the moment, instead of tackling the root causes of our conflicts. We haven't perfected the art of couples communication. And we're dealing with the daily realities of life (e.g. work, parenting, in-laws), just like plenty of other married couples — the vast majority of the November 2022 MER participants were SJSMers who have been married for 20 to 30 years.

Before Daniel and I said 'I do', we'd completed a marriage preparation course and a round of pre-marital counselling, done a bunch of reading on the spirituality of marriage, received some personal insights on the topic, and tabulated personal observations and analyses of married couples in our families and social spheres. We'd factored our wildly different personalities, preferences, and skill sets into a mutually agreeable decision-making protocol that took into consideration the various things we'd learnt over our four-year pre-wedding-day relationship. Having met in worship ministry, and having served together (as well as with others) over a significant period with him in a

leadership role, we were pretty sure that we were set for success. We had (okay, I had) this idea that we would be an example to others of what 'a good Christian marriage' looks like.

As it turns out, we sin daily, 'in thought, and word, and deed; through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault'. It has been in marriage that we have felt the most misunderstood, unheard, and unappreciated... and also been our most selfish, dismissive, and entitled. Psychologists have theorised that most marriages experience a decline in satisfaction (sometimes leading to divorce) at around the four-to-five year mark. In 2012, when a childhood friend at whose wedding I sang in 2008 announced that she was divorcing her college sweetheart, it hit me that a lot of us aren't really doing this marriage thing properly, despite our best intentions.

### **The "Saving Pause"**

There's a reason clichés become clichés — they're **true**. You know what I'm talking about: *Love is a verb, not a noun. We marry the one we love, but we must choose to love the one we marry. Marriage should be a contest of generosity and a union of two good forgivers. Your spouse is not your source, God is.*

The words roll off our tongues, but how many of us consciously apply them in real life? For those of us who do try, how consistent and persistent are we?

And if we've encountered practical challenges in our attempts, how successful are we at overcoming them? Do we even have time to step back from the everyday grind, take a breath, and look at our issues from just a little bit of distance, with the vantage of restedness and prayer?

One of the things that MER 2022 speaker Revd Chris Chia exhorted us to leverage was the 'saving pause', inspired in part by Proverbs 10:19.

Basically, intentionally pause before reacting. It doesn't matter if it takes a moment or much longer to formulate a response, because the pause ensures that it is a response and not a reaction.

This concept applies to much more than just handling marital spats: observing the Sabbath is a saving pause in work and ministry; making time to attend an MER or a Marriage Breakthrough Weekend (MBW) is a saving pause in the seemingly endless marathon of marriage and parenthood.

Need proof? About 30 percent of the MER's post-event feedback survey respondents highlighted how they were reminded of various truths and insights that they had forgotten or neglected, and had been refreshed through the teaching and sharing. Over 40 percent pointed to how the break in their standard routine and the refocusing on God's plan for marriage was beneficial to their relationship. Roughly 25 percent indicated that



their couplehood was ‘renewed’ and ‘enriched’, including their experience in different areas of intimacy. More than 60 percent expressed heartfelt appreciation for the fact that the very personal, practical, and even raw sharing was firmly grounded in the Word, and theologically sound.

**“Basically, intentionally pause before reacting. It doesn’t matter if it takes a moment or much longer to formulate a response, because the pause ensures that it is a response and not a reaction.”**

### **“Theology Controls Methodology”**

While Julia (31) and Guan Yu (32) were the 2022 MER’s youngest attendees (their wedding was on 4 May 2019),

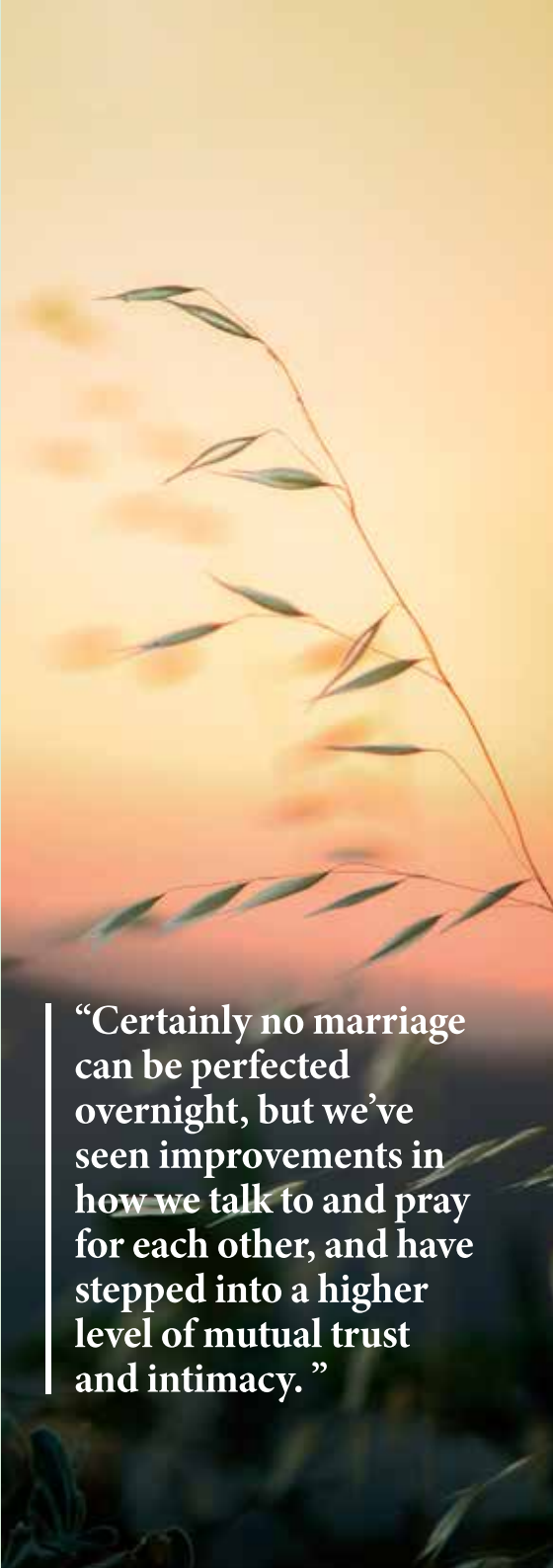
their decision to attend was influenced by sober facts based on social trends and statistics, and impending need. “Marriage is really under attack by the devil, and we need to identify his efforts and prevent them from gaining any ground,” Guan Yu explains. “We simply wanted to equip ourselves as a couple for what is to come.” This, in fact, is quite critical in their instance, as they are preparing to enter the mission field in the near future. Out there, there will be times when all they have is God and each other.

The conviction and passion of the planning team was also evident, not just in the execution of the programme, but in the resulting experiences that the participants came away with. “I’ve got to confess, that being the young bubbly girl that I am, I was initially worried about and dreading having to go through workshop after workshop with much older people. On the morning of 4 November, we were dragging our feet to make it to the venue,” Julia says. “But

oh man, it was SO FUN! The presence of God was real, Ps Chris was so genuine and vulnerable with us, and we really enjoyed the games. The experience FAR EXCEEDED our expectations. Whether you are young or old or have been married for a short or long time, it doesn't matter — God speaks to each couple individually for His glory. You won't regret it."

Julia and Guan Yu cited Revd Chris' teaching on 'holiness, not happiness' and 'being givers, not beggars' as being among their top takeaways from the retreat; coincidentally, these were among Daniel's and mine as well. Certainly no marriage can be perfected overnight, but we've seen improvements in how we talk to and pray for each other, and have stepped into a higher level of mutual trust and intimacy.

We were particularly taken by the insights and practical tips shared on how to identify and cast down inadvertent idols... hang on, enough spoilers. If you want to find out more, you know what to do: attend the next MER! See you there!



"Certainly no marriage can be perfected overnight, but we've seen improvements in how we talk to and pray for each other, and have stepped into a higher level of mutual trust and intimacy."

## Faith at Work

Prisca Ang



We are called to take up our cross and follow Jesus. But what does this look like for those of us at the workplace who are asked to meet secular demands and face challenges to our faith? Despite these obstacles, we know that work is a gift from God that we need to carry out honestly and well (Ephesians 4:28), and we should also glorify Him through it (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Two young adults share with Seasons of Life their journeys of living out their faith at work.

### Seeking God's wisdom

Grace Wong, 30

I have been working for six to seven years in the civil service, in various Ministries such as the Ministry of Health and Culture, Community and Youth. There have been instances when I had to work on policies that indirectly contradicted or stood in direct opposition to my faith.

There is always a tension between my duty as a civil servant to report

findings accurately, and my identity as a Christian to make a stand based on biblical principles. I've had to seek the Lord for wisdom when there are irreconcilable differences between these two areas.

What I have learned is that the Lord often grants wisdom not with direct answers, but with the reminder to prioritise the fruits of the Spirit – gentleness, self-control, compassion, and love, for example, when dealing with these issues. Guided by the Spirit, I could use these situations to have mature dialogues with colleagues who held diametrically different views or preconceived notions about biblical instructions on these issues.

More often than not, these situations remind me of how finite my own perspectives are. God has often shown that He is able to accomplish holier and grander purposes in my life. For instance, while I dread working on controversial policies, I've had the opportunity to discover engagement tools used by other countries to help facilitate national debates on

contentious issues. These tools have also been useful in my own personal life, when I had to resolve conflicts or mediate arguments.

I'm always encouraged by the story of Queen Esther, who was called to be bold and courageous for "such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). God always has a purpose for where He puts us. And guided by His wisdom, we are invited to partner Him in accomplishing His purposes. We need only to be obedient.

*Grace attends SES and leads a cell of adults in their late 20s and early 30s. She enjoys travelling to new places and cuddling with fluffy dogs.*

## **Speaking of His righteousness**

*Tristen Kian, 26*

Every 18-year-old youth needs to undergo the rite of passage of national service in Singapore, and I was no exception. After my tertiary education, I enlisted in 2016 into basic military training, and thereafter, completed the Officer Cadet Course in the Armour Training Institute.

After commissioning as an officer in 2017, I became a platoon commander and was responsible for nearly 30 individuals' soldiering fundamentals and training safety. Back then, I did not know God, nor did I know what being a good leader entailed.

All I knew were experiences from my trainee days, where my instructors not only used profanities in their

teaching and disciplining of cadets, but also loosely in their daily conversations. These memories were etched on my mind and I thought that littering my sentences with vulgarities and talking furiously were the correct means to "discipline and nurture" soldiers under my lead.

I continued serving in that unit until 2018 before accepting a scholarship from the Army to further my studies. By God's grace and mercy, He revealed Himself to me in 2019, and I accepted Him as my Lord and Saviour ever since. One night, as I was praying to Him before my final academic paper, the Lord deposited this verse into my heart:

**"Then my tongue shall tell  
of Your righteousness,  
and of Your praise all the  
day long"**

- Psalm 35:28

I was taken aback when I received this verse. What was the Lord trying to say? How would He use my tongue to speak of His righteousness?

As I pondered these questions, God revealed His will to me and I learnt that speaking of God's righteousness is made possible through the cleansing and atoning work of Jesus Christ. As His image bearer, God desires that I speak and act in a manner that emulates His holiness, one that is slow to anger and abounding in love. After graduating in May 2022, I returned to the Army to serve as an instructor to nurture and train the



next batch of leaders. I experienced a complete culture shock when I returned. The careless use of profanities in daily interaction and training – a norm to me in the past – now became uncomfortable and unsettling.

I witnessed numerous instances where my colleagues made unnecessary remarks to shame cadets for their mistakes instead of correcting them constructively. It was undeniably tough to be in such an environment, and it was even tougher to be the only believer among my peers.

How can I make a difference here being the only follower of Christ? How do I instruct in a way that builds my cadets up to be mature soldiers, while disciplining them in a way that pleases and glorifies God?

God was present in my struggles. I constantly drew strength from Him and put on His armour so I could take my stand against the devil's schemes. By His grace, I worked towards presenting myself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth, and avoiding irreverent babble (2 Timothy 2:15-16a).

Whenever I had to discipline the cadets, I would gently nudge them while being mindful to keep my tongue and actions away from evil. The servanthood of Jesus' leadership (Matthew 20:28 – "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve") inspired me to likewise

approach my duties at work with a servant's heart. Of course, my actions raised eyebrows from some of my colleagues, but I continued standing firm in the Lord who enabled me not to be swayed or distracted by others' opinions.

I recall an occasion when my cadet, who was a Christian, used our Lord Jesus' name in vain when he was addressing his fellow platoon mates. I was very troubled by this and prayed to the Lord for wisdom on how to respond to the situation. Subsequently, God provided the opportunity for me to raise the matter to the cadet individually, and thank God he was receptive and I did not hear him misusing the name of our Lord again.

Even though I am still seeking God's will in my vocation, I choose to be faithful to His calling in my current season as an instructor as I know He is always here with me. God uses every opportunity to refine my faith as I learn to trust Him in every circumstance, He chooses to place me in. As I reflect on my journey thus far in the Army, I praise and thank God for His sovereign guidance, and how He has used me and will continue to use me for His glory.

*Tristen attends SES with his wife. They are currently serving in the hospitality ministry. They enjoy worshiping God in their nature and sunset walks, exercising and cooking together.*

## Show and Tell

Yeo Hem Joo

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To most, if not all, Christian parents, there is no legacy like passing on our faith and biblical values to the next generation, no joy and comfort like seeing your children grow to become true disciples of Christ.

More than ever before, parents need to be invested in their children growing up to know and love the Lord. Reports of Gen Zs (ages 11-26 in 2022) dropping out of church at a significant rate should make us sit up. It should be of great concern that more and more second and third-generation Christians are losing their faith. There's also the worrying upward trend of young people struggling with mental health issues, and their lack of resilience in coping with failures, disappointments, and the stresses of life.

We live in a complex world: there are many voices vying for our children's attention, voices eager to shape their thinking, inform their beliefs. More often than not, these voices contravene God's truths. Take for example, one of the most common falsely uplifting

messages I see on social media: "you are enough" or "love yourself". It is an egocentric and idolatrous notion that we who are created by God are **enough** ie. self-sufficient and worthy apart from God.

Hence, if parents are not careful, our children will buy into these lies and be thoroughly confused about their self-identity and purpose in life or be sucked into a hedonistic and materialistic world. Indeed, one of the most painful things for Christian parents is to see their child abandoning the faith and choosing to live life without God.

But how do parents ensure a legacy of sincere faith? How do we raise our children to enjoy a living relationship with God? How do we - works in progress ourselves, inspire our young ones to follow Christ wholeheartedly? It is the objective of this article to attempt an answer by turning our attention directly to the Bible. Deuteronomy 6, which is a restatement and elaboration of God's commandments to His chosen people,





Israel, suggests a few broad biblical principles for God-centred parenting.

**“Indeed, one of the most painful things for Christian parents is to see their child abandoning the faith and choosing to live life without God.”**

### **1. Model with authenticity**

*“Fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son’s son... by keeping all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you...” (v2)*

*“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” (v5)*

All generations are instructed to fear and revere God by obeying God’s commandments, to love Him above all. Before we can expect our children and our children’s children to obey the Lord, we ourselves must set that example, by walking the talk. Fundamentally, we need to examine our own relationships with God. At home, do our lives demonstrate a visible love, devotion, and obedience to God? Do our everyday decisions, conversations, and attitudes reflect God’s values? Are we authentic believers, on the inside and outside?

I remember one incident where a teenager I know called her father a hypocrite for telling her off for excessive use of her mobile phone when she saw him using the phone first thing in the morning – for non-work-related purposes!

This point cannot be overemphasised. Children detect duplicity easily so we parents need to humbly ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts, and quicken our consciences so that we are found to be true disciples of Christ. A living relationship with God naturally impacts our daily lives as well as interactions with our children.



An SJSM member, Lily Phoon, shares how she and her husband emphasised godly values to their two girls by being careful to abide by them; the girls were punished for dishonesty but when they admitted to it, they were affirmed. By owning up to their own failings and mistakes, the parents encouraged their daughters to do the same, with

the assurance of forgiveness. In the area of service, they often involved their children: going on mission trips together, journeying with people in need, participating and serving in church events.

Now adults, the children now follow in their parents' footsteps— leading cell groups and mentoring younger people.

## **2. Teach with intentionality**

*"Teach them diligently to your children..." (v7a)*

Are we guilty of outsourcing the teaching of God's word to Sunday School? Understandably, many working parents have busy schedules and are hard pressed to find time even for regular mealtimes with their children. However, there is no skirting around this responsibility. God's words "shall be on [our] heart[s]" so that we impart, talk, and think about them constantly (v6&7). In reality, no one can teach what he or she does not know.

**If we do not read the Bible ourselves or know it well enough, how can we**

**sow seeds of truth in our children?**

"Diligently" also connotes conscientiousness and intentionality in teaching the ways of the Lord.

Lily shared that the family made use of opportunities like the daily drive to school to have short devotions and prayers; the girls hated it at times but now, they look back on those times fondly as their faith did grow then and they actually miss it! The lesson to learn here is not to give up when it becomes a drudgery – also, let's be creative in our teaching methods.

Besides encouraging children to have their Quiet Time with the Lord with age-appropriate devotionals, Lily added that taking the time to communicate, to listen to one another's day's happenings during car rides, mealtimes, playtimes, walks, etc. will bring about many teaching moments where parents inculcate right values and encourage a biblical worldview.

## **3. Answer with understanding**

*"When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of ...?'*

*then you shall say to your son..." (v20)*

A good grasp of Scripture through regular reading and study will enable parents to give clear biblical answers or explanations to questions that the young ones may have in their faith journey, e.g. How to know that God is real? Why did God make hell? Evolution vs Creation theory, etc.



Once, while in school, my son read about Florence Nightingale and asked me if all good people go to heaven. It was a chance to share about salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. **Sincere questions raised by the young ought to be answered thoughtfully, and not dismissed with a careless response like "just believe", or "do it because it's in the Bible".**

There will be difficult questions that stump us (e.g. Do dinosaurs disprove the Bible?) but turn them into opportunities for both parent and child to search for an answer and grow in knowledge and faith together.

**"Sincere questions raised by the young ought to be answered thoughtfully, and not dismissed with a careless response like "just believe", or "do it because it's in the Bible"**

#### **4. It takes a village**

Finally, it is good to note that the commandments in Deuteronomy 6 were given to God's chosen **people**, not one chosen **individual**. In the present context, we live out God's truths as the church, a family of believers. The implication is that, **we cannot raise our young effectively alone; we need one another.**

I was inspired when Lily shared with me how a school-based prayer group that she joined when her older girl was 11, is still going strong almost 20 years later! The group meets monthly to pray for their children, having seen their children's lives moulded and transformed through the different seasons of their lives – it is what keeps them going.

Be part of a larger community of like-minded believers – cell groups, ministry groups, prayer groups, etc., who will encourage us in our own walk and hold us accountable in our faith journey. It will motivate us towards a biblical

style of parenting – to **show and tell** our children how to be faithful followers of Christ.

*“Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!” (Deut 5:29)*



5 Things About:

## **Ps Kim Yien**

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### **Conversion by Grace through Faith**

Kim Yien grew up in the little seaside town of Port Dickson in Malaysia, where she lived till she was 18 years old. Born into a family of 5 children, Kim Yien's parents were not believers until much later, even though her paternal grandfather had come to know Christ in the 1930s through Dr John Sung, a Chinese missionary. Although her parents did not follow him into the Christian faith, God's grace shone through the faithful action of Christian neighbours and teachers who brought Kim Yien to church with them.

Her memories of childhood were that of growing up in Sunday School, and hanging out with the youth in church.

At age 13, Kim Yien made the life-changing decision to follow Christ at a youth camp, where God gave her the gift of faith to put her trust wholly in Jesus. With the imperishable seeds of spiritual life planted in her, getting involved in church, serving and

leading small groups became part and parcel of her growing-up years. [Afternote: by God's faithfulness, Kim Yien's parents came to Christ in their 60s and 70s. Praise the Lord!]

### **Calling To Christ and Him Alone**

When she was 16, Kim Yien heard a message at a Campus Crusade camp which inspired her to think seriously about serving God, especially in the area of evangelism. The conviction was clearly imprinted in her heart and mind – there is nothing more important than saving the lost. Kim Yien told God of her desire to serve Him full-time. Two years later, by God's provision, she had the opportunity to attend a mission camp organized by Operation Mobilisation. There, she met full-time missionary workers who spoke of distributing bibles in Pakistan to many who were just hungry for the word of God. On the spot, she responded to an altar call to be involved in overseas missions work. An opportunity eventually came in 1997 when Bishop Pastor Rennis spoke about looking for a full-time mission



administrator to support the work of SJSM's missions' endeavours. At that point, she had been deliberating staying at her job so that she could contribute financially to God's kingdom. Having prayed over it for a year, God's message came to her clearly, "It's not your money but your time and energy that I want." Kim Yien decided to obey God and stepped into full-time ministry, which led her to serve in Korat, Thailand, for ten years. It was hard and trying at times; yet she felt strongly that it was exactly where God wanted her to be.

### **Change and Callback**

In 2014, Kim Yien received an unexpected call to return to Singapore after being in the mission's field for a decade. Just as God had been very clear in calling her to go, the call to return was as evident, although unexpected. Kim Yien felt the Lord

guiding her through dreams and visions, followed by various confirmations. The lessons she took to heart were that "if God can call us out, He can surely call us back" and "Home is not where you are geographically, but being right at the centre of God's will for you".

Back in SJSM, Kim Yien was called to serve in the hospitality ministry. She gleaned some precious lessons from her quiet moments with the Lord:

- Whether out there in the foreign missions field or right here in Singapore, we are called to do good works (Eph 2:10), serving God, ministering to people and touching lives.
- The value of a soul is the same, anywhere and everywhere.
- To keep following Christ wherever He leads.
- Always be faithful to whatever God puts in our hands to do for Him.





- We must not box God into our understanding of things. God is limitless, and boundless in what he chooses to do.
- In a term used by Henson Lim (Alignment Check), SJSJ is her current Area of Operation and mission field.

She is thankful to God for those who have been led to Christ through the hospitality ministry, which has been reaching out to new comers, connecting with them, and plugging them into the life of the church via Alpha, cell groups or various ministries.

**“Home is not where you are geographically, but being right at the centre of God’s will for you.”**

### **Challenges Encountered**

When asked about the challenges of ministry she encounters, Kim Yien was honest: “This is a ministry that completely depends on people. People come with their expectations, and sometimes, that can be challenging and demanding. As an introvert, it can be emotionally draining for me to be mingling with people all the time. Thankfully God’s grace is more than sufficient for all my needs!”

### **Ministry Joys**

As the hospitality ministry is heavily dependent on the contribution of volunteers, Kim Yien is thankful for the more than 100 people who are serving in the host team. They have been generous in the giving of their time, treasures and talents; welcoming, befriending, ushering, baking, serving meals and refreshments. She is greatly

encouraged to see newcomers return to SJSM, and ultimately assimilate into the community of believers here.

*Kim Yien is the connecting point for SJSM's "ground up" initiatives, as she seeks to point members to the right channels and make the connections for what God may want to do in SJSM through His people.*

**"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters...**

**It is the Lord Christ you are serving."**

- Colossians 3:23-24





LESSONS IN LIFE:

## **It must have been God...**

Yeo Hem Joo

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My mother and I were tucking into her favourite steamed sponge cake at Tim Ho Wan one afternoon when she suddenly mentioned that something had happened recently, but she would tell me all about it only when it was over. I looked at her suspiciously – it was quite out of character as she usually could not wait to share all the goings-on in her daily life.

We had met earlier to go to the bank together to handle some banking matters. The queue was long, so we had afternoon tea before rejoining it. Once it was completed, we returned to her house. However, there was this niggling sense of something amiss, so I pressed her to tell me what had happened recently.

There was some initial hesitation but soon the story spilled out. A month ago, my mother, at 79, caught the Covid-19 virus. Thankfully, the symptoms were mild, and she was allowed to recover at home. She was told a Ministry of Health (MOH) officer would call to check on her. Unfortunately, the call that came a few days later turned out

to be from someone pretending to be an MOH staff. She did not suspect anything (she later blamed it on brain fog) and got a fright when told that she was implicated in a major money laundering scheme and so, a police officer was present beside this MOH staff, ready to question her.

This began a month-long ruse where two fake police officers took turns to call her regularly to update her on the criminal case investigations, share bogus reports, show concern for her health and to warn her repeatedly not to share it with anyone – not even her family members – as the case was very serious. My poor mother fell for it, hook, line and sinker. One of them even sent her a photo of himself dressed in uniform and flashing a badge – when I took a look at it later, it read ‘Interpol’. She was also instructed to ‘report’ to an officer via WhatsApp daily.

Then came the day when they explained that the case had been solved and she would receive monetary compensation for the undue distress she experienced. She declined but after they insisted, she



revealed her bank account number for the supposed transfer to take place. Some days later, she was persuaded to disclose her ATM PIN too.

However, she began to feel uneasy; for the next 8 days in a row, she went to the nearby ATM to withdraw some money and to check on her account balance. Although everything seemed in order, she decided to ask me to accompany her to a nearby bank without divulging the real reason behind it.

Hearing this, I immediately brought her to a police post to lodge a report. In the process, I found out with horror that my mother had already helped the scammers to create a digital token. There was actually nothing to stop them from siphoning off all her life savings! I quickly called the bank to suspend all online transactions.

"This is really a very elaborate scheme," the officer remarked after

taking down the full statement.

There have been so many news reports of people losing large sums of money to phone scammers; yet, strangely and amazingly, my mother did not lose a single cent!

We concluded that it must have been God who protected her with special grace. She was a two-month-old believer at that time and this incident bolstered her fledgling faith.

And she has learnt her lesson: she doesn't pick up unknown calls anymore!

Youth Speak

## Youth Camp 2022: New Life

Compiled by John Cheong and  
Testimony by Rachael Kwan

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### The return of Heartbeat Youth Camp

For a long time, youth camp has been an annual, keenly-anticipated highlight for many Heartbeat congregants. Heartbeat Youth Camp brings to mind an unhurried time of worship, new friendships forged and the unique joy of experiencing God's presence. As such, the past few years without it have felt rather incomplete. While Covid-19 safety measures began to be eased in early 2022, there were still lingering doubts regarding the Covid-19 situation come December. Nonetheless, the Heartbeat leadership moved in faith and wisdom, and appointed Shenn Tan as the camp commandant in April.

When camp planning first began, there was no camp theme, no camp speaker and no camp site settled upon. A prayer meeting seemed like the best place to start. Meeting at youth pastor Richard Kwan's house, Shenn gathered with Julia (Heartbeat core team member), Emma (assistant camp commandant) and John (camp advisor)

to pray for direction and alignment. In the middle of praying, Julia received a phone call from Majodi Centre (a campsite in Johor Bahru where many previous Heartbeat youth camps have been held), informing her that they were open for Singapore camps. As the Malaysian borders had just opened up at that point in time, the team could not bring themselves to be anything more than hopeful. Yet, 8 months on, Heartbeat found itself crossing the causeway enroute to Majodi Centre for camp.

Over the 8 months of preparation, God provided an incredible team of individuals to serve as camp committee members. He also directed Shenn and his team to approach Jemima Ooi to speak at the camp. In the months leading up to the camp, Heartbeat responded with approximately 170 sign-ups.

### What does a "New Life" look like?

2022's camp theme was "New Life". It aimed to capture the

transformational work of Christ in our lives once we let Him in. As the anchoring camp verse declares, “Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert” (Isaiah 34:19).

The camp speaker, Jemima, is a familiar friend to Heartbeat, having last spoken at 2017’s Heartbeat Youth Camp. When the camp committee first shared the theme with her, she was incredibly excited, citing that she had recently finished a water project with the exact same theme passage. Even in the lead up to camp, God was evidently providing and putting the pieces together.

Jemima’s teachings brought us back to the basics - she spoke on who God is, how we might perceive Him as our Father, and the different ways He might speak to us. Her sessions were impactful.

**“Even in the lead up to camp, God was evidently providing and putting the pieces together.”**

She painted a clear image of how present God can be in our everyday lives, inspiring Heartbeat to make space for a deeper relationship with God. She also encouraged us to practice hearing from the Lord. During these “listening exercises”, Jemima gave us handles to discern the Lord’s

voice, such as asking God for descriptions of ourselves and impressions for a friend we partnered with. It was particularly encouraging to hear campers share about what they had received from God, and to see how the words they received resonated with those around them.

## **Strengthening the Community**

Heartbeat Youth Camp provides a unique space for community building. New friendships within the groups are strengthened by the fires of inter-group games and conversations group meals. The mixing of age groups allows individuals to learn and serve in their own capacity. For the younger campers, the older youths serve as role models and front-runners who can shed light on the Christian journey. For the older youths, being among the younger ones challenges them to appreciate the fundamental foundations of our faith once again.

At camp, campers also have the opportunities to deepen and refresh the existing relationships they have forged in the community over the years. The unhurried pace in Majodi allows for meaningful conversations to be shared, enabling campers to reflect and be vulnerable with each other. Through these conversations, we gain a better understanding of the joys and struggles that the community around us faces.

Through the 4 days in camp, many mentor-mentee relationships began.



Youth camp is where individuals often find themselves called to serve the wider church, be it in a ministry or as a cell leader. This was certainly my experience when I first received my call to cell leading during 2018's Heartbeat Youth Camp. My experience at that camp eventually led me to speak with a batch cluster leader, who plugged me into a youth cell as a cell leader.

### **Personal Testimony**

Emerging from my 2022 camp experience, I found myself feeling renewed and refreshed. In the months leading up to camp, I had a serious leg injury that put me in crutches for 3 months. During that period, I was also dealing with a packed schedule, working part-time while finishing my university semester. Amid my busyness, I had withdrawn from church. With camp less than a month away, I was unsure if I was even able to attend it because of my leg injury. However, owing to the

encouragement of my friends and a longing to reconnect with the community, I took my chances and signed up as a camper.

One of my personal hopes while signing up for the camp was to have the space and time to seek God, to see Him move and receive from Him. Surely enough over those 4 days, God encouraged my heart by speaking to me and those around me. Through the time spent in camp, I was reminded of how my presence was missed within the community and just how much people cared for me, which was heartening especially after having gone through a tough few months of surgery recovery.

For a few years, I had been carrying a heaviness towards the Heartbeat community due to past experiences. I had come to accept that as status quo for some time, but God nudged me towards grace and steered me to have healing and reconciliatory



conversations. I believe this extraordinary kind of healing and reconciliation could have only happened in a context like youth camp.

## Closing

Overall, Heartbeat Youth Camp 2022 has been a great time of experiencing God's goodness and being inspired to do more to grow the community. I was also inspired by the courage and fire of the younger campers, and I am excited to see how God will grow and mold them into a new generation of Heartbeat leaders. Of course, camp would not have been possible without the camp committee, SJSM staff and adults who gave of themselves to serve the campers. Their efforts, prayers and presence, whether seen or unseen, has been such a blessing to every

individual in Heartbeat.

As 2023 starts, I pray that we at Heartbeat will move from inspiration to action, especially with the first half of the year being centred around the "Missions" theme. May the work that God has ignited in many of us, come to fruition as the year goes on.

*Rachael is 23 and currently finishing her final year in NUS, after which she will begin working in July. In her free time, she is rehabilitating her leg to return to full strength and ambitiously crocheting a cardigan for herself.*



FROM THE WORD:

## The Discipleship Journey: A Biblical Survey

Archdeacon Wong Tak Meng



Many of us have heard the word *discipleship* used in our Christian life, but we may each have a different idea of what it means. In this article, let us walk through the New Testament to see how Jesus disciplined the Twelve Apostles and others, and what discipleship means for us today.

### The word *Disciple*

The word *disciple* (Greek “mathetes” which means “student” or “follower”) occurred 268 times in the New Testament throughout the Four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

By comparison, the word *Christian* (Greek “Christianos” meaning “of Christ”), occurred only once in Acts 11:26. We can conclude that everyone who followed Christ (i.e., every Christian) is a disciple at different stages of growth.

From the Gospels, we can see four distinct stages where people became more and more committed as Jesus’ disciples.

### “Come and See” (The Seed Stage)

We see this happening in John 1:35-42 when John, Andrew and Simon Peter first met Jesus. From his invitation “Come and you will see.” (John 1:39), their friendship with Him grew. Philip also met Jesus, and told his friend Nathaniel that he was the Promised One. Nathaniel was skeptical at first, but once he encountered Jesus himself, he immediately acknowledged him as the Son of God (John 1:43-51). As these disciples spent time with Jesus, seeing His miracles and hearing His teaching, they believed in him. (John 2:11). Likewise, the Samaritan woman and her fellow townspeople, encountered Jesus and believed “this is indeed the Saviour of the world.” (John 4:29, 39-42).

**So, the “Come and see” stage is when a disciple first meets Jesus, and after experiencing Him, believes that He is the Son of God.**

In the SJSM Discipleship Journey, we call this the **Seed Stage**, where

the seeds of the Gospel of Christ are sown in our hearts. It may happen through an Alpha Course, through chapel or weekend services, through conversations with another disciple, or through someone helping us in a crisis, that led to us putting our faith in Christ.



### **“Come, follow me” (The Rooting Stage)**

Jesus baptized his disciples as a public sign of their faith (John 3:22-29). In Matt 4:18-22, He called Andrew, Peter, James and John to “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”. They followed Jesus as he taught in the synagogues, proclaimed the gospel (good news) of the kingdom of God, healed the sick and set free the oppressed.

Jesus was forming His disciples into a community, citizens of the Kingdom of God with a counter-cultural worldview and value system. He gave them a vision to be “the light of the world” and called them to “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matt 5:14-16). He taught them to pray, to fast,

to give and to forgive, not to show off, but to please God (Matt 5:1-7:29 The Sermon on the Mount).

**So, the “Come, follow me” stage is where a disciple is grounded in faith and develops the values, commitment and lifestyle of a lifelong member of the Body of Christ.**

In the SJSJ Discipleship Journey, we call this the **Rooting Stage** where we help one another as disciples to develop strong foundations of faith, consisting of:

- Knowing the Bible as the Word of God (Word),
- Walking closely with the Spirit of God (Spirit),
- Sharing life with the people of God (Community),
- Serving one another in the love of God (Ministry), and
- Sharing our testimony as a witness for Christ (Mission).

We call these aspects of faith the **Five Facets of Discipleship**. They nourish and give meaning to our lives holistically as disciples. As we grow deeper in them, we can lead and mentor newer disciples to grow in each facet.

The Rooting Stage in SJSJ takes place in the Faith Foundations Course and Confirmation Course, in cell groups, as well as other refresher courses that deepen our foundations from time to time.



### **“Be with me” (The Fruiting Stage)**

Next, Jesus “appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might **be with him** and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons” (Mark 3:14-15, Luke 9:1-6).

The Twelve entered the **“Be with me”** stage of discipleship, where they went to the villages ahead of Him to preach and heal like He did, as He was still with them in spirit. They were to emulate their Teacher, who came “to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt 20:28). It would be a test of their obedience to His calling, their confidence in His authority, and their faith in His providence along the way (Luke 9:2-5).

Jesus continued to correct their worldly ways: striving for status (Luke 9:46-48 and Luke 22:24-30), their offense at another person casting out demons in Jesus’ name (Luke 9:49-50), their desire to see a Samaritan village destroyed for rejecting them (Luke 9:51-55) and their overconfidence that

they would never betray Him (Luke 22:31-34).

Amidst busy ministry, they also learned to rest (Mark 6:31), commune with Jesus (Luke 10:38-42), and pray for the Holy Spirit’s enabling (Luke 11:1-13).

The Twelve stayed with Jesus even when His teaching was difficult to understand (John 6:35-69) and when others dropped out (Luke 9:57-62). They wrestled with Jesus’ call to deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23-25, 44; 14:26-27; 18:31-33). When Jesus was arrested “they all left Him and fled” (Mark 14:50).

But they had not yet failed the test. Peter followed from a distance, though he did deny Jesus as foretold (Luke 22:54-62). John stood at the foot of the cross and accepted Jesus’ charge to take Mary as his mother (John 19:26-27). The Eleven waited together for the resurrected Christ, and received His Great Commission (Acts 1:8 and Matt 28:18-20) to continue making disciples. Christ sent

His Spirit (Acts 2:1-41) to be with the Church forever (John 14:16).

**So the “Be with me” stage is where a disciple becomes like Christ through practice. They put their faith into practice as they live, pray, serve and witness for Christ together (Five Facets). Christ is with us through His Spirit’s reminder and enabling.**

In the SJSJ Discipleship Journey, we call this the **Fruiting Stage** where we live out our obedience to Christ’s calling and teaching in our personal lives and our church life together.

It overlaps with the Rooting Stage as we continue learning new principles and values. We continue to grow with the help of spiritual friends and mentors, in cell groups, in ministry groups, in Sunday worship service and in the world by the power of His Spirit. We rejoice to see the Body of Christ coming together in love, as well as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) and the fruits of our ministry (John 15:1-2) emerging in our lives.

### **“Abide in me” (The Flourishing Stage)**

The disciples’ journey with Jesus did not end with His ascension. It continued into the “**Abide in me**” stage that would last for the rest of their lives.

Jesus taught His disciples in John 15:1-17 that only by abiding in Him and His love can they bear lasting fruit. As the Father prunes them in love, they will experience greater fruitfulness (John 15:2) when they multiply their lives in other faithful disciples (2 Tim 2:2).

Pruning may take the form of suffering, persecution, disappointments, or ministry challenges. The disciple continues growing by dwelling deeply in the Word of God (2 Tim 3:16), walking closely with the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:4; Gal 5:16), putting on the armour of God (Eph 6:10-20), and abiding in Christ’s love (John 15:9-17). Thus, the disciple is to love one another and forgive one another (Eph 4:32-5:2) no matter how difficult and costly it may be.

Examples of disciples whose lives flourished in faith, hope and love include Paul in 2 Cor 4:7-9, 16 as he restored the Corinthian church, and in 2 Tim 4:16-18 as he displayed confidence in the face of imminent martyrdom. John, too, testified that abiding in Christ's perfect love casts out fear, and enable him to love because God first loved him (1 John 4:18-19).

**So the "Abiding in me" stage is where a disciple learns through the challenges of life and ministry to depend more and more deeply and wholly on the love of Christ, not only to endure and overcome the challenges, but even to serve His Lord solely out of love.**

In the SJSJ Discipleship Journey, we call this the **Flourishing Stage** because this is where we grow in lasting fruitfulness. There are few formal programmes for this stage for the time being. We are developing more processes and platforms to facilitate disciples who are well into the Fruiting Stage to continue lifelong growth in the Flourishing Stage.

## Conclusion

We have seen in this brief biblical survey that the Discipleship Journey is a lifelong one that involves **five vital facets** of our life in Christ. We are disciples from the time we start seeking Jesus. Along the way, we grow in our foundations of faith and we learn to live it out in the Body of Christ. We

overcome the corruption and cynicism of the world by holding fast to our faith and abiding in the love of Christ.

Let us journey with one another until we all reach the finishing line on the Day of Christ!

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