

THE **Plain Truth** ASIA

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break the vicious
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Courtesy—A lost trait?

A recent television message drew quite a lot of attention when a young man on a train was portrayed as rude and callous when he pretended to be asleep in order to avoid giving up his seat to a blind man and a pregnant woman. Many people responded that the message was timely since it depicted the general attitudes of youths in our society. In another newspaper report there was a story of a teenager who threw a chair at a teacher who reprimanded him. Yet another report surfaced of a student who chased a teacher and threatened to have her beaten up for advising him. This happened right in front of the student's mother. More recently, a man who chided some youths for recklessly racing on their motorcycles was cornered and beaten to death. What has happened to our culture of respectfully listening to the advice of elders?

Today many youths use foul language routinely, often in front of other adults without blinking an eyelid. Few if any adults would want to correct or advise youths and teenagers who misbehave in public for fear of being assaulted. A youth with a cigarette in his mouth thinks that no one is wiser than him. These situations were rarely present two or three decades ago. There was a time when youths respected all elderly people. The term 'Uncle' or 'Auntie' was a common local greeting used when addressing anyone much older than us, even a total stranger. Such courtesy was the norm and whether we realised it or not, it was also the crux of our cultural strength. Sadly, somewhere along the line in the race for development and modernisation, we have neglected to reinforce what was surely one of our greatest assets.

Our leaders have sounded the alarm that this situation cannot be allowed to continue or grow. The Prime Minister has wisely stated that the younger generation needs not only technological or scientific knowledge but also a strong spiritual foundation. The basis of all knowledge is not development

of science and technology but the fundamental knowledge of who we are and why we exist. Courtesy, respect for others, compassion, obedience to the laws of the country all have their source in right knowledge. Many youths today receive little guidance or instructions from their parents. A common scenario is the situation where both parents are at work and the children are left to the care of maids. Teenagers are free to do as they please often without their parents knowing anything of their whereabouts. Who is there to teach them courtesy?

The Bible clearly states that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.¹ The knowledge of



God is not something reserved for the elderly as some people jokingly state. Youths who are imbued with the knowledge of God and His ways are a tremendous blessing. They carry with them a wisdom far ahead of their age and their mannerisms are a balm to all those who meet them. Somehow, an adult is always refreshed and inspired to meet a teenager or youth who shows warmth and courtesy in their presence. That is precisely the way things should be. The heartache we face is the reality that this nature that was and should still be present in youths is eroding at a tremendous rate. Could anything be done to curb this trend?

Parents are the key to the development of teenagers and youths of integrity and moral essence. The young generation will not develop character automatically. They need to be taught and trained in developing

moral and ethical values. The words of wisdom written centuries ago in the Book of Proverbs state, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."² That means that the trait called courtesy will never develop automatically in a child. It needs to be taught. When God gave the Ten Commandments to the people of ancient Israel he emphasised that His laws should be written in their hearts, which means that He expected them to make it a part of their very being.³ Then He made another very important statement. "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."⁴

How many parents today diligently teach their children the importance of good behaviour and Godliness? Perhaps at the cost of seeking material wealth and financial stability we have neglected to invest in our true treasures, that is, our children. How can we expect our teenagers and youths to develop the traits that form the basis of good character when our priorities are flawed? It is time we realised that parents hold the key to the right character development of children. In a multiracial and multicultural society such as ours, it is the basis for strong co-operation and mutual respect among citizens. It is the simple aspects of life like courtesy and good habits formed in our future generation that will guarantee the continued growth of our nation as a shining example of economic development that is at par with an equally progressive moral and spiritual maturity. Parents should never forget their God given responsibility towards their children for no one else is better equipped to mould the younger generation. It is never too late to begin to reach out to our children. God expects us to do just that.⁵ □

¹ Proverbs 1:7

² Proverbs 22:6

³ Deuteronomy 6:6

⁴ Deuteronomy 6:7

⁵ Proverbs 19:18

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Sluggin

I don't usually like to lead our readers up the garden path, but I wonder if you could join me on mine for a moment. I want to show you a slug.

This is a particularly impressive slug. It is about four and a half inches long, and has a lustrous silvery sheen—well, to be strictly honest, perhaps it is more of a slimy grey—but it does have a bright royal purple panel on each side. I have seen it several times this week as it slides across the path from the shrubbery—where it apparently hangs out—to the flowerbed.

It is steadily chewing its way through our flowers, but I haven't the heart to reach for the slug pellets. I have become rather fond of this slug, and I have the distinct impression that I have seen it before. I seem to remember it crossed my path last year. But do slugs live that long?

A long, slow, life

A few minutes of research on the Internet showed me that they did. In fact, I learned that a slug can live up to six years—given favourable circumstances, like not being eaten, trodden on or eating a slug pellet. I wanted to know more. (If you stay with this article, you'll find out why, I promise!)

I bet you don't know much about slugs. For example, did you know they are not insects? They are molluscs, like clams and squid, and are distantly related to the octopus, but it is pretty distant. Octopi are considered to be quite intelligent; some people think they may be an intellectual match for animals like rabbits. Slugs certainly are not. They probably do not have any measurable intelligence at all. But they make up for that in numbers. Someone has calculated that there are as many as 26,800 species of slug. Most of them live on dead or decaying organic matter and even fungi. There are only a few species that feed on live plants—unfortunately those are the kind we have in our gardens.



by
John Halford

Biologists call slugs *gastropods* because they, like Napoleon's army, march on their stomachs. Also, like Napoleon's army, they don't do well in cold weather, surviving by burying themselves in the ground wrapped in a cocoon of their own slime. It has been estimated that there may be 250,000 slugs—weighing perhaps 70 lbs collectively—per acre of farmland.

'International' slugs

Since becoming 'slug conscious', I have begun noticing them on my travels. The biggest I have seen were in Sweden—massive black slugs, maybe six inches long, although I understand the biggest

I decided to time it. (I know, I know—I need to get a life.) I laid my mobile phone next to it to see how long it would take to travel its length. Almost immediately the phone, set on 'loud ring/vibrate' went off. I would have thought this would have the same effect on the slug as a stun grenade would have had on me at close quarters, but it didn't miss a beat. It took just under two minutes to travel the six-inch length of the phone. That works out at about 15 feet an hour, doesn't it?

What else can I tell you about slugs? (I am assuming you are still reading this, and probably wondering why. I really will get to the point, soon, honest!) Well, they



in the world are twice that size! The other day in Holland I had the opportunity to find out how fast they can travel. I met a four-inch Dutch slug, engaged on a suicide mission across a cycle-path. It did not seem to be fazed by the people flashing by. How fast was it going?

have as many as 27,000 backward slanting teeth, which act with a rasping movement, like a shark's. They also have a guillotine-like jaw, similar to that of an alligator. No wonder they play havoc with plants. They can eat several times their body weight in a night. They

g it out

have eyes on the tips of their tentacles, and some species may also have infra-red sensors which allow them to detect food, if not mobile phones. Oh yes, and they like beer.

This really isn't very interesting, is it? But I am afraid slugs just aren't. I suppose I could liven things up by telling you about their sex life. Apparently they start out as males, spend their breeding life as hermaphrodites, and then become female in old age. They have a most elaborate mating ritual—although exactly why they need one isn't clear. Some species climb trees in pairs and hang from the branches by strands of their own saliva. I'd better leave it there. What happens next might offend some sensitive readers!

From humble beginnings

So why am I wasting your time with this? Slugs really are some of the more boring, and even disgusting of God's creatures, aren't they? But watching that slug make its laborious progress across my garden path, and realising it might have been doing that for six years, reminded me of something the great Christian writer, C.S. Lewis, said in his famous *Mere Christianity*. In a discussion about what it meant for Jesus to come and live on earth as a human being, he wrote: "The Eternal being who knows everything and who created the whole universe, became not only a man, but (before that) a baby, and before that a foetus inside a woman's body. If you want to get the hang of it, think how you would like to become a slug or a crab."¹

Have you ever thought of it like that? At Christmas, we remind ourselves of the birth of our Lord and Saviour. Although common-sense tells us it probably wasn't really like that, we have a romantic impression of the Nativity scene in the stable. There is the calm mother with her beautiful baby boy: "The cattle are lowing, the

baby awakes. But little Lord Jesus no crying he makes."

I don't know how aware of His circumstances the baby Jesus was, but if in some way He was able to understand His situation I bet He would have felt like crying. Think about it. Not so long ago He had been God, the Lord of Creation. Now He was a helpless baby, unable to talk, to stand or



even control His bodily functions. He who had had all power was dependent on His mother for everything. He got cold. He got hungry. He got colic, and had to have His wind brought up.

His glorious, divine existence had been exchanged for the comparative squalor of life as a human being. Whereas once He could roam the Universe, unencumbered by the limitations of time and space, now He was wrapped in swaddling clothes,

unable to move. He could get tired, dirty and discouraged. He would have to learn to crawl, to talk and feed Himself. I don't know if there was an ancient equivalent of the nursery rhyme that goes: "What are little boys made of? Slugs and snails and puppy dog's tails." But if Mary had ever sung it, I think Jesus would have muttered a rueful "Amen".

Those 33 years during which Jesus slugged it out in our world must have seemed like a long time. No wonder He prayed to the Father as He faced the end of His physical life with the unspeakable torture of crucifixion, "Glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."²

Changing places

Watching that slug and remembering C.S. Lewis' words gave me a new appreciation for Jesus and the sacrifice He made. I would not want to change places with a slug for one minute, let alone half a lifetime. But that is, in effect, what Jesus Christ was willing to do in order to become our Saviour.

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full," He said.³ He knew what life could be like, and He wanted to share it with us—not what we call life, squashed into a few decades, constrained by time and space and trapped in a decaying physical shell. Real life is so much more than that. It is everlasting, indestructible, freed from all the weaknesses of mind and character. It is greater than anything we can really grasp, because:

*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man*

The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.⁴

We cannot fully grasp it, any more than that slug on the path can understand what my existence is like. So this isn't really about slugs. It is about Jesus—who became one of us so that He could show us the way to live forever. □

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1996.

² John 17:5

³ John 10:10

⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:9

Faith and

How can *feng shui* maximise your luck for the year? You have probably come across this in an advertisement. You may also have heard or read about someone who struck a lottery after rearranging his furniture according to certain *feng shui* principles. You may even have been told to place a certain plant at a certain corner of your living room to improve the *feng shui* of your home.

What is *feng shui*? Why do people—from the highly educated to the illiterate, from the East to the West—believe in it? In the last two decades, the interest in *feng shui* has caught on globally. In fact, one of the non-fiction best sellers listed by *The Star* for the week ending November 16, 2003, was *Flying Star Feng Shui For Period 8* by Lillian Too.

Feng Shui, literally ‘wind water’ in Chinese, is the study of ancient Chinese philosophy of nature. It is often identified as a form of geomancy—that is divination by means of geographic features—and is mainly concerned with understanding the relationship between nature and man so that man might live in harmony within the environment. Its original focus was to provide an auspicious burial site for the dead but this was later expanded to include providing auspicious structures for the living, fortune-telling, and prescribing remedies to people who have poor *feng shui*, and thus, miserable lives.

In ancient days, *feng shui* was conscientiously sought after and utilised by the Chinese emperors, especially in the building of imperial palaces and for personal power and success. The Imperial City in Beijing is a great example of good *feng shui* construction and landscaping as the environment and structure conform to the best *feng shui* principles. For a long time the knowledge of *feng shui* was closely guarded from the enemies. Later, it was confined to the upper ruling classes.

When a person says he has good *feng shui*, it probably refers to his state of well being resulting from

by
**Dr. Chan
Geok Oon**

arranging his surrounding in auspicious harmony with the natural environment. Given that a human being has a natural tendency to interact with nature, the ultimate goal is to capture the intrinsic energy or *shen chi* which moves around the atmosphere, to attract or harness all the good fortune that one can desire: wealth, health, success and happiness. Since the Creator God exists in every human heart, the natural environment—as opposed to our modern scientific desert—testifies to His existence.

In general, the practice of *feng shui* draws upon the fundamental concepts of the ancient Chinese view of the universe, which requires an understanding of balancing *yin* and *yang* forces and harmonising the combinations of the five elements—fire, earth, metal, water and wood. Among the Chinese, *feng shui* technology is commonly applied to designing, construction, orientation and decoration of buildings in order to “tap into the beneficial energies that cause intangible forces to generate good fortune,” according to Lillian Too’s *Feng Shui Fundamentals: FAME*.

Science, Superstition or Art?

Certain *feng shui* experts like to call it a science while others look at it as an art. In two interesting articles on migratory birds and lemmings, the Malaysian *feng shui* master Dr. Ong Hean Tatt used *feng shui* principles scientifically to explain the interconnection of the 12-year zodiac cycle with climatic and environmental changes.

Indeed, *feng shui* can be very exact in its calculations to get the best location, form, structure and decoration of a dwelling place. It also demands careful interpretation and subjective evaluation and intuition. This is perhaps why women are sometimes considered more efficient in undertaking *feng shui* analysis because they are more intuitive and detail oriented.

The *feng shui* language is full of symbolism. Besides the *yin* and *yang* symbol and the five elements mentioned above, there are the trigrams, the octagonal *pa kua* symbol, and the nine sector of the *lo shu* grid. Others are symbolic of abstract aspirations such as longevity, happiness, fame, wealth and fertility in marriage.

For example, placing the frog with a coin in its mouth outside



Feng Shui

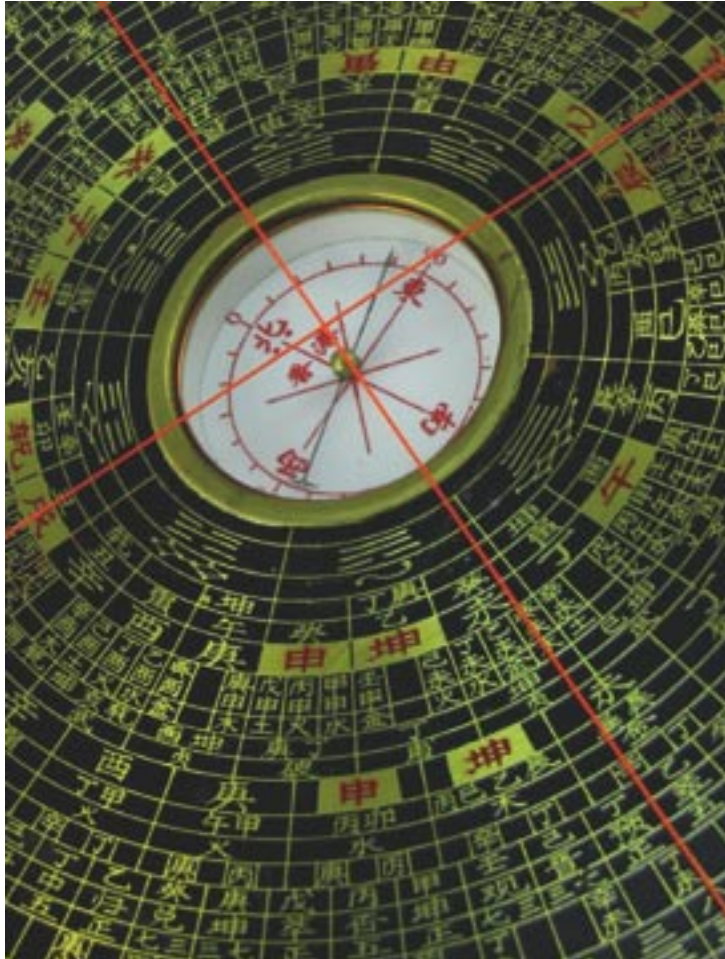
the main entrance of the house is expected to bring wealth to the family. The crane symbolises longevity and a pair of mandarin ducks symbolises happiness in love. Jars attract *chi* to settle when placed near the entrance of the house. A fan is a symbol of protection for the home. Likewise, placing the umbrella at the front part of the lobby is believed to ward off burglars. The mystic knot indicates a never-ending cycle of good fortune. There are many other symbols believed to attract or activate the energy that brings good luck.

“The cosmic breath of the dragon is the ultimate *shen chi*,” says a well-known geomancer. The “symbol of the dragon is the ultimate *yang* symbol,” and it is also said to be the “ultimate symbol of good luck.” Obviously the dragon is the centre of *feng shui* considerations. To most Chinese, it is a symbol of good fortune. Therefore it is highly desirable and is even revered or worshipped as a good luck charm.

Harmless decorations?

It may seem harmless and attractive to utilise some of these symbols as decorations. But for Christians, there is a danger that we may unconsciously put our trust in them to bring good fortune. When that happens, we insult God because it indicates greed and a lack of trust in Him. Such practices amount to idolatry. Colossians 3: 5 says, “...don't be greedy which is the same as worshipping idols.”

Christians make choices that lead either to ultimate good and divine blessings or total



destruction. “What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?”

The *feng shui* literature and advertisements are definitely enticing, feeding on our fleshly desires. In her book “*Feng Shui and Wealth*,” Lilian Too says: “Earth luck is *feng shui*... Earth luck helps you to enhance good heaven luck, thus expanding the scale of your successes during good times and bringing you good fortune and prosperity. It also modifies inauspicious heaven luck, helping you overcome difficulties and loss during astrological bad times.”

Christians can be enticed by mammon if we are not alert. It is worth reminding ourselves of James 1:14–15, “But each one is tempted when he is drawn by his own desires and enticed. Then when desires have conceived it gives

birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown, brings forth death,”

A professional *feng shui* consultant, advertised his course this way: “Learn the crux of the ‘Moving Stars’ and the ‘*Shien Kong* Moving Stars’ Schools which are practised by top Hong Kong Geomancers. You will be able to forecast events and adjust the *feng shui* to either enhance or neutralise them. Thus you become the Master of Your Destiny! When you conclude this level, you will have attained the standard of a respected Hong Kong Geomancer.”

Wouldn't you be fascinated? There is an innate desire to satisfy our curiosity of the unknown, to learn the secrets of our future and the hidden things. God has made it such that we want to find out about our future with the intended purpose of seeking Him and to fear Him alone. Unfortunately people create schemes to bypass God's way.

“Curiosity killed the cat,” so the saying goes. The moment we have an interest in things of the occult, we make an opening to the influences of the enemy. When we seek them out, the enemy wastes no time to be found.

Our future is in God's hand. The secret things belong to the Lord (Deuteronomy 29:29). As Christians we are forbidden to dabble in or have any dealings with the elemental or nether world spirits. In Christ we have died to the elemental spirits of the universe. C.S. Lewis claims that pantheism is the natural bent of human mind because deep down in every human heart, God exists.

The Deceiver may grasp every opportunity, through the large number of symbolisms used in *feng shui* to make man pantheistic instead of just worshipping the one true living God. When the human minds are obsessed with *feng shui*, which promises them everything that they desire, they then have no need for God, let alone worship Him. □

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Forgive... and break

Most of the world today tries to solve conflicts using the principle of tit-for-tat, an “eye for an eye” or a “tooth for a tooth”. It tells you to retaliate if people hurt you. It has not, however, produced any lasting solution. Is there an alternative approach?

Vicious cycle

The tit-for-tat principle doesn't really solve any problems. It only produces hostile and estranged relationships. It produces a cycle of violence, which can take the form of physical, emotional and spiritual abuse.

The principle operates ubiquitously—you can see its effect among family members, neighbours, colleagues, religious and ethnic groups and nations. For example, at home a conflict may start something like this. The wife argues with her husband over some issue (e.g., managing money, raising children, sharing household chores) and the husband retaliates. Small problems are magnified. Past mistakes are resurrected. Accusations and counter accusations follow, ending in verbal or physical abuse. It's a vicious cycle. If allowed to fester, it can destroy families. Sadly, some conflicts actually end up in divorce.

Similarly, conflicts may arise between individuals, ethnic and religious groups or nations over real and imagined injustices. Each party believes that it is right and the other is wrong. Each party lashes at the other in a vicious cycle, each cycle becoming more violent. A good example is the Palestinian–Israeli conflict where each insists that it is right and accuses the other of wrong doing.

We human beings like to rationalise and justify what we do. It's always the other party who is wrong. We don't want to admit our wrongs. The buck is passed around, and retaliation takes place, and the cycle of violence is perpetuated.

As you can see, the principle of retribution (tit-for-tat) doesn't really produce any lasting solution. It doesn't bring reconciliation.



by
**Dr. P.
Sellappan**

Nor does it promote and build relationships. It only perpetuates the problem. You can see its effects all around us. Sadly, this is the principle which rules many families, ethnic and religious groups, and nations.

High cost

Conflict—whether between nations, groups or individuals—is very costly. It consumes huge amounts of our time, money and energy, not to mention the physical, mental and emotional damage that it causes.

Take for example the Iraqi war. Trillions of dollars have been spent to bring peace and stability. It caused many deaths and injured many more. It broke families and shattered lives. Similarly, divorces break families and cause lots of emotional hurt. Divorces produce dysfunctional families and, if left unattended, the hurts can pass down to many generations. It is impossible to measure the real cost of a conflict.

Another approach

Is there another approach? Jesus Christ taught a different approach to solve the problem of hostile and estranged relationships. He taught people to forgive and break the vicious cycle. He taught the offended party to forgive the offender, and He taught the offender not to repeat the offence.

What are the dynamics involved in forgiveness? How does Christ's teaching solve estranged relationships?

To the forgiver: When we forgive a person, our anger within us is released and our burden is lifted. Forgiving frees us to engage in more meaningful pursuits. It also produces a feeling of magnanimity because when we forgive we act like God! If the offender apologises, our relationship with him (her) becomes more cordial. At the least, it doesn't make the situation any worse because it takes two to tango.

To the forgiven: When someone forgives us, we feel loved and respected. We don't want to retaliate. We feel ashamed of the things that we did. Our hearts become softer and change takes place from within. We regret hurting others and we try hard not to repeat the offence. We also learn to forgive others just as we have been forgiven.

Forgiving people breaks the cycle of hostility and violence. Reconciliation takes place, wounds are healed, and new relationships develop. It respects and values people and promotes friendship.

Bible teachings

The Old Testament primarily dealt with a carnal nation. It was based on the letter of the law. It taught the “an eye for an eye” and “a tooth for a tooth” principle. Some religions and legal systems today still use this principle. But it was meant for a carnal people and therefore has limited value. It doesn't change the hearts of people nor does it promote endearing relationships.

Jesus Christ replaced this principle with a higher principle. He taught His followers to forgive. He went even further—He told them to love their offenders, bless them, do kind deeds, and pray for them. He told them that there was no credit if they only loved those who loved them. In fact, He put them in the category of sinners if they did only that.¹

Christ taught His followers to rise above the human level. All have sinned against God and therefore need His forgiveness. Just as He has forgiven us, He wants us to forgive others.² He wants us to imitate Him. He warns us that if we don't forgive others, we will also not be forgiven. He told a parable to drive home His point. You can read it in the gospel of Matthew, chapter 18, versus 21 to 35. In this parable, a king forgave his servant who owed him a large sum of money. That servant, however, was not willing to forgive his fellow

the vicious cycle

servant who owed him a small sum of money. The king naturally got angry and demanded that the servant who was forgiven much be beaten until he paid all his debt to the king.

He also told the parable of the prodigal son. In this story, the younger son demanded his share of the family property and, after

Christ's instruction to His followers is clear. He tells us to forgive others just as He has forgiven us. Even during His last traumatic moments on the cross, he pleaded, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."⁴

The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Philippi, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."⁵ We must seek the same attitude as Christ. We must be willing to forgive others even if they don't apologise. It's all too easy to get upset and accuse others who offend us. What about our offences toward others? Can we also humble ourselves and seek forgiveness from others?

Forgiveness is divine

The only way to break the vicious cycle of violence is to forgive. Forgiving people, however, is not easy, especially if the offence is serious (e.g., gossip, murder, rape). The saying "To err is human and to forgive is divine" is so true. That's why we need to seek a Higher Power—God—who can grant us His love and attitude

of forgiveness. The Holy Spirit, as God in us, is able to impart to us the divine nature of God. He helps us to forgive and love those who offend us.

A new world order

A new world order based on the principle of forgiveness has already begun. It's currently at work in the church. The initiative came from God. He sent His son Jesus Christ to pay the penalty of our sin which is death. He suffered on our

behalf and died on the cross so that we might receive forgiveness and be reconciled to God.

God loves us. He is not waiting with a whip to punish us. He is gracious and is eager to forgive our sins no matter how bad they may be. He wants us to repent and change our sinful attitudes and ways. Any punishment He inflicts on us is only to help us see the error of our ways so that we might change.⁶

We need to break the vicious cycle by forgiving one another. Spouses, parents and children, neighbours, the blacks and whites in America, the Protestants and Catholics in Ireland, the Muslims and Jews in Palestine and Israel, the Hindus and Muslims in India and Pakistan, and the North and South Koreans must all forgive each other and be reconciled. Only forgiveness can break the cycle of violence and bring healing to estranged relationships.

Conclusion

There is a true story about a pastor and his wife who went to share the gospel with some remote natives in Irian Jaya, Indonesia. The natives happened to be cannibals, and as their custom was, they caught the foreign pastor and made a meal out of him. For some strange reason, they let the wife go. Sometime later, the wife (after much prayer obviously) came back to continue the work. She forgave them and something dramatic happened: instead of cannibalising her this time round, they listened to her message, and were converted. That's the power of forgiveness. It softens hearts and changes people.

God forgives and reconciles those of us who believe in Him. Because of His goodness we can enjoy a loving relationship with Him—a relationship that lasts forever. He promises to send us the Holy Spirit, who imparts to us God's divine nature which enables us to forgive one another and enjoy the same relationship with one another here and now. □

¹ Matthew 5: 38–48

² Matthew 6:12

³ Luke 15:11–32

⁴ Luke 23:34

⁵ Philippians 2:5

⁶ Hebrews 12:5



he squandered it and had had nothing to live on, he regretted his actions. So he went back to his father and asked his forgiveness. The father was delighted to see him again. So he quickly called his servants to organise a celebration. When the older son heard all this, however, he became angry and wouldn't even enter the house to meet his brother. He did not have the forgiving attitude of his father. He couldn't see his own sins. The father corrected him gently.³

It is not what

The young man on the hospital bed came back to consciousness slowly and reluctantly, almost as though he knew and dreaded the shock that awaited him. His hands were gone!

He looked up at the ends of his arms, wrapped in bandages. He looked up at the stumps at the end of his arms, and everything inside him went cold and numb. His hands were gone. He was a cripple.

“What good am I now?” he thought bitterly. “What can a man do without hands? My life is over.” But he was wrong. His life was not over. The most radiantly happy and successful years of his life were ahead of him. The loss of his hands was the turning point that led to undreamed of triumph and success.

The young man without hands was Harold Russell. He was to become a movie star and a best-selling author; he was to marry his childhood sweetheart and achieve happiness and success far beyond the dreams of most men.

But he didn't know it then, of course. He knew only that he had lost his hands, and that he was 'helpless'.

A sergeant paratrooper in World War II, Harold Russell lost his hands in an accident in a training camp. In the first agonising weeks after the accident, he was overwhelmed by a sense of failure and defeat.

He was terrified at the idea of going through life with steel hooks instead of hands, dreaded the thought of leaving the hospital someday and going out among people again. He didn't care much, in those days, whether he lived or died.

One day Charley McGonegal, who had lost his own hands in World War I, visited Russell in the hospital. He made the injured paratrooper see that the first and greatest obstacle he had to overcome was himself. He must conquer his bitterness and fear, the older man told him. He must become reconciled to his loss and adjust himself to it. There was a quotation from Emerson that had always helped him—perhaps it

**Extract
from
Light From
Many Lamps**

would help young Russell too: “For everything you have missed, you have gained something else.”

It did help. But when the major told him he'd soon be well, soon be going home, he was filled with panic and doubt again. How would he manage—how would he get along? He was distressed at the thought of venturing 'outside' and being on his own, mingling with people. “There's one thing you

disadvantage or hindrance making success in an undertaking more difficult.”

Then he still had a chance! He could still make a success! It would be tougher to win, but he could win. That was the important thing. That was what he must keep thinking about... that, and what Charley McGonegal had told him. From then on he forced himself to keep those two thoughts



ought to keep in mind, Russell,” the major said. “You are not crippled; you are merely handicapped.” What difference did it make, Russell thought. Crippled or handicapped; it was all the same. But was it? He went to the hospital library and looked up the two words. Crippled meant “disabled, incapable of proper or effective action.” Handicapped meant “any

uppermost in his mind. He was not crippled; he was handicapped. And for everything he missed, he gained something else.

It was wonderful what a difference this new mental attitude made. He stopped thinking about his loss and concentrated on what he had left. He stopped fighting his handless-ness, accepted it and began thinking and planning for

you have lost

the future.

Slowly but surely Harold Russell fought his way back from bleak despair to radiant triumph and victory. He was selected to play a leading role in "The Best Years of Our Lives" and made a sensational success. He won two of Hollywood's prized Academy Awards.

He wrote his autobiography and was as successful an author as an actor. He decided that the best way to use his new fame and influence was to help others handicapped as he was; and he went on lecture tours, spoke on the radio, utilising talents and abilities he never dreamed he possessed—and might never have discovered had it not been for the loss of his hands.

Writing about it later, he said, "I think it was Emerson who said that a man's weakness is often his greatest strength. Waking up in a hospital bed at Camp Mackall to find that I had no hands, I wasn't quite ready to believe that. But in the years since then I have discovered and rediscovered that truth over and over again. There is nothing startling new in that, I know. It is a truism as old as man, nor was Emerson the first to state it, I'm sure. Yet it is a stark fact that can be, that must be, repeated constantly so long as there are human beings on this earth. In one way or another, each of us must pass through the fires at least once in his lifetime. Each of us must find out for himself that his handicaps, his failures and shortcomings must be conquered or else he must perish."

"I suppose it is natural that people should demand that every story, no matter how humble and insignificant, has its moral, its lessons, and its message. I don't know whether it is possible to wrap up a man's life that neatly and say: Here is what it means. But if you can, I have a deep feeling that mine might prove the deep, abiding truth of Emerson's words. My weakness—my handless-

ness—my sense of inferiority—has turned out to be my greatest strength. I didn't think so at the time it happened and I don't think I'd ever willingly lose my hands, if I had it to do all over again. But having lost them, I feel perhaps



I have gained many fine things I might never have had with them. In a purely material sense, I know I am better off than I ever was before. But that is not the important thing. The important thing is that this seeming disaster has brought me a priceless wealth

of the spirit that I am sure I could never have possessed otherwise. I have enjoyed a life that has been full and rich and rewarding, a life that has had a meaning and depth it never had before."

"There is no easy formula to happy living. Anyone who says he has one is either joking or lying. Even if I could, I have no intention or desire of putting forth any patented, neatly packaged recipe of my own. But there is one simple thought I should like to pass on, if I may. It is no sure-fire prescription for happiness; it is not guaranteed to bring any bluebirds singing in your back yard. I offer it merely because I found it can help prevent much vain regret and self-defeat. It is not what you have lost, but what you have left that counts. Too many of us squander precious energy, time, and courage dreaming of things that were and never can be again, instead of dedicating ourselves to realities and the heavy task of today."

"If this story has any value or meaning at all—and I say this in all humility and sincerity—it is only because it confirms once again an ancient truth: that man's spirit is the most powerful force for good on earth."

"People frequently marvel at the things I can do with my hooks. Well, perhaps it is marvellous. But the thing I never cease to marvel at is that I was able to meet the challenge of utter disaster and master it. For me that was and is the all-important fact—that the human soul, beaten down, overwhelmed, faced by complete failure and ruin, can still rise up against unbearable odds and triumph."

Harold Russell's inspiring message goes on, helping the handicapped to stand up to themselves, to triumph over their doubts and misgivings. "It's not what you have lost, but what you have left that counts." □

The struggle again

A teenager, excited about the unlimited resources available on the Internet, has been surfing the Net for quite some time when one day a window opens up on a seemingly innocent website. The graphics are tantalizing, but what grabs his attention is the open invitation to tour some exciting pleasures which lie awaiting for him. All he has to do is click on a certain button and he would be rewarded with unimaginable sights. Curiosity overwhelms him, besides what harm could a little exploration possibly do? As he takes the tour, his eyes open wide as he is exposed to sexual images and sexual behaviour that he has never seen or heard of before. Pornography has just reached out and grabbed him! The scene just mentioned is happening every day and is leading to the rise of an uncontrollable flood of pornography into millions of households worldwide.

What is pornography?

Pornography to many people is sexually explicit material. But it is in reality far more than that. It is one of the vilest portrayals of deviant human behaviour that mocks the purpose of God for mankind created in His own image. Feminist groups have often condemned pornography as sexual violence, subordination and sexual objectification of women. They are right but it is also one of the worst forms of degradation of the role of men. The word '*pornography*' has its roots in the Greek words '*porne*' or '*porneia*' which relates to the treatment of women as whores or prostitutes. Pornography in modern terms is the visual depiction of women and men as objects for the purpose of perverse sexual gratification. We can never underestimate the influence of pornography on people especially youths as it is a multi-billion dollar industry worldwide.

The effects of pornography

The most devastating effect of pornography is the warped attitudes



by
**Devaraj
Ramoo**

which emerge as one continues viewing it. Youths, especially males develop an underlying disrespect for women. They get a false notion that the role of women is primarily for sexual gratification and that oppressive treatment of women as depicted in pornography is acceptable. This lays the groundwork for failed marriages, abuse, violence, rapes and other sexual crimes. It goes against all the pure and wonderful purpose of the male-female relationship as ordained by God for humanity¹. The message that is put forth instead is that violating and debasing women is a pleasurable experience! Unfortunately, measures to effectively counter the threat of pornography have not been successful. Many youths seek to obtain pornography to 'learn' what it takes to be a 'man'. Furthermore, the easy availability of pornographic video discs has made it all the more difficult to eradicate this problem. The Internet has also aided in the spread of pornography with millions of surfers visiting porn sites every day. Research has shown that continual exposure to pornography leads to desensitisation in individuals. People feel less abhorrent to sexual violence. The end result of this is a collapse of the strong moral values so needed in society.

What does the Bible say?

The Bible does not specifically deal with pornography *per se* since visual sex through movies and the Internet are modern day phenomena. The core principle which forms the basis of pornography, however, is clearly addressed in Scripture. Lust is the driving force which fuels pornography. Jesus states in no uncertain terms that "If a man looks on a woman to *lust* after her, he has committed adultery with her already in his heart"² The problem begins when lust grows within the individual. For many people

pornography is where this lust can easily be fulfilled. What Jesus said is absolutely clear! There is no room for pornography if we want to live a fulfilling life. This is further emphasised in the sanctity of the marriage institution as "marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge"³

Perhaps some would argue that there is nothing wrong with looking. After all it doesn't mean that anyone who sees sexually



explicit material is destined to be a rapist or pervert. Lets not underestimate the dangers of 'just looking'. King David is described in the Bible as a man after God's own heart.⁴ Yet for all his greatness there was an occasion when what he saw led him to commit adultery and murder as well. The account given in scripture depicts

nst pornography

David arising from bed and while walking around on the roof of his house he *saw* a woman bathing, and the woman was beautiful to look at. He could not turn his eyes away and his lust led him to have sexual relations with her. The fact that she was another man's wife did not deter him.⁵ How much greater is the effect of pornography when people have the opportunity to view it countless times in the privacy of their homes. There is also a strong correlation between

even the exploitation of children in pornography. As such the distinction between what is right and wrong is blurred for teenagers and youths who are exposed to all this. It is interesting to note that many of the sexual behaviours depicted in pornographic materials received severe penalty during the time of the prophet Moses. In some cases the death sentence was meted out.⁶ Though people today may consider this brutal, God certainly makes it clear

an almost unbreakable addiction to it. Some researchers have even labelled it more severe than addiction to drugs! Just like addiction to drugs, an addiction to pornography develops in stages. The first signs of a problem are when the individual doesn't feel satisfied and needs to view such material again and again. The frequency increases, often taking precedence over responsibilities such as school work, studies and, in the case of adults, even family and job responsibilities. There arises an uncontrollable craving to satisfy sexual fantasies.

Soon this craving leads to the viewing of more explicit or severe and shocking material. 'Normal' sexual depictions are not satisfying any more. At this point of the addiction the individual requires a higher dosage of perverted material to satisfy his or her needs. This leads to the need to search for more brutal and unimaginable forms of sexual behaviour which would be totally repulsive to a normal person. The addict no longer feels shocked at what he sees. In fact, it has become pleasurable and entertaining for him. The individual now spends hours each day viewing pornography and purchasing such material. It begins to affect his work and family life. Pornography has become an all encompassing need that surpasses all other things in life. At this point the addict is totally unable to get out of his slavery to his addiction. For some there develops a need to carry out their sexual fantasies in real life. The addict knows how 'unclean' he has become but is powerless to do anything to overcome his predicament. This kind of addiction has affected many youths and even people of respectable standing in society. But there is hope! No one needs to be enslaved to this scourge. That hope is in Christ.

Overcoming pornography addiction

As pornography addiction begins in the mind, the first step sincerely is to want to be cleansed of it. Reach out to God in sincere prayer. Tell

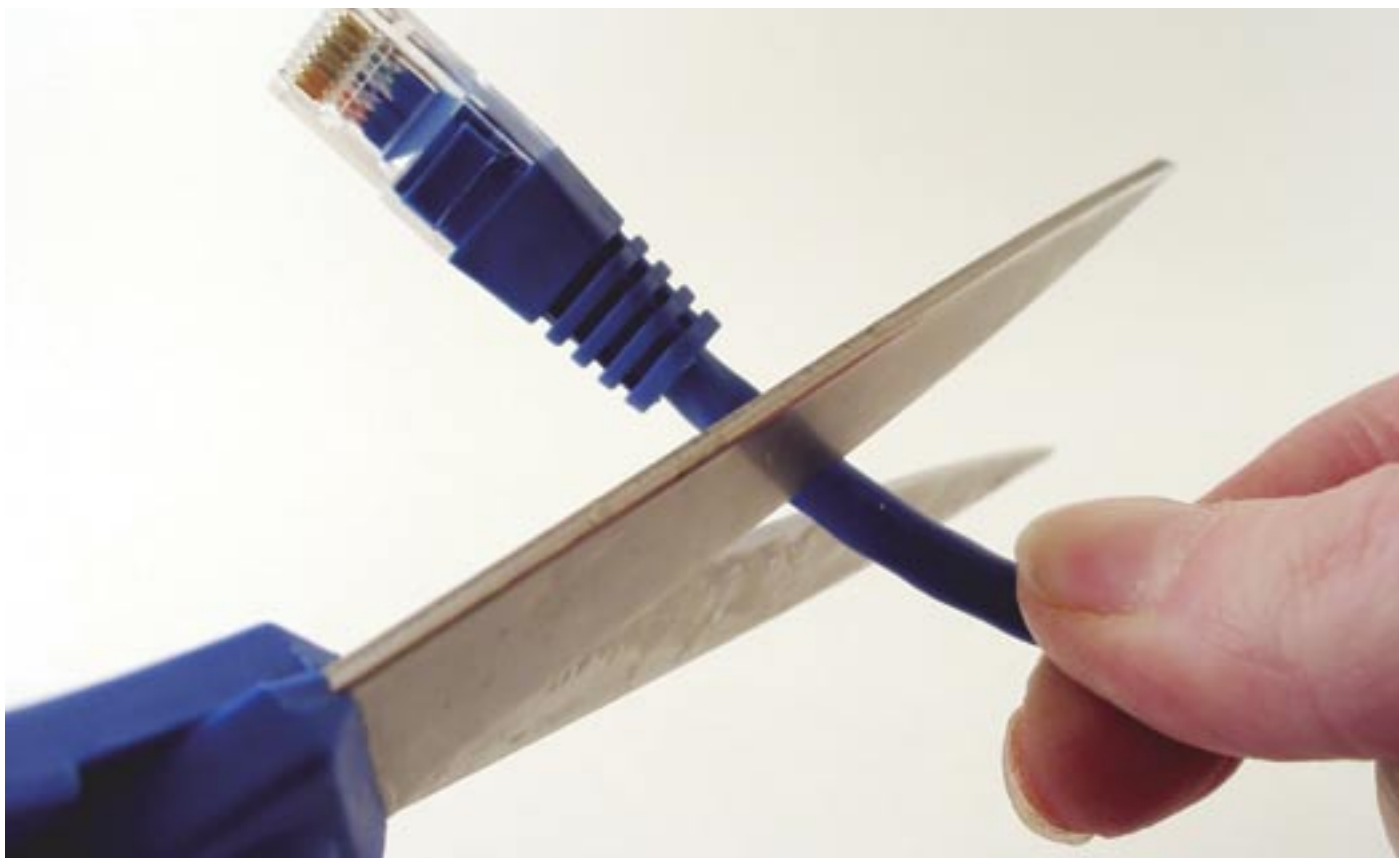
the viewing of pornography and the rise in sexual crimes in society today. Gang rapes, incest, sodomy, multiple sex partners and other unmentionable forms of sexually deviant behaviour are portrayed as enjoyable and perfectly acceptable in pornographic materials. Today, the perversion has grown to such an enormous extent that there is

how He views these sins. Sadly, the widespread availability of pornography in today's society has also led to a new scourge, that is, pornography addiction.

Pornography addiction

Few realise the underlying danger of viewing pornography. There is a very real danger of developing





God your exact problem and believe that Jesus can free you from this captivity, “for he has called us out of darkness and into his marvellous light”.⁷ Tell God that you want to be free of this madness and show a sincere commitment to follow His lead. Have the resolve that “I will set no unclean thing before my eyes!”⁸

Next, believe that Jesus took upon Himself all our sins and paid the penalty in our stead.⁹ Jesus frees every individual no matter what the sin. For no one walks in darkness any more when Christ fills their lives.¹⁰ Get rid of all pornographic material around you and tell God how easily those things affect you so that He will give you the strength to refrain from obtaining them again.

Never become discouraged when you fail along the way. Confess your failure and seek forgiveness from God and try again. God knows our frailties. God knows when a person is sincerely trying and putting his trust in Him. He will intervene at the point the individual is totally unable to overcome by himself. Soon the addict will realise that he is getting stronger with God’s help. The overcoming does not occur overnight. It takes concentrated effort over a long period of time. For some the process is on-going together with regular counselling from a trained counsellor specifically for this problem. They also have to be on guard always as the addiction can return if they lose sight of God. Such is the danger of pornography.

They literally need to flee from the things that can tempt them. The mindset needed is that depicted by Joseph when the wife of his master invited him to have an affair with him. He refused to do the evil deed and sin against God. Later when caught in a difficult situation, he fled from her.¹¹ Parents and teachers need to play an effective role in protecting young minds from exposure to sexually explicit materials from all sources. This is because the primary target of those dealing in these materials is young people. Their industry thrives on getting as many individuals as possible hooked and yearning for their products. Judging from the massive expansion of the porn industry, the danger to our teenagers and youths is very real.

The role of parents

It would be naïve to think that teenagers would never be exposed to sexually explicit material no matter how careful are parents in protecting their children. The best protection is for parents and even teachers to teach children the importance of respect for the opposite sex. Boys need to be taught that girls and women are to be respected as individuals made in the image of God with unique talents and abilities which are just as important as theirs. Mutual respect for the opposite sex is the most important guard against the

perverted message advertised by pornography. Parents should take an active interest in the affairs of their children and relate to them with love and care. Children, teenagers and youths need guidance. There is much wisdom in the bible admonition to train a child in the way he or she should go in life.¹²

Children should be taught that the human body is not a tool to be abused through drugs or pornography. The Bible teaches that the human body is the temple of God’s Holy Spirit and serves as an avenue to glorify Him.¹³ Pornography is a direct violation of God’s intended purpose for human beings. As such parents should take time to explain to their children the dangers posed by pornography. Cultural reservations may hinder some from talking to their children about matters pertaining to sex but the feelers of pornography are reaching into every nation and culture. The danger is just too pervasive. The best defence therefore is to have the spiritual and emotional maturity to refuse to give in to sexual temptation via pornography. In the meantime we should fully support all government efforts to eradicate this menace from reaching our youths. The moral integrity of our society must remain the highest priority. □

¹ Genesis 2:18

² Matthew 5:28

³ Hebrews 13:4

⁴ Acts 13:22

⁵ 2 Samuel 11:2–5

⁶ Leviticus 20:
15–16

⁷ 1 Peter 2:9

⁸ Psalm 101:3

⁹ John 3:16

¹⁰ John 8:12

¹¹ Genesis 39:7–12

¹² Proverbs 22:6

¹³ 1 Corinthians 6:
18–20

Violence among youths

P.T.: We often hear people say we are living in a “violent age.” Do you think our age really is more violent? Or is it just that we have wider media coverage?

Valerie: I do agree that we are living in a more violent age than in the past. It isn't only that media is covering more but there has been more focus on the development of weapons and the use of weapons that encourage violence, as well as the motivation towards violence seems to be associated with being more powerful. And these are very much the values of the world we live in today.

P.T.: Why do so many people have such explosive tempers? Are some people more prone to violence than others?

Valerie: People who have explosive tempers are often people who have very little ability to express themselves or release tension in a positive manner. These are people who are over stressed in powerful positions who need to release their tension, and so they find every excuse to release their tension on the powerless. I would not say that some people are more prone than others as if it is a trait that they possess but rather their experiences lead them to have alternatives to expression rather than being explosive.

P.T.: What do you think are some of the causes that are making our youth so volatile?

Valerie: The youth today are challenged with so much ie. movies, pictures,

THE PLAIN TRUTH ASIA interview with

Valerie Jaques,
BSc (Hons), MA
Consultant Psychologist

magazines, games, computer games, etc., that all show excitement and thrills in being violent. So it is of no consequence to the young person who has to choose the means to show power around him when all the examples of management are with extreme explosive measures.

P.T.: Malaysia has moved rapidly from being a

Valerie: I am afraid the answer to the above question is yes. Everyone is focused on moving ahead and becoming wealthier, more materialistic in value and having a lifestyle to keep up with others. As such, people are often sucked into the whirlpool of doing what is necessary to get what is wanted and in the process compromising on values that are said to be important but not treated with importance. This numbs



developing country to a developed one. This has caused an erosion of traditional values—values that kept society relatively stable. The tensions of getting ahead and keeping ahead often spill over into the home and family, which is now often not a ‘safe haven’ from the world. Is this inevitable—is it the price we pay for development?

most people from their truth and before we know it we are all part of the developed world which is externally civilised but ruthless in the manner in which we manage people and relationships.

P.T.: Gangsterism is common in many schools. Chances are that many youth who are involved in this will commit violent crimes in their adulthood. What preventive

measures can schools take and how can youth be helped or counselled to avoid involvement in gangsterism?

Valerie: This is a challenging question to answer. I am uncertain what anyone can do about preventive measures as this means added supervision, more social workers to attend to the problems that students face at schools, more counselling support (with a positive growth experience attached to counselling) to be provided for students, more interaction and activities to express themselves and build confidence in a child rather than reprimanding, comparisons and focusing on what is not done or achieved. The other challenge is for parents to be more involved in their children's lives, more openness and acceptance rather than high expectations to perform, tough love from parents and those around the child, i.e. the teachers and school authorities. Tough love speaks of discipline and structure with consistent behaviours from the adults supporting a child. But is this too much to ask adults today as we live with so many inconsistencies around us?

P.T.: Schools are restricted in the disciplinary measures they are allowed to take to correct students with behavioural problems. "Bring back the cane" is the recent call. Would this lessen or deter students' violent behaviour or instead provoke and promote more aggressive behaviour?

Valerie: This too is a difficult question to answer. For some children the "cane" approach may be good but then for others it may be just another means to taking more negative risks. Then again there are some that may have behaviour problems due to mental illness. So it is a challenge to decide who will benefit

from this treatment and who will not. After some time the physical pain is no longer felt as the skin hardens. But the emotional development is left at a standstill.

P.T.: Teens today are having a tough time. They feel all kinds of pressures—to do well in school, to be popular and accepted by peers, to be considered "cool" and to gain approval of parents. To what extent do these pressures cause some to develop serious emotional problems and become aggressive and violent?

Valerie: The pressures that these teens face are there today and were there in the past and will continue into the future. Each person is able to cope with the pressures differently. I would say that there is a potential for all to face serious emotional problems but the manner in which these emotions are expressed is another matter. Depending on the personality of the individual, some would be more aggressive in approach and then others would be passive aggressive in approach and then we also have those who are passive in approach. All still experience emotional problems.

P.T.: It was reported recently that the Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation Vice Chairman, Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye, said juvenile delinquents are not youngsters merely from broken homes but also from well-to-do families. Would you like to comment why rich children are turning to crime?

Valerie: Rich children are not spared from emotional problems of neglect, aloneness, wanting to be accepted by a group, wanting power, needing attention and love and support. Even though

they have money, it doesn't mean that they are emotionally supported. So many still have needs that are unmet that result in negative risk taking behaviour leading to juvenile delinquency. Money is not the answer to this problem.

P.T.: One reason Tan Sri Lee attributed to the rise of juvenile crimes was the proliferation of entertainment outlets such as cyber cafés where unsupervised youth participate in violent computer games and illegal online gambling activities. To what extent do you think all these computer war games have contributed to the increasing violent behaviour?

Valerie: These games and activities only attract those who are emotionally inadequate and lack discipline and guidance. There are many young people who with the appropriate guidance and support and discipline and structure are able still to play games and take part in activities but they do not allow these to affect their lives. So the responsibility is back to the adults, the businesses and the country's politics that encourage these behaviours through the promotion of these activities and games.

P.T.: What positive actions can parents take to help their children in this difficult time?

Valerie: All children need parents who are consistent and congruent in what they say and do. This teaches the child to be consistent and congruent in what they do. With less confusion, the child is better able to focus and therefore live with more freedom of spirit than to be wondering what is the appropriate action that will bring on the appropriate response in any given situation

P.T.: In one study, it is said that “parents don’t see themselves as educators, but as givers and receivers of love.” This approach can cause them to fail to give their children structures and boundaries. Does this contribute to the increasing violence among youth?

P.T.: In a recent newspaper report, our former prime minister, Dr. Mahathir when questioned on the increased violence and crime rate in Malaysia, said the problem was caused by a breakdown in moral values. He said, “Today, parents cannot control their children the way it

one too. Due to the focus on economic development and the political decisions made to focus on certain strategies, the education of values is compromised at all levels. Parents end up focusing on economic standards and are encouraged to inappropriate working hours that come about due to political and economic directions in our country’s policies. If the country’s labour policy is strict with employers and do not encourage long working hours, this would not impact the way families manage their lives. Children would not have to spend so much time being cared for by teachers, tuition and maids, but this focus could come from parents who are not burnt out from the workplace. This would also allow for more social development and family activities that encourage a healthy lifestyle of expression. We need more support in the policies rolled out to encourage and inculcate values. All religions are already teaching and encouraging people towards shaping the values of the youth. But unfortunately there is more influence from the economic, social and political forces and so the religious influences towards shaping values does not seem to have strong enough impacts. □



Valerie: Yes. Parents are the primary educators to their children. The school is only the secondary educator. So the parents are often more responsible for the outcome of their child’s behaviour than teacher should be. And so this is why working together as a team would benefit the child even more. Imagine if there is consistency between parents and teachers, then the children could focus on getting the most out of life experiences with less confusion.

was before. Neither can they inculcate values.” The report said “religion could play a role in addressing this problem through the inculcation of values.” But we see in the world today that religion is often the cause of violence. In a multi-cultural society such as ours, where different faiths must learn to co-exist, what is the proper role of religion in shaping the values of the nation?

Valerie: The problem of breakdown in moral values is not just a social problem but an economic and political

Valerie, a consultant psychologist works with individuals both adolescent and adult, couples and families in the areas of mental health (stress, depression, anxiety, etc.), marital therapy and group art therapy that lead to personal growth.

In addition to her private practice she also has worked with both local and multinationals in Malaysia as well as internationally with the United Nations mainly in the areas of counselling and training of counsellors for a variety of issues with special focus in the area of women and children.

Sailing Through Life

It is surprising how we can learn some important lessons from little incidents that come our way from time to time. Many of these incidents, if we are alert enough to notice them and thoughtful enough to think of them, can be life changing. However, most of the time little incidents are rarely noticed and if they are, their lessons are lost in time.

A month ago I was returning from a conference in Malaysia. I was early for the flight and had to kill a few hours at the Kuala Lumpur airport. This is not too difficult as there is a lot to see and do over there. The airport is beautiful from the floor to the ceiling.

Even though I noticed the beauty of the place, including the smooth and shining floor, I did not notice how smooth and shining it was until suddenly, as I was trying to kill time reading a novel, I saw a young boy sail past me at high speed.

All I saw from the corner of my eye was that his body was rigid but he was moving very fast. I looked up and realised what he was doing. He was actually sliding across the floor supported by only the rear turned up edge of one heel of his Nike shoes. He used the other foot to push himself forward from time to time.

I stopped reading my novel and watched this boy. What ingenuity, I thought. How enjoyable the ride must be.

It was obvious that the boy was thoroughly enjoying himself. He kept sailing across the large airport for a long time until suddenly his movement forward was arrested by, who knows what. He suddenly keeled over and fell flat on his face. He picked himself up and with an embarrassed look, walked away. I saw him sometime later sliding across the floor but it was obvious he had learnt a lesson from the fall, as he was more careful and skidded across at a lesser speed than before.

This incident got me thinking. How many of us sail through life without thinking where we are going? How many of us are content so long as the going is good? It is surprising that the thinking begins only after our progress is suddenly arrested. So long as we are moving smoothly, why bother? We by nature tend to take things easy until calamity strikes.

Let us look at the example of the recent World Cup in South Africa. The Indian cricketers played their first game against Australia and did miserably. It was not as upsetting



By
Joe D'Costa



that they lost, as it was in how they played the game.

Maybe they thought that, they would win easily or that since there are so many games to play with so many countries, they could take it easy now and play seriously later. Most of this happens unconsciously in the mind. Maybe there were some other reasons. But whatever may have been the reason, they did badly. Everyone who was rooting for India was upset and disappointed. I am sure the Indian team was too.

Something happened to the Indian cricket players after that first

bad game. They began to fare well in subsequent games and managed to beat all the teams to reach the finals. Australia won in the finals but at least they were second best. Moreover they played some brilliant games and many of the players excelled. One wonders if they would have played as well had they not faced that initial setback.

There is a saying, "Prosperity is a great teacher; adversity is greater. Possession pampers the mind; privation trains and strengthens it." Confucius also said, "The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials."

Downs in life are not setbacks but "set-forwards" if we learn from them and move on, wiser from the experiences. Life itself is a set of experiences which mature us.

We live for just seventy to eighty years but our experiences and lessons we learn from these experiences will live forever. Let us never look at our failures negatively but positively. Let us consider them as stepping-stones to success.

The poet Arthur Hugh Clough put it well when he said in his poem:

*Say not the struggle nought
availeth,
The labour and the wounds are
vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they
remain.*

*For while the tired waves, vainly
breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and
inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the
main.*

*And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in
the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how
slowly,
But westward, look, the land is
bright. □*

Peace of mind is that mental condition in which you have accepted the worst.

Lin Yutung

Man can climb to the highest summits but cannot dwell there long

George Bernard Shaw

I have never heard anything about the resolution of the apostle, but a great deal about their acts.

Horace Mann

The absent are like children, helpless to defend themselves.

Tacitus

Thought is the blossom; language the bud; action the fruit behind it.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Do not expect a "well done" if you have not done well.

The Lookout

Prosperity is a great teacher; adversity is a greater; Possession pampers the mind; privation trains and strengthens it.

William Hazlitt

I always pass on good advice. It is the only thing to do with it.

It is never any use to oneself.

Oscar Wilde

Life is 10 per cent what you make it and 90 per cent how you take it.

Unknown

Age is like love; it cannot be hid

Thomas Dekker

In Genesis it says that it is not good for a man to be alone, but sometimes it is a great relief.

John Barrymore

The most destructive habit is **WORRY**
 The greatest joy is **GIVING**
 The greatest loss is loss of **SELF RESPECT**
 The most satisfying work is **HELPING OTHERS**
 The ugliest personality trait is **SELFISHNESS**
 Our most endangered species is **DEDICATED LEADERS**
 Our greatest natural resources is our **YOUTH**
 The greatest "shot" in the arm" is **ENCOURAGEMENT**
 The greatest problem to overcome is **FEAR**
 The most effective sleeping pill is **PEACE OF MIND**
 The most crippling failure disease is **EXCUSES**
 The most powerful force in life is **LOVE**
 The most dangerous person is a **GOSSIPER**
 The world's most incredible computer is the **Brain**
 The worst thing to be without is **HOPE**
 The deadliest weapon is the **Tongue**
 The two most power-filled words are "**I CAN**"
 The greatest asset is **FAITH**
 The most worthless emotion is **SELF-PITY**
 The most beautiful attire is **SMILE**
 The most prized possession is **INTEGRITY**
 The most powerful channel of communication is **PRAYER**
 The most contagious spirit is **ENTHUSIASM**

Money may be the husk of many things, but not the kernel. It brings you food, but not appetite; medicine, but not health; acquaintances, but not friends; servants, but not faithfulness; days of joy, but not peace and happiness.

Henrik Ibsen

Character is what a person is in the dark.

Unknown

Cold words freeze people, and hot words scorch them, and bitter words make them bitter, and wrathful words make them wrathful.

Kind words also produce their own image on men's souls; and a beautiful image it is. They soothe, and quiet, and comfort the hearer.

Blaise Pascal

A loafer is a person who is trying to make both weekends meet.

Unknown

Modesty is the art of drawing attention to whatever it is you are being humble about.

Unknown

Life is like a grindstone—whether it grinds you down or polishes you up depends on what you're made of.

Unknown

I look forward to being older, when what you look like becomes less and less the issue, and what you are is the point.

Susan Sarandon

Troubles are like babies—they only grow if you nurse them.

Unknown

Give us the shattering jangle of the old-fashioned alarm clock any day and forget these versions that awaken you with soft music and gentle whispers. If there's anything we can't abide in the morning, it's hypocrisy.

Unknown

When people share their fears with you, share your courage with them.

Love is like quicksilver in the hand.

Leave the fingers open and it stays.

Clutch it, and it darts away.

Dorothy Parker

Wisdom is in the head, not in the beard.

Unknown

Before you decide about your aim in life, check your ammunition.

Unknown

Man's mind stretched by a new idea never goes back to its original dimensions.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

When we are reading, we often find something that attracts our interest. It's not earth-shattering, or life-changing, or worth cutting out and keeping, or sticking on the refrigerator door; or maybe sending to us for this page!

We invite all our readers to contribute news items, quotes, or poems, that make you say 'Hmm'. It could be in today's paper, or in a book hundreds of years old. Try to send the original clipping, or a copy of the page to:

Hmm... The Plain Truth, Locked Bag 2002, 41990 Klang, Selangor, Malaysia.

A lesson about

“I can resist anything but temptation!” says the bumper sticker. It’s funny but, as with so many things, one of the reasons it is funny is because sometimes it is all too true. As Christians, we know that temptation toward sinful, illegal or destructive things needs to be resisted, and yet we often find ourselves losing the battle. That is not only frustrating, it can get downright depressing. It can even make us start to question whether God still loves and cares about us.

More than a role model

The fact that Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are¹, teaches us at least two things. One thing it teaches us is that just as Jesus overcame every temptation, so we need to follow His example and make every effort not to fall to temptation either. But there is so much more here, and it makes all the difference. If Jesus were merely a great role model that we should follow, there would be no hope for us. Following Jesus would then just be another of the world’s many religions—humanly devised systems of coping with bad behaviour and plagued consciences.

The other thing these temptation passages teach us is that Jesus overcame every temptation in our place, as one of us, both representing us and substituting for us before God. Notice where Hebrews 4 places the emphasis: First, Jesus is presented as an incomparable High Priest.² The job of a high priest is to mediate on behalf of the people toward God. He offers the sacrifices and acts as the go-between to get everything straightened out between sinning people and God. In religion, this concept keeps people mindful of the need to behave better and establishes a hierarchy of human beings that can exercise control over the masses.

Gospel not another religion

But the gospel is not another religion. The gospel tells us that the real and true High Priest is God himself, the Second Person of the

triune God—the one who became Jesus Christ. He died and rose from the dead in glory, and now is in heaven as a glorified man and the Son of God at once, making actual peace between sinning human beings and God.

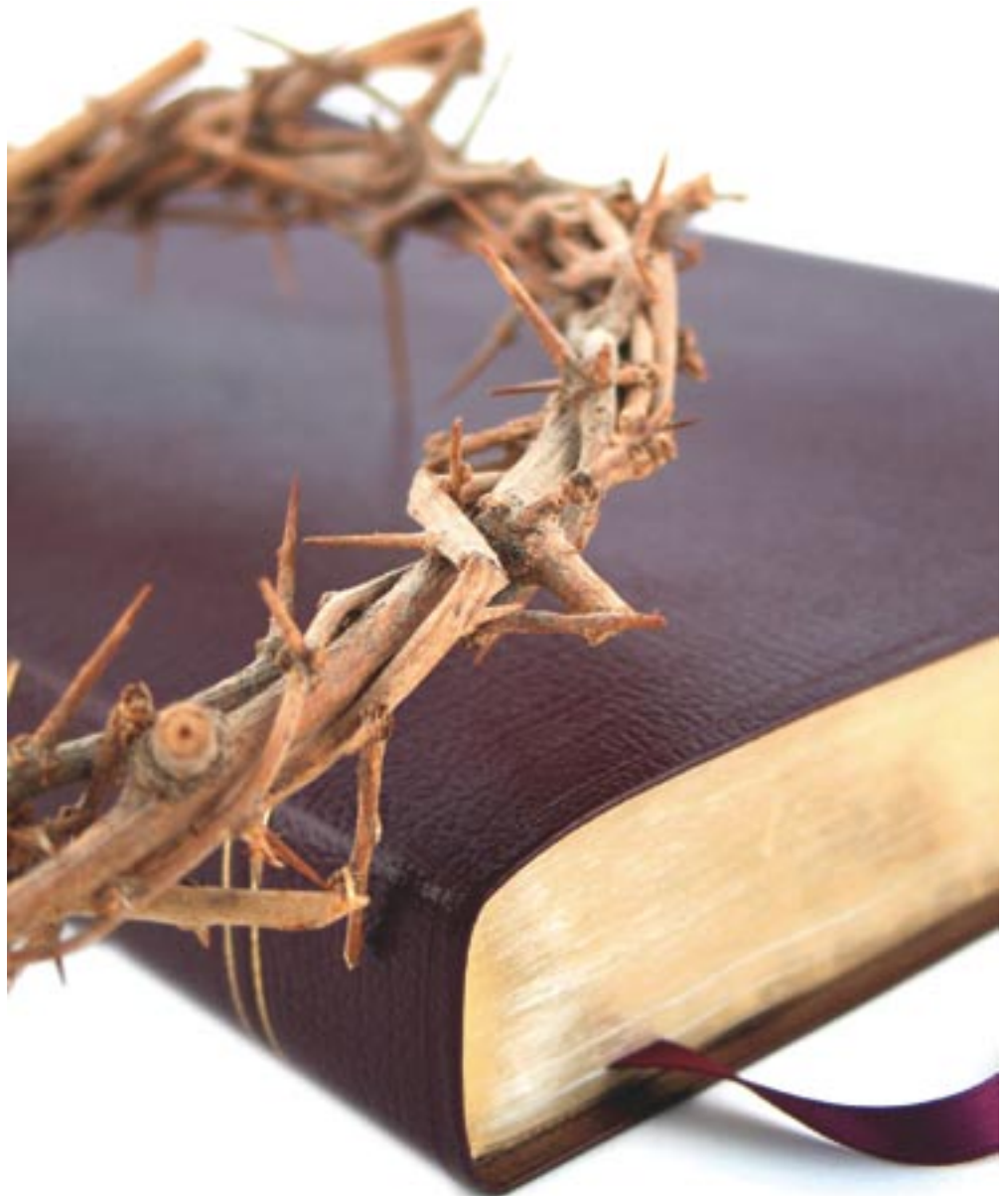
Jesus did not sin; He took all the sin of humanity on to His own head. But all the sin in the world was no match for the Son of God. In Him, sin, all sin, found its demise. In Christ, God destroyed the work of the devil and defeated sin—our sin—once and for all.

by
**Michael
Fezell**

This is not religion; it is the gospel.

That is why Hebrews 4 emphasizes the truth that Jesus sympathises with us in our weaknesses, and the truth that because of Jesus doing what He did regarding sin, we can come with boldness to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

We find the same emphasis in Hebrews 2:17–18. He became like us human beings in every respect for the express purpose of being a merciful and faithful high priest



t temptation

in the service of God. He can help those who are being tested because He was tested like they are. How does He help them? By His sacrifice of atonement (we are restored to fellowship with God) and by being merciful (He forgives you) and faithful (He'll do it every time).

Trust Him

How do you get in on all this grace and mercy? Hebrews 3 (verse 12) says, "Take care, brothers and sisters, that none of you may have an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God." It goes on to say, "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness"

How does sin deceive us? One way is by telling us, in effect: "Ha! God won't forgive you this time. You've crossed the line, pal, and the jig's up. His mercy only goes so far, you know, and frankly, it's reserved for those who clean up their act and stay in shape—not for the likes of you, sinbag."

Look how verse 14 puts it: "For we have become partners of Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end". In other words, trust Him. Trust Him to do what He says He does for you—forgives you. Trust Him to be what He says He is for you—faithful. Trust Him to know what He's doing. Trust Him to love you the way He says He loves you. Trust Him to be the Creator and the Redeemer of His Creation that He claims to be.

How can you lose out on such a great salvation? The same way you would lose out on a million dollars if you got a letter from the bank telling you someone had put it in your account, but you didn't believe the bank and never went to take it out—by not believing. By not trusting the giver of the gift. By not trusting God to love you and forgive you and transform you and make you His own child as He tells you He has already done.³

Good news

The gospel really is good news! Trouble is, for many of us, it seems too good to be true. We want to have at least a short list of "do's and don'ts" to separate the wheat from the chaff. But God gave us no list. He gave us Himself. In Christ, we have everything we need for salvation. He saves us; not Hail Marys or holy days or verbose prayers or even great worship music and perfect doctrinal understanding. We're worth saving not because we convince Him we are; we're worth saving because He decided we are and did it.

We devote ourselves to love and good works and righteous living because Christ has given us a new mind and heart, not because we figured out by intensive study that "we'd better or else." And even so, we fall to temptation far more often than we wish we would. But in spite of our failures, it is Christ who saves, so who will bring a charge against us? Paul figured nobody could—and make it stick, that is—because nothing "in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord".⁴

So, why bring a charge against yourself? The only thing charging yourself can do is, erode your trust in Christ to be the Forgiver and Grace-giver that He says He is for you.

For the love of us

Consider Jesus' temptation. First, the Spirit drove Him into the desert. That reminds us that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God with one purpose for us, and that purpose is the redemption of the entire creation. Why the wilderness? Because the wilderness is the barren habitation of lizards, snakes, scorpions, barbed plants, buzzards and such like. It is representative of the world of sin, the world of the Devil, the world of lies, deception and death.

It was there, on the Devil's own turf, so to speak, that Jesus

encountered the Devil and defanged His power to overpower humanity. Jesus was at His weakest, physically speaking, after 40 days without food, but even at His weakest, He made short work of the Devil's best stuff—satisfaction of physical appetites ("turn these stones into bread"), power, wealth and influence ("rule all the kingdoms of the world"), and self-indulgent arrogance ("parade your prerogatives by jumping off the temple wall and making the angels catch you").

When it was over, the angels waited on Him. He ate a legitimate meal, provided from the Father by the angels, not a meal the Devil offered. And all this was only the starting point of His long journey to Jerusalem to be murdered, buried and resurrected to glory—as one of us for all of us.

What more could we ask? The very God we are afraid doesn't like us, is fed up with us and won't forgive us again, is the God who loved us so much that He sent His Son, not to condemn the world, but to save the world.⁵

Take heart

In Christ, God has done for us what we could never do for ourselves. He has taken our sins on Himself, forgiven us, reconciled us with Himself and made us a new creation in Christ—redeemed, healed in mind, spirit and body and perfectly unified with Him. Though we do not yet see what He has made us to be in Christ, we can trust His word that at His appearing, we will be like Him.⁶

In our own temptations, then, we can take heart. Christ is with us, drawing us to Him and away from sin, but when we do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, who not only set the example for us, but also made atonement for the sins of the whole world, including ours.⁷

Trust Him. He did it for you! ☐

¹ Hebrews 4:15

² Hebrews 4:14

³ Ephesians 2:4–6;
Colossians 1:13–14, 22;
2:13;
1 John 3:2

⁴ Romans 8:39

⁵ John 3:16–17

⁶ 1 John 3:2

⁷ 1 John 2:1–2

Finding God's love in the family

I was recently very touched by a story I've read about the life of a little boy named Johnny. Johnny was born with severe injuries and multiple handicaps. The doctors had given a very grim diagnosis of his condition and a bleak prognosis for his future. The young parents were advised to put Johnny in

an institution, being told that this "unfortunate little creature" would not know the difference anyway. But the young couple, full of love for their little son, poured out their lives to rear him at home and to do their utmost for him. His mother devotedly maintained a tireless vigil over him especially in those early months. In his later years, confined to a wheelchair, Johnny became his father's most fervent prayer partner and avid supporter of his ministry. Johnny had been given only a short time to live, but the parents were able to see him through 24 years of life. Through all the pain and hardships, they experienced the greatest power known to humankind, love. That

power was experienced in direct relationship with the circumstances in which it was exercised. They were criticised by some for not doing "more important" things, but this young and gifted couple invested themselves in their family.

The "Johnny experience" shows that God and His love can truly be experienced in the family. Some have searched in far away places to find God, but God and His love can be experienced in the ordinary, the routine of family life. When Jesus was born into a family, in a lowly

by
**Daphne
Sidney**



stable to humble parents, He was to be named Emmanuel, meaning God with us. Is God with us in our families today? Perhaps for too long we have overlooked the family as a centre for finding God and His love.

In the Beginning

In the book of Genesis we see that God made man, both male and female.¹ This was the beginning of family life. Adam was drawn to Eve because of his deep need to love and to be loved. All of creation, including the animals, could not

satisfy his need for relationship. Marriage is the promise of two individuals, before God, to share their lives together—two lives which can intimately relate with each other, a place where mutual love, respect, tenderness and care can be expressed. God made man with a deep need to relate with him, the Creator, and with fellow man. An intimate and fulfilling relationship involves sharing life at all levels, the spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional. When a couple seek God diligently, and pray together, God's love can transform their marriage. God is love and He is the source of all love.

Love in the Family

As the gift of love grows and matures within the marriage, it cannot help but overflow with care and concern for others. Parenthood

is one expression of this love. The way a young child is loved will affect the way he is able to give and receive love in the future. This reminds me of another story.

A young child came home from school one day very upset. Her

mother noticed and asked why she was crying. She said that the other children would not let her play with them. The mother said, "You must have felt so lonely" and gave her a big hug. The child cried for a short time and then went off to play again. The child not only received love, but also learned about empathy. As that child grows up, she is being moulded into a person who is empathetic for others and who can express her concern, because she herself felt and experienced it. Parenthood involves not only loving, but also finding ways to express it.

Family life provides many opportunities to express love. Ernest Boyer, in his book *Finding God at Home*, put it this way: "Learning the expression of love is also so supremely central to parenthood because it is there that it can become the most difficult to live day after day. Caring for a 10-month old child who spits out every spoonful of food you give him, or a two-year old who, finding scissors, cuts several sections out of two of her mother's best dresses—caring for children in situations such as these draws on all that anyone can learn of love as something requiring courage and persistence."

As a young couple, Joseph and Mary showed great courage and

persistence in raising Jesus. In the face of many dangers they were forced to escape at night and take on a long journey with their young baby Jesus, in order to flee to Egypt for safety.² They did the ordinary things for Jesus, too—they fed Him, clothed Him and watched over Him with a loving, protective eye. Mary stood by her Son as she persistently stayed at the foot of His cross during His agonising crucifixion.

Joseph and Mary had the awesome task of serving as parents to Jesus. Parents today do not exactly have this honour. But every child is precious in God's sight. Jesus said that whatever we do for the least of His brothers, we do for Him. It takes courage and persistence today for parents to stand by their children, to give unconditional love and to make a stand for the truth.

Life itself is a gift. Each child is made in the image of God, and is a unique and special creation. Parents have an opportunity to participate in the ongoing act of creation. A child is an ongoing creation, being moulded and shaped by the love and care he receives. The 'ordinary' things take on new life when parenting is seen as participating with God in His creation. Every small act can be offered up to God as a prayer

with thanksgiving. Boyer gives the following prayer:

Dear God, whose name is love, Who in love and with love formed all that is, teach me to see the worth of those small, everyday tasks involved in the care of others. Teach me to see them for what they are: re-enactments of the greatest truth there is, the truth of your unfailing care for me and for all this is.

There is no great audience to give applause for the little things done at home for the family. But the Bible says: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men".³

Yes, God is love and His love can be expressed and cultivated in and through ordinary family life. And, yes, we can find God and His love in the family. Little acts of love we do in our families reflect God's greater love for us. May we find God and His love at the centre of our families as we journey into the new millennium. □

¹ Genesis 1:27

² Matthew 2:13

³ Colossians 3:23

What our readers say:

I really enjoy the articles written in THE PLAIN TRUTH ASIA magazine and look forward to receiving it. The magazine has broadened my outlook and perception of life. Enclosed is a small donation. I am a retiree. Prayer, helping others and staying healthy is important when one retires. God bless.

Thomas Lau
Singapore

Thank you for sending me THE PLAIN TRUTH ASIA magazine. I enjoy reading it very much. The stories in the magazine are very touching and encouraging.

Terri Ng
Singapore

Thank you so much for your magazine and sacrificial ministry.



It blesses me a lot and gives me a new understanding and vision. All your articles are so fantastic and so real to me.

Salai Lau
Malaysia

This is the second time I finished reading "Why did God let it happen?", and I have to write you to thank Mr. John Halford. I think he handled this tsunami-issue in our lives with much respect, sensitivity, and up-front, that I now feel more settled, less confused. I also now have a new respect towards God's part in our natural disasters and human tragedies; previously, "Where was God when all these happen?" seemed like a fair question to ask. I know I'll be reading that article again!

A reader
Kuala Lumpur.

Please send this wonderful God's magazine THE PLAIN TRUTH ASIA to the following people because they need God's help.

Jerom
Malaysia

Although THE PLAIN TRUTH ASIA is sent free of charge, it is not without cost. Each copy is made possible by the generosity of others. So we are very grateful for those readers who send a donation, and make it possible for us to continue to publish the good news of the Gospel.

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