

The Vessel

An official International Church of Shanghai publication

MARCH 2018

ICS 9th Anniversary Celebration

Testimonies

The Promised Land

A Purposeful Life



From the Editor's Desk

ICS reached another milestone as we celebrated our ninth anniversary last November. What better way to kick start the celebration than to have representatives from different countries bearing their nations' flag during the Parade of Nations. Despite the diverse cultures and nationalities in ICS, we put aside our differences and come together to worship God as one.

The much-awaited *Women of Faith* conference was a big hit! Despite being a "woman only" conference this year, the turn out rate was comparable to previous years, where it was open to everyone. The topic that day was "A Purposeful Life". Dr. Barbara shared her testimony and reminded the women that the key to living a purposeful life is to constantly reinvent oneself. Many were touched by her wise words and impactful conference.

A group of 16 members made their journey to Israel during the October holidays. They visited various important landmarks which we often read about in the Bible. Inside this issue, you get to see the trails covered by the group and the significance of each pit stop.

Weddings are exciting as it marks a brand new phase of our lives together as a couple. But how

ready are we, to face the ups-and-downs that come along with marriage? We know that God intends for us to have a blessed and everlasting marriage, so let us spend some time going through the marriage preparation manual for couples "Before you say 'I Do'" and answer some critical questions with our soon-to-be spouse. May these discussions help us understand and accept each other's similarities and differences, which in turn brings fulfillment to our marriage.

Last November, Dr. R.T. Kendall taught us how to free ourselves of hatred and bitterness that might be embedded in our hearts and minds. In his seminar titled "Total Forgiveness", he reminded us that Jesus forgives, and as children of God, He expects no less from us. He also shared with us signs or actions that show we have already forgiven our enemy.



Grace Chan

Why The Vessel?

Conceived from the verses of 2 Kings 4:1-7: "Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbours - empty vessels; do not gather just a few...", the newsletters are to be the vessels of His supernatural blessings and providence. With faith in the Lord, the blessings will not stop, but will instead overflow, so that we can, as vessels, catch and share with others the goodness that God has bestowed upon His people.

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Pastor Says...

Welcome 2018!

All of us are at different phases of our time in Shanghai, some have just arrived, others have been here for a long time, and some are about to finish your contract. We are glad that you are part of ICS' family no matter what stages of life you are at in Shanghai.

I had the opportunity to meet up with different groups of people who have repatriated to their home countries recently. Many of them have expressed how special Shanghai was to them, especially their time with ICS. ICS was like a home-away-from-home to them. Without sounding as though I am boasting, many of them missed the church life in Shanghai and in particular ICS. Many of them have served, attended cell group and participated in the life of the church. We are passionate about Christ and the church!

The dynamics is very different when we return to our home country. Many have expressed that life is very different back home because of the different demands and roles that they have to juggle with. Some of the trailing spouse will probably return to their work. They are trying to catch up with their career. There will also be the need to meet up with our extended families. They have to look into the children's school and after-school activities. The list of activities don't seem to end. We might not even be putting priority in looking for a church to worship God. We might not even be stepping up to serve in a local church because we want to be served and enjoy the services of a church. If we are not careful then we will probably become passive in our Christian faith in God. There might be those who move back to a sparsely populated environment and there is nothing much happening. There is a tendency for us to procrastinate in looking for a good church. It is worthwhile to look out for a good church to worship and serve Him even if it means driving a few hours. Whatever the case might be, it will be good for us not to lose sight of God, worshipping Him with a body of believers and to use our gifts to glorify Him. Keep the fire burning!

May the Lord bless you and the family if I do not get a chance to bid farewell to you on the last Sunday of your worship in ICS. A big welcome for those who have just arrived in Shanghai and do say hello if I have not met you.

Blessings,



Daniel Ho
Senior Pastor - ICS
The People's Republic of China

ICS 9th Anniversary

2017

*It is not by chance,
this perfect plan,
that we're gathered
here today...*



1
The sun shining brightly and temperature warmed up comfortably – an affirmation that God’s presence is with us.

2
The emcee and worship leader leading everyone to sing praises to God.

The years went by fast, and on November 4, ICS celebrated its 9th. anniversary! We gathered together as a family outside the Cypress Hotel to celebrate and give thanks to God for yet another year of His provision and blessing.

God’s goodness was manifested during the celebration. The day started off looking cloudy and cold. We began our celebration with praise and worship. As we invited God to be in our midst, suddenly, the sun began to shine brightly and the temperature warmed up comfortably. This is an affirmation to many that God’s presence is with His church. It felt very symbolic and touching. It was reinforced by personal testimonies of Till Kundt and Lynn Hsu. They shared their own journey with ICS during the years and the miraculous things that God had done in their lives.

One of the highlights of the event was the *Parade of the Nations*. Almost thirty countries gathered together to partake and manifest their belonging to ICS. After the worship, the representatives of different nations marched onto stage one by one, standing

there in their national costumes with flags of their respective countries while musicians played instrumental music until everyone has assumed their position.

Salyonn Koh from the worship team composed a central song for the event called “As One”. It was to demonstrate that despite different origins and backgrounds, we can stand together in harmony as “Christians”, united by the exceeding grace and love of Christ. “It is not by chance, this perfect plan, that we’re gathered here today, in His perfect plan, you’ve called us to this land by name, how we wonder at Your ways... we want to bless, oh, we yearn to love as one, in the name of Jesus”, sang Salyonn together with Annalisa Cameneti. All the representatives joined in singing while waving their national flags. It was a spectacular view!

“I was moved to tears when I saw all of you standing there waving your flags. Indeed, God has brought all of us to this land to be a blessing to others!” shared Daphne Ye, one of the organizers of the event. She, together with Akari Wei and Elizabeth Gouw Sung,



shared the main burden in making sure all the things worked properly that day and showed extraordinary commitment to His Kingdom work.

Elizabeth added, “I was also touched by everyone’s efforts to dress up and bring or even make your own flags in representing your countries. Like Daphne, my eyes were misting up during the parade. Thank you all!”

When everyone was still on the stage, Pastor Daniel delivered a short speech, emphasizing the main purpose and vision of the ICS church in Shanghai. It was accompanied by additional speeches from Madam Xiu who is the Director of Foreign Affairs of the municipal Religious Affairs and Reverend Shen who is the Christian Council Chairman. After the leaders cut the cake, it was time for meal and fellowship.

The beautiful area outside the Cypress hotel was placed with decorations featuring themes of various continents. When the official program ended, many used the opportunity to take pictures with these decorations behind them or just gratefully took photos with those who participated in the parade and wore their national costumes. Children were entertained by having the opportunity to paint their own decorations and that contributed to a lovely day.

It was joyful to observe groups of Christians from different nations sitting at the white tables, fellowshiping together, while eating the delicious food served by the hotel staff. It reminded us that we are not only Christians, we are also brothers and sisters who care for one another and share both our joys and burdens. The whole event helped strengthen our relationship with one another and also encouraged us to continue our work for the church and for God’s Kingdom. May the Lord bless the coming year when we as a church approach the majestic 10th. anniversary!



3 Families and friends come together to celebrate this joyous occasion.
4 Representatives from Congo, France, India, Nepal, and USA.
5 Members representing different nations come together as ONE.

ICS & I

Till Kundt

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1

This verse that I am sharing with you is one of the most important Bible verse in my spiritual life: Romans 8:1: **“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...”**

My name is Till and I come from the north-Eastern part of Germany, well known for its Baltic Sea coast. During my younger years, I was already very passionate in my walk with Christ. Growing up, I was always actively participating in the kids and youth work in our local Lutheran Church. I accepted Christ as my personal Lord and Savior in 1992 when I was in university. It was in a small church in the city. I was amazed to discover that the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially in areas such as prophecies, praying in tongues, and interpretation of tongues are alive literally, as the Word of God says!

In October 2008, my wife Bin and I, together with our young son and daughter, relocated permanently to Shanghai. We were excited about the announcement regarding the setup of SCF Hongqiao branch, which was eventually renamed to ICS a few years later. We joined the church’s very first service held in New Garden Hotel. We joined ICS with the assurance and conviction that this will be our home church and true enough, we have been at home ever since. Joining a cell group in November that same year also proved to be one of the best decisions we made. We got to know new friends and that brought us even closer as part of the family. Serving in Kid’s Church ministry had been both a great privilege as well as blessing for Bin and myself. It contributed to our sense of belonging in ICS tremendously.

Pastor Daniel’s teaching of the Bible, the unchangeable truth and the power of God’s Word, has had a really profound impact on my daily life. I came to understand my position of being fully and unconditionally accepted as child of God, because of what Christ did on the cross, regardless of how I perform in my walk with Christ.

Ephesians 1:3-4: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every

spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.” Ephesians 2:4-6: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 1:3-4 and 2:4-6 assures us that we are exceptionally blessed and are endowed with great authority to rule with Christ in our lives because of what Jesus did, not because of our own works. Nobody can take this away from us.

I am amazed by how practical God’s Word is for my family’s daily lives, be it at home or at work. Thanks to Pastor Daniel’s clear teaching on having a Bible reading plan and journaling, I discovered how the Holy Spirit speaks to my situations and challenges through the Bible verses. The guidance from the Bible has become a solid anchor for my life and has carried my family and I through a number of challenges we faced in Shanghai. This includes the recent painful closing down of the frozen food factory we had helped built, as well as the marvelous re-opening of the factory operations under a new ownership. With guidance from the Bible and encouragement of the Holy Spirit, we were able to come out of these difficult situations stronger than we were before.

When Bin and I first got married, we were told that it would be difficult for us to have children. The Holy Spirit encouraged Bin that God would give us two sons. In 2010, our twin boys, Consti and Toffi were born in Shanghai. To God be the glory! We were once a couple destined by medical science to be without children, but by the grace of God, we are now a family with not only a son and a daughter, but another set of twins! All of them are such precious gifts from God. Hallelujah!

My family and I feel so blessed to be a part of the ICS family, blessed to serve our Lord Jesus with so many of you. We hope to be a blessing to the ICS family in the years to come. Happy Birthday ICS!

God has been directing our path through life's journey and to lead us to our destiny.

Women of Faith Conference 2017

A Purposeful Life

The *Women of Faith* conference is a much-awaited event every year for the past three years of my stay in Shanghai. However, by not doing much justice to the name of the conference, we have had men also attending it for as long as I've known. I guess it is a bit hard to keep the men away when they know that God is going to show up mightily! Well this time we sure managed to do that. It was a woman only conference. Little did we know that God had special things planned for His daughters through His servant Dr. Barbara Wentroble.

For all our previous conferences, we had men and women in almost equal numbers in attendance. Hence this year, we, in our limited human understanding, booked a smaller conference room in advance at Marriott Hongqiao, expecting a smaller crowd of women alone. God's good plans for us are much higher than our plans. And so, it turned out that as the registrations poured in, we quickly outgrew the number of seats available in the conference room. **What God plans, He also provides.** While contemplating on whether to move to a bigger venue or not, much to our amazement the hotel offered us a larger room. They needed the smaller room for a client and the only available room was the larger one, which they did not want. Hence the hotel offered us the larger space in exchange at no extra charge. How great is our God!

Before the conference the *Women of Faith* had just completed their study on the book "Satisfied Lives for Desperate Housewives" by Beth Jones. The book concluded with a very thought-provoking chapter titled "desperate for purpose". This chapter lit a flame within us to live for our purposes. The conference "A Purposeful Life", right after the study was like pouring oil and setting ablaze that fire. Dr. Barbara shared on how to have a vision for our destiny, how to arise and move towards that vision, and how to fulfill that vision by constantly reinventing ourselves and with God's anointing.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that "He has also planted eternity [a sense of divine purpose] in the human heart [a mysterious longing which nothing under the sun can satisfy, except God]". God has put our purpose and destiny within us. We need to have a vision of God's future for our life. See what God sees. God spoke to Abraham to allow his eyes to see the destiny God promised to him. God was definitely using this time of the conference to help each of us do just that.

Dr. Barbara, through her testimony, showed us how from a place where we think we can never reach our destiny, God can take us right into the heart of it. This is true regardless what our age is, what our circumstances are, or how messed up we think we are. It is because He isn't done with our story! God revealed the purpose of her life to be a missionary of God to nations, at a time when she had a husband and three young children. She thought it was impossible, but the God of impossibilities is still continuing to enable her to walk in His purpose for her life even after 32 years. She is now even travelling to faraway places like China! **We are not victims of our**

circumstances or backgrounds, but we are who God made us to be.

Discovering our destiny is by looking back at our passions and what we have done in our life. God has been directing our path through life's journey and to lead us to our destiny. We need to connect the dots. Those who do not work towards creating the future that they want, often have to live with the one they are given.

A God-given destiny doesn't promise a smooth ride with no roadblocks or challenges but that should not drag us down the shadows of fear. Fear is false evidence appearing real. What is real is God's Word and His promises. Fear of failure will never take us to our destiny. **Until we lose the fear of man, we will never be able to walk in the fear of the Lord.**

A key to staying in our purpose is the willingness to **reinvent ourselves.** Reinventing ourselves to be relevant in the season that God has put us at a given time is vital but that does not change our ultimate purpose or our core values. It is only our functions or actions change. During the long journey of the Israelites from Egypt to their promised land, they would settle down at a place in the desert. Just as they get comfortable, God would sound the trumpet and ask them to move. Till they reach the promised land, change was inevitable. In the same way, the Holy Spirit shifts us in the right direction to accomplish God's will.

An impactful and powerful time during the conference was when Dr. Barbara asked the ladies to quieten themselves in the presence of the Holy Spirit for some time and ask Him what our identity in life has been so far and what our new God-given identity is. Many times, we take on a false identity that the evil one betrays us to believe we are; unloved, abused, incapable or insignificant, based on the voices around us or the circumstances we grew up in. Dr. Barbara shared that she was once afraid to speak to even a group of three people and believed she was a timid, shy, bashful and introvert person. When God called her to be His voice in front of rulers and authorities, she thought He made a mistake. **Yet God knows what He is doing and He certainly knows who He made us to be and for what purpose.** She realized God did not create her to be timid and shy but instead, she was made to be bold and speak His Word with authority. She embraced the new identity God intended for her and gave away the old identity that kept her away from her purpose. With new identity comes a new anointing and empowerment of the Holy Spirit to fulfill your destiny.

Through the conference, God gave us a chance to look back at our lives and realize the old identity that we carried. He then enabled us to look up to heaven to receive the new identity that He purposed for us before time began. It's in awe that I grasp that our loving Father has a unique and special purpose for each one of His children. We just need to step into all that He has for us!



IMPRESSIONS

A Purposeful Life

Yumi Ayama

With the many “ups and downs” happening constantly in my life, I had been struggling, not knowing whether my life was on track or not.

After attending this conference, I learnt that the most important way to live my life is to focus on God’s given destiny, regardless of the situation I am in.

In particular, the section that Dr. Barbara Wentroble talked about the importance of “reinventing myself for a purposeful life” helped me a lot. It opened my eyes to examine the season I am living in and the role that I can function now. I am now very confident, knowing that I might not be able to live in the same way I used to, but I can live a purposeful life which God has destined for me.

In every season, God has a wonderful plan for us to live a purposeful life.

Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

The old has gone, the new is here!

Sunny Zhu

The whole journey during the Women of Faith conference was filled with grace, love, and passion.

When I asked about my old name and new name, the Holy Spirit told me that my old name is “Lonely” and my new name is “Connection”. As I now have divine connection with Him, then also I will have good connection with people.

After Dr. Barbara anointed me with oil, I went back to my seat to meditate. I began to tear as the Holy Spirit revealed deep in my heart that I had rejected starting a new business because it stimulates two big traumas in my life. However, He told me that the door of yesterday should be closed. The Holy Spirit further encouraged me that He will bless a lot of people through this business.

Philippians 3:13-14: “But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. I pressed on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward, in Christ Jesus.”

See promises more than challenges

周金珠

- 1: 明天是屬於那些今日就有異象的人。
- 2: 恢復的異象將重心從過去的悲劇轉到未來的希望。

Akari Wei

本次的特会让我学习到认清自己在基督里的身分才能领受并且进入神所预备的命定当中, 来自神的异象无论在何时都能提醒恢复并且带来盼望, 让我继续奔跑神的道路, 跟随神的每一个脚步都会相当精彩

Testimonies



Jo Chui

Walking in Faith!

Have you ever tried the game “iFly”? You have to relax and let the air current lift you up in the air.

When I agreed with my cell leader to write this testimonial, I have no idea what God wants me to talk about. I have been receiving so much grace and mercy in my life that words and essays are not enough to express my thankfulness.

I submit to God in every major life event including this summer when I was diagnosed with cancer. In May, I was emotionally moved by a sudden departure of a church sister. I prayed to God for a chance **to be prepared for my own departure**. Ironically, this health issue was revealed months after my prayer. I had no fear but faith that God has His plan for me. I didn’t argue or complain. I simply follow every step and door that God opened to me.

My oncologist suggested six weeks of radio therapy plus two full weeks of chemo treatment rather than an operation to breaking up my excretory system. When my friend, who is a professional doctor, noticed my situation, he strongly disagreed and suggested a different treatment plan. I didn’t have

All the pain, side effects and infections were nothing bigger than I can take.

enough medical knowledge to debate with him. I struggled to convince him in what I believe. I could only pray to God for his wisdom. God delivered messages to him via his professional circle that the treatment plan I have was the correct way. Praise to the Lord, only God is able to overcome all different kinds of challenges.

Going through the treatment was not the most pleasant experience. There were many sleepless nights filled with pain and nausea. I received strength through prayers and Bible verses. Psalm 23 is one of the verse that kept crooning during my radio therapy. I went through body check, endoscopy, surgery, completed the radio therapy and chemo treatment in just two and half months. All the pain, side effects and infections were nothing bigger than I can take.

I prayed for my family members to see His work in my healing journey. Everything happened so smoothly. God enlightened me again with his word. I should not dictate God’s schedule. Once again, I learned to submit to God. Just like I played that *iFly*, make a step (to pray) and leave it to God to work.



Billie & Chin Tuck

A living God who listens and speaks to us intimately

Our God is a living God who knows every detail in our lives and He wants to journey with us daily. As young Christians, my wife and I often wonder how we can hear clearly from God. God brought us to Shanghai in 2010, then to ICS in 2012. We attended cell group and through Pastor Daniel's teaching, began to start a Bible reading plan to finish the Bible in a year during our daily quiet time. It changed our lives as well as our walk with God.

We would like to share how God spoke to us about a major decision in our lives. This is one example of the many occasions that He has spoken to us regarding big and small decisions! He is a living God that is into the details!

Joshua 18:3: "Then Joshua said to the children of Israel: 'How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers has given you?'"

It was March 25, 2016 when this verse came to my wife, Billie. She felt as if God was chiding us for not taking any action. For a couple of years, we toyed with the notion of buying a property here in China, but with increasing home prices, we decided that we were happy to rent even though we knew that we would be staying in China for many years. A few days later, on April 2, I received a word from Deuteronomy 1:21 and felt that this was a confirmation from God to proceed with our house search. In making any major decision, **it is important that husband and wife receive separate confirmations from God before proceeding.**

But where do we start? We didn't want it to be just any house, but the house that God has prepared for us. We arranged for agents to show us around. God guided us every step of the way with specific details. In Joshua 18:6, we felt that He wanted us to explore seven possible areas; in Deuteronomy 7:22, we felt that He was telling us to go for a house that is not too big, that we could handle financially (we were beginning to be tempted to over-stretch ourselves then), and many other instances.

Even though the Shanghai government announced cooling measures to curb the escalating property prices around that time, home prices did not go down. As weeks turned into months, we were getting increasingly tired and discouraged. We saw properties we liked being snapped up, or had their prices increased to a point where it was not affordable to us. Sometimes, even when we have a rhema word from God, our faith may be challenged. The key is to be anchored on the word.

But God is a loving father. His words continued to encourage us during our quiet times. To Billie in 1 Chronicles 28:9-10: "...be careful to seek out all the commandments of the Lord your God, that you may possess this good land, and leave it as an inheritance for your children after you forever. Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it." With this verse, we were comforted to know that the decision to buy the

property was not one birthed from vain, materialistic and selfish gains, but out of obedience to a God who loves us and knows our hearts' desires. And to me in Isaiah 14:27: "For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?"

We were drawn to a certain compound in the western suburb of Shanghai. Although it is closer to Billie's workplace and the children's school, it is going to be a challenge for me as I work in Pudong. We finally found a unit which we liked at a reasonable price. We started negotiations but failed to close. The owner did not look reliable and I felt prompted not to comply to their counter-offer, despite it being not too far from what we offered. We were once again thrown into a state of disappointment and doubt, but we kept going back to the word of God to anchor us on His promises. The decision turned out to be right as that particular unit is still on the market today. The owner was not sincere in selling at all.

With the school holidays approaching in June, the chances of us getting a property before we return to Singapore for summer became very slim. On the final Friday before we were supposed to fly, the agent informed us that a new property had just been listed, with the exact criteria that we wanted... a bedroom for each child and us, a room for elderly visitors on the ground floor, and near the exit for easy school bus pick-up.

We arranged to view the house the next morning and immediately knew that it was the house for us. We made an offer on the spot. Sometimes, God has to show us things we do not want or like in order for us to know what we really like. Besides us, there were four to five other offers on the same day. Our offer was not the highest among them so we lost the opportunity to be the first party to meet the seller. With our offer price being so close to the asking price, we thought the chance of not securing the deal was very slim.

Miraculously, on the following Monday, we were informed that strangely, the party with the highest bid did not get to meet the seller and the opportunity to negotiate fell on us! We knew right in our hearts that this could only have happened with God's intervention. However, I had to work very late that night and Billie, who does not read Chinese contracts, had to go alone for the meeting. Having had earlier experience with the other owner, we were worried that the seller would jack up the price again. But the sellers turned out to be genuine and were happy to accept the original asking price, which was unbelievable given the overwhelming number of offers and market conditions. Billie managed to sign the deal that night! Sometimes, God puts us in situations where we can only rely on Him and He delights to show Himself so spectacularly. There is no way to deny that it is only possible through Him!

The story continues, and I wish I have more space to tell you how God led us through our negotiations with contractors (we had to change our contractor halfway through the renovation, but still managed to get the project completed in around 6 months), how He has provided a car for me to get to work, how He ultimately solved my travelling problem by opening a new role within my company which allows me to travel half the distance with more flexible arrangements, etc.

Our God is an amazing God! As we move into 2018, we are excited to see what else He wants us to do and even more excited to see Him show Himself to us as we learn to obey and rely on Him.

If you truly want to hear from God, seek God and **put Him first.** Prioritize your quiet time and follow a Bible reading plan and journal, and be amazed by how our God can truly guide you in every single detail of your lives!



Christine Ke

和多数台湾人一样我从小便活在偶像崇拜的环境当中，也因此当我决定信主时父亲相当反对甚至有些争执，信主至今后30年也没有机会进一步分享福音给我的家人，因为家人们都刻意避开不谈信仰，看似相敬如宾。今年9月底在得知父亲得了淋巴瘤第3期。我便迫切祷告并渴望求神带领

我在对的时间回台湾并将我勇气与信心赐给我，让我能有机会带父亲祷告！并赐下好时机来和他分享唯有耶稣基督才是他生命唯一的救主！

我请告诉小组的弟兄姐妹们代祷，直到10月底，在得蒙神的回应便决定11/1回去二周。在祷告中神给我两个字：“**mercy**(怜悯)、**love**(爱)”。短短两周的奇妙经历我诉说不尽！在此数算恩典：首先，在回到台湾第二天我便鼓起勇气告诉爸爸：“我爱你，主耶稣更爱你，我相信主耶稣必能医治你，现在我要为你祝福祷告。”没有询问父亲的意愿我直接带着他来祷告。感谢赞美主！奇妙的是父亲不仅没有反对，反而安静下来让我祷告。更奇妙的是，从回家的第一天开始直到我离开台湾，圣灵帮助我天天为父亲按手祷告、放诗歌给他听。父亲病发的很突然没有任何征兆，他们的偶像告诉他这是命，在劫难逃。也因此父亲变得消极甚至已经预备进入离世的沮丧情绪，化疗让他的身体痛苦因此拒绝进食，体重迅速消瘦到**37kg**，白血球也急遽下降。然而，透过我每天按手为他祷告，神医治父亲的尿血、消化系统、其他的病痛…更医治他的心，释放魔鬼带来的捆绑，赐给他喜乐与盼望。第二周，父亲已经能够积极地进食和复健，体重回升到**42kg**，白血球指数也正常，并且常常和我们讨论他恢复健康之后的愿望。经上说：“喜乐的心乃是良药，忧伤的灵使骨枯干。”真是如此！

其次：罗马书**8:28**“万事都互相效力，叫爱神的人得益处，就是按他旨意被召的人。”某天，父亲又拒绝进食，并且和母亲发生争执。又向挑衅我的信仰，说些狂妄、敌挡神的话语，在争执过后我选择离开出去走走冷静祷告…。圣灵提醒我：“**爱能遮掩过犯**”、“**怒气不能成就神的义**”、“**mercy**(怜悯)、**love**(爱)”。我对神说：神啊！人的爱和怜悯是如此地不足，尽管对着自己的父亲，我还是那么容易受情绪的影响，求你的恩典怜悯和慈爱帮助我！于是，我选择回家主动与父亲和好，唱诗歌再为他按摩。奇妙的是，当我尽家门，竟然是父

亲主动向我道歉。这真是圣灵的作为！我更感谢主安慰我：透过这次的争执，让我有机会将多年来想分享的信仰差异说出来。虽然不是用我以为的方式，但是神让万事互相效力。

第三件事：马太福音**13:12**“凡有的，还要加给他，叫他有余……”。我觉得传福音给家人最大的困难是老我的身份，他们会用过去的刻板印象来看我。为此圣灵也常提醒我：“在基督里，我就是新造的人，旧事已过，都变成新的了。”某天当我和母亲聊天长达**3**小时，关于对金钱、信仰的看法，当下圣灵感动我“用爱心说诚实话”，要将基督信仰的价值观表明清楚！而这样的谈话却引发母亲对信仰的好奇与疑问，我才知道原来在她的心里是如此渴望死后能上天堂。我便利用这个时机为她祝福祷告。包括我期于的家人大姐和弟媳妇，也在我这次回台湾与他们同在的好时机，能够行使对的话语向她们分享福音、带她们接受耶稣。

回想此行回家之前我对神的祈求，而就在这短短的两周内都得以成就了！人的低谷与难处，往往是神大能作为的彰显。以弗所书**3:20**：“神能照着运行在我们心里的大力，充充足足地成就一切，超过我们所求所想的”。所以，“不要怕，只要信！”这是我最鲜明的领受！感谢神！



The Promised Land

1 TABGHA (MOUNT OF BEATITUDES)

The greatest sermon in history, Sermon on the Mount, was given on this mountainside. This is also probably where Jesus called Peter and Andrew to follow Him and become “fishers of men”. This spot is revered as the place where Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes to feed the multitude.

2 CAPERNAUM

This was the centre of Jesus’ Galilean ministry after He left Nazareth. It was here that Jesus healed the sick, preached in the synagogue, and performed miracles such as delivering of unclean spirits.

3 SEA OF GALILEE

Jesus began his public ministry here, teaching in the synagogues and curing the sick. Crowds flocked to Him, “for he taught as one having authority, and not as their scribes” [Matthew 7:29].

4 MUCKRAKA (MOUNT CARMEL)

This is where Elijah contested and defeated the prophets of Baal by a mighty demonstration of the power of God in 1 Kings 18. It was from this mountain that Elijah prayed for rain to end the three and a half year drought.

5 MEGIDDO

Megiddo means “ingathering of truth”, which is the same term as *Armageddon*. This is probably the site of history’s final battle. More wars have been fought here than any other place in the world. Solomon built a chariot city here and a water tunnel which brought fresh water into the city is still well preserved.

6 CAESAREA

Paul was taken as a prisoner here and was later sent to Rome for trial. Hence, this is the very place where Paul set sail for his journey to preach the gospel to the Gentiles so that you and I know the gospel today.

7 THE WESTERN WALL

This is part of the retaining wall from the time of the Second Temple and is the most sacred structure in Judaism. Jews have been praying at the Western Wall for centuries believing that the spot is the holiest site on earth after the Holy of Holies.

8 MOUNT OF OLIVES

The Mount of Olives is where Jesus wept over Jerusalem [Luke 19:37-41], and where He ascended to heaven after His resurrection. It lies to the east of Jerusalem, facing the Golden Gate. When Jesus comes back again, He will descend on the Mount of Olives and enter Jerusalem through the Golden Gate [Zechariah 14:1-4; Ezekiel 44:1-3; 46:1-2, 8].

9 CITY OF DAVID

This is where King David established his capital and pitched a tent to house the Ark of the Covenant. Solomon was anointed here at the Gihon Spring. This is also the place where prophet Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied. It is amazing to be standing at this spot being part of the prophecy that was spoken by the prophets.

10 GARDEN TOMB

This is believed to be Golgotha or literally the “place of a skull”. It is also probably the tomb and site of Christ’s resurrection. We went in and did not find Jesus’ body for He has risen! Hallelujah!

Before you say “I Do”

Weddings are often associated with celebrations and feasting, but how prepared are we to spend the rest of our lives living with the person we choose to walk down the aisle with? Pastor Daniel spent five weeks covering various topics that every Christian couple should consider before saying “I do”.

This topic is both necessary and applicable for my husband and I. We have been married for over two years and like many of our friends, we did not attend any premarital course. What really stood out for me throughout these five sessions was the view on marriage – either as a contract, or a covenant. My marriage so far, has brought me lots of comfort and joy. This made me think further about how I will respond, if things got a little more challenging, or if life gets less comfortable. I have never personally addressed these questions before listening to the sermon, but now, I am clear and I know with certainty what my answer will be.

As Christians, our marriage should be viewed as a sacred covenant. It is a commitment we make as a couple, with God as the witness at the altar. We should not associate our marriage with any terms and conditions often found in a contractual marriage. Instead, we should always keep in mind that there are three important parties that make up our marriage: husband, wife, and God. These three parties are intertwined together and as husband and wife draw close to God, they also draw close to each other.

The next point that I feel is very important to me is on the roles and responsibilities of a husband and wife. The Bible clearly defines what is expected of a husband and wife in a marriage. Ephesians 5:25-29: “Husbands, love your wives [seek the highest good for her and surround her with a caring, unselfish love], just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her... even so husbands should and are morally

obligated to love their own wives as [being in a sense] their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself.” Titus 2:4-5: “That they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

As Christians, our marriage should be viewed as a sacred covenant.

In the world we are living today, the roles and responsibilities of husband and wife are no longer as clearly defined as written in the Bible. Women these days are more educated and independent. They are perfectly capable of supporting themselves and are often asked to be treated as equals to the opposite sex. However, we should not let roles and responsibilities in a marriage be influenced by the environment or culture.

When my husband was asked to take up a position in Shanghai two years ago, I was reluctant to follow. Moving to Shanghai meant that I had to give up my job, leave my friends and family behind and start rebuilding my life afresh. I was being uprooted from my stable and comfortable environment, from the only kind of life I knew. I did not like the idea at all. I procrastinated all I could for a year, justifying my stay with reasons after reasons. When I finally ran out of excuses, I packed my bags and dragged myself unwillingly to Shanghai. Life away from home is different to

say the least. Grocery shopping, doing the laundry, preparing meals – things that I did not even have to spare a thought on back home became the top of my “to-do” list. All these tasks, though necessary, did not bring a sense of satisfaction nor accomplishment to me. I started asking God if Shanghai is really the place I should be in. Slowly but steadily, His words dwelled upon me. A series of studies and sermons in the following months to come felt as though it was tailored specially for me. In our *Women of Faith* group, we studied the book “Satisfied Lives for Desperate Housewives”. Next, along came Dr. Babara Wentroble, preaching on the season of recovery, and finally Pastor Daniel’s session on roles and responsibilities in a marriage. All these put together, gave me the assurance that during this season of my life, this is what I should be doing, and I should carry out my role well.

Lastly, are our in-laws also out-laws? Matthew 19:5-6: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall

become one flesh. So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” Our in-laws should not be out-laws for God expects us to honor our parents. We need to strike a balance between having a good relationship with our in-laws and managing our family without their intervention. I thank God that my husband’s and my relationship with both sets of parents are good.

After spending some time reflecting together, my husband and I now have a clear idea on what position we should take when having to deal with our extended families. Our duty should always be to support each other, presenting a united front whenever a conflict arises between us and our families. Those five weeks of sermons were definitely beneficial to my husband and myself. It made us think through many scenarios that we would not have addressed until we come face to face with the problem. It has helped us to build our marriage on a strong foundation based on Biblical principles.

TESTIMONY

Graeme

Katharine and I got married 36 years ago. Our minister’s wife was Joyce Huggett, one of the best Christian relationship and prayer writers we have known. Some of her books are still in circulation and we strongly recommend them for Christian couples. They insisted that we attend a marriage preparation course prior to our marriage and this proved an invaluable foundation to what has been a wonderful and lasting Christian marriage. Both of us believe that marriage is the foundational relationship for all of society and that strong marriages are the bedrock of strong societies. Yet marriages are under huge attack today.

For us, this sermon series could not have come at a better time. The marriage of our daughter and son-in-law had just hit a crisis and they were talking of splitting up. Immediately after the sermon, we were able to remind them that they are in a covenant marriage and not a contractual marriage. It did the trick. They stayed together and continue to work at rebuilding their marriage. The process is slow, but at a steady progress. Thank God for a timely sermon that

...marriage is the foundational relationship for all of society and strong marriages are the bedrock of strong societies.

hit the mark, not just with us, but with our family all the way over in the UK. The remainder of the series continued the high calibre of that sermon, thoroughly Biblical, thoroughly committing and so very, very timely. How much for married couples, as well as those considering marriage, need this series. It was the highest calibre, and exactly what the Christian church needs today – and needs more of.

We need to uphold marriage values, protect our marriages and celebrate just what a magnificent covenant this is. Marriage is God’s great gift to couples.



Forgiveness for Others, Self, and towards God

On a Saturday in Shanghai, an anointed theologian, Dr. R.T. Kendall, approached the stage to bring a message about “total forgiveness”. “**Greater suffering renders greater anointing of the Holy Spirit**”, was his thesis after looking at the life of Joseph found in Genesis.

The foundation for total forgiveness rests upon three intentional actions: **we totally let the enemy off the hook; we kiss vindication goodbye; we pray for and bless those who have hurt us.** As we look at Proverbs 4, we can ask for wisdom and understanding in every situation in life. The Hebrew meaning equates wisdom with anointing. We can see a transformation of life, as we read about Joseph in his early years, boasting about dreams and visions to the last chapters of Genesis, where he cried with humility and

faith as he met his brothers. Joseph was sold to slavery; he was taken to jail unjustly; he was taken out of jail because it was the will of God to find him and restore his life. After living through injustice and learning to forgive and walk in humility, God is ready to bring him into the courts of Pharaoh. God’s plan for character development in the life of Joseph was that the broken Joseph, would be transformed into a new Joseph, sensitive and obedient to the voice of his Heavenly Father. Dr. Kendall shared the signs that show when we have totally forgiven a person:

- ① We tell God how hurt we are. We share the story with only one trusted believer.
- ② We will invite the enemy to come close and not allow them to be afraid of us [Genesis 45:4].

③ We look at the situation with eyes of faith. We look for the kingdom purposes in our lives and those we are hurt by.

④ We let our enemies “save face”; we protect their names and keep no records of wrongs. We forgive like Jesus did from the cross: “Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”

⑤ Forgive our brothers and sisters and bless them as Joseph did with his brothers. Vengeance is not an option for the believer who desires to walk in increased anointing.

⑥ We make a list of enemies; we pray for them and bless them. Since we are sons and daughters made in the image of God almighty, we should live a life of anointing and grace, like Jesus our Savior.

We look at the situation with eyes of faith. We look for the kingdom purposes in our lives and those we are hurt by.

Forgiving Self

Dr. Kendall changed the focus in the afternoon to reflect upon what cripples us from joy. What are the past sins or failures in our lives that are keeping us from loving people more? The question to be answered was why should I forgive myself? Simply, we are set free for more anointing. He expanded on some of the benefits from forgiving one’s self. God says to do it and so this act honors the blood and the work of Jesus Christ.

The evil one wants us to stay in bondage; he wants us to live in guilt and in a mindset of self-righteousness. Forgiveness takes us out of the place of bondage. As we walk in freedom or “common grace”, we have nothing to prove to anyone, only a strong awareness of grace. We will not be paralyzed by our past sins; our physical

health will not be compromised. Our emotional and mental health will be stronger and less fragile.

Forgiving ourselves will bring greater intimacy in our time with God. Dr. Kendall also clarified the difference of “pseudo guilt” or false guilt; worries about jobs, family problems, reputation of how people view us in the workplace or at home, can be an obstacle to forgiving oneself. The attitude of self-pity or self-righteousness can keep us in bondage from the work of Atonement. We are assured from Matthew 1:6 and Romans 8:28, that sins allow God the Restorer and Redeemer to invade a person’s life and situations for His Glory.

Forgiving God

In the midst of natural disasters, death, famines and wars, we find assurance and hope in Habakkuk 2:3-4 and 3:17-18, revelation will happen at the end of time. **The just will live by faith and will continue to rejoice even if the crops fail to bear fruit. The righteous person will live by God’s faithfulness.** In the books of Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, one-day God will clear His name. Presently, there are two worldviews: the secular view of the atheist or pure scientist, and the Biblical view of the children of God. Dr. Kendall calls this season of time the “privilege of faith”. In John 11:15, Jesus said “I’m glad I was not there at the home on the day Lazarus died, so that you may believe.” In Revelations 1:7, we read that every eye will see Him and all the tribes will mourn and wail. Zechariah 12 states that mourning and weeping in Jerusalem will be great. The global family of Christians, the Bride of Christ, will be overcome by the blood of the Lamb. But, the non-believers will weep bitterly at Christ’s return. Dr. Kendall closed with practical steps of how to forgive God and keep a heart pure before the Father:

- ① Be honest and pour out my heart before God.
- ② Make a list of items to be grateful or thankful for.
- ③ Fight against self-pity or self-entitlement.
- ④ Choose to believe that God is just and in permitting the story, no matter what the suffering.
- ⑤ Be willing to wait and see how God will solve the problem and end the chapter.

Finally, if at the end of our lives we never see the answer to a prayer, or never get the prayer request we hoped for, will we join Habakkuk 3:17-18: “even if the fig tree does not bud, and there are no grapes on the vines and the fields produce no food, yet, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior, the Sovereign Lord is my strength.”

Total forgiveness of others, self, and God is a lifestyle that will strengthen our intimacy with God and will usher us into greater anointing as seen in the lives of Joseph in the Old Testament and of Jesus in the New Testament.



Give
Thank
TO THE
Lord
for He is
good

PSALM 107:1