



**salt shakers**  
joel 3:16 matthew 5:16

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**“ I WILL CONFESS  
MY TRANSGRESSIONS  
UNTO THE LORD... ”**

- ✦ **“ ...how serious are you about leaving your sinful ways, sinful behaviour, yes, your besetting sin or sins behind? ”** *Pastor Kenneth Koole, Is My Repentance True?*
- ✦ **“ ...follow-up work requires meet-ups during the week to get to know the newcomer better, to continue to forge a genuine friendship with him or her. ”**  
*Marcus Wee, Follow-up Work: The Individual (1)*
- ✦ **“ We gather to meditate on and apply the Word. But, what drives us to study together, and to do so weekly, monthly, yearly? ”** *Lim Yang Zhi, Communion of the Saints*  
*- Youth Society: Coming Together*

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## DEAR READERS, WELCOME TO THE 33RD ISSUE OF SALT SHAKERS!

We are pleased to say that the circulation of Salt Shakers has increased substantially in the first half of 2015, particularly among our friends overseas, both in our online and hardcopy publications. We thank God, Whose work alone this magazine is, and Who has brought Salt Shakers through this phase of growth. We know that this will not always be, for the days approach where the fruits of such endeavours diminish. Nonetheless, we are grateful for a time of peace, when the Truth may travel freely and be appreciated by many.

It is a time of great busy-ness and fanfare in Singapore, as we approach the 50th anniversary celebrations of the nation's independence on 9th August. For many, the celebrations are all the more significant following the passing of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, one of the great founding fathers of Singapore, earlier this year. Patriotic flags are appearing on cars and from the balconies of homes everywhere; many jet aircraft can be heard in the skies rehearsing for the National Day Parade. For us, we are reminded that all things in heaven and on earth, including the rise and fall of nations [Acts 17:26], as well as the current prosperity enjoyed by Singapore, are all determined by the Lord's sovereign decree, set from before the foundations of the earth.

At the time of writing, we read of many disasters around the world, including the shocking news that a number of Singaporean primary school children and their teacher perished in a 6.0 magnitude earthquake while climbing Mount Kinabalu in Malaysia—a mountain hike that is considered by many to be relatively safe. Many of us have made that trek ourselves. Some claim that ten western tourists taking nude photos at the peak the weekend before the earthquake angered the "mountain spirit". But to us, these are signs of the coming of our Lord, Who when asked what the signs shall be, prophesied earthquakes in many places, and the abounding of iniquity [Matthew 24]. Let us not be surprised—nor afraid—when we hear of such things, but know that the day of Christ draws ever nearer, and watch therefore.

To new readers of Salt Shakers, welcome! It is our prayer in the committee that you may be edified through the articles in this distinctly Reformed magazine, and we encourage you to *pass the salt* as well!

Blessed reading,  
Lee Yang





# Ready to Meet Christ?

>> Paul Liu



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The title of this editorial was the theme for CERC's camp in June this year. The theme verses were taken from 2 Timothy 4:6-8, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." We thank God for His faithful Word delivered through the five messages by Prof. Gritters.

The five messages were systematically divided so that we could properly understand, love, and prepare for the second coming of our Lord Jesus both as the Church and as individuals. For the benefit of those who were not able to attend the camp with us, I shall try to do the speeches justice and summarise briefly the five messages.

Message 1 was titled, "Loving His Appearing (Looking Up)". Before we can even approach the question

of whether we are ready to meet Christ, a more fundamental question we should ask ourselves is whether Christ's coming is even real to us! Because, if Christ's coming is nothing more than the fantastical arrival of aliens to earth, then why should we—or anyone—even prepare for it? Those who teach Premillennialism or Postmillennialism duly have no need to prepare for the second coming of Christ; for the former, rapture conveniently takes them out of the end times and persecution, and for the latter, the way the world is becoming less and less blessed and Christianised simply puts the second coming of Christ outside of present reality. For us who believe in Amillennialism, we are aware that we live in the end times where we shall be persecuted by the enemies of God, but yet we are also acutely aware that the second coming of Christ is so blessed and glorious that we have so much to look forward to in these times. We shall see Christ, our Lord and Saviour, with our very own eyes! We shall receive crowns as children of the Most High! Christ shall be glorified as He comes to judge the world and redeem His precious bride! We think fondly of the second coming of Jesus, and we—of all Christians—must never forget to look up.

In the second and third message, Prof. Gritters addressed the "course" that we need to finish as the Church of Christ. In Message 2, we learnt about "Looking Out". An important question put to us was, "What is the

Church's place in the world?" For many Christians, the Church has a small place within the world (which they call the Kingdom). And so, the Church has to serve the good of the Kingdom, to improve the world, change culture for the better, bring about social good etc. Having such an understanding of the Church will cause a local church to pursue causes to improve the physical lives and earthly comforts of those who are needy and dying. However, we must know that the Church is the Kingdom, and it stands in opposition to the world. Doing missions is always at the world's expense. Though the devil cannot do anything about it, a saint converted is nevertheless a blow in his face. As such, a local church has to, as its primary mission, seek the lost and publish the Gospel of Jesus Christ far and wide! (Acts 8:4, 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8) In this Gospel, we must never leave out the message that our Lord will soon appear at His appointed Day!

After "Looking Out" comes "Looking In"—the second part of the Church's "course". Especially in the last days, the Church is called to look in at what it has been entrusted and keep the faith. What is this faith? As also seen in Q&A21 of the Heidelberg Catechism, faith to us is both objective and subjective. It is the "certain knowledge" that all of God's Word is truth; it is also the "assured confidence" that the promises of salvation and all its benefits are for ME as God's child. What is the Word

of God? It is the Bible, which speaks of Christ, what He did, and why He did it from the first word to the last. What is this confidence? It is the personal, experiential, embrace of our Lord Jesus Christ. By these, we understand that our Lord does not just come for His people, but He indeed comes for ME. Since this faith is one that is true, it also manifests itself as one that works and is alive. One very important way in which the Church keeps the faith is by Covenant instruction of its young ones. Lovingly teaching young ones and causing them to respond with understanding constitutes nothing less than a tenacious defense of the faith. (Nehemiah 8:8) Keeping the faith is no easy task, as the Apostle Paul called it a fight, or literally, an “agony”. But yet, it is the will of God that His Church should grow by means of keeping the faith as she looks toward the appearing of her blessed Husband. The last two messages addressed the “course” that we need to finish as a believer in the body of Christ.

“

Christ shall  
be glorified  
as He comes  
to judge the  
world and  
redeem His  
precious  
bride!

”

Message 4 was a call for us Christians to be prepared for trouble, and not to fear it. In order to prepare for persecution, we must first be aware of persecution’s purpose: it is to either silence the witness of Jesus Christ in us or destroy our very spiritual lives. We may be silenced either by a fear of speaking up for the cause of Christ or by our physical deaths. If we succumb to persecution and reject the Truth that we know, then our spiritual lives will be destroyed and the confession of our mouths and Christian lives will be no more. The way to prepare for persecution is no rocket science or new discovery. We need to daily mortify the old man; we must learn to abhor everything that dishonours God and Christ. We also need to daily quicken the new man; we must learn to love Christ and His cause more than anything else in the world. These things must not be done in a lackadaisical manner for we are preparing to be fearless of persecution and death! A memorable example was how elite soldiers have to be brought close to death in their training time and again before they became fearless of death and ready to face anything in battle. Similarly, we must prepare wholeheartedly, and with great diligence, that by the grace of God, we may be well prepared for persecution when it comes. A great comfort for us is God’s loving purpose when He allows us to go through persecution. First, when the wicked persecute God’s people, they fill up the cup of iniquity and are ripened more and more for destruction. Second, persecution purifies the church of hypocrites. Third, persecution drives the church to preach the Gospel everywhere (Acts 11:19-21). Fourth, we become more and more prepared to meet Jesus because persecution loosens our ties

with earthly things. Indeed, when Daniel’s three friends were persecuted in the fiery furnace, the only things that were consumed in the fire were the cords that bound them, causing them to be freed! May we loosen our hold on earthly treasures, as we reach forth with open hands to those things that are before us, even the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13-14).

As we began with “Looking Up”, so also we ended with “Looking Up”—though in a different sense. The final message was about “Looking Up”, in the sense that we should not be despondent (looking down) but anticipate good, be joyful, and look forward to meeting our Lord! The tense of the word “love” in “love His appearing” is a special one because it does not only mean that we will love His appearing, but it also means that we have loved His appearing. As those who love Christ’s appearing, we have this hope in us that causes us to wait and watch, but at the same time also work. The crown of righteousness that Apostle Paul speaks of indicates “work” and “busy-ness” during his time on this earth. As believers, our “course” is not just to avoid sin, but also to be most busy with Kingdom work and righteousness. We must be concerned if our lives are filled with all kinds of earthly work so that only the leftovers of our time and energy are given to Kingdom work. Two parables were highlighted in the message: First, the parable of the virgins teaches us that in our waiting, there must be a spiritual reality (oil) to our outward confession (lamps) of the coming of our Husband; we genuinely believe and hope for His coming, and order our lives accordingly. Second, the parable of the talents teaches us that we have various duties and responsibilities

that our Master has given us, “every man according to his several ability” (Matthew 25:15). Therefore, we are to be faithful servants who work diligently and strive to gain a profit for our Lord Jesus. We must not bury our calling for that is what a slothful and wicked servant would do. What good shall we receive? Even now, we receive unbelievable rewards—whatever joy we receive when we forgo something

for Christ is hundredfold more than the joy we would have had we kept it for ourselves (Mark 10:28-30). The final reward comes when we are crowned with righteousness. This crown of life, glory, and righteousness, is not something that is outside of Christ our Lord—it is in fact our Lord Jesus Himself, the infinite blessedness of being in His presence and knowing the glory of our loving God in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Beloved friend, are you ready to meet Christ?**

If you find this summary of the messages edifying and encouraging, do take some time to hear the full message recordings online at <https://sites.google.com/site/cercaudiobackup/home/church-camp/2015>. May God bless you richly and cause His Word to be profitable for your soul.



*Prof. Herman Hanko* is a retired professor of the Protestant Reformed Seminary. His present work consists of preaching at Hope Protestant Reformed Church, writing for the Salt Shakers magazine, writing in a forum for the young people in Singapore, and writing new books. He has been to CERC many times and is dear to the people here.

We are nearing the end of our discussions on what it means to be Reformed. I shall write a few articles on Reformed church government, and these will conclude our discussion.

There have been different kinds of church government over the centuries of the history of the church of Christ.

Although variations have abounded, basically, three different kinds of church government have been practiced.

We may call the first kind “Hierarchical Church Government.” It is practiced especially by the Roman Catholic Church in its extreme form. The rule of the church, under this form of church government, is rule from individuals who have supreme authority in the church and determine all affairs in the church. The Roman Catholic Church places the pope at the top of the pile: he claims to be the sole representative of Christ in the church and tells the whole church what Christ wants. He thinks he knows exactly the mind of Christ.

Under him are tiers or levels of clerics who also have more limited authority, but their authority is always under the authority of the pope. Generally speaking, the levels go down from the pope to the cardinals, then to

the archbishops, then to the bishops, and then to the priests. At each level, as one moves down from a higher to a lower level, the authority of those occupying their level of authority is more limited in scope.

The Anglican Church, found primarily in the British Isles, has the same form of church government as the Roman Catholic Church, except it does not have a pope. The reason for this goes back to the way the Reformation unfolded in England. The highest official in the Anglican Church in England is the Archbishop of Canterbury. The people in the pew have no official voice at all in the government of the church.

The second kind of church government is that practiced by Baptists and other groups. It is sometimes called “Independent Church Government” or, more generally, “Congregational Church Government”. This form of church government places all the

rule of a congregation in the hands of the adult, confessing members of the congregation. This form of church government is a sort of ecclesiastical democracy, a sort of government “of the people, by the people, and for the people”—as Abraham Lincoln characterised American democracy in his Gettysburg Address. Such congregations have no “office bearers” in the Scriptural sense, but a Board of Trustees who execute the decisions of the congregation.

Churches with this form of government are also usually independentistic. That is, each congregation is independent and has no governmental connections with other congregations. These independent churches will often join with other like-minded churches in alliances or assemblies, but no other ecclesiastical body may interfere with the internal affairs of a congregation.

The third type of church government is usually called “Presbyterian Church Government”. It is the kind of church government practiced by our Protestant Reformed Churches, by Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, by Ballymena Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland, and by the Protestant Reformed Churches organised in the Philippines. It is, with some differences, the church government practiced by Presbyterian churches. It is also practiced, with some differences, by Reformed Churches world-wide.

The name “Presbyterian” comes from the Greek word *presbuter*. It is the Greek word for “elder” and refers to the office of elder as established by the apostle Paul, especially in the churches organised on his missionary journeys. The name therefore, refers to that form of church government in

which elders, holding a special office, rule in the congregation. It is the form of church government that we will be discussing in the following articles.

Two more remarks have to be made as part of an introduction to these articles.

The first is that Reformed or Presbyterian church government holds to the principle that Scripture is decisive in determining what form of church government is to be used in the church of Christ.

This principle is not accepted by many churches. Some churches argue that Scripture gives no principles of church government that are binding on the New Testament Church. The argument is that the Scriptures only give us a description of the work of the apostles in the New Testament Church and so give us some (very scanty) information of what the apostles did when they organised a church. But their work is not of any regulative value and is not binding on the churches of the post-apostolic centuries.

Sometimes this argument is bolstered by appeal to the history of the church. It is pointed out that after three centuries of church history, early church political practices were thrown to the wind and the hierarchical church government of Roman Catholicism was developed. This form of church government prevailed until the Reformation, a millennium later. If God has preserved his church throughout all history, he would have preserved a Biblical form of church government as well. We cannot conceive, so they argue, of God allowing His church to be ruled by popes if the Bible gives us a specific form of church government. So, the argument goes, it

really does not matter what form of church government is practiced. The church must decide that question for itself and the decision must be based, not on Scripture, but on the sole question: How best can the church function in the society she lives in? Circumstances determine the form of church government.

Those who hold to “Presbyterian Church Government” repudiate that position and insist that Scripture also lays down the principles of the form of church government that must prevail in the church. I hope to demonstrate that this is true in further article.

The second point that has to be made is that the *Church Order* that is used in Reformed Churches does not contain these principles. Look as you may, you cannot find them. Reformed Churches do not have officially adopted principles of church government. Many books have been written that lay down these principles; and in the Reformed tradition, there are extremely helpful books; but the best ones are in Dutch and have not been translated.

I find this rather sad. We follow the **rules** for church life defined in our *Church Order*, but the *Church Order*, based as it is on principles, does not tell us what these principles are. And it seems to me that knowledge of the rules without knowledge of the principles underlying them fosters a spirit of disrespect for the rules.

I am not interested in using these articles for *Salt Shakers* as an explanation of the *Church Order* we use. I am interested in the principles underlying our *Church Order*. God willing, we will look deeper into these principles in the following articles.



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## Introduction

Charismatic Christianity is a very significant religious movement in our day. One estimate of the number of renewalists, as Pentecostals, Charismatics and Neo-Charismatics are collectively called, in the world in the year 2000 was 523,767,400—over a half a billion people.<sup>1</sup> In other words, about one-twelfth of the planet's population in Y2K were Pentecostals, Charismatics, or Neo-Charismatics. This is also widely reckoned to be the sector of Christendom that is growing at the fastest rate. One church historian even called Charismatic Christianity or renewalism “the fastest growing form of Christianity ever.”<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, and perhaps most disturbingly, there is also a changing perception of Charismatic Christianity and its views on the part of many Protestant, Calvinistic and Reformed people. They used to be called “Holy Rollers” who existed on the lunatic

fringe of Christendom. But now, lo and behold, they are faithful brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ! “Yes,” many would say, “we have our differences with them but we can cooperate with Pentecostals, Charismatics, and Neo-Charismatics, and we have a lot to learn from them.” This article deals with a very large and rapidly growing movement that is becoming more and more acceptable to many in our day.

What is at the heart of the Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Neo-Charismatic movements? The answer is a peculiar doctrine of the Holy Spirit. They maintain that the supernatural gifts of the Spirit, especially tongues, miracles and on-going prophecy, are for today. Thus they are increasingly claiming that the Spirit is restoring the offices of prophet and even super-prophet, and apostle and even super-apostle. By these means and others, they reckon that the Spirit is empowering the individual renewalist and renewal churches to worship and evangelise with great gladness and power.

Pentecostals, Charismatics, and Neo-Charismatics especially emphasise the *experience* of the Holy Spirit—a supernatural and extraordinary experience; an experience involving rapturous joy, glorious spontaneity and freedom before God—which is, of course, very appealing to many in our day. This, the renewalists believe, is genuine New Testament Christianity. This is getting back to

the Book of Acts and apostolic church life. Furthermore, Pentecostals, Charismatics and Neo-Charismatics present their movements not only as a return to the apostolic past but also the way of the future. “God is doing a new thing in the earth; He is sending us a glorious end-time revival,” they claim. “We are dynamic and doing great things for the Lord. Look at the size of our movement and its growth in a little over a century. This is the way of future success and blessing for Christianity.”

Let us look at the history and origins of Pentecostalism, Charismaticism, and Neo-Charismaticism, following the commonly adopted three waves classification of C. Peter Wagner.

### 1st Wave: Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism was the first wave of the Spirit which broke over the church. In 1906, in Los Angeles, California, a revival occurred at 312 Azusa Street, led by William J. Seymour, a black holiness preacher who believed in entire sanctification. On that occasion, people claimed to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit and to speak in tongues. They said that this was another Pentecost like that recorded in Acts 2. Church historian Vinson Synan, who is favourable to the movement, describes the scene:

A visitor to Azusa Street during the three and a half years the revival continued would have met scenes that beggared description. Men and

women would shout, weep, dance, fall into trances, speak and sing in tongues, and interpret their messages into English ... In the middle of it all was “Elder” Seymour, who rarely preached [!] and much of the time kept his head covered in an empty packing crate behind the pulpit. At times he would be seen walking through the crowds with five- and ten-dollar bills sticking out of his hip pockets that people had crammed there unnoticed by him. At other times he would “preach” by hurling challenges at anyone who did not accept his views or by encouraging seekers at the woodplank altars to “let the tongues come forth.” To others he would exclaim: “Be emphatic! Ask for salvation, [entire] sanctification, the baptism with the Holy Ghost, or divine healing.”<sup>3</sup>

What mayhem! People dancing, shouting and singing gibberish, with Seymour, head under a crate behind the pulpit or striding through the excited crowds with greenbacks poking out of his back pockets or hollering Pentecostal commands. This is not the work of God’s Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:33,40; 2 Timothy 1:7)! From Azusa Street, the Pentecostal revival spread throughout the United States and around the world, leading to the formation of separate Pentecostal denominations, like the Assemblies of God.

### **2nd Wave: Charismaticism**

Some fifty years after the Azusa Street revival, the second wave broke: Charismaticism. Like Pentecostalism, Charismaticism began in California. On a Sunday morning in 1959, Dennis Bennett, an Episcopalian clergyman, announced to his congregation in Van Nuys, California, that he had been baptised with the Holy Spirit and had spoken in tongues.

Like Pentecostals, Charismatics believe in a baptism with the Holy Spirit subsequent to or after conversion, which is evidenced by tongue-speaking. But, unlike Pentecostals, Charismatics do not separate into different denominations. Thus, there are Charismatic Anglicans, Charismatic Lutherans, Charismatic Presbyterians, Charismatic Roman Catholics, Charismatic Methodists, etc. Like Pentecostalism, Charismaticism also spread around the globe.

### **3rd Wave: Neo-Charismaticism**

Some twenty years after Rev. Dennis Bennett’s thunderbolt, the third wave broke: Neo-Charismaticism. While the first two waves arose and crashed on the shores of sunny California, the third wave was merely *named* in California by C. Peter Wagner of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena in the early 1980s.

Like Pentecostals and Charismatics, third wavers or Neo-Charismatics practise the pentecostal or charismatic gifts but, unlike Pentecostals and Charismatics, the Neo-Charismatics do not believe that baptism with the Holy Spirit as a second work of grace subsequent to the new birth is necessary in order to exercise spiritual gifts. Nor do they view tongues as the initial physical evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Third wavers tend to be less obtrusive and seek to be less divisive in practising their gifts.

### **Effects of the Three Waves**

These waves began just over a century ago with Pentecostalism in 1906 and continued with Charismaticism in 1959 and its explosion through the 1960s, which was followed by the third wave of Neo-Charismaticism a couple of decades later. These tsunamis have “tossed” people “to and fro” with their false doctrine for the last hundred

years (cf. Eph. 4:14). Thankfully, these three waves have left us high and dry!

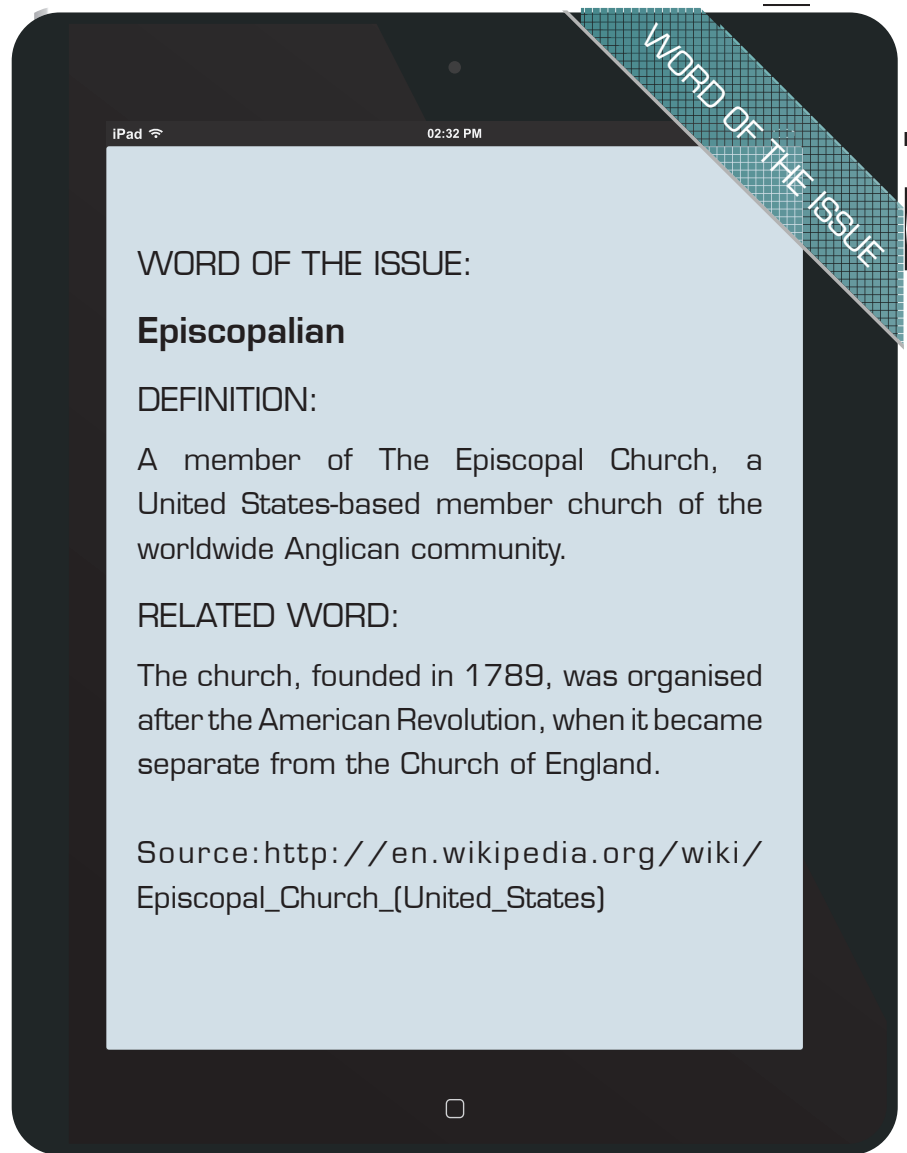
Within this broad movement of Pentecostalism, Charismaticism, and Neo-Charismaticism, also known as renewalism or Charismatic Christianity, there are various societies or groups, such as the Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship International, the Latter Rain Movement and the Signs and Wonders Movement, which holds that, unless you are working miracles, your evangelistic labours have all the power of a damp squib (contra Romans 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24). During the Toronto Blessing, which began in 1994, people fell backwards and claimed to be slain in the Spirit. More recently, Canadian Todd Bentley of Fresh Fire Ministries of Florida asserted that he has raised people from the dead—one favourable report said over twenty and another reckoned over thirty.<sup>4</sup> Even in N. Ireland, a disciple of the Fresh Fire Ministries claimed he had resurrected a young man in the Tiger’s Bay area of Belfast.

The century or more of Charismatic Christianity has left us with many unforgettable images, beginning with its founder with his head in a packing crate and including people being slain in the Spirit and doing “carpet time”. Some remember Rodney Howard-Browne blasphemously claiming to be the Holy Ghost bartender. Who can forget Benny Hinn taking off his jacket, waving it and blowing, so that people fall backwards? Into this mix, we must throw in the gibberish of tongues-speaking, animal noises, uncontrollable laughter and various other bizarre antics, both on-stage and in the crowd. On a sadder note, there are the pictures of sick and disabled people going home unhealed again after yet another big charismatic



meeting. Many of us know people, including family members, who have been caught up and messed up by Charismatic Christianity. Some have taken years to recover, while others have never gotten over it.

Beloved, let us walk in the “old paths” of biblical, Reformed and creedal Christianity. This is the “good way” to the glory of the Triune God revealed in Jesus Christ. In Covenant fellowship with our Father and by His Holy Spirit, we and our children find “rest” for our souls (Jeremiah 6:16).

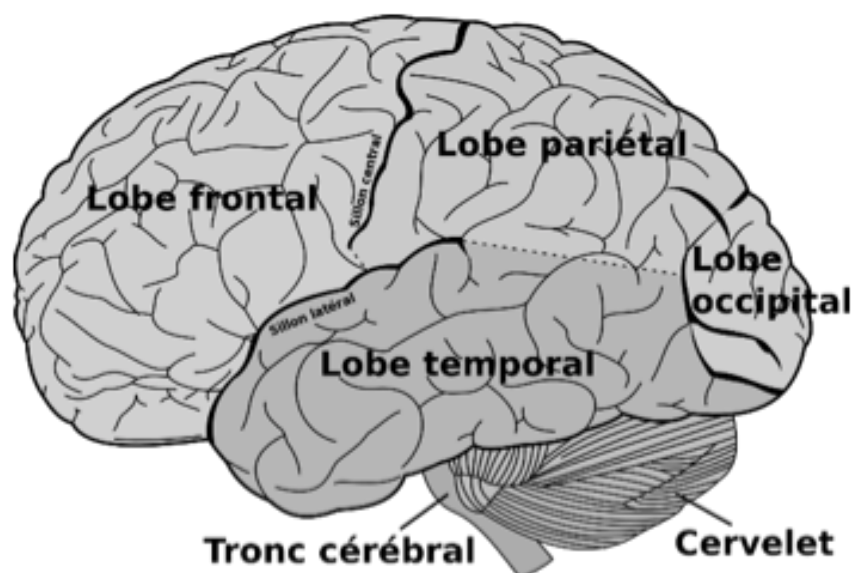


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**Isaiah 64:8 “But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.”**

Our human body is one of the most amazing and fascinating creations of our Potter’s hand, something we ourselves often take for granted. Despite having only studied but a fraction of the intricacies and interplay of anatomy and physiology (for our very engineering is infinitely

complex), the work of our Lord in our creation is undeniable. Scientific study can only bring us so far; even with the discovery of the building blocks of life, and how they work together in complex processes, science can never explain fully how or why these building blocks and complex processes exist. The mysteries of which belong in the domain and perfect wisdom of our chief Designer, Mechanic, and Engineer—our



Sovereign God. What is even more awesome is the knowledge that our creation only took God a single day. In contrast, researchers and scientists have taken thousands of years and yet only have a small beginning in their understanding.

Of all our complexity, I find the human brain most remarkable. The average human brain measures 15cm in length and weighs a mere 1.3-1.4kg. It has an average surface area of 2,500 cm<sup>2</sup>, contributed by the numerous folds in the brain (gyri and sulci) that allow massive amounts of information to be stored and processed. It governs just about every other function in our body, and is essential for life support. Simply put, the rest of our organs are responsible for collecting information and executing orders while the brain is the headquarters that is responsible for processing information, making decisions, and giving orders.

The organisation of information and function in our brains can be mapped anatomically to identifiable regions that are similar from one person to the next. Just to name a few major ones:

**1) The motor cortex** is responsible for the initiation of every single movement producible by our human body, from the winking of your eye to

the swinging of your arm while playing tennis or badminton. The cortex itself has a map known as a homunculus that maps different muscle groups to different areas of the cortex.

**2) The sensory cortex** processes sensory information that is collected from our peripheries (skin) including pain, temperature, fine touch, and a perception of ourselves in space (this is what tells you whether your toe is pointing upwards or downwards without looking at it, or the estimation of how far your hand is from another person).

**3) The visual, auditory, smell and taste centres** which receive and process information from our eyes, ears, nose, and tongue respectively with regard to the rest of our senses.

**4) The cerebellum** which is a structure lying in the lower part of our brain plays a major role in the function of balance and coordination.

**5) The respiratory centre** that initiates and coordinates the function of breathing, responding promptly to small changes in oxygen and carbon dioxide levels in our blood.

**6) The frontal cortex** which is the centre of logic and intelligence, receiving information from all other

parts of the brain, in order to make complex plans and decisions. It is also responsible for how we behave in society and towards our peers.

**7) Centres that process emotion and store long term memory**, such as the amygdala and hippocampus.

The above list is far from exhaustive, with each area playing a far more complex role than what is described. Moreover, every region of the brain is connected to another and to the rest of our body via a complex but organised system of neurones (centre of information), nerves (transporters of information) and synapses (the connections between the neurones and nerves) that allows us to perform various functions. It is beautiful to consider the amount of “communication” going on in our brain in every move that we make, including reflexes which bypass our frontal cortex entirely. For example, when we touch a burning kettle, pain receptors in our skin send information to our sensory cortex that in turn triggers activity in our motor cortex, prompting relevant muscle groups to move away from the burning kettle. Or the thoughts and emotions generated when you witness a moving scene, which involves information flowing seamlessly from your eyes to our visual cortex and subsequently to the frontal cortex and amygdala, all of which occurs in fractions of a second. If one viewed the human brain in a single instant, and information could be viewed as light, it would be a scene on a grander scale than fireworks.

The frontal cortex of the human brain sets us apart from the rest of the animal kingdom, created larger and more developed, enabling a higher level of learning and functioning that explains the development across the

facets of human society that is not seen in other species. It brings to mind God's decree at the creation of man in Genesis 1:26: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

It is also the higher functioning of our frontal cortex that gives humans the impression of free will, through decision making and choice. We know from scripture that God is sovereign over all things, who "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians 1:11). How then do we reconcile the reason for this higher level of functioning that God has created us with? What is His sovereign purpose in giving humans a brain that appears to permit the will of man and a perceived independence from God, a brain that can be susceptible to questioning God and Scripture? Understanding that God works all things for His own glory, through the salvation of those He loves is essential to coming to terms with these questions.

First, as with all things, that man should have intelligence and an ability to make choices is part of God's sovereign plan, and that includes

every conscious and unconscious decision that we make, which He not only has foreknowledge of, but has also foreordained. Second, the mind which believes that it has freedom of will "to be like God himself" is actually blinded in corruption and judgement because of the Fall and is only and always going to choose the way of rebellion against God. God in His great mercy and grace enlightens the minds of His elect that they may be led to the Gospel, and be made alive in conscious faith through the revelations of Scripture and the working of the Holy Spirit. The wicked, left in darkness, are turned away from the truth, all the while believing that they have freely determined what they believe in (2 Thessalonians 2:11). Third, only the elect, who have been given faith in God, can see that there is truly no will of man, but only the Will of God that manifests itself in every part of our lives; while others are convicted and imprisoned under the falsehood of man's freewill. The intelligence that God has blessed us with is but a facility through which He brings about our faith, and uses in the spreading of His Gospel.

It is of interest, that there have been studies which show that the functioning of the frontal cortex is not only a matter of individual intelligence, but also determines our ability to live and work within a societal

context. Living creatures tend to live in proportionally larger and more sophisticated communities in relation to the size of their frontal cortex. What are the implications? First, that humans were not created to exist as individuals within a community, but to be able to excel within the workings of a community for the overall good of that community. And, second, for the Christian, there is no community that is of greater importance than that of the one Church of Jesus Christ that we are called to serve. 1 Corinthians 12:12: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ."

In summary, scientifically, the human brain that we have been given confers an intelligence that has immense potential for all kinds of functions. After the Fall, it has been used only for wickedness in rebellion against God. Only in our Lord Jesus Christ can our brain be "healed" to begin learning righteousness and obedience to our great God. The proper workings of the brain are too awesome to behold, and does not fall short in wonder in comparison to the great mountains, seas and nature all around us—a testimony to the marvels of our Creator. It is a privilege and responsibility that God has blessed us with, which we, as Christians, are called to employ to serve His purpose.

“

What is even more awesome is  
the knowledge that our creation  
only took God a single day...

”



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The office of elder is good!

Paul told Timothy, “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Timothy 3:1).

The Belgic Confession calls “every one . . . to esteem . . . the elders of the church very highly for their work’s sake . . .” (Article 31).

The *Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons* calls the office of elder “an honourable office of government over others.”

Yes, the office of elder is good.

Because the office of elder is good, it is proper for men in the church to desire this office. In fact, it is proper for men in the church to long for the office of elder, to set their heart upon it, to reach out for it, to seek it earnestly, to strive for it, to crave it, to aspire to it, and to yearn after it. Such intense desire for the office of elder is not condemned by Scripture, but encouraged. “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office

of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Timothy 3:1).

In this verse, Paul uses two different words for desire, even though the KJV translates them both as *desire* or *desireth*. The first word (“If a man *desire* the office of a bishop”) means to reach out for something, to stretch and strain one’s self toward it in order to grasp it. The second word (“he *desireth* a good work”) means to crave something with yearning, to set one’s passions upon a thing with earnest longing. These are strong words to describe strong feelings! And these strong feelings of desire for the office of elder are appropriate for the men of CERC.

Perhaps we are not as comfortable with this idea as we should be. Perhaps we feel guilty if we want to be an office-bearer in the church, attributing it to our sinful pride. Perhaps we would be suspicious of a man in our midst who would be so eager to be an elder, wondering what sinful ambition drove him. Perhaps we think that the most trustworthy men are those who must be compelled to be elders, but not those who desire to be elders. This attitude is not Biblical and must not be nurtured among us. The office and work of an elder is good, and it is healthy for our men to desire this office.

However, the reasons why a man desires the office make all the difference. Having good reasons for desiring the office makes the desire good; and, having evil reasons for

desiring the office makes the desire sinful.

What are some evil reasons men might have in desiring the office? For one, a man might be ambitious for personal honour and prestige. The office of elder is a place of authority in Christ’s church. The congregation must submit to the rule of the elders, and they must give due honour to the men for their works’ sake. A man must be careful that he does not desire the office out of a sinful ambition to climb high in the sight of other men.

Another evil reason might be an idle curiosity to know people’s secrets. As an elder, a man learns many things about the personal lives of the members of the congregation. As he labours in pastoral visitations, pastoral care committees, or discipline committees, he is called to uncover and address underlying sins and problems. Other people’s sin and shame may make savoury tidbits for the old man of sin, but men may not seek the office merely to satisfy their idle curiosity.

The desire for earthly wealth is also an evil reason for seeking the office. This applies especially to the minister, who is also an elder, because the minister is financially supported by the church. If the church has some wealth, it is possible that some of that wealth finds its way to the minister, whether through public salary or private gifts. It is proper for a church to support its pastor, because the labourer is worthy

of his hire (Luke 10:7), but a man may be tempted to seek the office in order to fleece the sheep.

Yet another sinful reason for seeking the office is the power to hurt one's enemies in the church. Although it is sinful for us to be at enmity with each other, members of the church do not always get along. A man in office has opportunity to use his authority and position to get revenge on those he does not care for. Whether it is by smearing their name among the other office-bearers or the congregation, threatening them with censure, or even unjustly judging their cause, an elder may have leverage over those he despises.

All of these sinful reasons can be summarised as pride. Every man must struggle against pride in his life, including those who seek the office of elder. Even when a man has godly reasons for seeking the office, he finds to his shame that there is much fleshly pride mingled. Men, this gives us constant reason for repentance and humility before God as we cast our evil pride at the foot of our Saviour's cross. Let us forsake our vanity and pray for the mind of Christ.

What are some of the godly reasons for a man to desire the office of elder? First, a love for Christ and a desire to serve Him. There are many ways to serve the Lord, and every member of the church has his own station and calling in that service. Mothers, fathers, singles, youth, aged, rich, poor, sick, or healthy—all have their own calling before God. Those who have been given the qualifications for office in the church can give expression to their love of Christ by pressing their gifts into Christ's service in office. What a glorious way to exercise one's gifts, by being a servant in the Lord's house!

Another reason is love for God's people and a desire to care for them on Christ's behalf. The office does not exist for the sake of the men who hold it, but for the sake of the people whom they serve. The office of elder may be a position of authority, but an elder is given authority for the sake of serving Christ's sheep. The sheep are precious to the Good Shepherd, so precious that He laid down His life for them. Loving Christ, the elder will also love Christ's sheep, and be willing to lay down his time, energy, and life for them.

Another godly reason for desiring the office of elder is a love for the Truth and a desire to maintain and promote it. Elders have an important role in guarding the pulpit so that right doctrine is taught. Elders fence the Lord's Table, so that only those who confess their faith according to the gospel are admitted. Elders discipline those who are impenitent in doctrine or life. And elders are instrumental in sending forth and overseeing missionaries. A man who loves God's truth will have unique opportunities to maintain and promote that truth as an elder.

Many more reasons for desiring the office of elder could probably be listed, but all of them can be summarised as grateful service. God has made us what we are and has given to us our measure of gifts. God has redeemed us from the curse of sin and has given us our measure of new obedience to Him. All that we are, we owe to Him! Heart, mind, soul, and strength, we are His. If He gives us opportunity to use these gifts in the office of elder, what a blessing!

Men of CERC, do you desire the office of elder? This is a true saying: If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

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God has made us what we are and has given to us our measure of gifts... All that we are, we owe to Him! Heart, mind, soul, and strength, we are His.

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How can we nurture that desire? Here are a few practical suggestions.

1. Pray. Our Lord explicitly commanded the church to pray for God to provide office-bearers. “Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2). As a congregation, we must pray. As individual men, we must pray. God uses these prayers as means to accomplish His purpose of providing office-bearers for His church.

2. Perceive the need. CERC needs elders. God has given our church many worthy projects in His kingdom, in which the elders often take the lead. He has called us to preach the gospel and instruct the Covenant youth; He has opened a door for mission work in Kolkata; He has cleared the way for a sister church relationship with CPKC in Northern Ireland; He has given

“ ... it is proper for men in the church to long for the office of elder; to set their heart upon it, to reach out for it, to seek it earnestly, to strive for it, to crave it, to aspire to it, and to yearn after it. ”

us a calling to comply with URA guidelines. This is not to mention caring for all of the regular needs of the congregation. In God’s gracious providence to us, He has provided very good elders to do the work, and we give Him thanks.

However, we must also recognise that CERC needs new elders. Not in the sense of entirely replacing our current Session, never to serve again, but in the sense of having a rotation of elders, with men able to have a break for a year or two after their term before being elected to another term. The same men have been serving in the office of elder for several years. Very rarely, if ever, are there new men to vote for at the ACM. In the previous article in this series, the author mentioned that the elders of CERC have served long consecutive terms with no replacements. It is true that God has been good to CERC by providing qualified men who cheerfully, capably, and without complaint serve as elders, by His grace. Through them, God has led our church into green pastures and laid us down beside still waters. Life in CERC is spiritually peaceful and pleasant, and much of this can be attributed to God’s use of our elders. But why are there no new men to serve a term as elder? Why is there no rotation of office-bearers at CERC? Is it because there are no other men who are qualified to serve? Perhaps, but

with a congregation of our size, with as many men as we have, this is not likely.

Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that we have not taken seriously enough the matter of men desiring the office. Men, in all of our aspirations and plans, let us make serving as elder our top priority, subject to God’s will. Especially men with years of experience as a Reformed Christian in Christ’s church, set your heart on the office. Wives, cultivate in your own heart a willingness to give your husbands to the work and obligations of the office, and let your husbands know that you would support them if they were called. Young men, as you face many choices that will affect your future, consider how your choices will impact your ability to serve as elder in a year, or five, or twenty. All members of the church, take note of men who are qualified and personally encourage them to consider the office of elder. When the ACM draws near and Session requests the congregation’s input for nomination, submit the names of men whom you believe could serve according to Scripture. And men, when your name is nominated, do not decline unless there are specific weighty reasons by which God in His providence makes it impossible for you to stand for election. This is a true saying: If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

3. Ponder. Our desire for the office of elder will increase the more we contemplate on our Lord Jesus Christ. The more we understand God’s grace in salvation, the more we will desire to serve Him to the fullest use of our gifts. Therefore, read God’s Word, for it is God-breathed and will fill your soul with the Spirit’s breath. Read good books that can help you unearth Scripture’s treasures, new and old. Cut down on life’s rush so that there is time for quiet meditation in the tranquil depths of the gospel. Think on God’s Word.

4. Patiently prepare. God does not guarantee that all who desire the office will be given the office. A man may have to wait a long time before it is God’s time, or he may never be called at all. As he waits, he must wait upon the Lord. Use the time of waiting as a time of preparation, a time of training one’s self in the discipline of devotions and meditation on the mysteries of the Kingdom. When the time comes that God calls you, your preparation will be put to good use. If you are never called, your preparation will still be put to good use in other ways, for no faithful service of God is in vain.

The office of elder is good! And this is a true saying: If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

## Our Children's Education: A Covenant Necessity (III) The Evils of Public Education

>> Aaron Lim



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### The Public School Environment

Scripture leaves no doubt that God's people are to live in spiritual distinction from the world.

*2 Corinthians 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

When parents of the Covenant place their children in public schools, they subject their children to an environment of rampant ungodliness and worldliness. This spiritually hostile environment tempts their children to live in spiritual harmony with their ungodly peers. They tempt their children to speak the language of Ashdod (Nehemiah 13:24). Jehovah's children are severely tempted to agree with Belial.

We are all well aware of the principle of peer pressure. Young children and teenagers are especially susceptible to the influences of their peers. When their schoolmates live a life of

thorough wickedness, our children are tempted in extremities to live like them because sin always appears attractive. Sin is always attractive to the sinful flesh which our children are bound to. In such an environment, we allow the wicked iron of ungodly children to sharpen the countenance of our covenant seed (Proverbs 27:17).

When we place our children in public schools, there is a great danger of blurring the spiritual distinction that must always be sharply maintained between them and the children of this world—parents must be very aware and careful about this. Children of the Covenant are to be spiritually separate from unbelieving children. Describing the antithesis between Covenant children and unbelievers, Prof. Engelsma writes:

*“First, the life of the believer is subject to the Word of God, whereas the unbeliever's life is independent of the Word and in rebellion against it. Second, the goal of life is different. The believer directs his life towards God. His life is God-centered. The unbeliever leaves God out. His life is man-centered”* (pg 57, *Reformed Education*).

Prof. Engelsma is precisely correct about what happens when we place our children in public schools:

*“The antithesis is abolished, and the culture of the ungodly swallows up the children of God”* (pg 14, *Reformed Education*).

If they wisely refuse to integrate with their worldly school mates, our Covenant children are bound to face persecution. They will be tormented in great measure because the world will hate those that do not belong to it (John 15:19). The wicked shall revile, persecute and say all manner of evil against them falsely because they belong to Christ (Matthew 5:11). Instead of a place of learning, the school will be a cold and cruel environment to our Covenant children. They will be left alone to fend for themselves in a spiritually hostile environment.

We must understand that our children need friends as much as we do. Our responsibility as Covenant parents is to choose the right kind of friends for them and the right environment for them to foster those friendships. The Psalmist declares with great joy that it is good and pleasant for brethren—brothers and sisters who have and love the same God—to dwell together in unity (Psalm 133:1). Friendship cannot exist between God's children and the devil's. The seed of the woman is always at war with the seed of the serpent.

On the subject of friendship I have not found a sharper definition than one provided by Prof. Engelsma in another book:

*“Friendship with the unbeliever is both impossible and forbidden. Friendship demands oneness in Jesus Christ. My friend and I must have God as our God*

together. *Whoever is an enemy of God is my enemy*" (pg 70, *Common Grace Revisited*, RFP, 2003).

At a young and tender age, Covenant children do not possess the spiritual maturity or developed faculties necessary to understand this distinction. They are young and easily impressionable. Naturally they make friends with those who are around them.

The evil environment to which our Covenant children are daily exposed has tremendous repercussions on their spiritual development. Covenant parents may not be surprised when their children turn to the ways of this world and forsake their faith. The temptation to conform to this world is almost unbearable in such an environment. I have never felt more alone, more frightened, and more intimidated during the years of my public schooling where my Christian upbringing and principles were tested and shook to its very foundations. The evilness of the wicked environment is radically opposed to all that the Christian faith stands for. And in such an environment, Covenant seed come very close to losing their Covenant identity apart from the grace of our faithful Covenant God.

### **The Goal of Public Education**

A discerning parent would realise that the government is only interested in educating our children to meet its own needs. A government like Singapore that places economic progress as its chief priority will necessarily train its children to be economically-minded. All other aspects of their upbringing are subservient to this cause. One who is educated by the government must necessarily become a product of the government.

Inherent in the thinking of the public education is its message to its students: study hard, establish a good career, and contribute actively to society as responsible and productive citizens. There is, of course, nothing wrong or sinful with such a message. God's people are called to render their debts to the government of their land (Matthew 22:21) and to obey those whom God has placed in authority over them (Romans 13:1-2). What is wrong about the public education is the ultimate or higher purpose it strives for.

From a spiritual perspective, the goal of public education is to raise up men and women for this world. Scripture calls it earthly mindedness. Because the government only has its progress in mind, its citizens are naturally trained in the education system to be part of this earthly pursuit. Its aim is to train our children to construct an earthly kingdom for themselves, for the good of society and the country. An earthly pursuit like this causes our children to set their affections on this earth (Colossians 3:2), laying up treasures where moth and rust corrupt (Matthew 6:19). Public education, if all goes according to "plan", produces covetous, materialistic, greedy children who, like the rich fool, live to eat, drink and be merry (Luke 12:19). So Covenant parents must be warned against allowing their children to align their goals in life with the goals of public education.

When earthly pursuits find strong roots in the lives of Covenant seed, they will sacrifice their spiritual growth and find little delight in spiritual things. Why should studies take priority over spiritual activities? Why should spiritual activities be

confined only to Sunday worship? Should not the child of God yearn for the fellowship and edification of his saints rather than burying himself in textbooks?

What is so dangerous about the education in the public schools is that it forces our Covenant children to view this world like a playground, where they can fellowship and cooperate with unbelievers for a common cause. Scripture repudiates this idea when it instructs God's people to live as strangers and pilgrims on the earth (Hebrews 11:13). God's people are aliens in this mad world of unbelievers and sin. They are called to hold loosely to earthly things, for no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2 Timothy 2:4).

Covenant parents are training their children to be heavenly-minded. They are training their children to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1). Their hearts are not settled on earthly mansions, but mansions which Christ has prepared for them in glory (John 14:2). Why train our children to fight the corporate battles of the business empires when Christ calls them to fight the battles of faith? Why seek the crown of earthly success when Christ has promised us a crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Peter 5:4)?





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Fellow saints, we face in this article our calling in the youth group of this church. We have various places or callings in our lives. God has placed us in our families. He has also given us callings in other situations: school, the army (for young men), and workplace. But, God has also a calling for us in our youth group.

The point of the article is not to argue that we *do* have a calling; that is assumed to be true. Rather, this article puts this question forward: *What* is our calling in the group?

This question is important, for we oftentimes forget—moreover, sinfully neglect—that calling. This negligence and forgetfulness will be resolved only when we recognise our calling in the youth group.

However, to recognise our calling also means we need to recognise what *motivates* us to fulfil that calling. What knits us together as CK/CKS? Is there anything that brings us together? Lord-willing, that question will be answered in this article.

Before we list our motivations for coming together as CK/CKS, a working understanding of our group is in place. Essentially, our group is the coming together of youths for the study of God's Word and of various topics pertinent to our spiritual lives. In our Bible studies, workshops, and outings, the ultimate content of study is the Scriptures. Furthermore, this study is done *together*. We gather to meditate on and apply the Word.

But, what drives us to study *together*, and to do so weekly, monthly, yearly?

First, that drive is rooted in the preaching of the Word of God. The voice of Christ that we hear every Lord's Day motivates us to study the Scriptures together.

The preaching of the Word is powerful. Through the ordained minister's exegesis and application of the Scriptures, Christ speaks to us and strengthens our faith. Strength comes when Christ's Spirit takes the written Word and invigorates us to believe that Word. In summary, the Word is this: "I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine" (Isaiah 43:1). Through this Word, we are brought to the joy of our salvation.

Exactly because we find our joy in hearing God's Word, we remain unsatisfied with two brief meditations on a single Sunday. In fact, the faith invigorated by the preaching drives us to study that Word daily, as well as in

our youth group meetings.

Hence, our meetings are a fruit of the preaching of God's Word in His church. Our Bible studies and workshops are times for us to grow in our understanding of the Scriptures. Exhortations during outings also give us time to meditate upon the Word. Through these activities, we dig into God's Word and learn how to be a doer of that Word. The motivation to learn and apply the Word is the weekly, powerful preaching. Yet, more should fuel us.

Return to the Lord's Day. Find yourself not only listening to the preaching, but also in the company of God's people. That company is the manifestation of God's universal church. All of us come to church, not merely as individuals, but as *one* church. In that *one* church, each of us has a privileged duty.

The Heidelberg Catechism summarises our duty: "[Our] duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members" (Q&A55). When do we fulfil this calling? On the Lord's Day, certainly: in our singing (see Colossians 3:16); in giving our offerings (1 Corinthians 16:1); but also, in our CK/CKS meetings.

Hence, in the second place, our zeal is rooted in our responsibility as a member of Christ's church. As confessed in our catechism, that responsibility is to care for one another. We fulfil that duty especially

“ [Our] duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members. (Q&A55) ”

as prophets nourishing each other with God's Word. Discussions during workshops and Bible studies open opportunities for us to explain and apply the Scriptures to everyone's benefit. As we bring that Word to one another, the Word once more strengthens our faith. To bring the Word to one another is the duty we bear, and it is the duty we fulfil in CK/CKS. Still, more fuels us.

Look now at the world where we live in. The world has its own gatherings too: the company of unbelieving classmates and colleagues. In those gatherings, a word is brought: not God's Word, but the word of temptation to the negligence of the study of the Scriptures, and to the forsaking of God and His church.

Do we belong in these gatherings? No: God has separated us from the corruption of these gatherings and works in us to hate that corruption. The world's corruption is found in their entertainment: the idolatry of material goods, of attractive physiques, etc. That corruption is found in their conversations: discussing the latest gossips and scandals, mocking others who are weak, etc. We take no pleasure in this corruption, as it goes against God's demand of us. God demands from us honour and

glory; He demands us to care for our neighbour's good. The world with its idolatry and slander contradicts God's demand; we take no delight in their way.

That lack of delight in the world is our third motivation for meeting. Because we find no joy in the world, we find ourselves instead yearning for the company of the saints. "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalm 84:10): This is our confession on Sunday, as well as in CK/CKS. In the company of our brethren, we find joy as we praise our God through our singing and study of God's Word. In the same company, we take opportunity to encourage each other in our individual situations and to pray for those who are in need. To us, the world is dry and barren; but in the company of the saints, we find what is better than life: the lovingkindness of God, extolled by us, and working in us so that we love one another.

We have a three-fold motivation: the weekly preaching, our duty in the church, and our lack of joy in the world. We know what CK/CKS is. We know what knits us as a group. What, now, do we do?

We come. Our response to the preaching, to our calling in the church, and to our displeasure in the world, is attendance. We set time—*make* time—to study God's Word together. But, coming is just one part of the response.

Attendance must be *active*. Active means *preparation*. We come not merely to sit through a lecture by the facilitator. We come not merely aware of what will be covered in the meeting. We come equipped with a working knowledge about the Scripture passage in study, or about the topic in discussion. Prior to the meeting, we read the article (and other materials) to gain a good understanding of God's Word. We also answer the questions to gain a firmer application of the Word. Doing so before we meet will prepare us to explain the Scriptures to others. We will also be ready to receive more instruction from our brethren, who have studied other Scripture passages and made other applications of the Scriptures. Attendance is not mere presence in meetings; it is active participation in the meetings.

Our calling is simple: Come!

God has given us great motivations to come; let them drive us to the company of His saints. There is room for improvement. There are times we fail to prepare and come for our meetings with a lackadaisical attitude. Perhaps we notice that attitude in others, but firstly in ourselves. During our preparation, we do mere guesswork in finding the exact meaning of the Scriptures. During discussions, we judge them to be stale and limited and clam up. We find in our study of God's Word a lack of zeal. Improvement is needed.

Such indifference wanes only when we remember our motivations to come. How precious is the truth of the Scriptures! God speaks to us through the written Word; in the midst of our burdens on this earth, God tells us: “Fear not! I am with you.” We respond with a studious attitude to find the truth of our salvation in the Scriptures.

How precious is the fellowship of the saints! God speaks to us even through

them, as our brethren speak (and sing) the Word to us. The fellowship enriches our experience with God’s Word: We not only read it, but we hear it from our brothers and sisters. Indeed, a stark contrast to the words of our unbelieving colleagues!

Fellow saints, remember the blessedness of our society! Yes, *our* society! And, perhaps, this is a misconception among us. CK/CKS

exists *not* because some person-in-charge leads a committee to plan weekly activities. CK/CKS exists *only* because you as young people are willing—*eager*—to commune together. The society is *your* coming together to study God’s Word. The committee exists only because you want to come.

Therefore, seek from the Lord eagerness to study His Word. Therefore, come!



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A significant question: not simply what constitutes (comprises) true repentance, but how can one be sure that he has truly repented?

Just keep in mind that the two questions stated above are closely related. Before you can determine whether or not you have truly repented, you must have some idea what true repentance is all about. Only then can you determine whether such characterises you. Only then can you ask, “Do these elements

of true repentance characterise me?”

To say that repentance is one of the most vital elements of the Christian faith and life is no exaggeration. Scripture makes plain just how central true repentance is to the Christian faith and being counted as a Christian.

In Mark 1:15, Christ Jesus’ own preaching is described in these terms, namely, that He came preaching that “...the kingdom of God is at hand: **repent ye**, and believe the gospel.”

Notice that **repentance** is mentioned first, even before believing. Not because repentance is more important than believing, but to make plain that there is no real believing or faith apart from repentance of sin. Repentance is an essential element of true faith, it is essential to having the right to call oneself a Christian: a follower of Christ.

According to Luke 24:47, when

Christ gave His disciples the great commission, He told them that according to the prophets “... **repentance** and remission of sins should be preached in his name among the nations...” The call to **repentance** was to be at the very heart of the preaching of the apostolic gospel in the New Testament Age.

And on Pentecost, according to Acts 2:38, when the people asked what was required of them to be saved, the apostle Peter told them, “**Repent**, and be Baptised everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

On the mission field, it is **repentance** that demonstrates that the Holy Spirit is working in one, thus making one a worthy candidate of Baptism and of membership in Christ’s church. No repentance?—no membership in Christ’s church, for, according to the



According to the root meaning of the Greek word translated 'repentance', it has to do with a change of mind...



text, one as yet neither has the Holy Spirit nor a right to claim His gifts.

Repentance is vital indeed for the right to call yourself a Christian and for the assurance that you are saved.

So, what is this heartfelt repentance?

According to the root meaning of the Greek word translated 'repentance', it has to do with a change of mind, that is, an entire change of perspective towards things—towards one's self and towards one's deeds and actions; a change in what one considers good and what one considers evil. It has to do with a changing of how one assesses things, a change of mind and perspective that indicates that one's heart has been transformed by the Holy Spirit.

Scripture commonly speaks of repentance in two ways—as a repentance OF sin, and as a repentance FROM sin.

The phrase "repentance OF sin" places the emphasis upon **confessing one's sins** and sinfulness. The knowledge of your sins against God gives rise to grief and sorrow and one pleads to

God for mercy and forgiveness. That is the significance of the statement found in Psalm 32: "I will confess my transgressions..." The Hebrew word translated "I will confess" refers so stretching forth one's arms and hands, that is, lifting empty hands to God and with uplifted face pleading for mercy, mercy due to one's guilt and sin. "Have compassion upon me, O God, and forgive my sins."

The other phrase "repentance FROM sin" puts the emphasis on **turning from sin**, on **leaving one's sinful ways**. That your sins grieve you means more than that your sinful deeds fill you with a regret. It means that you find them abhorrent and do not want to continue doing them and living that way anymore.

True repentance involves both these aspects; not just saying you are sorry for having wronged God or your brother, and then continuing right on in your way ("I said I was sorry! Isn't that enough?"), but showing you are sorry, really, truly sorry! How? By resolving not to engage in those things again, not to say those words again, not to go to those shameful places again. And it involves praying to God for the grace to discipline yourself to be free from the evil and rule of those sins again.

In other words, true repentance is what the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 33 calls 'true conversion'. In has everything to do with the mortification of the old man with his deeds and not letting those deeds and impulses see the light of day again.

It is what 2 Corinthians 7:10 calls the "repentance to salvation not to be repented of."

A repentance that needs to be "repented of" is an expression of sorrow verbally while one continues right on in the same sinful way. That is not a sincere repentance. Rather it is itself sin that needs confession and turning from.

So, true repentance is a sincere sorrow for one's sins against God and the neighbour, confessed day by day, and also daily conversion and turning from sins and resolving by grace to cease from those things from that point on.

Such in brief is the Biblical truth of repentance. How then can you be sure your repentance is sincere? Well, in large measure, how serious are you about leaving your sinful ways, sinful behaviour, yes, your besetting sin or sins behind?

In other words, not simply an interest in forgiveness as such—"Just as long as I am not punished for my sins, I am satisfied. My main interest is in escaping the consequences of my evil, that's all." That is not out of a new heart. Rather it is a desire to forsake the way of disobedience and a resolve not to return to those sinful ways again.

And notice we keep using the word SIN. Why? Because 'sin' has reference to evil and wrong doing as relating to God, as something displeasing to God. And that also looms large in true repentance. It is not SIMPLY that a way of life grieves one and that one then resolves to stop doing that any more. Worldly men can do that. Take, for instance, drunkenness. The pagan can see the evil of his drunkenness, what it has done to him and is doing to his family. He is filled with remorse and resolves to cease. Many have done just that, and may have stopped their gambling as well.

But, that is not true, Biblically-defined repentance. Why not? Because there is no confession before God and grief over **displeasing** Jehovah God, the God of the Scriptures.

In other words, what also looms large in true repentance is that one desires **the approval of God**. That is why one is so grieved by one's sins and evils—God's **approval** is important to you. And walking in the way of sin is NOT the way of God's approval. So

you confess it and seek grace to leave it **for God's sake**. As a believer, God's **approval as Father** means more to you than that of your earthly father, mother, family, or friends.

True repentance indeed. Heartfelt!

So, how can you know whether your repentance is sincere? Well, how important is God's approval to you?

Why are you and I are grieved by our sinful deeds, thoughts, and

imaginations? Why do we seek forgiveness in Christ Jesus' name? Why are we resolved to live as Christians? Is it because it is the way of our Lord's approval?

If our answer is "Yes", then be assured our repentance is sincere. Such a repentance is not a 'natural' thing. It is something only the Spirit of Christ Himself can work. And what the Spirit of Christ works is always something one's Father in Heaven will recognise and approve of.



*Boon Suan Kiat* is a member of CERC. He is the husband of Mee Choo and their family is blessed with three children.

During the first and third quarter of 2013, CERC Men's Fellowship met after worship service for Bible discussion. On average, ten to fifteen men attended these group discussions. Brothers took turns to chair the meetings and lead in the discussions. We had previously finished a series of studies on men in the Bible. Having done a preliminary study on the Bible character Job (not the whole book, mainly the first two chapters), and

having chaired a discussion session, I thought that it would be good to share how piously Job responded to his trials of physical sickness and the loss of all his children and possessions. May we all emulate the patience of Job (James 5:11) in his suffering of afflictions.

In the early part of our discussion, a brother correctly mentioned that we seldom find Christian parents wanting to name their new-born son after Job of the Bible. Certainly many do not welcome sufferings and may not want to see their own son going through the kind of trials that Job had to endure. That could be a possible explanation for the aforementioned observation.

The book of Job is one of the most wonderful poetic books of the Bible. The main theme of the book is the intense suffering that God allowed Satan to inflict on Job. It has a

superbly written prologue (Job 1:1-2:13), and an equally magnificent epilogue (Job 42:1-17). Between these opening and closing chapters, a series of conversations are recorded that took place between Job and his friends (Job 3-37).

Job 1:1 begins with Jehovah God declaring that Job was perfect and upright, and he was one that feared God and eschewed evil. What God said about Job's character was proven true as he did not sin and did not charge God foolishly after his first trial. When Satan appeared again to accuse him in the second trial, God reminded Satan of Job's upright character and piety (Job 2:3). In verses 4-5, we also learn that Job was concerned for the spiritual lives of his children; he rose up early in the morning to offer burnt offerings for all his children as he felt that they may have sinned against

God in their feasting of merriment. The Bible tells us that Job offered the burnt offerings continually.

The extent of his first trial is great. He lost everything in one day – his possession of 1000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 oxen, 500 she-asses, and all his 10 children. He broke down in grief and fell down in worship. *Then Job arose and rent his mantle and shaved his head and fell down upon the ground and worshipped. And said “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave and the LORD hath taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD.”*

In Job 2, Satan came with a second charge, having failed in his first attempt. The first charge accused Job of following God because God had blessed him with many earthly possessions—land, houses, cattle and servants. Remove all of these, and he would deny the faith. God reminded Satan of Job’s integrity in Job 2:3b, “Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? And still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.” Satan would not admit that he was mistaken about Job’s integrity; instead, he complained that the trial was not radical enough. The first trial involved the external: Job’s possessions and his children’s lives. The second trial would affect his physical well-being. He was afflicted with sore boils from the sole of his foot to his head. To relieve his pain or itchiness he took a potsherd to scrape himself. The worst thing was how his wife did not support him in this difficult and trying moment, and instead said to

him in Job 2:9, “Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die.” Job rebuked her in verse 10, “Thou speakest as one of the foolish woman speaketh what? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

After several brothers had shared, I concluded by reading six points from the outline taken from the book ‘Let’s Read the Old Testament’ by author Raymond Brown.

What is this wonderful book saying to us in our day?

### 1. Acknowledge Your Limitations

We do not know everything. If Job had only known when his calamities and adversaries would come, and all that we know of God’s concern and pleasure in him (Job 1:8, 2:3), he would not have spoken carelessly and angrily about God who loved him so deeply. The great speeches by Creator-God (Job 38-41), are designed to impress upon us, as well as this righteous sufferer, the limitations of our knowledge. In our moments of agony and grief we must believe that the One who knows all, orders the best for His children.

### 2. Guard Your Speech

The main lesson to learn from Job’s friends is that however convinced we may be, we should always be extremely careful about what we say to people in serious trouble. Kind words can be used to heal. Some grim and thoughtless words can intensify grief and make a sufferer even more unhappy. When Job’s friends first met him, they sat quiet for a week. When our own friends are in deep trouble, our presence and companionship can often accomplish far more than a

torrent of words.

### 3. Examine Your Heart

If you are in trouble yourself at this time, the Book of Job has many vital things to say to you. It urges you not to be resentful or bitter, but to look deeply into your own needy heart and mind and ask God to use this trouble to bring you nearer to Him. Adversity can have a corrective ministry in our lives (Hebrews 12:3-13). It can be used to make us more aware of our dependence upon God.

### 4. Consider Your Friends

The sad thing about Job’s friends is that by their careless preaching, they disappointed him so deeply (Job 6:14). They appeared to him like a mountain stream which in the rainy season was full of sparkling waters but became dry once the rain stopped. He looked to them hoping to have his thirst quenched but was bitterly disappointed. One of the good things that comes out of trouble is that it helps us to be far more sensitive to the needs of others. The man or woman who has an almost completely trouble-free life is rarely sought after by harassed souls. J.M. Barrie said that because his mother had lost a baby, other distressed mothers would turn to her in the hour of their anguish.

### 5. Relinquish Your Resentments

Job had every reason to be miserable at the reactions of his useless friends. They seemed to make his trouble worse and not better. However, the epilogue of the book tells us that Job was brought to a position where he could pray for them instead of fight against them. “And the LORD turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends.” (Job 42:10) It is an exultant climax to an otherwise bitter episode. In those moments of prayer,

he anticipated the words of the LORD Jesus who surely knows what suffering was. “Pray for those who abuse you... forgive and you will be forgiven.” (Luke 6:28-37)

## 6. Trust Your Creator

The main message of this Book of Job is that we must learn to trust the God who made us, even though at times we are bewildered and baffled by the adverse circumstances of our lives. He reigns, and all that has happened has not escaped His notice. Always remember that as our loving Father, He cannot allow His children to be tested beyond their capacity to endure. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

In conclusion, we can follow the example of Christ’s humility and

patience in willingly going to the cross to suffer death in order to redeem us from hell and destruction. It was written in Isaiah 55:3, “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” 1 Peter 2:21 says, “For even hereunto were ye called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.” May you find encouragement and comfort in singing the versification of Psalm 77 (Psalter 210), if you are currently undergoing severe trials and temptations.

### **Psalter 210 Questionings and Comfort**

*To God will I direct my prayer,  
And He will make my needs His care;*

*I trust Him still, though in my grief  
No answer yet has brought relief;  
With hands stretched out through all the  
night, Uncomforted I sought for light.*

*I asked in fear and bitterness,  
Will God forsake me in distress?  
Shall I His promise faithless find?  
Has God forgotten to be kind?  
Has He in anger hopelessly  
Removed His love and grace from me?*

*These doubts and fears that troubled me  
Were born of my infirmity;  
Through I am weak, God is most high,  
And on His goodness I rely;  
Of all His wonders I will tell,  
And on His deeds my thoughts shall  
dwell.*



Marcus Wee is a confessing young adult in CERC.

It’s a typical Sunday after worship service in church and you notice a newcomer sitting in a corner looking slightly uncomfortable and disoriented. What should you do? What sort of responsibility do you have towards him or her, if any? These are some questions that are relevant with regards to follow-up work, and we will consider them in this article.

### **Follow-Up Work**

Follow-up work is a specific application of the calling to love our neighbour—a love that seeks his or her salvation. The neighbour in question that we are supposed to love are: (1)

our fellow brethren in the church who are experiencing difficulties, and (2) newcomers in the church. It may involve certain outward measures that are taken, but without love, all these measures are merely that—outward. Without love, these measures, however great, are worthless in God’s sight (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). Without love, these measures are not follow-up work.

We are commanded to love our brethren in Christ, and this is how we show ourselves to be Christians who have experienced the love of God (John 13:34-35, 1 John 4:7-8).

We who have experienced the love of God cannot help but show this same love to our brethren. We are called to love our brethren in the church, in particular those who are experiencing difficulties (1).

Yet, this calling does not end there. Matthew 25:34-40 makes it plain that we are to show love to those who are in need and also to those who are strangers. Let us consider another passage. Hebrews 13:1-2 says, “Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” We are not to neglect strangers, and we are to entertain them with love—brotherly love! We are to extend the same love we show for our brethren in Christ to strangers, especially the newcomers in church—strangers whom God has brought to the church—some of whom He is pleased to call His children. We are also called to love newcomers in the church (2).

We are called to love (1) and (2)—we are called to do follow-up work. This calling is unmistakable, and none of us can plead ignorance. All of us, as children of God who have been loved by our Father, must necessarily possess a brotherly love towards our brethren in Christ and newcomers in the church. In this article, we will focus mainly on our calling to love newcomers as an application of follow-up work.

Follow-up work must be inwardly grounded in love for the neighbour, but this love does not stay inward. This love is the love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts (Roman 5:5)! It is an unlimited love (Psalm 103:11) that cannot be contained within our limited hearts, but bursts forth

in thankfulness to God and loving service of others. We next consider how we manifest this love of God in follow-up work.

## How do I do Follow-up Work?

### *The Golden Rule*

Christ gives us the rule of the kingdom, sometimes known as the golden rule, as a guiding principle for us to show love to our neighbour.

*Matthew 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

The golden rule must be abided by in follow-up work. It requires love for the neighbour, and we are to put ourselves in the newcomer’s shoes and think what we, as a Christian saved by grace, would want to be done to us if we were in that situation. We would desire that others seek our spiritual welfare! We thus ought to do anything, in accordance to God’s Word, to seek the spiritual welfare of our neighbour.

If I were a newcomer, how is my spiritual welfare best sought? Would I prefer to be ignored by everybody, or feel welcome, in the church? We definitely would want to feel welcome, with some particular preferences (e.g. talking to a huge/small group, certain interesting topics of conversation). So, we should make the newcomer feel

welcome with a sensitivity towards his or her circumstances and preferences. Let us consider some practical ways that we can do follow-up work.

### *Practical Aspects*

1. *Talking/Listening:* Obviously, for this to happen, we need to talk to the neighbour. How can we hope to properly and sincerely welcome a newcomer to the church if we have no interaction whatsoever with him, nor even a mere customary “Hi”? How can we encourage a newcomer in her spiritual walk when we do not breathe a word to her, and choose instead to look past her? Talking to the neighbour is essential in expressing our love towards him or her.

Difficulty: “But... I am a shy person. I am afraid that the conversation will be awkward when we have nothing left to talk about. I am an introvert and prefer to keep to myself, and it is a huge step outside my comfort zone to talk to newcomers.” Let us ask ourselves: Do these fears or character traits in any way absolve us from our duty of love, or diminish our responsibility to show love to newcomers? Most definitely not! The same calling to love our neighbour applies to us as it does to everybody else.

Perhaps we recognise our calling to love our neighbour, and we know that our social fears and character

“ So, we should make the newcomer feel welcome with a sensitivity towards his or her circumstances and preferences. ”



traits do not in any way excuse us from our calling. However, they may remain real obstacles to us. Here is a practical way to work around them: we can approach newcomers with other brothers and sisters in Christ; when in a group, we may feel more at ease talking to newcomers. This way, we are better able to do follow-up work. In doing so, we also aid our brothers and sisters in their calling as we involve them in follow-up work.

Importantly, we should not view our shy or introverted natures as weaknesses with regards to follow-up work. They allow us to approach follow-up work from another angle. Some newcomers in church are talked to by many people, while others are talked to by fewer people, or none at all. There may be many factors involved, but in the former scenario, the newcomers tend to be more extroverted, and in the latter, more introverted. An introvert is in a good position to apply the golden rule: As an introvert, what do I want done to me if I were the newcomer? You probably do not wish to be “overwhelmed” by many others, yet you also wish to feel welcome, to learn more about the church and its members. An introvert may be more sensitive to the neighbour’s preferences, and be better placed to approach a newcomer rather than someone who is more extroverted.

2. *Content:* When we talk to a newcomer, we must be clear about our purpose for doing so. We desire his or her salvation. Of course, this does not mean that the only things we are to talk about are spiritual things; oftentimes we would have to build up some rapport with the person before he or she may be comfortable with

“ We do not need to have certain “spiritual qualifications” to be able to talk to newcomers about spiritual things. God says to us, “Ye are my witnesses” ... ”

sharing deeper and more personal information. True love that desires the newcomer’s salvation will also take an interest in other aspects of the person’s life: background, experiences, interests, and so on. But true love that desires the newcomer’s salvation is not merely interested in these, and it is above all interested in the person’s spiritual welfare. We must find out more about the spiritual situation of the newcomer, and seek to edify him or her with our conversation.

Difficulty: (1) We may not know how to broach the topic of spiritual matters with the newcomer, or if we do, (2) we do not know the best way to go about it, or (3) we simply do not know what to talk about. Needless to say, these are not legitimate reasons for us to shirk our calling of love for the neighbour. Regarding (1), the very fact that the person is a newcomer in our church is a natural topic of conversation about spiritual matters. What brings him over? Is he a Christian, and if so, from what denomination? What does he think about certain doctrines of the Bible? And many more! It is also possible that the person is interested in the Reformed faith, and wants to learn more about it from us and carry on such a conversation.

Regarding 2 and 3, the more we grow in love and knowledge of God’s Word,

the more we are able to talk about it, to give an answer to those who ask us a reason of the hope that we have. Our lack of spiritual knowledge should not deter us from speaking about spiritual matters with newcomers. Rather, recognising this lack and how it limits us in our calling to love both God and the neighbour should compel us to fervently read and meditate upon God’s Word to grow in our love and knowledge of God. We must not wait till we are “spiritually mature enough” before we talk to newcomers about spiritual matters, for we are ever growing in our knowledge of God’s Word, and there is no end state of spiritual maturity that we can be content with.

We do not need to have certain “spiritual qualifications” to be able to talk to newcomers about spiritual things. God says to us, “Ye are my witnesses” (Isaiah 43:10), and Christ calls us the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). These statements are in the present tense. We are *already* God’s witnesses, and *presently* the lights of the world—and not so at a future time or when we have become more spiritually mature. Solely by God’s election are we God’s witnesses—there is no question about it. Our witnessing to newcomers begins now. We do become better witnesses and

brighter lights as we increase our spiritual maturity, but these were never the prerequisites for us to be witnesses.

There is also the issue of lack of experience. We might have a good knowledge of God's Word, and yet be unsure of what exactly to talk about. Once again, our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ come in. We can ask for advice from more experienced members of the congregation: our pastor, adults, or older youth. We can approach the newcomer with others and learn from how they do follow-up work. We have much to learn just from observing them, and in doing so, we gain valuable experience in follow-up work.

3. *Continuous process:* The literal meaning of "follow-up" is to "continue something that has already been started", and this is an important element in follow-up work. The newcomer has been brought by God to our church, and the seeds of the gospel have been sown in his heart through the preaching. A genuine love for his salvation does not merely wish for the planting of the seeds in the newcomer's heart, but wishes also for the watering of the seeds, that God might give the increase if He so pleases. Such genuine love for the newcomer's salvation is not content to let him hear the preaching for a single Sunday, but sincerely desires that he returns Sunday after Sunday, to be continuously fed by God's Word, to drink from the fount of living waters, and have his faith built up.

*Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another:*

*and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

In our dealings with fellow brethren, we seek to grow together in love and good works, and encourage each other to gather together for worship on Sunday, and on other occasions whereby we can edify one another, such as Bible studies, prayer meetings, youth group activities, or personal meet-ups. We ought to do likewise with newcomers. A single conversation, even a weekly one, surely does not suffice to provoke them to love and good works, and to exhort them not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together! Oftentimes, follow-up work requires meet-ups during the week to get to know the newcomer better, to continue to forge a genuine friendship with him or her. Indeed, follow-up work requires commitment.

4. *Prayer:* Finally, do not forget to pray. All the measures listed above are merely practical outward measures that guide us in doing follow-up work. We need to pray to God for grace to do follow-up work and to put in our hearts a sincere love for Him and for our neighbour. Very often, we do follow-up work for selfish reasons, in pride, or unwillingly. Even more often, we do not do follow-up work when we should, and go far out of our way to avoid the newcomer.

We need to pray to God to bless the work of our hands. We may plant and water, but it is He who gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6). We may possess a genuine love for the neighbour, and be highly experienced and sensitive in doing follow-up work, but God may be pleased to use us to drive the newcomer away. We may be awkward, bumbling, and inexperienced in follow-up work,

yet God may be pleased to use us to bring the newcomer to salvation. We recognise God's sovereignty in follow-up work, that He elects and reprobates whom He wills. We recognise that follow-up work is all of God—He begins it through our salvation, allowing us to show His love to newcomers, and ends it with their salvation. We, the instruments, must constantly pray to the Maker for the salvation of newcomers, in spite of our weaknesses.

### Conclusion

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, you have been abundantly blessed by God to have the precious knowledge of the Reformed faith as taught in His Word. You have been shown the love of God, which has engulfed and transformed you, and replaced your heart of stone with a heart of flesh—one that throbs fervently in love for God. It is inconceivable that you do not reflect this same love towards others, to bring them into blessed Covenant fellowship with God. You are commanded to show this same love towards your neighbour, and towards newcomers in the church. This very same love also empowers you to fulfil this command.

If Christ Himself were to visit our church as a "newcomer", which one of us would not take Him in and make Him feel welcome? But Christ Himself does visit our church, and does so often, in the form of newcomers. Do we take them in, and make them feel welcome? Do we take *Him* in, and make *Him* feel welcome?

*Matthew 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*



# News from the Churches

## **SINGAPORE**

The young people of CERC held their annual Covenant Keepers Retreat from 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> June 2015. Pastor Andy Lanning gave two speeches about prayer on the theme “Before God’s Throne of Grace”, titled “Calling on the Name of the Lord”, and “Let Your Requests Be Made Known Unto God”. Each of the two speeches were followed by a time of discussion, culminating in a prayer meeting on Saturday. The youth also played games and had various activities in between, ending off with a fun-filled afternoon of bubble soccer.

The annual CERC Camp was held in Batam, Indonesia from 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> June 2015. Professor Barry Gritters gave five messages about Christ’s second coming on the theme “Ready to meet Christ?” based on 2 Timothy 4:6-8. Each of the messages were followed by a time of fruitful discussion. On the last night, there was a concluding workshop conducted by Pastor Lanning based on the theme and the messages delivered during the camp.

## **KOLKATA**

Elder Leong and Pastor Lanning visited Kolkata as a delegation from 25<sup>th</sup> June through 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015. This is the first delegation sent since CERC approved the oversight of Emmanuel’s work. Their main task there was to get everything organised so that their work together can be orderly.

In addition, we thank God that Emmanuel was able to secure the rental of a house in Kolkata that is very near some public transportation hubs. The group plans to use this house for worship on Sunday and for all of their other studies during the week. This house is much more accessible than their previous worship location, and so it is a big boost for the fellowship.

Also, Emmanuel and CERC’s Christian Literature Ministry continue to communicate regarding the translation of the Heidelberg Catechism into Bengali; by God’s grace, it appears that publication can begin soon. This is a significant project because it is the first time that this essential Reformed confession will be translated into the Bengali language.

## **PHILIPPINES**

An official delegation of Doon PRC and the Foreign Mission Committee visited the mission field in Philippines from June 25 through July 9. The delegation consisted of Pastor Allen Brummel (representing the FMC—Foreign Mission Committee) and Elder Jim Regnerus (representing Doon PRC). Their wives (Crysta Brummel and Brenda Regnerus) accompanied them.

## **USA**

The PRCA Synod was held from 9-12 June 2015. This year, Deacon Tang Yoon Chuan represented CERC as a delegate to Synod. Deacon Tang (CERC) and Deacon Hall (CPRC, Northern Ireland) addressed Synod on behalf of their respective congregations, with a joint letter to Synod from the two churches expressing their desire to establish a sister church relationship with each other. Synod not only raised no objections to this relationship, but expressed great joy and thankfulness to God for manifesting the church’s unity and catholicity in this manner.



After a rollin' good time of "Bubble Soccer" during CK/CKS Camp



Wefie contest at CERC Annual Bible Camp 2015 in Batam



Games at Church Camp: No holds barred "Human Foosball"



Last day of Camp: Ready to Meet Christ?



"Synodical Exam" of Singapore for Prof. Gritters - looks like he passed!

We are planning to include a new rubric into future SS issues! Readers will have the opportunity to write in their questions on doctrine and Christian living which may be answered in this rubric. We would like to invite SS readers to note down such questions and email them to [cksaltshakers@gmail.com](mailto:cksaltshakers@gmail.com). Thank you!

**Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church**

We are a Reformed Church that holds to the doctrines of the Reformation as they are expressed in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt.

Place of Worship  
11, Jalan Mesin #04-00  
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Singapore 368813

Time of Worship  
Morning Service:  
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2:00pm to 3:00pm

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