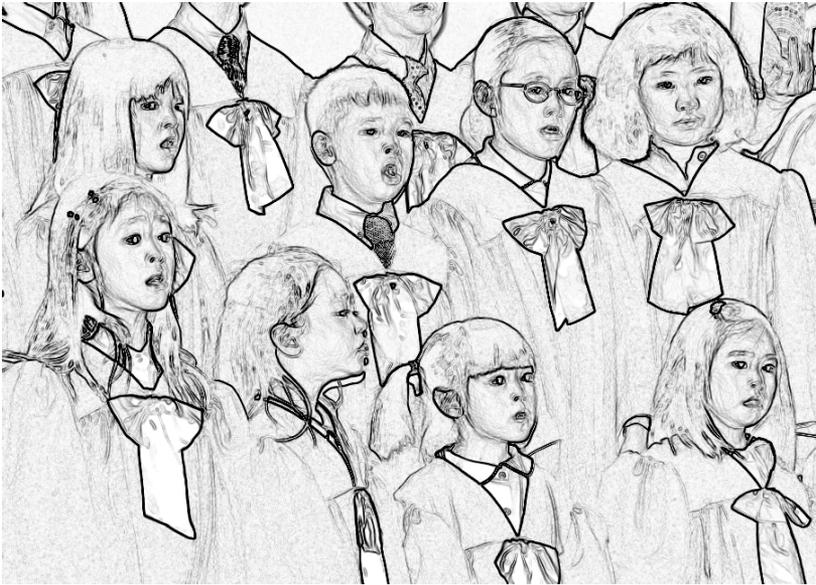


Rochester Chinese Christian Church

ECHO

December 2005 Volume 23 No. 2



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Rochester Chinese Christian Church

Three-Year Plan (2005 – 2007)

Main Emphasis: Outreach And Evangelism

2005

Motivation - Focus on equipping our people

Theme: **You Will Be My Witnesses**

Theme Verse: Acts 1:8

Goals:

1. Equip every person for short-term missions
2. Every church member serves in at least one capacity
3. Identify outreach ministry groups

2006

Mobilization - Focus on reaching out to the unsaved

Theme: **We Must Preach the Gospel**

Theme Verse: Mark 13:10

Goals:

1. Support and send out at least 30 short-term missionaries
2. Every person brings at least one friend to church
3. Mobilize outreach ministries

2007

Multiplication - Focus on assimilating newcomers

Theme: **Lord, Send Out Workers!**

Theme Verse: Matthew 9:38

Goals:

1. Every person has a short term missionary experience
2. Send out at least one full-time worker from RCCC
3. Multiply outreach ministry members



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English Sunday Worship 中文主日學
9:30 am 上午九時三十分

English Sunday School 中文主日崇拜
11:15 am 上午十一時十五分

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主日崇拜
Sunday Worship
下午 4:00 - 5:15 pm

主日學
Sunday School
下午 5:20 - 6:15 pm



Missions! Missions! Missions!

Pastor Herman Tang

I have a friend who is a real estate agent. When I asked her opinion on matters related to her profession, she would say to me with a big smile on her face, "Location! Location! Location!" Since the Missions Conference in October, my mind has been ringing with "Missions! Missions! Missions!"

I always thank the Lord for missionaries who obey the Lord's calling to share the gospel with people everywhere. Our church has been blessed to have the opportunities to support many missionaries. It was so wonderful to see some of them coming back from the mission fields to join us at the Conference. During the Missions Conference, my heart was touched by the missionary stories, my mind was stimulated by the preaching of God's Word and my will was challenged to take more actions to obey the Lord's command.

Shortly after the Conference, sister Shirley and I prayed together. We offered thanks to the Lord for His blessings upon our church. We also prayed for God's guidance for the future. How can we achieve our church goals (2005-2007) of Outreach and Evangelism? Shirley and I agreed that we should not let the fire for missions die down. Therefore we continue to encourage everyone in our congregation to participate in missions through preaching, Sunday school and other ministry projects.

Many missionaries are my heroes. I respect them and want to imitate them. If I have a chance, I would tell you their stories. Their lives have impacted my life in an unforgettable way. Allow me to mention just one of them to you here.

Dr. James Herbert Kane was my professor in Missiology back in my alma mater, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. I had the privilege to study under him for about two year before he passed away. He was a missionary to China for fifteen years (1935-1950) under China Inland Mission. I was first interested in listening to him because he went to China to share with our kinsmen the gospel of Jesus Christ. Then as I listened to him more, I found that his enthusiasm for missions was really impressive. I still remember one day in 1977 he told us in the class that he left China rather reluctantly. He said, "If the door is open, I wouldn't mind returning to China tomorrow. I would take a tooth-brush and my Bible and go." Later, with

a sense of humor, he said that he might not even need to take the tooth-brush because he could get one in Shanghai. Then he said, "I am old now. I don't know if I could even have an opportunity to go back to China again. That is the reason why I am talking to you. I want to train you to do missionary work. One day, many of you can go and do the unfinished task." Until this day, I still remember Dr. Kane vividly. He is one of my heroes.

The year 2005 is of special blessing to me. God has used many events to stretch my faith and taught me many things. I thank God for His grace in my life. He knows my weaknesses and wants his servant to be strengthened through His testing. Sometimes when I feel discouraged, the Lord would encourage me through His Word and His faithful servants. Faithfulness is what He wants from me. Doing pastoral work is part of my missions. One of my duties is to encourage brothers and sisters to get involved with missions. Since I became a Christian thirty-seven years ago, I have always had a burden for evangelism and missions.

A missionary in Africa was once asked if he really liked what he was doing. His response was shocking. "Do I like this work?" he said. "No. My wife and I do not like dirt. We have reasonably refined sensibilities. We do not like crawling into vile huts through goat refuse...But is a man to do nothing for Christ he does not like? God pity him, if not. Liking or disliking has nothing to do with it. We have orders to 'Go,' and we go. Love constrains us."

By the grace of God, our church is now more convinced than ever before that evangelism and missions come directly from the heart of God. Now the question is: Are we willing to go?

Missions! Missions! Missions!



Sharing Our Faith

James Brancato

Are you equipped to share your faith with a stranger? A friend? A co-worker? A relative? If you were to have asked me this same question ten years...five years...or just one year ago, I would have to say I was unequipped for the task. Even today I feel slightly daunted by the challenge to effectively share my faith. Could I effectively share why we call the gospel of Jesus Christ "The Good News"?

In Psalm 19:7 the scripture tells us that "*the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul*". Matthew Henry's Commentary explains "*The law of the Lord is perfect. It is perfectly free from all corruption, perfectly filled with all good, and perfectly fitted for the end of which is designed. Nothing is to be added to it nor taken from it. It is of use to convert the soul, to bring us back to ourselves, to our God, to our duty.*" In summary, the law of the Lord is perfect, free from corruption and is used to convert our souls to bring us back to God.

Why do we need to turn back towards God? 1 John 3:4 teaches us that "*sin is transgression of Law*". Matthew Henry wrote "Commission of sin now is the rejection of the divine law, and this is the rejection of the divine authority, and consequently of God himself." When we sin, we have transgressed God's law. Repentance is the turning away from sin and turning towards God.

Would we know we have sinned without God's law having been revealed to us? In reading Romans 7:7 we learn that "*I would not have known sin except through the law*". And in Romans 3:19 we read that "*Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God.*" Matthew Henry wrote "there is no way to coming to that knowledge of sin which is necessary to repentance, but by comparing our hearts and lives with the law. The law convicts and condemns you--you see it does. *That every mouth may be stopped.* Those that are justified have their mouths stopped by a humble conviction; those that are condemned have their mouths stopped too, for they shall at last be convinced." When we compare our hearts and lives with the law our sins are revealed convicting us, we become guilty before God.

God is Holy and Just. Because he is Holy, we cannot be in his presence in our state of sin. Because he is Just, there will be judgment for all who have broken the Law. Romans 3:19 reveals that none of us is without sin, we are all guilty before God. All of our thoughts, words and deeds will be judged when we appear before the Great White

Throne. Revelation 20:11-12 *“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.”* Revelation 20:15 *“And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

Having found myself convicted of transgression against the Law; and knowing the fate, which awaits me unless my name is written in the Book of Life, I now indeed can joyously welcome the Good News. The “Good News” being that *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). The Lamb of God, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ--came to take away the sins of the world and all those who believe in Him shall have everlasting life. We have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God and our sins washed away, to be remembered no more.

So are you equipped to share your faith? Are you prepared to lead someone through the laws of God? Through the Ten Commandments? Understanding first God’s Law will open our hearts and humble us, so we can be led into repentance; and through our faith in our Lord Jesus we too may one day reside in our Father’s house for all eternity.



Little Lights

Jessica Kuo

During the past summer I was asked if I wanted to join an urban missions trip in D.C. called Little Lights. Little Lights is a camp designed to teach inner city kids about the gospel, help them improve their reading/math skills, and have fun through activities such as swimming and visiting museums.

In the beginning I was quite skeptical and half-hearted about this mission trip. A part of me felt inspired to help inner city kids since I had worked with a few at college, teaching them private violin lessons. However, the other side of me was feeling lazy. It's only five days. What can we possibly do for these kids in five days? What can I learn from being with them for this short amount of time?

Another reason for my hesitancy was the fact that I barely knew most of the people on the mission team. A majority of the team was from the youth group, and since I am rarely home during the year, I did not know them very well.

But I would soon realize that all the skepticism and fears that I had before the trip would be thrown out the window after some time with the team and eventually being with the kids. The first day that we went to the Hope center was mainly for us to settle in and get comfortable as a group. It was fun getting to know everyone, reading Amelia Bedelia for bedtime stories (since there was a shelf full of children books), watching the guys cook bacon with loads of oil (yuck!) and having time to talk about what we were worried about and later on, what we were learning.

Meeting the kids for the first time was quite intimidating. My worst fear was confirmed when I was assigned to take care of the oldest group, a group of 11-13 year old girls who were supposedly causing the most trouble out of everybody. I soon realized my fear was well grounded too. Wow, did some of these girls have attitude! They seemed bold and aggressive, not afraid to speak their mind. One girl especially had the worst attitude I had ever seen. She would always throw fits if things didn't go her way. To my horror I even saw another girl "playfully" strangle another with a rock in her other hand. It was the first time I had to break up a fight.

Although the attitude and culture of the kids took some getting used to, I soon realized that no matter what they're still kids, and they crave for attention and love. Initially I thought that it would take ages before the kids warmed up to us. In actuality, it took only a few hours. The moment Mei-jean (a team member) and I were with them in the pool, it

was only a matter of seconds before they started asking us to flip them and did the same to us. One girl even opened up to me, asking if I ever thought of committing suicide, and saying that her grandpa thought about it before. I also noticed how much they loved hugs and putting their arms around each other, us included. One little girl insisted that I carry her around, giving her a full tour of the playground.

It was an amazing feeling being with them. For once I felt that my thoughts weren't swarming with me me me...my worries, my ambitions, etc., but how to care for these kids, how to get to know them and get them to trust you. It was amazing having my life being centered on showing God's love to these kids versus being self-centered.

I entered in having barriers, worries about my own strengths, differences in culture and whether that would make it more difficult for us to bond with the kids. God, however, had other plans. Despite the differences in culture, I learned to step out of my comfort zone and they soon warmed up to us. I learned that I didn't have to worry about my weaknesses because God would work through me as long as my heart is in the right place. Through this trip I was able to learn so much and I'm just grateful that I was able to experience it.



A Pastor's Touch Of Love

(A True Story - Characters Are Fictional)

Aileen Chow

Ten days before Christmas, Pastor James Warren and his fellow deacons went to buy Christmas gifts for nearly three hundred people! They went shopping at Wal-Mart, Kmart and the Dollar Tree Stores and bought all sorts of Christmas presents. These gifts were for his church family, a congregation of approximately five hundred people. It was his gift of love to people whom he wanted to reach out to. He assigned eight of his deacons to go shopping. Four deacons were in charge of purchasing gifts for the adults. The other four deacons went and bought lots of toys for the children. When they were done shopping they brought all the gifts back to the church.

On Sunday morning, five days before Christmas, the deacons and some youth group members helped place all the gifts on the front stage in the sanctuary. The unwrapped boxes of gifts and toys were placed beside six decorated Christmas trees. Pastor Warren and all the helpers looked upon all the Christmas gifts with delight. The front stage in the sanctuary has been transformed into a huge Christmas treat! This was the second time they had gone out shopping and bought gifts for the church family. Last year, around this time they had done the same thing. Pastor Warren loved Christmas and the joy of giving gifts to people in need. A church member who loved to give had also bought a brand new couch and a dinette set! The furniture was now displayed at center stage along with the other gifts.

When the people arrived for service on Sunday morning, they were all happy to see hundreds of gifts on the stage along with the Christmas trees. The children were especially excited after seeing all the toys. Pastor Warren was happy to see the number of people who came to service.

When the Christmas lights on the trees twinkled one by one, the lights in the sanctuary dimmed. The choir started to sing a Christmas song. Pastor Warren knew how special this event was. "Look at the all the gifts. Isn't it wonderful that we can do this," he said and pointed to the unwrapped gifts under a tree. "It just brings joy to my heart to know that we can give to so many people. It is the spirit of giving that I love and it is also the love that God gave to us. His gift is his only Son, Jesus Christ. Do you know that there are people out there that don't like Christmas? They can't bear the misery or madness of shopping or just spending money. There are also people who are hurting when Christmas arrives. They hurt maybe because they lost their jobs or they lost a loved one that couldn't be with them during this joyful

occasion. This is where we step in, as God's people we need to give hope to people who are hurting and suffering."

Pastor Warren pulled away from the pulpit and stepped down the stage to face the people. "I am going to—" he paused and smiled. "You won't believe what I am about to do here. I am going to give this fine dinette table to a family. This family had lost everything they had to a house fire two weeks ago. They just moved into an apartment. They called me and told me they needed some furniture. Where are Joe and Linda Wilkerson?"

Suddenly, a family came down to Pastor Warren. There were three children in all. Joe and Linda looked at the pastor gratefully. "This family went through tremendous loss. As a church family we have always provided families with anything they need. Joe and Linda, we want to give you hope as you start to rebuild your home and lives again."

Moved to tears, Linda spoke, "We thank you from the bottom of our hearts."

"And we are thankful that you and your children are safe," said Pastor Warren. "We will continue to look after you as you settle into your new home." At that moment the people cheered and clapped. The pastor said, "Also, that couch up there is for you too." The people clapped again. Joe and Linda wiped their tears and thanked everyone.

Then the pastor told the youths to come upstage to distribute the gifts. The children were happy upon receiving the toys. And when some families received their gifts they were all very grateful.

Later that week, Pastor Warren received an unexpected phone call. It was from a gentleman who attended the church. He was quite unhappy about the Christmas service and was concerned that the church had spent way too much money on toys and Christmas gifts for the families. The man was worried that it was his money or his offering money that was being used to purchase gifts to all those people. The pastor had never thought of that. He had never wanted to use church offering to buy things at Wal-Mart. He assured the man that the money was not his offering. He then told him the money was donated to the church from the community.

After the phone call, Pastor Warren did not feel right. He was not sure if he wanted to give out gifts again. He realized he didn't want to make people feel that he went out of control to spend over three thousand dollars worth of gifts. He could have put better use of the money that was donated to the church. He sort of felt bad about it and began

talking it over with his wife. "But you love Christmas! You love to give!" His wife exclaimed. Yes, he thought, he did love to give and he wanted to help people too. But still, he did not know whether to keep this tradition of buying gifts to the church family during Christmas. That answer did not come until the next Sunday. After service that Sunday a number of families came to the front sanctuary to talk to him. One group of family came to the front and greeted him.

"Hello, it's nice to meet you," said Pastor Warren to a couple. He had never seen them before. He asked them, "What are your names?"

"Well, hello Pastor. My name's Mike and this is my wife, Anne", said the husband. The pastor shook hands with the couple.

"It's nice to meet you both." The pastor looked down and saw a young child with them. He bent down and asked the child, "And what is your name?" The young girl shyly smiled back at the pastor and then hugged her mother. "Oh, she's very adorable."

Anne giggled and said, "Her name is Emily."

"Are you first time visitors?" The pastor asked the couple.

Mike replied, "It's our third time here. Well, we've been church hopping and we like this church a lot."

The pastor smiled and said, "Thanks! That's great to hear that you like to stay here."

Mike added, "Last week's service was very touching especially. My wife and I didn't expect it."

Anne said, "Emily loved the pink tricycle she got last week. She's been riding it everyday. It makes her feel so happy. She loves it." The mother looked down at Emily and said, "Emily, you now can say "Thank You" to Pastor Warren for the tricycle." They looked at each other eye to eye. Emily understood her mother. Before the service, her mother had told Emily to thank the pastor for her new tricycle. Emily came up before the pastor and smiled. She didn't say anything and the pastor wondered why she did not say a word. Suddenly, she raised her hands and communicated to the pastor in sign language: *Thank you Pastor Warren for my tricycle!* Anne translated to the pastor. "She just said to you, 'Thank you, Pastor Warren for my tricycle.'"

This child struck the pastor so much that he was moved to tears. He bent down next to her and gave her a hug. "You're welcome Emily." He touched her cheek and asked her, "How old are you?" Anne

gestured in sign language to her daughter the question. Emily held up four fingers. "Oh, you are an Angel," he said and gave her a hug again.

Soon after this initial meeting, the pastor realized that he had made a difference in this little girl's life. He had made her happy and that was all he wanted to do. He realized that just one upsetting phone call should not stop him from doing what was right. The money that was donated to the church should be used for this kind of event. *And we should continue this tradition at this church, year after year*, thought the pastor. Then he remembered his last message: *"It just brings joy to my heart to know that we can give to so many people. It is the spirit of giving that I love..."* And you'll never know who you will touch.



Art And Science, Truth And Beauty

Oliver Chang

There is the truth that science pursues, that of the world around us, in its makings and workings, in the unraveling of the great puzzle that is the universe. But then, between the water particles in the sky and the innumerable paths of an electron, lies a greater truth. It is greater in that the world around us is still based on an assumption of trust in the senses, and that that truth does not depend on reality in order to hold value. If reality defines truth, and reality is questionable, the physical world may be simply a dream. But even if the world is false, there still exists a form of which this dream rests upon. Thus, the dream still expresses an ultimate thought; it is that greater truth. Within that truth lies a part, which art expresses to its full. It is the truth of a sheer reality of beauty despite a world that has had its foundations shaken. This is not to say that science does not hold beauty of its own. The complexities of the universe do not subtract from, but rather glorify the masterpiece that is reality, that down to the very particle, there is still more beauty to be found. It is sophomoric to limit science to truth and art to beauty. Truth and beauty are one and the same; there is truth in beauty and beauty in truth. Art in its very core sprouts from the world of the real. The human soul is shaped and transformed by its experiences and from those experiences blossoms art. Art in this aspect is the most real of any endeavor. It takes the truth of this world and pulls it out by its roots, giving the very essence of our existence. Science, in turn, is pursued by people just as human as musicians and artists, and their drive (we all hope) is their passion in their field. The network of individuals all striving together to find order in a chaotic world cannot be called cold. Their needs and struggles are at the core as fervent as any musician's, and the only word that can encompass the essence of such a quest, is beauty. The real separation between science and art is the place where they find that beauty. Science studies the world as the physical painting of God's mind, while art takes the struggles and triumphs within our minds and brings it not only into the physical world, but communicates it to all who see and hear it. What is truth? What is beauty? I repeat myself.



1-3-8

Alvin Spivy

*"¹⁹There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores ²²The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'²⁵But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶And besides all this, **between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.**" (Luke 16:19-26)*

When I sat down to write this ECHO entry, I had to make sure it was clear to myself—so, I should make it clear to the reader—that this article is not an eulogy for Dennis, or in any way for my own convalescence, but to the glory of our Father; of the role played by the Spirit in me during my time of need, remorse, anxiety, and spiritual uncertainty. As I now sit down to write this, almost one year has passed, and as the time rounds down to the anniversary of his suicide, my emotions peel open, just as fresh as when I first found out at 7:42 pm on December 6, 2004. I apologize for any inappropriate digression, and again emphasize the original intent of this article: to God be the glory.

Throughout my entire life I've been blessed to be able to say that God has walked with me. His presence was most known even before I began my Christian Walk—my Christian Journey—noticing His presence as far as back when I was in Primary School. Over the years, of course, it's waned; and so has my walk itself. When I sit and reflect on where I am and where I need to be, I'm constantly thinking, "it's not as strong as it's been before." But back when His walk with me was most obvious, and not so occluded by sin, bias, and ignorance; even then, I was provided with some sort of companionship—a personal confidant, whether it was by the Holy Spirit, an interpersonal friendship, or through intrapersonal peace.

There's this recreational facility with a pool located across from my grandmother's house, and one time when I was around 5 or 8 my

brother and I had gotten into a fight, for some reason I don't remember anymore. Back then, whatever had happened, I was so upset and filled with hatred toward him that I went marching across the street to make the case to my grandmother of why he so clearly needed to be reprimanded with the full force of the power invested in her by the State of South Carolina, and how I would make a perfect witness to this sorely needed expression of justice. But, while on my 10-yard crusade crossing the street, I like to say that it was the Holy Spirit who came to me and spoke; just as clearly as when being face to face with any of you, repeating, "Calm down, Calm down. No. No. Don't do this, calm down..." What reason, why or why not, I don't know, but as He spoke and claimed my heart I thought nothing of it. I didn't think I was going crazy. Of course, I knew that it definitely wasn't something that was usual, but it definitely wasn't something that I felt wrong, and I tried to follow that Spirit and do what I was told, not knowing or understanding that it could have been God's presence.

Going through Primary, into Elementary school, and up-and-out of High school I garnered some true and strong friendships in Ben Herriot, my brother Calvin Spivey, Eben Cockely, Ian Goldberg, Adam Smith, Mark Triece, Mark Thayer, Mark Mossa and Mike Xue. Just as quickly as one ended, for whatever reason, another began, each ever stronger than the other—blessings delivered from the hands of God. The last one, the most recent one, and the one that has made the most indelible impression on my Christian life, and on me personally, is of Dennis Fan.

I first met Dennis through Mike Xue, who brought me here to the Rochester Chinese Christian Church. He ended up becoming my roommate, and from the very beginning we hit it off. He was usually quiet around everyone else, but behind closed doors, when it was just he and I, he really let loose. One weekend, during my Junior year, we were watching a Discovery Nature episode on prairie dogs. Dennis and I were in the same room, but sitting on opposite sides, and the narrator started talking about the prairie dogs territorial "jump-yip" display, "...the animal stretches its body vertically and throws its forefeet high into the air as it makes a bark-like call." Immediately, with the most serious of serious faces, Dennis and I look at each other, sat up straight and start barking back and forth. For five minutes we barked. There were no bounds to our immaturity.

He and I spoke about school, society, culture, and mostly religion. We talked about Christ, and God's grace. Dennis' position was obvious. He clearly was not a Christian or religious in any sense: feeling the way so many people feel today, that a belief served only as a conversation piece, or was a topic of opinion, not so much a case of certainty, or even necessity. It's almost a compromise that "you may think one way, and I may think another, and that's ok." Every time I brought it up he

would become uncomfortable; and not that I was convincing, but because of his growing awareness of how he has been continually denying God's benevolent grace, I felt that there was no rush, that Dennis would eventually realize the importance and undeniable truth of Christ.

*"²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with **groans** that words cannot express. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."* (Romans 8:26-27)

I got into graduate school, and my time with Dennis ran short. With graduate school came more time in the labs, a 5 am to 1 am, 21 hour day schedule, a stretch away from what was ordinary between Dennis and I. I later found out that he had stopped going to classes, stopped working at his student job, and was apparently sitting around the house each day, for the past 10 weeks, waiting for me to come home. It makes sense now why, when four days before he committed suicide, he met me at the door late one night and asked me, very timidly, if I was upset and embarrassed of him, since I'd been spending less time around.

He told me he planned on taking a Co-op in Chicago, and that he'd be leaving this coming weekend. It turned out to be a lie, and that following Monday, on December 6, 2004, two campus safety officers and a housing operations administrator met me at my apartment and told me Dennis had committed suicide in a New Jersey hotel.

Tom Chang has submitted an ECHO article detailing exactly how the Holy Spirit worked in both of our lives up to that point. How I came to befriend him, and he became my comforter. So, I won't go into the background of that. I'll say this much though; what we experienced, the unquestionable truth of the power, mercy, presence, comfort, and love of God, will never be forgotten. Whether I want to be or not, "Tom Chang" has been seared into my heart, and I am thankful for him. Through him God reaffirmed his love, patience, and desire for me; and continues to do so.

It was in that night, in the upper bedroom of Tom's house, that it was the hardest. I sat and prayed. I prayed hard, with impassioned moans and tears, for Dennis' soul, knowing full well it was all in vain. It became my mantra, the theme for the entire night, "God is righteous and Holy; perfect in every way." Knowing that, it was clear in scripture what the implications of suicide were—and that the judgment had to be upheld. A burning unforgiving Hell for all eternity awaits Dennis' soul. And according to Luke 16:26, I could be a witness to his punishment.

He could see me, and I could see him. Neither of us reaching the other. I always thought it was significant that when Abraham pointed out the great gulf between heaven and Hell, that he mentioned, and mentioned first, anyone in Heaven who'd want to go to Hell would not succeed. Why would anyone in Heaven want to go to Hell? What in Hell would make someone want to even try to cross a great gulf to get to it—or her, or him?

Dennis was my delivered blessing. Currently, the last in a chain of intimate relationships. Now I'm more familiar with intermittent depression, angst, and nostalgia. Because we were manly men, juvenile, and corny, Dennis made up this code for whenever he was really enjoying himself, or mad at me. 1-3-8. It means 1 sentence, 3 words, 8 letters. Either "I love you", or "I hate you". But when he used it, you never knew which one he meant. Most of the time he said it to me, it was safe to assume, "I hate you". Looking back at small things like this makes me appreciate what God has allowed me to experience—in the midst, and aftermath of Dennis, his steadfast presence.

You were my greatest happiness;
And my deepest pain.

1-3-8.



Job's life different from Job's life

Simien Lin

My job search started even before graduation. I was hoping if I could get a head start on it, the ride would be smoother and after graduation, I will know exactly where I will go next. In preparation for this, resumes were sent out by the dozens, calls to employers during the free time I have between classes and school work, numerous trips to the co-op office to chat with my co-op advisor concerning the best ways to interview and how to make my resume look impressive. All those things paid off... they got me a ton of interviews but never a job offer, at least not while I was still in college. Now looking back, I am grateful that I did not get offers from some of the companies that I interviewed. Perhaps out of desperation, I would have taken the offer back then.

Actually... that did happen. Because I did not have a job after graduation and the only thing available for me was a 6 month co-op in Campbell Hall, NY, my job hunt operation was moved to Poughkeepsie, NY. Near the end of my internship, I was given a job offer to be a technical sales engineer for a company in New Jersey. They had given me two weeks to make the decision. I was not completely happy about the package that they had offered me, so I tried to negotiate with them during that short period of time. That did not get me anywhere. In fact, I began to feel that I was becoming an annoyance to them. Without having the patience to wait for other employers' answers and getting more desperate as the days went by, I decided to accept this offer. I called them on the very last day of the two weeks to tell them that I have accepted their offer only to find out that they decided they wouldn't be needing me and was going to rescind their offer. I praise God that in my weakness when I could not make the right decision, He had made the decision for me.

My struggle of becoming a sales engineer was the fear of becoming a manipulative person that would lie and cheat to gain sales. I prayed that God will help me make the decision, and that He will show me the way. But not getting much response from Him, I turned to the other brothers and sisters around me and asked them about starting out in a sales position. Even when the answers from those around me were that it's okay to be a Christian and a sales person, I was still uneasy with the idea. When that job was stripped away from me, I was upset and questioned God. I was angry with Him and hardened my heart against Him. I didn't know why He would grant me a job and snatch it away from me at the last moment. Now looking back, I know that having that job taken away from me became the best thing that happened for me, career-wise.

After a few months of waiting, I finally got another job offer from a company that offered a position that I was comfortable with. The position was a sort of cross between engineering and sales, and in this way I was able to progress and experience both fields. To top things off, I got to travel. The job description concerning travels was said to be 50% or more... they should've emphasized the "or more" part. I think the traveling part is more like 75%. I have traveled to Taiwan, Singapore, Germany, China, Hong Kong, and with Japan coming up in the near future. Currently, I am writing this in Shanghai. I am visiting for the week because the company is thinking about transferring me there for two or three years. To sum it up, everything I had asked God for, all my desires for traveling, wanting to come to China, hoping for the chance to move towards the business end of engineering was granted to me. This was a job that is completely different from Job's life. Job lost everything when God tested him. Despite his lowly circumstances, he continued to praise God and put his faith and trust in God. Oh yes, he questioned God but he never turned his back on God. I, on the other hand, was given everything that I had ever wanted. Everything I had asked for, God granted. But what is my response to it all. Do I have the same attitude as Job? Do I praise God and worship Him? Do I live each day thanking Him for His greatness and His love for me in providing such a great job? The answer would have to be a disappointing "no."

I find that while on the road, it is extremely hard to keep a strong relationship with God. My traveling is always taking me to new places where no one knows me. In those places, I say to myself, "I can do whatever I want because no one knows me, I don't have anyone physically around me that I will have to answer to." This mentality has led me to many of my spiritual downfalls. The longer my stay is, the worse my relationship with God grows. It is when I come back to the States that I feel revived and draw close to God. However, before I can fully recuperate from my defeat, I am off to another place again. This cycle of defeat and partial healing has been going around and around ever since I started working. I know that I must break this cycle somehow but I am finding it extremely hard when I am alone, lacking fellowship, church and accountability.

This month has been constant travel for me. In the first two weeks of November, I was in Germany. Because I did not speak German, I did not attend any service and needless to say, I didn't have the chance to go to fellowships there. I suffered greatly spiritually in those two weeks. I flew directly from Germany to Shanghai. My stay here in Shanghai is almost over but I am glad to say that I am starting to recover from my defeats in Germany. A few of my friends in the states had friends here in Shanghai and so when I came, I was able to meet up with some of them. These new found friends were all Christians and they brought

me to their fellowship and church. I felt God speaking to me through the song “Draw me close to you.” There were a few lines in this song that stood out to me the most:

I lay it all down again, to hear you say that I'm your friend.

No one else can take your place, to feel the warmth of your embrace.

Help me find the way, bring me back to you.

Help me know you are near.

I guess being on the road so much and not having a consistent relationship with God made me realize how much I missed Him. The song reminded me of the goodness and the joy that comes from being a friend of God, and the ability to feel the embrace from my Heavenly Father. It is only fitting that after God convicted me of what was lacking in my life, my only cry was for Him to help me find my way back to Him while I am taking that journey, and I will be able to know and experience His nearness.



Fallacy In The Lyrics

A. Traveler

The power of a song stems from not just the rhythm, but also the lyrics. I am not talking about the obvious such as some of the raps that have caused listeners to commit crimes or suicides. Even the soft, benign love songs can romanticize us in such a way that gently leads us away from our true belief.

One of my favorite love songs is Crystal Gayle's “*Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue*”. Loving the song for its rhythm, arrangement and the singer's rendition is one thing, believing in the lyric is another. Part of the lyric says, “*Tell me no secrets; tell me some lies. Give me no*

reasons, give me alibis". It's romantic. It's selfless. It glorifies a woman's love for her man even though she is losing him. She doesn't want to face reality. She can't bring herself to hear any of her man's secrets for fear they may hurt her. She'd rather hear lies. In fact, she wants her man to tell her some lies so that she can continue to live in her dreams. Her state of mind is totally preoccupied with this hopeless love, leaving no room for reasons. Ah, but alibis are different. Alibis can feed her dreams with more fantasies and paint her mirage with vivid colors.

"Wake up! You fool." Before you say that with contempt, examine your own life and see how many times you have ignored the obvious because you are blinded by the bright vision of your dreams or aspirations. There is nothing wrong with having great dreams and aspirations. We just need to make sure they are within God's plan for us. Don't be tempted by the sugarcoating or icing. Don't fall for the "feel good" sayings or advice. Most importantly, don't be like the woman in the song and keep fooling yourself. We want God's truth; never lies or alibis. And sometimes, even human reasoning can hurt us if it's not abiding by the word of God.

Another one of my favorites is Anne Murray's signature song, "*You Needed Me*". Here the lyric is more romantic and powerful. "... *You gave me strength to stand alone again; to face the world out on my own again. You put me high upon a pedestal; so high that I could almost see eternity. You needed me. ...*" To many people the song is not just romantic but also "deep" and mysterious in its portrayal of a delicate relationship between a man and a woman. On the one hand the man is portrayed as a strong, powerful and noble figure, giving the woman encouragement and strength. On the other hand, he may be the weaker one because he needs her so much. Is it love or friendship? or both? Part of the power of the song lies in this uncertainty, leaving it to the listeners to imagine whatever fits their fancy. But the point I want to make is "seeing eternity". Human thinking dictates that in order to see something far away, we need to go higher. What can be farther away than eternity? The singer was put on a pedestal, so high that she could almost see eternity. Isn't it true that deep down we all want to see eternity. The sad part is, most people think that in order to see eternity, they must go higher. Some think that material wealth will put them higher. Others think that intellect or knowledge can put them higher. But the bible tells us otherwise. God is the ultimate eternity. To see God, we need to do just the opposite. Instead of striving to go higher, we need to go lower. We need to be humble and submit our will to Him. Only then will we be able to see the eternal God. When we cast aside our pride, confess our sins, believe and accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we don't just "almost see eternity", we in fact have eternity.

To My Grown-Up Son

Author Unknown

*My hands were busy through the day
I didn't have much time to play
The little games you asked me to
I didn't have much time for you*

*I'd wash your clothes, I'd sew and cook
But when you'd bring your picture book
And ask me please to share your fun
I'd say: "A little later, son."*

*I'd tuck you in all safe at night
And hear your prayers, turn out the light
Then tiptoe softly to the door
I wish I'd stay a minute more*

*For life is short, the years rush past
A little boy grows up so fast
No longer is he at your side
To you his little secret confide*

*His precious books are put away
There are no longer games to play
No good-night kiss, no prayers to hear
That all belongs to yesteryear*

*My hand, once busy, now are still
The days are long and hard to fill
I wish I could go back and do
The little things you asked me to*