

Rochester Chinese Christian Church

# ECHO

December 2010 Volume 28 No. 2



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## Church Goals (2008-2010)

### ***Glory to God Alone***

*“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31)...*

- \* by **growing** in our understanding of and love for the great doctrines of Scripture and the knowledge of Christ (Ps.119:97);
- \* by **honoring** the Word of God and prayer in humility, conviction of sin, and repentance, as the means of grace for the transformation of our lives (Rom.12:2);
- \* by **developing** a biblical world and life view, a heavenly-minded outlook, and personal character worthy of the gospel of Christ (Phil.1:27);
- \* by **encouraging** mutual exhortation toward each other's spiritual welfare, as well as concern for each other's all-around well-being (Heb.10:25); and
- \* by **strengthening** our conviction that the gospel of Christ is the only means of salvation, and our proclamation of it locally and worldwide (Acts 4:12).



Rochester Chinese Christian Church  
羅城華人基督教會



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|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>English Sunday Worship</b><br/>9:30 am</p> <p><b>English Sunday School</b><br/>11:15 am</p> <p>Call the church for other<br/><b>fellowship, bible study</b><br/>&amp; <b>youth group</b> meetings</p> | <p><b>中文主日學</b><br/>上午九時三十分</p> <p><b>中文主日崇拜</b><br/>上午十一時十五分</p> <p>欲知其他團契聚會<br/>查經班，請電教會</p> |
|---|--|

Rochester Chinese Christian Church West  
羅城西區華人基督教會

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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



## Our Ultimate Trust

Pastor Mitchell R.Herring

*"Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God." (Ps. 20:7)*

*"First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and godly life in all godliness and dignity." (1 Tim. 2:1-2)*

A few weeks ago, we witnessed an extraordinary election in which the Republicans made their biggest gains in more than 70 years. They gained around 65 seats to become the majority in the House of Representatives, and made significant gains in the Senate and in many states around the country. How should we respond? Here are a few observations.

1. Remember that neither party has a monopoly on truth. While on some issues the position of one party might be more consistent with biblical principles, on other issues the other party may hold the biblical high ground.

2. The problems and challenges facing the country today go beyond which party controls Congress or the White House. To a certain extent, the character of Washington, D.C. only reflects the character of the nation as a whole. As standards of right and wrong change in our culture, we should not be surprised to see such change reflected in government and politics. Whether in moral standards, personal ambition, craving for material things, spending beyond our means, a mentality of instant gratification, seeking quick fixes to deep-rooted problems, or arrogant, empty talk---these will also be reflected in the character of leadership at every level, regardless of party. Sin and selfishness make no distinction between political parties. One party is not more righteous than another.

3. In the nation as a whole, there is deep polarization on certain issues that are also reflected in the politics of Washington, D.C. This leads to a situation in which differences are taken personally, and there is a tendency for each side to want to vilify the other. Therefore it is difficult to sit down and truly listen to what the other

side is really saying, and to understand where they are coming from and what their concerns are.

4. On top of this, as crass as it may be to say it, pursuit of political advantage increasingly trumps all other considerations, even matters of national interest, no matter which party you talk about. While there are certainly many individuals in both parties who do possess moral integrity, deep conviction, and a genuine desire to do good as public servants, yet this does not represent the general culture of government today. What we see all too often, rather, is the desire to defame the other side, accuse, slander, distort, misrepresent, and obstruct, just for political advantage. Both sides repeat the same meaningless rhetoric to rally their troops, and hold to a one-sided view of issues that is unable or unwilling to see the whole picture. Working together to analyze a situation, see and address the whole picture, and come up with a reasonable approach and policy might give too much credit, should it succeed, to the person you want to defeat in the next election!

These are some of the considerations that keep me from getting too excited no matter which party wins the upper hand. But beyond that, we have the Scriptures and the worldview they present which should guide our thinking. First, *the doctrine of sin should keep us from putting our ultimate trust in any person, party, or political system.* Governments, political systems, social systems---all are made up of fallen human beings like you and me. Those who put their ultimate hope in them will be ultimately disappointed by them. Second, administrative measures can at best only restrain sin for a time. They cannot eradicate it or stop its relentless spread. Political conservatives held the White House through the 1980s into the early 1990s, and again in the first eight years of this century. *Yet this has not resulted in an increase of righteousness in the land.* But third, and most importantly, the Bible consistently *warns against putting our ultimate hope in any person or party, government or military. "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the Lord!" (Is.31:1).*

We have seen strong empires fall in a very short time, and there are no guarantees for the duration of America's place in history either, if the Lord does not return soon. Already America is falling behind other countries in several important categories. But we are citizens of that better country, that is, the heavenly one (Heb. 11:16), and we wait for the coming of that kingdom and the age to come, and the

sovereignty of Christ our Savior, whose "policies" (i.e. law and righteousness) will insure all that we ultimately hope for: *"...and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away"* (Rev. 21:4). When that time comes, we will not glory in being American or Chinese, but only in Christ and His kingdom.

Yet the Lord has given us our earthly and temporal citizenship as well, and He calls us as His witnesses to pray for our leaders, our country, and our fellow-citizens (1 Tim. 2:1-2). We do not put our ultimate hope in political leaders, but we pray for them for divine guidance, righteousness, wisdom, honesty and integrity, no matter which party they belong to. And we pray for the well-being of our fellow citizens, and for the opportunity to share with them about the country of our true citizenship, and the Savior in whom is our ultimate trust.



## The Great Awakening

Bob Disch

English immigrants settled permanently in what is now the state of Virginia as early as 1587. Soon after, settlers from other countries such as Spain, Portugal, Holland, Germany, Scotland and France followed suit. Early settlers sailed across the Atlantic to North America due to economic or religious considerations.

In Europe, powerful governments designated an official state religion, and the citizens had to support that church, even if they belonged to a different one. In Spain, France, and Portugal, the state religion was the Roman Catholic Church. In England, the official church was the Anglican Church. In European history, people were frequently killed or tortured for believing in a religion that was different from the one approved by the government. This tradition continued in North America, as nine of the original thirteen colonies that made up the United States forced inhabitants to pay taxes to a state church that dictated how worship was to be conducted.

Churches founded by settlers initially flourished, but eventually state control caused them to decline in attendance and enthusiasm. Religious faith cannot be coerced or dictated. By 1700, lethargy was the trend. Only eleven per cent of the colonists attended worship services. Supported by state tax funds, many pastors served in positions for the money and were unconverted to faith in Jesus Christ. Churches were literally dying due to ungodly leadership.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was the son of a Congregational minister who earned his Master's degree from Yale at age 19. By 1734, Edwards was serving as pastor of Northampton Church in Massachusetts. Large numbers of youth began showing up at church. Over a two year period, people from every age group in the community came to faith in Christ and were baptized; a total of three hundred in a population of six hundred.

The sermons of Jonathan Edwards typically emphasized the need for an experience of conviction of sin and divine forgiveness. People began responding to his sermons, some with emotional outbursts, but many with a remarkable change in their lives and increased devotion to Christ. The movement swept through much of Massachusetts and reached into Connecticut as well.

In 1740, George Whitefield (1714-1770), already a famous preacher in England, arrived in New England. Whitefield was a Calvinist graduate of Oxford University who preached outdoors, and he gave new impetus to the Great Awakening. When Whitefield initially preached at Northampton, Edwards was moved to tears. The movement eventually extended south, as far as the Carolinas and Georgia.

While some preachers followed Whitefield's example, traveling through the countryside, many local pastors of various traditions –

Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists – brought new zeal to their pulpits, and extraordinary responses were evoked in their churches as well. People wept in repentance for their sins, some shouted for joy at having been pardoned, and a few were so overwhelmed that they fainted.

By 1742, it is estimated that an additional twenty-five to fifty thousand colonists were converted to faith in Christ. Mission efforts increased and additional Bible colleges were formed in Princeton (1746), Brown (1764) and Rutgers (1766).

The Great Awakening also led both Baptists and Methodists to the western frontier. At the time, whites were constantly appropriating Native American lands; and it was the Methodists and Baptists who, guided by the spirit of the Great Awakening, preached to the western settlers and planted churches. As a result of the Great Awakening, and subsequent similar movements, the hope for an “awakening” or “revival” has become typical for many American Christians.

Religious freedom, renewed evangelism, powerful preaching (without notes) and monetary support of ministers by local churches resulted from the Awakening. Interestingly, the Great Awakening had political consequences as well. This was the first movement that embraced the thirteen colonies that would eventually become the United States. Thanks to it, a sense of commonality began to develop among the various colonies. At the same time, new ideas were circulating regarding human rights and the nature of government. Those ideas, joined with the growing sense of brotherhood among the colonies, would produce world-changing events.

On July 4, 1776, the United States of America, declaring independence, referred to rights granted by the Creator God. On December 15, 1791, the First Amendment to the Constitution of United States of America indicated, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people to peaceably assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

*“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* – Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospel of John, chapter 8, verse 31 (NIV).

## Uncertainties of Life

Joelle Shiyun He

Life is full of surprises and uncertainties. Just merely 4 years ago, I remembered being in the car with my accompanist and driving to my audition for Eastman and a couple of other schools. They hold auditions in Singapore yearly. In fact, halfway through the journey, I told my parents that I did not want to take the audition as going abroad to America alone was totally out of my comfort zone and I also wasn't confident in my abilities. They mentioned that I did not have to do it if I really didn't want to. However, at the end of the conversation, we arrived at our destination and I agreed to take the audition since my accompanist was already with me. Three months passed, and I received news that I got into Eastman as well as the conservatory at home and the one in Sydney. I was thanking God for opening so many doors for me as I wasn't expecting such results. I had never been an outstanding student, so acceptance in various places really gave me great confidence in myself. It was decision-making time and I really had no idea where I really wanted to go. Everyone was telling me that the choice was so obvious but no one actually understood my fears and worries. Throughout this entire journey, I had one verse in mind and it was " *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you*" (1 Peter 5:7). This verse gave me great comfort that God is such a caring God, and it gave me such an assurance that I'm able to cast all my worries and anxiety upon him. Finally, after many prayers and talking to former Eastman alumni, they all encouraged me to apply, and I did.

Eastman is filled with such talented musicians and the faculty is world-class. I'm really happy to be part of the Eastman family and also be part of the Rochester Chinese Christian Church family. There are so many supportive people here and I feel very blessed. Coming to America really helped me become a much more confident person. Before, I never imagined myself taking a plane alone for more than 24 hours. In fact, I was actually afraid of flying. However, right now I'm doing it so often and it doesn't feel scary anymore. Time flies and it's time to think about my future. I'm a senior right now and it's funny to think that I'm not even legal in America to drink. I just did my grad school applications and it occurred to me I'll be embarking on a whole new different journey. It seems scary but I always know that God is in control of everything and he can only answer prayers if you knock on his door and pray.

I would like to close with this verse, "*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you*" (Matthew 7:7)

## My '98 Ford Escort

Aileen Chow

*"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:18-19)*

I owned an old '98 Ford Escort for the past twelve years and it has well over 130,000 mileages. My husband Barry and I hoped it would last another year, but the muffler was getting very noisy and it also needed new tires and a new gas tank. So these problems made us look into buying a new car much sooner.

We planned to trade in my Escort. After doing some research, Barry found a used car that he liked, and after test-driving it, we decided to purchase the car. Our salesman was so eager to close the deal with us and said that we could have the car by this afternoon! But...my heart sank. As we were sitting in his office, I couldn't help but think about losing my Escort and I wondered to myself if this would be the last day to see my car ever again! It was unexpected and I wasn't ready to let go.

I was becoming emotional. When the salesman asked who owned the car for the past twelve years, Barry said, "My wife." And so the salesman understood how much I loved that car. Luckily, we could not get the car that afternoon, so we drove home in the Escort.

A day later, early in the morning, I left the house. I went to the garage to say goodbye to my Escort. I opened the garage door and stared at my gray Escort. It was smaller than the new car. It was plain and not sleek with silver chrome lines like the newer model cars. But I still loved my old car anyway. I got in the car and sat in the driver seat. I petted it and said goodbye. I must be a little crazy, I thought, but I couldn't help but think that when I bought this car, it was not displayed outside on the car lot. When I first laid eyes on this car, it was inside a Ford dealership showroom. It was the only car I looked at, and it was just right for me...and it had no power lock doors. Just think of the many times we had to tell the passengers to lock the doors! I sat in the car thinking of the fond memories with this vehicle.

I got out of the car and opened the back door. I sat in the back seat. The automatic garage light turned off and so I was sitting in the dark. I remembered when this car hit a deer, two years in a row.

The accident broke the headlights and dented the hood. Another time was when the speedometer needle went haywire when I drove on the highway. Other than that, this car did not get into major road accidents. I rubbed the back seat and told my car that everything would be okay.

I think I spent about a good half hour in the vehicle and then I kissed it goodbye. At the end of the week, I kept hoping that I would spend more time saying goodbye to my Escort. But then, I saw a car pull into our driveway from my kitchen window. I was preparing dinner and I saw Barry inside the new car! I was so upset because I didn't know he was picking up the new car at the end of the week. I went to him and cried. Well, that said it. I was not excited about the new car.

Sometimes, in our lives it is hard to let go of things precious to us. I could not let go of my old car and accept the new car. And sometimes, I look back into my past and wished I could have done things differently. But the Bible warns us not to dwell on the past. Looking back to the past and holding onto the old things has paralyzed my life. It keeps me from fulfilling the will of God for my future.

*“Remember Lot’s wife”* in Luke 17:32. She is unnamed, but she represents many of us who dwell on the past and hold onto dear precious things in life. The story is in Genesis. God told Lot and his family he was going to destroy the city of Sodom where they lived. It was a city full of sin. God would spare Lot’s family and told them to leave the doomed city. He sent down angels to warn Lot to flee for their lives and never to look back. That night, Lot took his wife and two daughters out of the city. When God rained down sulfur and fire on the city, Lot’s wife looked back! It was a dangerous move...for it cost her life. She became a pillar of salt. When she looked back, did she have fond memories of living in Sodom?

We all must believe she could not let go of the past. Maybe she forgot something there that was precious to her...a gold locket, a treasured vase, fine clothes, her lovely home or precious memories. Whatever it was, it made her sad to leave behind everything and to run away with nothing in hand. You see, I think God promised a better future for Lot’s family and so God did not want them to look back.

I think about my old Escort. If I still had kept my car today, it would have been dangerous to drive it on the road. It would not pass the

state inspection. It would fail because of the loud muffler, the bald tires and the leaking gas tank. And then we would have to spend hundreds of dollars to repair the car. I think God spared us from these problems and so our prayers were answered when He provided this new car for us. In a way, I must accept it as God's gift to us and use it to glorify Him. Although I know it is sad to dwell on the past, I pray that God will know my innermost desire and give me His blessings. I'm hoping for a new thing. I know God already knows it and has planted a seed of hope and sunshine in my future pathway, and I...just haven't traveled there yet.



## A Father's Reflection

Sam Ng

When I was young and rebellious, I was always baffled by the fact that my dad always seemed more proud of my achievements at school than I was. When he told his friends about my grades and awards, his face would glow and his countenance would convey such a sense of fulfillment that made me feel embarrassed. I kept wondering why he was more excited about my achievements than I was. After all, the achievements that he was excited about were mine, not his. Maybe he was just genuinely excited for me. Or was he feeling proud because my achievements attested to his success in bringing me up? But then, would he still be proud of me if I didn't achieve those things? Why is it that how I did academically mattered to him so much if he wasn't the one earning those grades?

Now entering my fifth year as a father myself, I have slowly gained some insights into this baffling question that I've always had. When Elias went to preschool last year, his teacher told me one day that she was very impressed with the fact that Elias knew the names of

different kinds of apples at the age of 4. The moment I heard that comment, I felt an immediate rush of satisfaction. I didn't analyze my own feelings at that point to see where my satisfaction came from. But in hindsight, I can see that I was not thinking "Good for you, Elias! That you can name different types of apples at age 4 shows that you're going to have a bright future!" But I was probably thinking something like "Good job, Elias, for showing your teacher that Daddy and Mommy are teaching you right!"

It is alarming that how my children behave or perform can become a source of my pride. I believe that the most adverse effect of this pride on a parent lies not in the pride itself, but in blinding us from wanting what really is the best and what matters the most for our children. When I congratulated myself for Elias's knowledge of different kinds of apples at the age of 4, I was essentially deceived into thinking that Elias's knowledge of different kinds of apples at 4, tackling the trickiest SAT questions at the age of 16, and entering the most prestigious university at the age of 18, and having the most stellar career in one of the high-paying professions at age 25 are the most important. They are the most important to him because then his life reflects well on me. I've done a good job.

But what does my child really need? Proverbs 22:6 says, *"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."* What is the way that he should go and from which he should never depart? If I truly believe that man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever, and if I truly believe Jesus when He says, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6), and if I truly believe Jesus when he said, *"And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent"* (John 17:3), are those things that I just mentioned essential to sending him on the right way of life?

Although Paul has no biological children, he sees Timothy like a father sees his own child. Thus, although we can read 1 Timothy as a letter from an older pastor to his protégé on church and ministry issues, we may also see Paul's heart for Timothy as a father's for his son. Before Paul begins detailing his personal directions for Timothy, it is instructive to note that Paul affirms to Timothy that our ultimate joy and satisfaction rest ONLY in our Lord Jesus, not on any of our achievements or our children's achievements. Paul says,

*<sup>15</sup>The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save*

*sinners, of whom I am the foremost. <sup>16</sup>But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.*

Why does Paul even need to mention this since he's writing to not a new believer, but a pastor of a church who should know this? What I see in this is that Paul is not only affirming that for him God's salvation through Jesus is the basis of everything in his life, but that he also wants Timothy to remember that his life and calling have their origin and basis on the salvation through Jesus.

From this foundation, Paul exhorts Timothy to stand firm in the truth and not stray toward false doctrines:

*<sup>6</sup>If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.*

*<sup>7</sup>Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; <sup>8</sup>for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*

*<sup>9</sup>The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.*

*<sup>10</sup>For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.*

Now some may think that these comments are directed toward only a young pastor ministering in a church affected by the teaching of false doctrines. But let us think about the world we are in today. With all the false religions and philosophies so rampantly attacking our beliefs, aren't we all called to be soldiers for Jesus Christ to minister to people deceived by falsehood? And didn't the Lord command us to teach and train our children to be such soldiers, not only for their own sake, but more importantly for His kingdom's sake? What do we want for our children, then, so that they can stand firm on sound doctrine and live for Christ? And in the end, do we really believe that living for Christ is God's calling for my child and would bring my child the greatest joy?

When someone tells me "Elias is so smart," or "Elias sings so well," I'm full of thanksgiving that God has given him some abilities to do certain things. But the Spirit reminds me that what I ought to long for is to hear that "Elias is a good and faithful servant." A few months ago, Elias went to a nature camp in which one of the teachers told him that we all evolved from monkeys. Elias told us

that he told the teacher he disagreed, and that the teacher simply dismissed his comment. I felt such joy in hearing that God helped him stand firm in his faith in what he has been taught about God and trusting that God is encouraging us to continue to faithfully do what we are doing. Ultimately, I celebrate what Elias did because God received the glory when His children stood up for His truth.

Several months ago, Wendy heard at a homeschool conference the wonderful idea about the education of our children: The study of the Bible is not a subject that co-exists side-by-side with the study of other subjects. Rather, the study of the Bible as a sincere quest for knowing God should be at the center of the child's education to inform the study of all other subjects. For it is our sincere belief that when our children are trained to see the world from God's perspective, they will remain in the way that they should go and not depart from it even when they are old. In 2 Timothy, Paul reveals something about Timothy that gives us all a very precious lesson:

*<sup>14</sup>But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it <sup>15</sup>and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

And how apt that this passage appears right before the most important claim of the Bible's authority in the entire Bible itself! Essentially, Paul is saying, "Timothy, you have studied the scripture all your life, and see how that has paid off because the scripture is God's very own word to set your path on the most abundant life!"

Returning to my questions at the beginning, "What do I desire for my child that would satisfy my heart?" I can say honestly that I do not desire for him to be a precocious prodigy, to get high SAT scores, or to be admitted to the most prestigious university, or even to have a peaceful and affluent life. What I desire for my child is summarized in 2 Timothy 2: 1-3,

*<sup>1</sup>You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup>and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. <sup>3</sup>Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

Because I truly believe that this kind of life is the best life for my child.

## Believer or Disciple

Simien Lin

As I reflect on the five plus years after leaving Rochester, I see how God has been working on me in a particular area of my life. Every step I took, His question would be, “Sim, are you willing to step out from the spiritual comfort zone of being a believer and start moving into the role as a disciple.” At first, I really didn’t know what the difference between a believer and disciple was. I figured once I am a believer long enough, I am considered as a disciple. My dedication to believe in God all these years would show my sincere heart towards Him and put me into the category of discipleship. If that was the case, transitioning from believer to disciple was way easy.

For me, I have been a believer pretty much my whole life. Dad was a pastor and mom loved the Lord, and I went to church even before I was born. Back then I really had no choice, because I was still in my mom’s tummy. Being a believer was like second nature. I knew all the right answers in Sunday school class. And during bible studies, perhaps I had more of an edge over my peers who may have been less experienced with the Bible. I did my best to serve as much as I could at church, whenever there is a need. To be quite honest, I thought I was a pretty good believer. I tried hard to do what pleased God. I prayed, spent time reading the bible, went to church on Sundays, and attended bible studies. These were things that believers do. I held on to it over the years and maybe that was enough to be a disciple.

But God continued to question me, “Sim, are you ready to become my disciple?” Were the things I did not enough to make me a disciple? I’ve walked with the Lord for so many years. Every time I failed or went astray, I always came back to Him. Does that not show my determination to be His disciple? God then took me on a journey to make me realize the difference between the disciple that I thought I was and the disciple He longed for me to be.

For a whole year since August 2009, I worked with a missionary to try and build a business model that would train people to become CEOs and directors in the corporate world, all the while holding on to kingdom principles. The goal of the business model is so that when these people graduate from the program and start their own businesses, they would implement God’s principles in their own companies, and in turn become a beacon of light in their own

industry. We were looking at financial sponsors to support us, and it seemed like the finances would come through within a few months after my resignation. When I resigned, I had enough saved up to support myself for six months of frugal living. I figured I could live more simply for a few months, and once the finances are released, I will have an income again. God, however, had other plans in mind. Not only did the finances not come through in those six months, two months into working with the missionary, I was close to depleting most of what I had saved up. The reason was because the missionary was traveling to different countries to speak. After much prayer, I felt that God wanted me to travel with him. So much for frugal living! I bought a round trip ticket from Shanghai to L.A., roundtrip from L.A. to Mazatlan, and roundtrip ticket from Shanghai to Sydney.

By the time I got to Australia, I had very little money left in my bank account. I started praying and asking God how I would be able to continue to support myself. Would He miraculously provide money from nowhere? Could someone walk up to me and say, "I feel that God wants me to give you 10,000 dollars," since these were the kind of stories I heard growing up. I believed that God could do all these things for me and He would if I prayed hard enough. Throughout my prayers, God reminded me of an answer I would often give to people while I was still in High School. Many had asked if I would follow in my dad's footsteps and become a pastor. I would answer them, "If God calls me to be a pastor, I would do so. Until He calls, I will work and save up enough money so I can support myself, not wanting my ministry to become a burden for anyone else." When God reminded me of this answer, I came to the conclusion that the money will come out of my own pocket, not from some rich guy coming up to me and offering 10,000 dollars. But the reality was, my checking was down to nothing, my savings had only a few hundred dollars, and everything else I had saved up was locked away in my retirement accounts, both 401k and Roth. Since God held me to my word, He was also gracious enough to provide for me. I received an email from my Roth IRA investors informing me that I was ineligible for making contribution in 2008. They had to refund me the total amount that I had put in. This was great! I was able to get my money back from my account without any penalties.

With this money, I purchased a round trip ticket back to US. I had hoped to attend my 10-year high school reunion, Amy Yeh's wedding in NYC, as well as spend Christmas with my family. I was able to stay in the US for quite some time, from November 2009 all the way till June of this year. During this long stay in the US, I was

able to spend a lot of quality time with my family, something that I have not done since I moved out to China.

The year went on, and still finances for the company were not released. All I had left saved up was locked away in my Roth IRA and 401k accounts. I sought the Lord on whether I should take out the rest of my Roth IRA and felt the sense to do so. After taking out the remaining amount in my Roth IRA account, I felt God directing me to fly to Australia and spend time working with the missionary. Yet the Lord did not stop stripping away my money. Even though I did not have much left, He continued to ask me to give. On one occasion, I was attending Hillsong's annual conference. I had \$300 in my wallet, which was half of all that I had left at that point. As the meeting began, I sensed that the Spirit was convicting me to give all that was in my wallet away. I struggled with God. I told Him it didn't make sense. I had no money left, why was He asking to give money away. But the feeling to give it up wouldn't go away. These words continued to repeat in my head, "Do you trust me?" Finally I gave in, and put in everything that I had in my wallet into the offering plate. Completely illogical, but I learned something through that. It is not for me to figure out what makes sense or not. My sole responsibility is to be obedient when I hear the Master speaking to me.

To sum things up, what I have learned is that a disciple is someone who is willing to follow at all cost, no matter what is required. Whether it makes sense or not, whether the task is logical or not, the disciple follows regardless. When I evaluated the difference in my own life, I realized that while I was living as a good believer, I was still calling the shots in my own life. I called the shots on how I wanted to spend my money. I called the shots on what I wanted to do during the 5 days out of the week when I was not in church. I called the shots on whether I should do things God's way or do it my own way.

For a long time, my money was my security. I held on to it tightly and not willing to give up. I was not even faithful and consistent in my tithing. Even though I knew and grew up with the concept of God being my only security, I really couldn't see myself letting go of what money could bring to my life. I am glad that God used this one year to strip all that away from me to make me learn a valuable lesson about being a disciple. Not only that, He showed me that I could trust Him more than what is in my wallet. I have truly experienced Him as my security. And I would not trade that experience for any amount of money.

Although there is a cost for being a disciple, the reward is also irreplaceable. Knowing that our precious Lord and Savior will always come to our rescue and uphold us ought to give us the courage to step out from being a believer and becoming a disciple. *"If anyone comes to me, and doesn't hate his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he can't be my disciple. Whoever doesn't bear his own cross, and come after me, can't be my disciple."* (Luke 14:26-27)



## Legacy

Sylvia Lu

I was born and raised in Indonesia, and I came from a large, complicated family. My great grandfather had wives and concubines. He had 11 sons and some daughters. At that time, girls were not important. Both my grandfathers also had wives and concubines. My maternal grandfather's last name is Tan. He had nine daughters but only one son. So he adopted two more sons. He even adopted my aunt's son and changed his last name from Hsei to Tan. My children are interested in my family history. They want me to write a book about them because they think it is like a soap opera. "No way" I said to them. Lydia gave me a book *"How to Write Your Legacy"* a few years ago. I did nothing to it. Last Christmas, little Ellie gave me a book *"Grandparent's Legacy"* (thanks to her mom) in the form of questions and answers. The kids said that I should do it. So I think "All right. I'll fill in the blanks." But it got me to think how I want her to remember me and also my remembrance of my own grandmothers. Well, my paternal grandmother was very stern and yet unfairly partial. My maternal grandma was very kind, generous and easy-going. She was a very devoted Buddhist and always prayed at the little shrine at her home. As for my mom, she is very kind and gentle, yet with strong faith in Christ. What will my children and grandchildren's thought and remembrance of me?

Last year we studied the women of the bible. How we remember them and what lesson we can learn from them. Let's look at some of them. Eve was a woman of doubt. She disobeyed God and yielded to Satan's temptation. Sarah was a woman of faith. Rebekah was a woman of partiality. Rachel was a jealous and bitter woman. Hannah is known for her prayer of brokenness. Jezebel

was wicked and evil. Esther was obedient and courageous. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is known for her trust and submissiveness to God. Paul said of Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice as women of sincere faith, and they passed their faith to Timothy. So, what will my legacy be? What will my Children and grandchildren think of me? How will they remember me?

Our small group is studying the fruit of the Spirit. The introduction says, "When it comes to living by the Spirit, we do not have the freedom of pick and choose of what fruit we do or do not want to exhibit. All of the fruit of the Spirit is to be desired and cultivated in our lives as we abide in Christ." So I hope I can be remembered as a woman of faith that bears fruit of the Spirit. How about you? It is not easy to reach that goal. We need to ask our Lord Jesus Christ to help us. As Jesus said in John 15:5, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*



## The American Burger King

Samuel Pang

Burger King is one of my favorite burger places, because you can "have it your way". From the different beef patties to the assortment of grilled chicken filets, to the varieties of cheese, bacon, or any other toppings, you can pick and choose to create a crazy angus-burger three times the size of your mouth. Or for the less adventurous, you can ask for the humble hamburger with just one slice of beef patty and some tomatoes and onions on top. You not only enjoy your burger at Burger King, you also enjoy a strange sense of power and authority, you are the "king" over your burger. No one denies you of your kingship. The burger is exactly the way you want it.

However, we often take our Burger King attitude outside of Burger King to other parts of our lives, even to the way we relate to God. In a culture where so much emphasis is put on human rights, free thinking and freedom of speech, we are easily led to think that everything can be done the Burger King way. There are estimated 2.3 million Christian churches in the world. Yet a large fraction of these churches have a very similar slogan to Burger King—"Have it

your way". These churches allow their church-goers to "personalize" God into someone more "suitable" for them, because sound doctrine is hard to understand and difficult to swallow. And because of these Burger King churches, believers begin to believe only in their favorite verses of the Bible. But as for the rest of God's Word? They receive with what the world calls "an open mind". At the end of the day, these Christians believe only in what they imagine God to be, and they no longer acknowledge the attributes of God that they find hard to accept. That is how churches end up referring to God as "Parent, Child and Spirit" instead of "Father, Son and Holy Ghost", because not everyone accepts the idea that God associates Himself with the male gender. The entire Bible becomes a book of figurative speech, because there are commandments and principles in God's Word that are hard to follow. And worse still, some churches cease to pray in the name of Jesus because they believe that Jesus was simply a great prophet and might not be the only way to Heaven. And the world loves this new Burger King doctrine, because with the Burger King doctrine you can be a true "free thinker" and "be at peace" with everyone from every religion. You will never be known as "closed-minded" or "conservative".

*"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him."* (John 4:23) To worship in spirit and truth, we can only worship the Father the way that He is, because there cannot be deceit in the truth. God said to Moses, *"I AM WHO I AM."* God will not be someone else for us and neither will He ever change, whether it be His character, His attributes, His love or His righteousness, because He is who He is. God is truly perfect, and can only be perfect, and therefore God cannot be different from who He is. But through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, God can change us to what He has called us to be, so that we can be His people, and He can be our God (Jeremiah 32:38).

Imagine if one day your son decides to address you by another name, another gender, or if he relates to you as if you were another person; or worse still, he decides to address someone else as his father. What a horrible father-son relationship that would be! And if we as earthly parents desire respect from our own children, how much more should we honor our Heavenly Father, and worship Him the way that He is?

As we carry on our Father-son relationship with God, let us honor and worship Him in spirit and truth.