

2005

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Editorial Committee

Lawrence Chan (Editor)
 Chang Chew Klient
 Judy Kan
 Chong Kwok Yan
 Wong Tuck Keong
 William Koh
 Tan Jin Song
 Josephine Lin

Design and layout by Jeffrey Yap

Love One Another . . . in the RFG

Regional Fellowship Group (RFG) means different things to different people. Some see it as an avenue of spiritual support in time of crisis (e.g., death of a loved one; lost of job; children taken ill). Others see it as a place to seek spiritual advice from older brethren (e.g., Can you advise me which job is best for me? Should I change my job?). Yet others see it as an avenue to provide spiritual support (How can I pray for you?) or fellowship (It is really nice to get to know you better!). Indeed all these, and more, are the right motives for us to join an RFG. They are the same sort of activities and motives that resonate throughout Paul's writing in many of Epistles (e.g., 1 Cor 13), the writer of Hebrews (Heb 10:25), Luke in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:43; 4:32) and our Lord in John 15:12. That is what body life is all about.

For those worshipping at Ang Mo Kio, these reasons are particularly salient. Our congregation continues to be relatively large, despite the outreach work at Depot Walk; the RFG, therefore, serves as an avenue for saints to deepen their fellowship and relationship with a smaller group of people. For those in Depot Walk, the RFG has taken on an interesting new role; it has become an opportunity to meet up with their friends from Ang Mo Kio, friends whom they had to say goodbye to when they took up the challenge and responsibility to help with the outreach work at Depot Walk.

One way or another, the RFG provides a sanctuary for many likeminded saints to meet each other's needs in ways large meetings do not, or the context would not (e.g., Sunday School or CEP).



October/November 2005

BETHESDA



MITA (P) 054/11/2004

newsletter



In the CEP, people move around to gather new ideas and views; membership is transitory as most believers do not stay in the same group for more than five years. When he was the coordinator for the CEP, brother Oon Soo used to say that people must not fossilize in their groups. The Sunday School, likewise, is traditionally focused on learning the Word of God rather than Christian fellowship. The annual assembly bible camp does provide an avenue for both Bible learning and Christian fellowship; but, its short one-week lifespan provides scant opportunities for building lasting relations. One needs to make a concerted effort to follow up or the relations will terminate on the last day of camp.

The RFG, therefore, fills a gaping void, a void which by their very nature and mission the Sunday School or CEP cannot fill. In RFGs, people are

allowed to “fossilize”. In fact, fossilization and life-time membership are warmly welcomed and strongly encouraged. Relationships, as we all know, can only be built over the long term; people need time and space to open themselves up to each other. The sustained period of contacts allows for activities like frequent outings, deliberations of topics customized to the needs of the respective RFGs (in contrast to the standardized curriculum in the Sunday School or CEP), and sharing of deeply personal issues which one might find uncomfortable in the midst of strangers. One might even venture to conclude that strong bonds to a RFG can help us resist the effort of sheep snatchers.

If the RFG plays such an important role, why do many assembly members avoid joining one? As one who would risk life and limb in order not to miss a single RFG meeting, I feel totally inadequate to answer that question. Could it be that some RFGs have become too family-oriented and the singles feel left out? If so, family-oriented RFGs can learn to make the singles feel at home. Perhaps some did join an RFG in the past and,

finding the fellowship to be cold, decide to call it quits. Others may simply be unaware that there is a RFG meeting near their homes or cannot find the time to engage in RFG activities. There could be many other valid reasons why some have kept away from RFGs. But, for those of us firmly anchored in the RFG culture, joining a group is a way of responding to the Lord’s specific command that we love each other. The RFG simply gives us that many more opportunities to show love, care and concern for each other.

With the success of the first combined RFG meeting on 9 August 2005, we believe that the RFGs in our assembly will move on to a new phase, one that will see greater sharing of ideas across groups, greater pooling of resources to meet common needs, and a more significant ‘warming up’ of the assembly in terms of fellowship. Without a doubt, for all of us who are firmly immersed and anchored in this culture, it is a silent but no less burning hope that those still outside the circle join us on our journey of love and fellowship till He comes.

William Koh ✦

AssemblyNews

Wedding

20/8/2005 – Vinnish Baby & Elizabeth Shelbha in Kerala, India

We thank the Lord for another Christian home and trust the Lord through our prayers to grant the couple His resources and refreshment to go through life together as heirs of the grace of God. +

Bereavement

1/8/2005 – Helen Teo & Tai Hoon on the home-calling of their father

25/8/2005 – Daniel & Michelle Tok and Raymond & Joanna Wee on the home-calling of Michelle & Raymond's father

19/9/05 – Tan Gek Cheng on the home-calling of her brother.

Pray for the above brethren that the Lord will be their redemption, relief and recourse. +



Farewell get-together for Yang Hong Eui on 25th Sep 05

Farewell

30/9/2005 – Yang Hong Eui left us to return back to Korea after spending two years in his job assignment in Singapore. Pray for him as he settles back in his home and assembly.

28/9/05 – Tan Hui Xin who left us for UK to further her studies at Cambridge University for three years. +

Our newly-received saint

25/9/05 – Medaline Boey

We admitted her gladly into our fellowship. She was saved at a very young age in 1999, was baptized in Oct '04 while overseas. Let's encourage her in the Lord in our relationship with and responsibility for as members of God's family. +



Called home to glory

*David Wee Chin Hock
(13 Sep 1952 – 8 Sep 2005)*

Our beloved brother went home to be with the Lord on 8 Sep 2005 aged 53 after being diagnosed with cancer of the pancreas in August '04. He was saved on 6 May 1983 and baptized on 18 Nov 1984 at Bethesda Hall (Bras Basah). He was one of our former scholars at Bethesda Sunday School. For the past 21 years he was in happy fellowship with us and maintained a quiet and consistent testimony for the Lord and faithful to the meetings of the assembly. He was also a member of the Whitley RFG. The night services were taken by Kurien Kurian and Tay Kim Swee with Edmund Yong taking the funeral service. Remember in our prayers, his wife, Delphin, daughter, Veena and his sister, Lily, during this time of their bereavement. +

Sisters' Retreat (30 Jul 05, 1 - 5 pm)

*Venue: The Garden Hotel, Cedar Room
Theme: "Make a Difference" (Matt 5:13-14)
Chairperson: Ng Swee Choo*

Tan Lie Leng shared her thoughts on "The Sermon on the Mount" and Keyna Goh presented a song item. High tea was served. About 109 sisters attended. +

Special Gospel Service (4 Sep 05, 6 pm)

*Theme: "There is hope in Jesus" (Luke 19:10)
Speaker: Chan Man Wong
Mandarin Interpreter: Chng Kok Hui
Chairman: Linus Tan*

We praised the Lord for the evangelistic effort of the Children's Corner in taking charge of one of the gospel meetings attended by 250 people. Many parents of the CC children attended and the gospel message was translated simultaneously into Mandarin. The Children's Corner presented song items. Pray that the Lord will give the increase through the various gospel efforts of the assembly. +

Combined RFG get-together (9 Aug 05, 10 am - 1.30 pm)

*Venue: Bethesda Hall (Depot Walk)
Panel of speakers: Khoo Oon Soo, Kenneth Wong and Harry Tan
Topic: "Handling Family Crisis"*

A break from the normal combined get-together between two RFG groups, this year saw all the groups gather together at one place for half a day meeting with 3 messages, games, singing, forum, lunch which ended with recreation for those who stayed behind after lunch. The meeting was chaired by Richard Ting, singspiration led by Andrew Sng, games conducted by Boon Chuan Jian and forum relating to the theme led by Adrin Loi with the 3 guest speakers forming the panel. A note of thanks to the organising committee chaired by Richard Ting. 270 members attended. +



Mission Trips

22/7 – 19/9 – Colombo, Sri Lanka
Participants: Daniel Panneersalvam (22/7-8/8), Kurien Kurian (26/8-5/9) and Robert Hmar (9/9 – 19/9)
Purpose: for the ministry of God's Word at Bethesda Gospel Hall (Colombo) and other villages outside of Colombo

6/8 – 16/8 – Kunming
Participants: Choy Wai Fann, Ng Siew Lian, Koh Liang Hwee, Ng Kim Khoon, Kenneth Khong, William Chew, Robert Hmar, Diana Lau, David and Grace Leng.
Purpose: to test and fit reading glasses to the villagers at JijieZe and DaPingDi (mainly women who needed them for their embroidery work) besides evangelistic efforts.

12/8 – 22/8 – Pyin Oo Lwin, Myanmar
Participants: David & Daniel Goh, Kurien Kurian, Poon Kum Meng and Wong Tuck Keong
Purposes: to attend the Ebenezer Brethren assembly's 20th Anniversary and Thanksgiving, to conduct 1 week of discipleship training course and to assist in the building of Harvest Training school.



Bethesda Gospel Hall,
Colombo, Sri Lanka



Mission trip to Kunming



Inside of Bethesda Gospel Hall (Colombo)



5-member team to Pyin Oo Lwin

We are indebted to the Lord for having exercised the above brethren to do mission work overseas. Pray that the Lord will enable the assembly to be missionary minded both at home and abroad so as to fulfill the great commission to make disciples of all nations. +

Bedok RFG: Small group, but big on support and encouragement

I have been attending the Regional Fellowship groups for close to 25 years. Initially, they were just additional meetings besides the usual meetings in church. We had Bible Study and, occasionally, we had speakers on topics related to Christian Living or Church History.

The Bedok RFG is not big, so there are many opportunities for everyone to share after the speaker has given his input. The sharing of personal experiences and how God has worked in our lives draw us closer. Every Sunday, our activities are packed back-to-back, and we do not have much time to interact and get to know one another better. The RFG setting allows us to get to know each other better, and once we know one another better, we can pray intelligently for one another. The support and encouragement provided

by the RFG help to build the bonds of unity in the face of challenges and obstacles. All of us go through challenging phases in life such as sickness, being first-time parents or problems related to the work place. The thought that we are supported in prayer is an effective source of encouragement; we know that we are not going through this all alone. After all, in James 5:13, we are reminded to pray for one another, especially for those who are afflicted, and to rejoice with those who are merry.

Every year our group goes on an outing either in or out of Singapore, and presents an item at one of the Gospel Services. As not everyone in the group is musically inclined, the singing item can be a challenge. Yet after each performance, we always feel a sense of achievement.

Indeed, the RFG means more to us now than before. We are the only family that has gone to Bethesda Depot Walk, and we look forward to every RFG meeting as an opportunity to meet with our brothers and sisters from Ang Mo Kio, besides the prayer and gospel meetings. During the recent family camp, we noticed that our own children's closest friends are from AMK and realized that the move to DW was not easy at all, especially for our children; they have had to make all the difficult adjustments. Often, it is not fatigue that wears us down but discouragement. Yet, with God and prayer support from our friends in the RFG, the journey is made a lot easier.

Mr Chua Teck Koon and Family

I joined the Bedok RFG in 2000. I was listening to the announcements one Sunday morning when the topics and venues for the various RFGs were mentioned, and found the topic



for Bedok RFG quite interesting. As I was staying in Tampines, I decided to join them even though I have never been in one before. I have been with them ever since.

My experiences in the RFG are quite different from the regular Bible Study groups such as Sunday School or CEP. During RFG meetings, At RFG meetings, I have fellowship with families; I go to members' houses where we share experiences; I can get advice from older believers; I also have the opportunity to interact with older and younger people and in some ways, my perspective on life is broadened by this experience. Once a year we also hold combined meetings with other groups and again we get to know several more families and believers better. Surely this is what the Lord means by fellowship. Therefore I encourage all who do not attend any RFG to join one in your area and get to know the believers there.

Kenneth Khong +

Hougang RFG: In their own words

Hougang RFG has many long-time faithful believers who meet together monthly for fellowship and spiritual nourishment. On 13th Aug 05 the group went on an outing – the Tree Top Walk at MacRitchie Reservoir – and then proceeded on to a delicious traditional Ya Kun breakfast to replenish our energy after all that physical exertion. Many found the outing, the first after many years, enjoyable, creating many opportunities for fellowship.

A time of fellowship, of experiencing God's creation together

It was a good time for exercise and admiring nature -- the creation of God. Of course, not forgetting to mention the great time of fellowship at Ya Kun."

John Chua & family



All in the Hougang family

The outing was a great time of getting together, knowing the members better and experiencing God's creation and beauty. In our RFG meetings, we have sharing from members who have immense experience to share."

Tan Ah Lim & family



Break from routine

It was a break from the mundane work routine. This opens opportunities for free chatting and exchange of ideas and no doubt an occasion for good family time.”

Daniel & Linda

Bridge to Heaven?

It was one of the most memorable and refreshing morning walk for Jennifer and myself. We enjoyed walking on the long and narrow bridge reminding us of the narrow gate that leads to Heaven. It's the only way to go and no turning back. We were also very thankful for the fellowship we received from one another - an almost full turnout for our group”

Adrin & Jennifer

Biblical thinking, practical applications

Some of the good points of Hougang RFG are: the biblical discussion is always practical with applications; the age ranges of our members are wide

- this would be useful as the young ones could learn from the older members. We always enjoyed the warm fellowship with each other.

Some of the ways in which we can improve are: having a once-a-year outing in the programme e.g. picnic, fishing; having a flexible program with video related to the discussion subject.”

Johnny Fan & family

Spiritual profit, mutual encouragement

I take this opportunity to thank sister Janice Chan who welcomed me when I first attended the regional group. After the meeting, she came and sat next to me and had a heart to heart talk that made me feel very much at home. So Sek and myself continued in this fellowship until now. Indeed, the RFG meetings provided very good opportunities for get-together and fellowship, with someone taking the lead in Bible discussion and many others sharing. Through it we spiritually profited a lot. Truly the Word of God is

like a river of living water to our souls. I thank the Lord and pray this kind of gathering will continue until His coming to take us home.”

Mrs Sek

Supporting each other in all ways

Completing the route and crossing the bridge above the trees was such an invigorating experience.”

Mr Sek

The recent outing was a change from our usual fellowship activities and everyone enjoyed it and said we should have more of it in future. In our RFG, we can see practical fellowship amongst members in visitations during bereavement and hospitalization, etc. Members are very much committed to the group and kept it going all these years. They heartily support the group activities such as song item presentation during Gospel Service. There is much learning and spiritual growth from both sharing and leading of Bible discussions by members.”

S H Ang +

RFGs

History of Regional Fellowship Groups

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1:3)

There are three directions of “fellowship” revealed in verse 3 of 1 John. Fellowship with the Father, fellowship with the Son and fellowship with one another. The essence of Regional Fellowship Groups is captured in the last category—fellowship with one another.

The Regional Fellowship Groups started in 1971, with Dr and Mrs James Hannum as the overseers. The elders realised that there was a need for more fellowship among the

assembly members in view of the size of the assembly. In the initial stages, there were only three to four RFGs formed. Meetings were and still are conducted once a month among those living in the same areas. As the years swept by, this initial objective has evolved to RFGs taking the additional role of supportive groups gathered together to encourage one another in the Lord, whether in times of joy, hospital visits or of bereavement, as prayer warriors or simply gathering for a time of group bible study.

How different is it from the Christian Education Programme or prayer meeting, one may ask. The RFG takes place in an informal setting; a brother or sister’s home. There will be prayer and bible study, but more importantly, there will also be time set aside for fostering friendships among their members. We must realise that fellowship with the assembly entails

more than Sundays, and joining a RFG within our residential areas gives us ample opportunities to remember the LORD and worship Him as a collective group during the rest of the week. If we want to know Him better, active involvement in the assembly body is a definite must.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Matthew 28:19

Functioning as the extension of assembly life, the RFGs’ objectives are currently five-fold: to fellowship, encourage one another, for bible study, organise recreational activities and to evangelise. Each year, the RFGs set aside a session for



evangelistic outreach and this provides the occasion for assembly members to bring their friends and relatives to the meeting. Furthermore, the groups are encouraged to be involved twice a year in presenting singing items during the gospel meetings to evangelise to the listeners and to encourage the saints that are gathered there.

“RFG meetings are a reminder for me to live closer to the LORD and study the Bible more and learn to share what I have gleaned, with others.”

– Dr Lawrence Chan

Encouragement to join the RFGs must start both ways. Those who are currently involved must continue to encourage others to set aside a day in a month to participate and those not involved are encouraged to join.

Inform the assembly office and they would direct you to the nearest RFG within your residential district. Give yourself six months to know others and others to know you. If you feel you are not fitting in, change to another group where you think you will be more comfortable in. If we are really serious about wanting to go back in step with God, start today. The assembly office may want to consider putting up a RFG membership box for assembly members who are interested in attending.

For the existing RFGs, perhaps this article is a solemn reminder of our duties to each other—to desire the fellowship and to encourage one another in the LORD. As we gather for our next RFG meeting, let us ponder over the prayer items listed in the prayer diary and other prayer lists, and pray for those serving and those in need of prayers. Let us also be mindful of the purpose of the gathering and set aside time to meet the LORD.

“O let my life be given,
My years for Thee be spent;
World-fetters all be riven,
And joy with suffering blent;
Thou gavest Thyself for me;
I give myself to Thee.”

As the Lord's returning draws nearer, let us pursue every single opportunity to gather together in His name, “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.” Hebrews 10:25.

The following brothers' contributions are deeply appreciated:

Mr Adrin Loi

Mr Wong Tuck Keong

Dr Lawrence Chan

Mr Khoo Oon Soo

Josephine Lin +

1st Combined Regional Fellowship Group Meeting

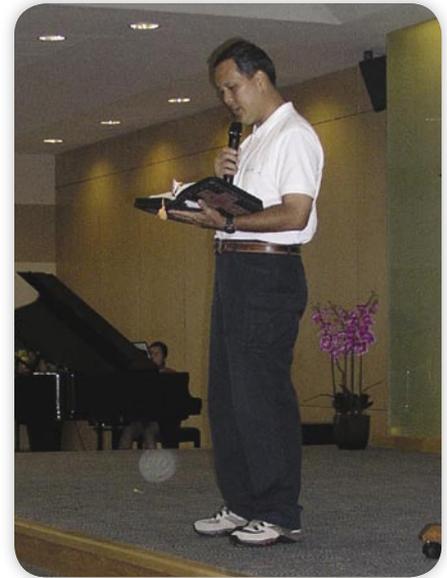
Venue: Bethesda Hall (Depot Walk) • Time: 1000 hrs • Theme: Handling Family Crisis

The first combined RFG meeting saw the gathering of some 200 saints from the 13 RFG groups in both Bethesda Hall (AMK) as well as Bethesda Hall (Depot). The focus of the meeting was a forum-style dialogue on “Handling Family Crisis”. After some singing and a few “ice-breakers”, the three panelists: Mr Khoo Oon Soon, Dr. Harry Tan as well as Mr. Kenneth Wong each took turns to address the audience.

Brother Oon Soo began by sharing from the Scriptures on how to maintain/ attain a biblical perspective in handling crisis and also defined a crisis as a period of intense difficulty or a turning point for the family. It was an apt reminder from 1 Cor 10:13 that all that happens in the

believer’s life is permitted, ordained and controlled by our Heavenly Father Who will not suffer us to be tested above what we are able. Mr Khoo also gave his insights on Romans 5:3-5 and 8:28 on how God is able to make all things work for good to them that love Him.

Next, brother Kenneth touched on the “Boundaries of Counseling” by giving some practical Dos and Don’ts when helping someone in need and also reminded us of the importance of listening to our Heavenly Comforter Himself when we are seeking to provide advice and comfort to those in need. Finally, brother Harry shared on how trials and persecutions are not to be thought as strange when they occur (1 Pet 4). Instead, they draw us closer to God as



Andrew Sng leading singspiration





Combined RFG meeting at 10 Depot Walk



Games led by Chuan Jian assisted by his two sons



Adrin chaired the forum. The panel comprised Oon Soo, Harry Tan and Kenneth Wong



The RFG meeting chaired by Richard Ting





Lunch was served after the RFG meeting

we learn to humble ourselves and come before His throne of grace.

Many interesting and pertinent questions were then posed to the panel which touched on specific issues relating to how to handle wayward or rebellious children, divorce as well as maintaining communication and understanding in the family, and helping those in financial difficulties. A simple lunch was served after the

meeting and many young people stayed back to enjoy some games while the adults hanged around to chit chat with one another.

It was indeed wonderful to have this occasion when the assembly could come together and learn from the more mature saints with regard to some of the issues that families face, as well as how to seek and give help. Surely, as various families go through their

periods of individual testing, it is a reminder of our Precious Saviour, Who Himself “bore our sins, and carried our sorrows” and intercedes for us. May we follow His Blessed example in upholding one another before the throne of grace and learn how we can carry one another’s burden.

Finally, the contributions of the following deserve special mention: brother Andrew Sng who led the singing, brother Chuan Jian for the games, sister Yen Ching for running the concurrent children’s programme, and finally, brother Richard Ting, who helped in the organization and co-ordination of the meeting, and brother Adrin Loi who chaired the planning committee.

Tan Jin Song +

The Person of Christ – (4) His Deity

In our last study, we looked at the Gospels and how they showed us that Jesus of Nazareth was truly human. We again recall that the Council of Chalcedon's statement says that Jesus was truly God and truly man. It is with the first part of the statement that we shall now concern ourselves. We shall examine the evidence from Scripture seeing that this claim is fully justified. In Jesus of Nazareth, we have God incarnate, God made manifest in the flesh.

The starting point of our enquiry is in the action and claims of Jesus himself. Did He claim to be God? Did his action show that He was God? There are no direct claims from Jesus to be God. This is not surprising since anyone who really was God would hardly go around claiming it. His action, behaviour and general demeanour would show that here was someone who stood out from the rest of humanity. Further, when we come across folks who claim that they are

divine, we tend to think that they need special psychiatric treatment.

Jesus did claim indirectly that he was God. The relationship between him and his Father is a close filial one. I and the Father are one (Jn 10:30). This is not only one in thought and action but one in substance and being. (As theologians would say, there is an ontological unity between Jesus and the Father.)

Others recognised that Jesus was a man apart from the rest of men. Nicodemus said, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God" (Jn 3:2). The woman at the well of Samaria recognised Jesus as the Christ, that is the anointed one.

John, after reflecting for many years on the person of the Lord Jesus, wrote: No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him (Jn 1:18). The sure eyewitness of John is clear that in Jesus of Nazareth, we have the only

begotten Son (Jn 3:16) who is not just God-like but is God himself.

Paul, after his encounter with the risen Lord Jesus on his way to Damascus, could write: Christ, who is over all God, forever praised! Amen (Rom 9:5 NIV). The writer to the Hebrews in the opening chapter of the letter, which shows the superiority of Christ over all heavenly beings and his eternal sonship, states unequivocally Thy throne O God is for ever and ever (Heb 1:8).

We have seen then that the personal claims of Jesus as well as the claims of those who knew him is that He is God. This was not a conclusion that the writers came to in a hurry. Some, like John, spent many years in mature reflection before they wrote their conclusions. We are the beneficiaries of these early witnesses since, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they have



committed their reflections to writing, that is in the New Testament.

On a few occasions, Jesus demonstrates that He has pre-incarnational knowledge. Although Jesus of Nazareth was only about thirty years old, the *logos* was eternal. Hence in a discourse with the Jews on one occasion, Jesus said, Before Abraham was, I AM (Jn 8:58), showing that He existed as the ever present, self-existent one, I AM. The God who revealed himself to Moses (Ex 3:14) as I AM is the same God we meet in Christ in the New Testament. Before the incarnation, before there was a Jesus of Nazareth, there was the self-existent one I AM.

On another occasion, Jesus referring to himself as the one who from above ... (Jn 3:31 NIV) says of this one that He testifies to what he has seen and heard, ... (Jn 3:32 NIV) Seen and heard refers not to any earthly scene, but to what had taken place and what was heard in heaven. How could Jesus have known of what had taken place in heaven? Unless He had come from heaven. Where was he before the incarnation? He was at the right hand of the Father; the eternal Son. It is

from this position that has enabled him to speak of what he has seen and heard. Speaking from such a position makes his testimony sure and true.

The Lord's Prayer of John 17 furnishes us with another glimpse of the status and glory of our Lord Jesus prior to the incarnation. He prays, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began (Jn 17:5). In this, Jesus shows not only His existence prior to the incarnation, but also knowledge of this existence. Here He asks that the glory he once had, a glory that only God has, be restored to Him.

Worship is something that rightly belongs to God and to God alone. The first commandment is to have no other gods (Ex 20:2). Godly men and angels have shunned and shrunk away from accepting such worship (cf. Acts 14:14ff Dn 8:15ff). However, Jesus never shunned or shrunk from such worship. Why? Because He is God and to Him worship is due.

Thomas acknowledged Jesus as My Lord and my God (Jn 20:28). The whole band of disciples just prior to Jesus'

ascension worshipped him (Mt 28:17, Lk 24:52). The demoniac, Legion, fell prostrate at Jesus' feet in worship (Mk 5:6). A blind man, after being healed by Jesus, believed in Jesus and worshipped Him (Jn 9:38).

The few incidents we have just related add to the accumulating evidence that Jesus of Nazareth is divine; He is God indeed. He could not be a good man if he accepted worship, and He was only a man. However, He could be a good man and accept worship if He were God as well. Clearly the first proposition is inconsistent with the evidence; Jesus was a good man and He accepted worship; therefore He must also be God.

The Jews would offer worship and prayers to Yahweh only. However, the early church, which was composed almost entirely of Jews, offered prayers to Jesus. They would not have done this unless they thought that He was God.. Stephen, at the point of death, prayed to Jesus (Acts 7:59). Paul, in the closing lines of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, quotes what was



most probably a well known prayer from some Aramaic Christians, If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha (1Cor 16:22). The penultimate verse of the whole New Testament is a prayer to Jesus: Even so, come, Lord Jesus (Rev 22:20).

Next we shall look at how other people understood the words of Jesus.

We begin by “revisiting” an incident that we have already mentioned. Immediately after Jesus declared before Abraham was, I AM” (Jn 8:58), we find that those who heard this picked up stones in order to stone Him. Stoning was the punishment for blasphemy. Clearly, there were many among the crowd who realised exactly what it was that Jesus was saying; He was claiming to be God.

Another incident where Jesus was confronted by some Pharisees, He claimed that God is his Father. Clearly this is a claim to deity, yet on this occasion, no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come (Jn 8:18) which shows us that, under other circumstances, the Pharisees would have laid their hands on Jesus.

The Jews tried to stone Jesus on more than one occasion. Jesus had been talking about My Father” (Jn 10:25ff). The point in the conversation that angered the religious leaders was when Jesus said I and the Father are one (Jn 10:30), at which the Jews tried to stone Jesus for blasphemy, because you a mere man, claim to be God (Jn 10:33).

The conversations that we have looked at demonstrate clearly that even though there was no direct claim to being God, the words of Jesus were taken by others as a claim to be God, again adding to the accumulating mountain of evidence that Jesus is God indeed.

We have noted in a previous paper that the early Church recognised Jesus as Lord (cf Rom 10:9, 1Cor 12:3, 2Cor 4:5). That is identical with Yahweh of the Old Testament. In simple terms, this is a recognition of the deity of the Lord Jesus.

The most quoted psalm in the New Testament is psalm 110. An exposition of a part of the psalm is given by the Lord himself (Lk 20:41ff). Peter alludes to the opening verses of the psalm (1Pet

3:22), indicating that Jesus is divine since all power and authority is in submission to him.

The use of the names God (or Father), Son, and Spirit in juxtaposition (cf Mt 28:19, 2Cor 13:14 Rom 1:7, 1Cor 1:3 etc;) shows that in the minds of the writers of the New Testament, Jesus is co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, that is, He has full deity.

Finally, we shall consider the association of Jesus with creation. The opening verses of Genesis states that it is God who created the universe. John, however, shows that it was the logos, the eternal Son who was active in creation. (Not that the other members of the trinity were not involved. For as always, every member of the trinity is involved in any action of God. It is just that in some actions, one member seems to be more to the fore than the others. So it is in the case with creation.)

The whole of creation, the material and immaterial universe came into being



through the logos. No matter if the writer is Paul, John or the writer to the Hebrews, all when referring to Jesus identify him with the one who created. Through him all things were created (Jn 1:3). For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him (Col 1:16). God ... hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds (Heb 1:1f).

Our brief survey of the evidence brings us to one conclusion, and one alone, that in Jesus of Nazareth, we have God manifest in the flesh. Rightly could the Council of Chalcedon say that Jesus of Nazareth is both God and Man.

Ernest Abbott. July 1994

Slightly amended January 2005 ➦

Bible basics on Elders (Part 4 of 4)

Pray For Your Elders

We continue with God's call to remember our elders and to pray for them (Heb. 13:7). Elders need prayer for courage. Many biblical and moral truths are being assailed by modern thinking. Much pressure can come on elders to water down an assembly's standards, especially by those who are afflicted by the "large numbers at any cost" syndrome. To stand firm on God's truth is not easy, and if the elders waver, then all can be lost.

Elders also need prayer for wisdom. Difficult questions are being asked today; problems that were unheard of fifteen years ago are now becoming pandemic. The number of spiritual, social, and emotional problems elders face is staggering. The feeding of the flock has become

critical and needs careful and wise planning. All of these issues require great wisdom and discernment.

Another need of elders is sheer physical stamina. Most elders have secular jobs and families they are responsible for. Besides this, they usually are involved and in attendance at most, if not all of the meetings of the church. They meet among themselves regularly. They must spend much time in studying the Word of God. They visit God's people, and open their homes to them. They plan the meetings of the church and arrange speakers. In many cases, they take teaching and preaching responsibilities themselves, as well as weddings and funerals. They are responsible for rebuking or disciplining individuals. They counsel others. They decide where the money of the assembly should be



directed. They spearhead evangelistic efforts. Amazingly, they do all this and more willingly, and not for filthy lucre. Many churches pay tens of thousands of dollars for these activities to be done by “professionals” who, in many cases, do not do as good a job.

Oh, how our elders need prayer and encouragement! Too often they receive only criticism, disobedience, and disrespect. Shame on those who have treated God’s leaders in such an ungodly fashion. Let us begin today, if it is not already our habit, to pray for their strength and well-being.

Whose Faith Follow

We close our series by thinking about the challenge of Hebrews 13:7-8, “Remember them who have the rule over you...considering the end of their [manner of life]: Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.”

No matter how wonderful or lacking the leadership in a local church is, we need to remember above all else

that we are ultimately responsible to the One who the elders are following - the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the object of our desire and the solution to all of our problems. In particular, there are two issues in relationship to our elders that He overcomes. The solution comes from this precious little verse.

First of all, we can become overly critical of our leadership. We can allow our frustrations (valid or otherwise) with the elders to make us lose sight of who is really the centre of our gathering - the Lord Jesus Christ. Once we reach this point, we soon begin to justify our inactivity by “elder criticism.” Sadly, it is the Lord and His work that suffer with such an attitude. At times like this, we need a fresh view of our Saviour. Others may be failing us, but He never will; He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He will enable us to rise up, lay aside our distresses, and give our best for Him.

The second danger is an inordinate focus on an elder or elders. The

elders of a local church ought to be of such a calibre that the saints can emulate their lives and conduct, but it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is to consistently fill our vision. A man, no matter how great and godly, will always let us down at some point. If our focus has been on him, this can lead to disillusionment. Sometimes an assembly can drift or even crumble because a certain man - for any number of reasons - cannot continue to function as an elder. But never with the Lord Jesus: He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

In closing, we pray that we would see Him, the same yesterday, today, and forever and that we would make sound investments along with our elders in His Church.

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Coming Events

Assembly Youth Camp 2005

Date: 5-12 Dec 2005

Venue: Resort Lautan Biru Mersing, Malaysia

Camp Teacher: Roy Hill (Scotland)

Age group: 12 to 25 years

Camp Theme: "The Reason" - Know what you believe and why you believe (1 Peter 3:15)

Highlights:

Camp fire • The Great

Debate • A-Mersing

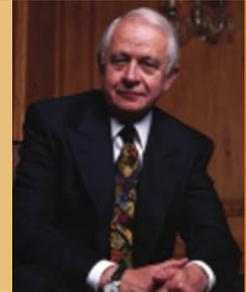
Race - Discovering

Mersing Town •

Exciting games • Night

Workshops • Film show

Sign up early +



Daily Vacation Bible School

29th Nov - 1st Dec '05

Time: 9 am to 3 pm

Venue: Bethesda Hall (Ang Mo Kio)

Theme: "Champions for God"

Teachers: Loh Geok Bee and Andrew Sng

3-day Special Ministry Meetings by Roy Hill

30 Nov to 2nd Dec '05, 8 pm nightly

Venue: Main Hall, Bethesda Hall (Ang Mo Kio)

All are welcome +

Workshop on Preachers and Preaching by Roy Hill

3rd Dec '05 (Sat)

Venue: Hall 4B, Bethesda Hall
(Ang Mo Kio)

Time: 5 pm to 8 pm

Please register early with the
assembly office

Closing date: 20th Nov '05 +

Bethesda Hall (Ang Mo Kio) & Depot Walk 2005 Speakers & Chairmen List

	Morning Ministry		Gospel Service		Tuesday Prayer Meeting		
2005	Speaker (AMK)	Speaker (DW)	Speaker	Chairman	2005	Bible Text	Speaker
2nd Oct	Harry Tan	Eric Choa	Tan Chee Hwee	Mau Teck Hwee	4th Oct	Heb 10:32-39	Andrew Sng
9th Oct	Harry Tan	Adrin Loi	David Chua	Erik Erh	11th Oct	Heb 11:1-3	Toh Wei Hong
16th Oct	Tan Kian Huat	Wong Tuck Keong	Collin Leong	Kenneth Chua	18th Oct	Heb 11:4-7	William Chew
23rd Oct	Tan Kian Huat	Tan Chee Hwee	Andrew Kwan	Nathaniel Sim	25th Oct	Heb 11:8-12	George Varughese
30th Oct	Chang Chew Kient	Adrin Loi	Koh Liang Hwee	Johnson Chua	1st Nov	Heb 11:13-16	Daniel Skelton
6th Nov	Chong Kim Chow	SV Ramalingam	Felix Lim	James Yim	8th Nov	Heb 11:17-22	Kurien Kurian
13th Nov	David Goh	SV Ramalingam	Edmund Yong	Gary Goh	15th Nov	Heb 11:23-28	Andrew Premsundar
20th Nov	David Goh	Ho Kuang Cheng	Kurien Kurian	Lee Kam Wing	22nd Nov	Heb 11:29-31	William Hooi
27th Nov	Ernest Chew	Victor Ng	Robert Hmar	Ng Lee Peng	29th Nov	Heb 11:32-40	Aaron Wong
4th Dec	Roy Hill	Khoo Oon Soo	Roy Hill	Aloysius Ong	6th Dec	Heb 12:1-3	Chan Man Wong
11th Dec	Roy Hill	Khoo Oon Soo	Roy Hill	William Hooi	13th Dec	Heb 12:4-11	Soo Chai Chew
18th Dec	Sum Siew Tak	Tan Kian Huat	Kan Shik Lum	Peter Chow	20th Dec	Heb 12:12-17	Jeffrey Jee
25th Dec	William Koh	Tan Kian Huat	Harry Tan (DW)	Daniel Thein (DW)	27th Dec	Heb 12:18-24	Leong Chee Tiek

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” ~ 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NASB)