

GRACE NEWS

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Grace Baptist Church is a disciple-making church that transforms lives with the gospel and love of Jesus Christ.

The Importance of Being Rooted in Christ

Pastor Arnold Wong emphasises the importance of sinking our roots deep in Christ.

“Hence, from the point of accepting Christ as Saviour, the believer grows both in knowledge and experience in Christ...”

“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.” (Colossians 2:6-7, ESV)

The above verses are part of the theme passages for 2016. They will serve as a lamp unto our path as we travel together throughout the coming New Year. In this edition of Grace News, we want to discover together what Paul meant when he used the word “rooted”. In subsequent issues we will explore other words and phrases in these verses.

For the one who accepts Christ as their personal Saviour, life becomes a pilgrimage in which the believer learns what it is to “walk in him”. Their new life in Christ starts with faith and continues in faith in Christ’s precepts, principles and promises, which leads to a transformed life. The believer’s life is “rooted” in Christ. Instead of spiritual nourishment, strength and stability for their new life in Christ coming from the false teachings and vain philosophies of man, they come from Christ.

Well “rooted” believers are taught to “no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people...” (Eph 4:14, NIV)

Similarly, by being “rooted” in Christ, believers should mature in their walk with Christ. The expectation for every believer is that they progress from “...the elementary teachings about Christ” and go on “to maturity” (Heb 6:1, NIV). Hence, from the point of accepting Christ as Saviour, the believer grows both in knowledge and experience in Christ – hence becoming more like Christ each day.

This was an important truth for the believers in Colossae. Just like today, there were teachers of false doctrines who sought to distract and divert believers away from Christ. Paul’s exhortation to them was to start and stay with Christ – being firmly “rooted” in Him.

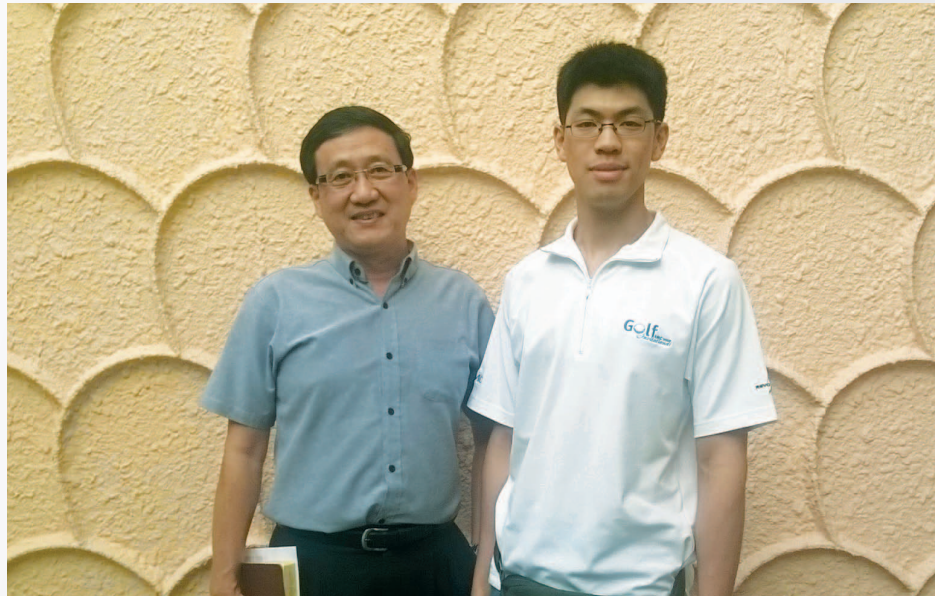
In whom or what are you “rooted” – in Christ or in the thinking of the world? Ω



Illustration by Deborah Yan

Desiring GOD

Against the backdrop of life's daily grind, how does personal daily devotion strengthen one's walk with Christ? Grace News interviews **Ngo Thian Chye** and **Matthew Koh** to find out what they do during their daily devotion, how they find the time and energy for such regular devotion and the motivation behind their commitment.



Thian Chye is a taxi driver and father of two grown children. Matthew is single and a junior lawyer. They might have vastly different personal and work schedules, yet these two servants of Christ share a united desire to lean upon the Lord daily through His Word and prayers.

Q What is a typical working day like for you?

Matthew: I usually have 11- or 12-hour-long working days. I usually try to do my devotions at the beginning of the day, for example, by reading the Bible when I'm travelling to work or after I get to work. If that doesn't happen for some reason, I'll try to fit it in at another time, for example, when I am taking a break.

Thian Chye: I drive my taxi on weekdays from 6 am to 7 pm. I set aside time for my daily devotion by waking up at five every morning except for weekends when I wake up slightly later in the morning.

Q What do you do during your devotion sessions?

Matthew: I try to read the whole Bible – from beginning to end, within one year. I also read Christian books (recommended by my brother or friends) as part of my devotional.

Thian Chye: I subscribe to a Bible app "YouVersion" and am currently using the one-year NIV plan which covers all aspects of our faith. A typical morning will include a 20-minute prayer time followed by Bible verse(s) meditation and reading a short write-up. I will also write in a journal what the Lord has spoken to me and personal application of the verses that I have read.

Q What do you pray about?

Thian Chye: It varies from day to day with a simple plan so that my prayer can cover a wider range of needs. For example, on Fridays I'll pray for my care group (because it's CG night), on Saturdays the Care Group Ministry, and on Sundays the needs of our church and the church leaders. From Monday to Thursdays I'll just pray for whatever needs the Lord impresses upon my heart – there are so many things to pray for if we are willing to commit to support others in prayer.

Matthew: I usually try to pray consistently for our church's missionaries, they need to be covered in prayer. When there are things I'm worried about, I make it a point to pray about it and ask God to give me strength and peace, rather than letting my anxiety build.

Q Why do you feel the need to do devotion every day?

Thian Chye: It's a challenge and personal discipline that I want to undertake – I feel that if I want to love God and serve Him, I must make a deliberate effort to know Him better each day, including what He wants me to do (His will for me) and what direction He is giving me. You can get to know God through sermons, Christian books or fellowship, but the most important way is by meditating on God's Word personally. And I pray because I can lift up my burdens unto Him and likewise support my fellow church members in prayers. It's an act of dependence on God and also a reminder to me each day that it is God who lives in and through me.

Matthew: Without immersing ourselves in God's Word, it is difficult to know what God wants and to make the right decisions when the time comes. When I do something that I regret, it is often because I haven't immersed myself sufficiently in God's Word and haven't had biblical values imbued in me. The result is that when I act on instinct, I do the wrong thing.

Thian Chye: By cultivating a consistent daily devotional life, I am confident and have the faith in God to face the challenges of this world as a follower of Christ. It's very enriching. Ω

Speaking the Truth

(about our Smartphone Addiction) In Love

“We were not called to be chained to our phones. We are called to be images of Jesus.”



Illustration by Deborah Yan

What can we learn from goldfish? **Tan Yee Kiat** explores how our smartphones influence our use of time and our Christian witness in today's digitised world.

A *Telegraph* (UK) article declared that our attention span is officially shorter than that of a goldfish¹. The study, published earlier this year in May, was performed by tech giant Microsoft. The irony of one of the contributors to the present situation performing such a study notwithstanding, it highlighted that the attention span of humans has fallen from 12 seconds in 2000, to eight seconds now.

Fun-fact: Goldfish can hold a thought for nine seconds.

Here are some more data, and these are more contextualised to our setting: Singaporeans spend an average of 38 minutes per session on Facebook, twice as long as Americans; two counselling centres based in Singapore – National Addictions Management Services and Touch Community Services – already have programmes for digital addiction².

Alas, this author is writing as one equally culpable of all these. The more pertinent issue for us to address as Christians is to see not just how this is affecting us in a generic way as part of society at large, but how this is affecting the more important issue of our Christian witness.

John Piper, author of *Desiring God*, has quipped, “One of the great uses of Facebook and Twitter will be to prove at the Last Day that a lack of prayer was not from a lack of time.”

Ouch. Perhaps a good question to ask is what does God's Word have in store for all of this? I took a crack and suggested these:

Firstly, realise that the New Testament speaks about real face-to-face fellowship in glowing terms. The only thing they have that is remotely similar to what we do, is perhaps, letter writing. In the short epistle of 2 John, this is what we see: “Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete.” (2 Jn 12, ESV)

Perhaps this is one form of witness that we have to the surrounding culture. A culture whose communication is getting increasingly digitised, and whose outings are broadcast on social media, we stand against the tide by desiring real fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. No need for broadcasting what we do on the Internet, just bliss and joyfulness to see one

another as a fellow sinner saved by the blood of Christ.

Secondly, in Paul's letter to the Colossians, he uses clothing-heavy language to describe what the Colossians ought to embrace as God makes them anew. Strip off (*apekduomai*) the old clothing and put on (*endysamenoi*) the new. “Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off (*apekduomai*) the old self with its practices and have put on (*endysamenoi*) the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.” (Col 3:9-10, ESV)

Perhaps what Paul would be telling us, if we were the ones being written to, is this: Put down.

We were not called to be chained to our phones. We are called to be images of Jesus. It is a calling far higher and far better than what we are addicted to. Ω

¹ Watson, Leon. “Humans have shorter attention span than goldfish, thanks to smartphones.” *The Telegraph*, May 15, 2015.

² Ian, Stefanus. “Singapore grapples with smartphone addiction.” *AFP News*, June 18, 2014.

Train Up a Child in the Way He Should Go

Chan Kit Wan shares how responding to a call to teach Sunday School brought her unexpected blessings in teaching her own children God's Word.



(L-R): A family growing in Christ — Soo Hee and Kit Wan pictured here with Daniel, Sarah, Jessica and Samuel.

When my children were aged 7, 5 and 2 years old, I remember that there was a need for Sunday School teachers. At that time, I thought, “I have no experience with teaching children in Sunday School. I am not equipped. Why can’t other people serve instead?”

Despite my initial hesitation, I heeded the call for teachers and found myself teaching my first Sunday School class that year. The very first class I taught was my son, Samuel’s class. He was in K1 then. I was overwhelmed on my first day. I had no co-teacher for the first lesson because there were not enough teachers. The children in the class were active but by God’s grace I survived my first lesson! As the saying goes, the rest is history, as I went on to serve with the Children Ministry for several years.

In preparing my lessons each week, I discovered that I needed to be creative in my storytelling to engage the children. It was a challenge to impart God’s truth in the stories in simple words such that the children could understand. I also recognised that children at that tender young age are more trusting, which increases the responsibility that teachers bear!

As an added blessing, I did not realise that in preparing the Bible lessons each week, I was also enriching the way I related stories about God and the Bible to my own children. When reading Bible

stories with my children, I learnt to be more expressive! Similarly, preparing the materials for craft taught me the great learning value these crafts could have in teaching and impressing biblical truths. When my children brought home their crafts from their lessons, I would get them to display the crafts in the house. We would discuss the crafts they made and how they related to the Bible stories. I also learnt the importance of the take-home paper that all children brought home after each Sunday School class. It’s a great way to let parents know what his or her child had learnt in class. On Sunday evenings, I would use the take-home paper to review the lesson with my children.

Teaching in Sunday School taught me the awesome responsibility I had in imparting God’s truth to the children. In addition to deepening my own spiritual walk with my children, the experience taught me to appreciate the work and effort of all Sunday School teachers. As such, I would remind my own children to thank their teachers before they left after their Sunday School class. Also, I encouraged them to make gifts for their teachers on Teacher’s Day as a small gesture.

I found much joy and blessings when I served as a Sunday School teacher. Later on, I went on to serve in Junior Church and Vacation Bible School. I would encourage all to actively show your appreciation to teachers and helpers in the Children

Ministry. And to all parents, what better way to learn how to train up your own children in God’s Word than to start with serving in the Sunday School? Ω

“...in preparing the Bible lessons each week, I was also enriching the way I related stories about God and the Bible to my own children.”



We thank God for the faithfulness of David and Gladys, here with their children (at the back) Daniel, Faith, (at the front) Jeremiah, Hope and Jubilee.

ROOTED IN CHRIST AS A MISSIONARY

David Chang reflects on sinking his spiritual roots in Christ, whilst serving in metropolitan Bangkok.

How do I stay rooted in Christ as a missionary in Bangkok? How can I stay fresh and continue to thrive in a city filled with noise, pollution, traffic jams, selfishness, and spiritual oppression? Three memories come to my mind.

The first is an image of me in a coffee shop on a particular weekday morning after rushing my kids to school. As I take a sip and look out the window, I see a twelve-lane expressway roaring with container trucks speeding from Bangkok to the Eastern seaport. If any customer opens the shop door, the noise is deafening. Yet, it is the only place for a brief solitude before my meetings. I try to read, meditate and pray. There in that busy shop, I sense God's presence. In spite of the hustle and bustle outside, I find my spiritual roots reaching for Christ and my strength is renewed.

The second memory is sitting with a small group of men. After reading from the Scripture, we share our joys and struggles. The sharing is genuine, because we have developed trust over the years. There is no fear of condemnation or comparison, just listening ears and heartfelt support for one another. These are people who I can turn to for this kind of renewing fellowship – some are missionaries, and some are Thais.

The third and final memory is preparing for Sunday worship. The Chang family is getting ready for church! There are many bags filled with various items ranging from toys, snacks, drinks and musical instruments to Bibles and songbooks. This process is getting easier, hallelujah, now that our kids are a bit older. But, I

still have vivid memories of making sure all five kids are bathed, and all items are loaded into the car. By the time this is done, I am drenched in perspiration and need to shower again! In spite of the hard work, there is no greater joy than to serve and worship together as a family.

These are just three examples of how I stay rooted. The spiritual disciplines of solitude, fellowship and corporate worship have kept my family and I in Christ.Ω

“The spiritual disciplines of solitude, fellowship and corporate worship have kept my family and I in Christ.”

GROUNDBREAKING AT MATTAR ROAD 21 NOVEMBER 2015



▲ The groundbreaking was conducted by four young men (L-R: Toshi Mori, Caleb Lee, Jasper Chua and Kiew Heng Wei) from the English and Chinese congregations to represent the next generation of the church, together with longtime member Charles Chan (centre) whose father had taken part in the groundbreaking for the original 17 Mattar Road building.



▲ The ceremony closed with the aptly chosen hymn, 'The Solid Rock', reminding us that though everything around us may give way, 'He then is all [our] hope and stay'.

◀ Dr Poulson gave a short devotional reminding us that although our old home had been demolished, we, as the people of God, are the church. He exhorted us to rebuild not just a church building, but the church itself as the house of God.



▲ Thanking God for His faithfulness as we move ahead into the new phase of rebuilding and rededicating ourselves to the work of the Lord.

BAPTISM 13 DECEMBER 15



◀ We rejoiced with (L-R) Nathanael Raj, Julian Chow, Glen Ng and Koh Zhifeng as they publicly declared their faith in our Lord through baptism. We are very much encouraged by their testimonies and seeing God's hand in their lives. We pray that they will continue to grow in their love and understanding of God.

YOUTH CAMP 20 TO 24 DECEMBER 15



We praise God for six new campers and a great time of fun and fellowship during the camp! Most importantly, our youths cherished the time devoted to hearing the word of God. We pray that they will always keep their eyes on Jesus as they persevere in their journey of faith.



CHRISTMAS DAY 25 DECEMBER 15



GBC's Christmas Day service this year was a time of thanksgiving and rejoicing through songs, Scripture readings and the hearing of the gospel message. With joy in our hearts we celebrated the mystery of God becoming man to dwell among us as Saviour, Christ and Lord – and we went out with renewed purpose to proclaim Jesus to the world.



OUR LAST SERVICE AT MATTAR ROAD 27 SEPTEMBER 2015



A group photo of the English congregation before we bid farewell to our old church premises at Mattar Road. We thank God for His provision and guidance over the past years, and look to the future with hope.

GBC Congregational Care

Pastor Bobby Lee *likens the role of the Congregation Care Team to following in Jesus' footsteps by caring for the flock.*

On recent Sundays, worshippers at GBC might have noticed the practice of taking attendance. This is just one of the initiatives introduced by the Congregation Care Team to improve the level of watch-care over the flock of GBC.

The goal of congregational care is to help GBC worshippers through various life situations from the perspective of the gospel. Such care – practical help, prayer and/or counselling – is focused on the brokenness of humans as a result of their alienation from God. The healing of humanity is ultimately offered in Jesus Christ. In other words, congregational care is a representation and demonstration of Jesus' shepherding of His flock.

In accordance with biblical understanding, the primary modes of pastoral (or congregational) care in the New Testament consist of mutual edification (*oikodome*), encouragement (*parakesis*) and mutual discipline (Matthew 18:15-17).

It is noteworthy that this work of caring for the flock is recognised as the work of the whole people of God. The ministry of pastors and elders encourages, rather than prevents or 'controls' this ministry. Hence, it is a great joy that we have members of our GBC family coming together to form a team to partner the English Congregational Leadership in shepherding the flock. The Congregation Care Team's members are chiefly characterised by their physical presence and prayer for the flock.

Praying for the GBC Family,

Ps Bobby Lee (on behalf of the Congregation Care Team – Chan Kong Wah, Chan Poh Leng, Leong Kuan Yui, Carol Leong, Low Lai Sai, Patsy Low, Josephine Chan, Carrie Chow and Kuan Kok Pui)



After the last worship service, there was a relocation briefing and a time of prayer as we committed the relocation and rebuilding to the Lord.



To improve the level of watch-care over the flock of GBC, we started taking attendance prior to service in November 2015.



Illustration by Angel Lee

Children's Corner

By Rachel Wong

ROOTS . SHOOTS . FRUITS

Let's see how much you know about plants.

When you plant a seed,
what comes out of the seed first – the root or the shoot?
Yes, it's the root!

Here is an even easier question:
If I plant an apple seed, what kind of tree would grow?
(I'm not going to tell you the answer to that one!)

When you believe in Jesus, it is like planting a special kind of seed in your heart – a 'faith' seed. What will first grow from your faith seed, the root or the shoot? Right, it's the root! One important thing that roots do for a plant is to take food and water from the soil so that the plant will grow strong and healthy. In the same way, we need to give food and water to our faith seed. Does that mean we should go and stand in some soil every day? You can go and stand in some soil every day if you like – but it won't help your faith seed! The way to give food and water to your faith seed is to read the Bible, pray and think about Jesus, and come to church to learn more about God.

Now, what kind of plant will grow from a faith seed? Yes, it's a faith plant! That shows that your faith in Jesus is growing stronger

all the time, and it is something that people around you can see. Soon, there will be fruit on your faith plant: you can read about those fruit in Galatians 5:22. People will love to see your fruit, but the most important part is what they cannot see – those strong healthy roots underground.

Healthy roots also mean that plants do not fall down when there are strong winds. So, your faith plant will be safe even when you go through problems, as long as the roots are in good shape.

You see how important it is to have strong roots for your faith plant? Make sure you look after your roots! Ω



Church Rebuilding Update @ 31 Dec 2015

