

Fatherly Talks 3

Devotional Series 3.01 to 3.24

By Peter Tan

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PREFACE

This third series of Fatherly Talks covers areas of true revival, relationships with your loved ones and others, and also exploring a deeper relationship with God. These talks were delivered from April 2008 to October 2008.

Aspects of ministry, anointing and faithfulness to one's calling are also touched upon. Being in the perfect Will of God is the most important criteria in life. The key to discovering the Will of God is in walking in love towards God and towards others, especially those of our loved ones. Until and unless we know how to relate to those whom we can see, we will not have the skills or the ability to relate to our God whom we can't see with our physical eyes.

May the Lord bless you and increase the love of God in your lives as you meditate through these series of talks.

Pastor Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.01

The Measure of a Revival

Dearly Beloved

The 2000 year history of Christianity has always been filled not with a perpendicular 45° growth graph but rather with a wave-like graph of ups and downs with peaks and lows. We will probably continue seeing these figures in the next 200 odd years if Christ tarries. The peaks of Christianity have often been marked by periods of great revivals; some worldwide and some regional. Today we live so far from the time in the early church of Acts that we are more conscious of the revivals of the Reformation, 1st and 2nd Great Awakenings, Holiness movement, Pentecostal outpouring, Charismatic revival and all the various flavours of Word movement, church growth movement, prophetic movement, etc. and of the regional revivals like the Welsh revival, Indonesian revival, etc. How do we measure the net impact of a revival or move? How do we measure its quality and centrality? (By centrality, we speak about its ability to move the whole universal church forward, for example when you push against the centre of gravity of an object it moves forward but when you push outside of the centre of gravity, it only causes it to move). How do we quantify its purity and doctrinal accuracy?

Like all things observed, it is always harder to measure something when you are too subjectively influenced and within the object that you are trying to measure. It is far easier to measure and evaluate something when you are removed and outside measuring it objectively. For this reason, unless one is capable of setting one's emotions and inner desires to neutral, it is always harder to hear God in any area that one is emotionally or intellectually affected than when one is not affected. And if a person has already chosen or made up their inner mind about a matter, any measurement or evaluation done is purely to justify one's own position and not that accurate. We can hear God only as clearly as we have completely died to ourselves and purely seeking just His Will. The 'death of' and 'death to' self requirement is vital before one can clearly hear God or the true leading of His Spirit.

In the end, we must return to the book of Acts and use the principles within by which it measures its own revivals (there were several revivals within the book of Acts itself) and use it to measure all revivals in Christianity; including those within our own time frame and are still affecting us emotionally and intellectually plus we ourselves might be a part of and a product of the continuing move or revival.

1. Doctrinal and Word level

Every true revival continues to bring us to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ *that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting* (Ephesians 4:13-14). The immediate effect of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was that the disciples continued steadfast in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42). The healing of the lame man in Acts 3 which brought a numerical church growth to 5,000 strong also caused the arrest of Peter and John but upon their release they continued to speak the Word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31). The signs and wonders of Acts 5 brought forth a new level of daily teaching and devotion in the temple and house to house (Acts 5:42). The addition of the seven deacons (which was done so that the apostles could devote themselves more to the Word of God and prayer – Acts 6:4) resulted in multiplied church growth and the spread of the Word of God (Acts 6:7).

The revival in Antioch was watched and supervised by the apostles sending Barnabas, who added Paul to his team, and they taught the Word of God there (Acts 11:26). The revival of Ephesus was both preceded and accompanied by the daily teaching of the Word of God (Acts 19:10-11). Of course, we also need to understand that the teaching given was not just a doctrinal tangent or pet doctrine but the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Although revivals have a way of focusing on certain neglects of essential doctrines that are freshly re-emphasized, a true revival needs to restore people back to a love for the Word and a love for God. Our love for God and our love for His Word are measures that are directly related (John 14:21). The Reformation brought forth a revival of the printed Word and also a new understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith. The 1st great awakening was accompanied by systematic teaching by John Wesley and his followers plus an emphasis on holiness and Christian perfection. The 2nd great awakening was accompanied by much prayer emphasis and one of its leaders, Charles G Finney, brought forth a new level of the theology revivals and of sanctification (He started a school of theology known as the Oberlin theology). The Pentecostal revival led to a re-examination of the Word of God and its teaching on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Whenever there is a true revival and move of God, it always leads people back to a love for the Word and its essential doctrines. Anything less is but an emotional wave of euphoria. It is interesting that the book of Acts characterised a revival as the Word of God grew mightily, for this is a very key essential to the quality to a true revival (Acts 6:7; 13:49; 19:20).

2. Worship and Prayer level

The end of all revival is to establish a close relationship with God. A close relationship with God always involves prayer and worship at an intimate level. The book of Acts is filled with prayer meetings and worship before, during and after a revival (Acts 2:4; 3:1; 4:24; 6:4; 13:1-2; 20:36). Any move of God that does not result in an increase in prayer, worship and devotional life of believers' personal and church public life should be a concern to us. Any church growth that does not continue to sustain the 'power room' (prayer meetings) of a church should be of concern for us. It would mean that the standards of quality of believers we attract are shallower than those of Bible times. Do we want to make such a compromise for the sake of more people? Is bigger and shallower better than deeper and more quality? I know that the best is to have both quality and quantity, but what if one has to choose either in an age of compromise and worldliness? What would be our choice as church leaders? The 1st and 2nd Great awakenings, the Wales revival and the early Pentecostal revivals were periods of deep prayer by the masses of believers. It is possible to be beneficiaries of prayer revivals of previous generations (many of today's church growth) but if we are to successfully pass it on to the next generation after us, we need to continue to sustain the depth of prayer.

3. Church growth and expansion

True quality will always lead to quantity – church growth- in the end. The secret is never to lose the quality level of the Word, of prayer, of worship, of fellowship in pursuit of numerical growth. All revivals will produce church growth as is evidenced in the Bible (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:7; 11:21; 14:27; 19:26). All the great revivals of Christianity have always resulted in numerical church growth. The sad thing is that in many pastors' conferences and gatherings of fivefold ministers, this is the *only* measure that is used as evidence of spiritual and revival leadership. For those ministers who are striving for church growth but are yet to achieve it, we want to encourage you to keep doing the right things and persisting in the good work in the Lord. If you keep working correctly at the quality, quality will produce quantity. This was the message I gave to a group of pastors and ministers 20 years ago when the average Asian church was about two to three hundred in size. I have seen some of the pastors faithfully plodding away and today pastor mega churches. Many ministers do not realise that there are different dynamics at work at each phase of church growth. The various phases of church growth are as follows:

- a. The initial to a core group of 50.
This important initial phase requires the establishment of key ‘pillar’ leaders and the main pastor’s ability to nurture the ‘correct’ vision for the church in their local community. If there are continuous new streams of people coming in and leaving (back door is as large as your front door), then the problem could lie in the ability to nurture leaders or the vision is not mature yet or a non-fivefold pastor is leading the group or the character of the main pastor is unable to allow room for strong leaders to merge with him. Only when one or two ‘captains of fifties’ type of leaders have emerged can the church grow to the next phase.

- b. Growth from 50 to 150
This phase consists of the development of core departments within the church. Usually by this level a few core ‘captains of fifties’ are in the main church leadership or of influence within the structure. The more gifted areas of departmental development like worship, Sunday school, prayer ministry, etc. need to be developed to take the church through to this phase. The geographical location of the church is also important at this phase where most likely, there is a move from homes to a small building of their own or rental premises for use in the larger meetings. How everything is coordinated and the cohesion of the leadership will determine whether the church remains platitudinal at this stage or moves on to double in the next phase. At this stage, the ability and character vision of the main pastor is essential to move it into the next phase. If the vision is not clear-cut and the calling is not strong enough, it will never move into the next phase of church growth.

If all things are flowing in accordance to God’s Will, God will send ‘captains of hundreds’ into the church to bring it into the next phase. Some of these ‘captains of hundreds’ will be raw and outspoken or very strong with their own ideas and mini-visions (like every potential leader should be). The main pastor will need to succeed in moulding them to be part of the main vision of the church like David did of the people who came to him in Adullam cave (1 Samuel 22:1-2). If he does not succeed or the character of the main pastor is not strong enough to mould them (it takes the strong to mould the strong) and inspire them, the back door of the church will be as big as the front door and the church is stuck on a plateau phase of 150. If the main pastor succeeds and forges an army of captains, the church will easily move into the next phase. (By army we do not mean that there is no freedom of gifting and expression – it is used only as a metaphor. An over controlling pastor will never nurture strong

leaders for strong leaders would rather be part of a team than to be a manager level pawn).

c. Growth from 150 to 400

It is at this phase that a church will either remain one of the many average sized churches or mushroom into a mega church. A few things are essential here now that the church has captains of hundreds in their midst. There would be the development of a new level of grace and anointing for the mega church capacity. This involves the main pastor developing a stronger pulpit ministry. The church as a whole would also begin to take on its own 'special characteristics.' These characteristics determine whether it is in line with what God wants to promote to the entire body of Christ (remember that each line of revelation, truth or emphasis has its own time in the lime light – and some truths will never be allowed to be in that lime light level but others will). In a sense when a church is promoted to the limelight via mega church capacity, it is not the person or the church that God is promoting but rather the revelation or the emphasis that God wants the whole body of Christ to be impacted with. Of course being human, many cannot differentiate between the person and the message or the organisation and the emphasis. At the same time the finding of another expansion building is of prime importance to catch the flow of growth (not too early not too late), if done well there will be a faith level rise within the congregation that will cause a swell of growth into the next level to break the 1000 mark.

d. Growth from 400 to 1200

At this stage strong pulpit ministry and strong departmental ministries (music, Sunday school, cells or various other areas) become the specialized hallmark of the church. There will be a new level of excitement as the church reaches a 1000 capacity. This phase also involves the linking together with fivefold ministries who in themselves carry an anointing to thousands which help push the local church past the 1000 mark. By now the church is used to captains of fifties and captains of hundreds, and there will rise (either from within the church or imported from the wider body of Christ) captains of thousands. As many of such captains would in their own right already be successful in their own ministries, most of the time the 'sense of importing and incorporating their ministries into the life of the church' involves more regular visits from them rather than actual staying to become part of the church local team (but this can also happen in some cases). The most important decision at this time is also the location of the church or the ministry

for transportation of the people to the church (either make it central in terms of transportation or if located outside of the bus routes, provide the necessary transportation to church). If the church manages all these well, it will grow into the next phase.

e. Growth from 1200 to 5000

Although this will seem like a breeze after hitting 1200, but many churches also plateau at this phase and don't know how to go on from here. There definitely must be involvement of fivefold ministries here – either coming from within the church or from outside (on a very regular basis). By now the church would be known for its special characteristics and if properly harnessed would create an excitement in the entire community that this is the 'new move', 'new revelation', 'new emphasis', etc. and feel that destiny is on her side. If the character of the pastor develops along with the church, he or she would become like a 'mini-celebrity' but if they keep their hearts right before the Lord, He would continue to promote them. Many doors would also open to the main pastor and if he accepts the 'call to the wider body of Christ' there will be a growth of the local pastor from a local pastor to a 'national pastor.' A few major city wide rallies or outreaches via fivefold ministers ministering alongside with the main pastor of the church would cause the church to easily reach the 5000 mark. At the same time there must also be proportional growth of the various departmental areas of the church. Some of the departmental areas may hold back the entire church from reaching its full growth to 5000 for this phase. At this stage of the church, gifted and anointed people (captains of thousands) must also be released into the departmental areas.

f. There are many other areas of growth from 5000 to 10,000, from 10,000 to 20,000, from 20,000 to 50,000, from 50,000 to 100,000, and so forth which are beyond the scope of this devotional to cover but we will cover them in a separate teaching.

4. Signs and wonders level

Every true move of God will be accompanied by the Holy Spirit bearing witness to the revelation that is being refreshed upon the body of Christ. Signs and wonders were evidenced in all the revivals in the book of Acts (Acts 2:12, 43; 4:14, 33; 5:11-12; 8:13; 19:11-12). The quality and quantity of the signs and wonders will be dependent on the depth of the relationship of the minister with God and the special call that the minister is called to. Note that there is a level of signs and wonders that the devil can do with sorcery that is no match for the power of signs and wonders that are demonstrated by the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:9-13).

5. Conviction of sin and holy living

All true revivals will free people from sin and worldliness. People will love righteousness and holy living and become more spiritual (understanding that the world is only temporal). The people in Acts were convicted of sin when God's holy presence came (Acts 2:37; 5:13; 7:57; 8:22; 13:9-12; 19:17-19). There will be an empowerment of the Spirit that will cause people to live a holy and spiritual life at a higher level than they had by the infusion of the strength of the Lord into them.

All the above five marks of a true revival are not present in all revivals (some revivals have only one of these marks or two or three or four) but a full fledged revival with all five characteristics is very, very powerful in changing the face of a city or nation. Whether all five marks flow sometimes depends on the openness of people to God in a certain area (for example, in the 1st and 2nd great awakening, conviction of sin was present but the healing signs and wonders were not as widely known as in the Pentecostal revival for people were still largely untaught in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is teaching in a particular area that enables faith to rise for those areas.

God will surely grant that each of you beloved would see the fullness of this wave of revival that is already streaming forth.

In Christ Jesus

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.02

Discouragement and the Still Small Voice

Dearly Beloved

Weariness and discouragement is not something which is uncommon amongst believers who face insurmountable odds in their walk with God. The Hebrew Christians were facing such odds when they were urged to look to Jesus who is the Author and Finisher of their faith (Hebrews 12:1-3). It is also clear that weariness and discouragement are in the soul realm (Hebrews 12:1-3). Sometimes the extreme length of a journey to reach a destination is a source of discouragement to the soul (Hebrews 21:4). At other times the discouragement can be caused by the words and perceptions of other people (Numbers 32:7; Deuteronomy 1:28; Colossians 3:21). God knows that such feelings of the soul are common amongst those who live in the flesh and blood reality of the physical world and has often exhorted His people through His servants not to be discouraged (Deuteronomy 1:21).

1. The greatness of a person or leader is in their ability to overcome discouragement which stops most people.

It is the valleys of discouragement that separate the mediocre from the great. Understanding that discouragement is a human emotion of the soul, one should reach out into one's spirit and draw on the strength from the spirit man. When David had seemingly lost everything which he possessed including his wives, when all his men were also in extreme distress such that they wept till they had no strength to weep, when his men were thinking of killing him, and when David's own soul was greatly distressed, the Bible says that David encouraged himself in the Lord his God (1 Samuel 30:6). It is this ability to strengthen oneself in the Lord that separates mere mortals from great men and women of God. The word *courage or encourage* is derived from the Hebrew word *chazaq* which means to be strong (most of the time translated as *be strong*, also translated as *be of good courage*). People who have not been through the valleys of despair and discouragement have not yet found their inner ability in God. Many times it is more like the valley of the shadow of death where one even feels like dying or giving up. At such times, one should always remember that with every trial, with every temptation, with every valley, God has prepared a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13).

2. The greatness of a person or leader is their ability to find something else stronger than them to lean on – God the Rock of their salvation. God understands and knows the need of us receiving encouragement. Many times insurmountable circumstances may discourage our souls. At other times the negative words of those we love or those we look up to may discourage us. Sometimes the journey to reach a goal is so, so long – almost like climbing Mount Everest or trekking to the South or North Pole all by yourself. If something were easy or convenient to do, every Tom, Dick, Harry, Ahmad, Ramasamy, Ah Kow, Sally, Samantha and Sue would be doing it now (apologies if your name is one of these common names used in the illustration). Those who succeed find something stronger than themselves to lean on or to draw their strength from.

The Word of God is supposed to be our source of daily life and strength. Joshua, while being told to be strong and of good courage, was also told to daily meditate on the Word of God (Joshua 1:6-8). It is alright to feel the soul emotion of discouragement (just like the ability of the soul to feel every other negative emotion like rejection, sadness, irritation, anger, etc.) but you must never let these emotions rule you; instead tap into your spirit man where God through His spirit has poured His fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance (Galatians 5:22-23). Treat discouragement as the soul hunger pangs for the Word of God. If you haven't eaten for some time, your stomach growls and makes noises; if you haven't drawn from the strength of your inner man and spirit, your soul makes negative emotional noises. Just spend time in the Lord and in the Word and your soul will be chewing in encouragement, love, rest and contentment in God.

3. The greatness of a person and leader is their ability to draw aside and receive fresh impetus from God to fulfil their destiny. Elijah was a great prophet who did powerful things through God even calling down fire from heaven (1 Kings Chapter 18). Many times after doing a great work for God, humans feel some form of exhaustion in their soul like an athlete who has just completed a fast 100 metre dash or a marathon run. It is at this point that one must know how to withdraw into the presence of God to receive refreshing. Elijah was beginning to feel the hunger pangs of the soul emotions of abandonment, loneliness, discouragement and fear when another new threat was thrown against him – the threat of Jezebel to immediately kill him in 24 hours (1 Kings 19:1-3). It was like the proverbial straw that (almost) broke the camel's back. Elijah was so

discouraged that he asked the Lord to end his life (1 Kings 19:4). God understands all the soul and physical limitations of our present life and sent His angel to cook for Elijah (1 Kings 19:5-6). Later on, Elijah was encouraged to make a journey to Mount Horeb where he heard the still small voice of God (1 Kings 19:8-18). It was there that he was told that there were many others who loved God (7000 people) and given instructions of what to do next. Remember that when your soul is discouraged and down, all you need is to receive a fresh *rhema* from God. His *rhema* brings with it the energizing power of faith to do greater things (Romans 10:17).

4. The greatness of a person or leader is their ability to find the right fellowship and partnership to do the Lord's Will together. God knew that Elijah had been physically alone all his life and told him to start training Elisha to replace him (1 Kings 19:16). Elisha served as Elijah's servant (known as the one who poured water for Elijah to wash – 2 Kings 3:11) for a period of ten years before the double portion of anointing fell on him (2 Kings 3:9-15). Moses in a time of great stress and discouragement complained to the Lord about the greatness of the burden that he carried for the ungrateful Israelites (Numbers 11:11-15). He said that he was not able to bear the burden alone (Numbers 11:14). God instructed him to gather seventy others whom He would anoint to bear the burden together with Moses (Numbers 11:17).

Paul's ministry only began when he was in the right fellowship in Antioch through the encouragement of Barnabas (Acts 9:26-27, 30; 11:24-26; 13:1-2). If Paul had not been prepared to leave the comfort of his home town and set up new roots in Antioch, he would have lived and died without even entering his first phase of ministry. Barnabas had a gift of encouragement which helped difficult and strong people like Paul and Mark find their destiny (Acts 4:36; 9:26-27; 15:37-39; 2 Timothy 4:11; 2 Peter 3:15-16). There is a greater measure of encouragement and energy to overcoming insurmountable odds when one is bonded together in the right fellowship or group (Genesis 11:6; Deuteronomy 32:30; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Matthew 18:19-20). David forged a strong army from the most difficult and untamed bunch of individuals (1 Samuel 22:2; 1 Chronicles 11:10-47). Great faith comes from great battles and the highest vision comes from the lowest valleys. The strongest steel comes from the strongest pressure and hottest fire. David's mighty army (feared both by his enemies and those who chose to go against him) was forged in the lowest valleys and hardest times of his life.

The next time you face discouragement or depression or rejection, remember these four sources of encouragement: your inner man and spirit, the written Word of God, the still small voice of God and refreshment from being in the right fellowship.

Dearly beloved, be strong and of good courage,

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.03

The Importance of the Word of God

Dearly Beloved

The Word of God holds central place in all of God's dealings with man and in His work on the planet earth. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away by My words will by no means pass' Jesus declared (Matthew 24:35). Without faith it is impossible to please God, and faith can only come through the hearing of the Word of God (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 10:17). Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). Jesus did many wonderful works and signs while on earth but in His prayer in John 17, He was most concerned about the keeping of His words and teachings which He left with the disciples (John 17:6-8). If we abandon the Word of God in a revival, we abandon the only weapon we have (the sword of the Spirit) against the forces of darkness (Ephesians 6:17; in fact all the other pieces of the armour can also be shown to be indirectly related to the Word of God). The true work of the Holy Spirit is to confirm (not replace) the Word of God with signs following (Mark 16:20).

Some may protest that the Word of God in many churches is dry and stale but this is not because of the abundance of the Word of God; rather it is the lack of the Word of God which has been replaced with man's traditions and customs. The Word of God delivered by the unction of the Holy Spirit can never be dry and stale. In the early days of the 1950s revival, people abandoned the Word for the Spirit in their enthusiasm to be part of the move of God and went into extreme errors. In the 1980s people began to get back into the Word but they lost a lot of the understanding of the power of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Today there is a new wave of hunger for signs and wonders again and many people want to abandon the Word and just get into the Spirit. This would be only the return to the 1950s and the church at large would not be any better as the same mistakes would be repeated. The revival that God is bringing forth in this decade is a revival of both the Word and the Spirit. Do not be contented with the demonstrations of the Spirit nor be satisfied with the teaching of the Word; but be zealous for both the Word and the Spirit.

He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches: the revival that God is sending in this decade is a revival of both the Word and the Spirit. There will be those who want to move only in the Spirit and others who only want to remain in the Word; the first group will be led

astray for lack of teaching, the second group will be left high and dry for lack of Spirit refreshing. But those who hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and yield to both the new move of the Word and the Spirit will tap into the next wave of revival that is unmatched and unseen before in the last century; it will be a manifestation that only this century has been privileged to see and experience.

The revival in the book of Acts was a revival of both the Word and the Spirit.

In Acts 1, the disciples obeyed the Word of the Lord in continuing in Jerusalem in prayer for the Spirit (Acts 1:8-14).

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit came down and the Word was preached; three thousand were saved (Acts 2:1-4, 37-41). The Spirit confirmed the Word with signs and wonders (Acts 2:43).

In Acts 3, the Spirit through Peter brought healing to the lame man and the Word was preached – the number of the disciples grew to five thousand (Acts 4:4).

In Acts 4, the disciples asked God for boldness to preach the Word by stretching His hand to do signs and wonders (Acts 4:29-30).

In Acts 5, the Holy Spirit demonstrated His power with many signs and wonders; and the apostles were told by the angel to preach the Word of God (Acts 5:12-16, 20).

In Acts 6, the Word of God grew and spread after the appointment of the seven deacons because the apostles wanted to focus more time on the Word and prayer; and God did signs and wonders by His Spirit through Stephen (Acts 6:4, 7, 8).

In Acts 7, Stephen preached an entire Word sermon recounting the history of Israel and while filled with the Spirit prayed a martyr's prayer that set in motion the conversion of Paul.

In Acts 8, those fleeing the persecution preached the Word of God and signs and wonders followed them (Acts 8:4, 13).

In Acts 9, Paul was converted and preached the Word that Jesus was the Son of God and that He was the Christ, and the church walked in the comfort of the Holy Spirit and multiplied (Acts 9:20-22, 31).

In Acts 10, the angel told Cornelius to get Peter to preach the Word to him and as He preached, the Spirit fell on them (Acts 10:36-38, 44).

In Acts 11, the church in Antioch was set up through the preaching and teaching of the Word by the leadership of Barnabas who was a man full of the Holy Spirit, and who brought Paul from Tarsus to help teach the Word of God (Acts 11:19-26).

In Acts 12, there was a supernatural Spirit and angelic deliverance of Peter after which the Word of God grew and multiplied (Acts 12:24).

In Acts 13, the Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey to preach the Word with signs following; Paul taught the Word of God in every synagogue he found, and was led to also preach the Word to Gentiles (Acts 13:1-2, 46).

In Acts 14, they were preaching the Word of the gospel and God did a sign and wonder before they returned from their first missionary journey (Acts 14:7, 9, 26-27).

In Acts 15, the apostles and elders of the church sought doctrinal accuracy and the Word and the testimony of the Spirit settled the issue for them (Acts 15:12-15). With the doctrinal question on the Gentiles settled Paul and Barnabas continued preaching and teaching the Word of God (Acts 15:35).

In Acts 16, the Holy Spirit stopped them from preaching the Word of God in Asia Minor but sent them to Macedonia where God established the Philippian church.

In Acts 17, Paul preached the Word and was well received by the Bereans who loved the Scriptures but were persecuted by others (Acts 17:2, 11).

In Acts 18, Paul was compelled by the Spirit to testify of Christ and made a decision to preach the Word to Gentiles after Jewish rejection (Acts 18:5-6). The ministry of Apollos, who was well skilled in the written Word, took off when he met two of Paul's disciples (Acts 18:24-28).

In Acts 19, Paul found a group of Ephesians whom he laid hands on to receive the Holy Spirit and after daily ministry of teaching the Word of God in the school of Tyrannus for two years, God did unusual miracles by His Spirit (Acts 19:6, 10-11). The Word of God grew mightily and prevailed (Acts 19:20).

In Acts 20, Paul commended the Ephesian leaders to the Word of His grace telling them that he had taught the whole counsel of God, and exhorting them to be faithful to the position the Holy Spirit had given them (Acts 20:27-28, 32).

In Acts 21, Paul had two prophecies delivered to him through the Spirit but kept on in the direction that he discerned the Will of God was for his life (Acts 21:4, 11, 13-14).

In Acts 22, Paul preached the Word of his testimony to the Jews while being arrested.

In Acts 23, Paul continued to share his testimony before the Jews, and the political leaders of his time.

In Acts 24, Paul shared his testimony and reasoned of righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come (Acts 24:25).

In Acts 25, Paul testifies and appeals to Caesar.

In Acts 26, Paul testified before Agrippa and said that he spoke Words of truth and reason (Acts 26:25).

In Acts 27, Paul as a prisoner spoke the words given to him by the Spirit supernaturally to bring physical safety to those in the ship.

In Acts 28, Paul while in detention of the Roman guard continued to preach the Word of God.

It is obvious from the whole story of Acts that the revival revolved around the Word of God and the Spirit confirming the Word that was preached. Our Lord Jesus was the Word made flesh and He was anointed with the Spirit without measure (John 1:11; 3:24). A revival is already beginning and we must know and understand that with every revival, history has shown that there are extremities in doctrine, practice and style. We must remain the mainstream of the revival and not the side stream or the extreme tangents. Many revivals do not last because of the lack of balance of both Word and Spirit. Let us be the generation that will tap on the fullest manifestation and allow the Word and the Spirit to flow through our lives until we are fully transformed to Christlikeness and the church is ready for Jesus at His coming.

Remember the five qualities of a genuine revival we shared in Fatherly Talk 3.01: Word level, Worship and prayer level, Church growth level, Signs and wonders level and Holiness level. Don't be satisfied with just one level, press into all five levels of a full-fledged revival.

In the Old Testament Tabernacle of Moses, there were six pieces of furniture: the brazen altar and the laver in the outer court (representing the body), the candlestick, the table of showbread and the incense altar in the holy place (representing the soul) and the ark of the covenant in which was the Tablets of Moses, the rod of Aaron and the manna all located in the Holy of Holies (representing the spirit). The laver, the showbread and the manna respectively also represent the washing and renewal power of the Word, the mountain-moving faith power of the Word, and the revelation power of the Word. The Word of God works upon our body, our soul and our spirit. It is through the triple working of the power of the Word that we are able to be tuned to the Spiritual realm.

Also remember that when the Spirit pours out in a new wave from the God's Throne, wherever you are as long as you love God and are hungry for Him, you will receive the outpouring. It is never geographically limited when it is time for God to show forth another of His waves.

In Christ's love

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.04

The Beauty of the Lord's Voice

Dear Beloved

This week I am sending this devotional early on Friday instead of Sunday, as I will be busy ministering in Sydney this Saturday and Sunday.

The Voice of the Lord is a spiritual voice and can only be received by our spirit beings. Only spirit can contact Spirit, only soul can contact soul, and only body can contact body. Before the fall, Adam and Eve must have delighted in hearing the voice of God in the Garden but immediately after the fall the same voice that had brought joy and comfort, now brought them fear (Genesis 3:8,10). The Hebrew word 'voice' is the word 'qol' which sometimes has been translated 'sound.' It is possible to hear a sound without necessarily hearing and understanding the voice (Of course, if it is a spiritual sound, only spiritual ears can hear although to the hearer it might sound as if it is just a natural noise).

When Jesus was baptized in water, there was a voice from God that declared Him as His beloved Son but most likely only John saw vision and heard the voice of God (Luke 3:22; John 1:32-33). When a voice answered Jesus as He prayed, some people near Him heard it as a thunder, others heard something without understanding and said that an angel had spoken (John 12:28-29). When Paul was down under a vision on the road to Damascus, he heard the voice and instruction of the Lord but all those around him heard a voice (sound) but did not understand anything (Acts 9:7; 22:9). All these events were supernatural events which affected the surrounding people differently depending on their own spiritual development in God.

1. We are promised the leading of the Holy Spirit everyday (John 14:17-18, 26).
2. The leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives is always there every day. It is never a question as to whether He has spoken but rather whether we can hear and understand Him. Jesus said that His sheep hear His voice (John 10:27). And the Holy Spirit has come to lead us and to guide us into all truth (John 16:13). The anointing that God has given to all believers abides in us, teaching us all things (1 John 2:27). Sometimes we don't understand because we are not tuned to the area to hear what is being communicated. For example, an

experienced mother knows what a child's need is and the more experienced they are, the more they can differentiate between the whimper for comfort, the cry for nourishment, and the cry of pain and discomfort. An animal lover can differentiate the needs of an animal by its posture, sounds and even eyes. God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, His angels and the Holy Spirit are constantly sending us little leadings of the Holy Spirit that we must tune in to everyday.

3. The promptings, signals and leadings of the Spirit and His angels are not given in a human language. We might in the end hear it in human language but they are given Spirit to spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). For example, when God's voice vibrates in the spiritual realm and is telling a group of His people not to be afraid; some of them will not hear anything but purely feel a sense of comfort, some will sense the remembrance of an event in which they had taken great comfort and faith, some will hear within their inner mind, words of comfort in their own vocabulary (Be not afraid or Be strong, Fear not, I am with you, I am here, you are not alone, etc.), some will suddenly remember varying Scriptures telling them not to be afraid (Matthew 28:20 – Lo, I am with you; Psalm 23:4 - Though you walk through the shadow of death, you will fear no evil for I am with you; Psalm 91 – He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under His shadow, etc. Some may ask, why is it that the same voice of comfort produces such different interpretations? This is because we all hear the same voice of comfort in our spirits but our souls and minds translate it into something which we can understand. Understanding this principle of Spirit to spirit communication is important, for it is the key to developing our relationship with God:
 - a. We all do not perceive in exactly the same way. No one thinks exactly the same way. We all are unique and although we understand and acknowledge that there is Absolute Truth and Reality outside of ourselves, and the principles of those Truths, we all perceive it in our own unique way. Two plus two equals four but a baker will see it as two buns times two makes four buns, an animal lover may see it as two cats plus two cats make four cats, and astronomer may see it as two stars plus two stars makes four, a mathematician might see it as two plus two using a base of ten makes four, etc. We all add our perception to what is being perceived.

- b. We are limited by our ability to stretch our perception. Humans normally never hear sound vibrations higher than 20,000 vibrations a second but dogs can. Our inner ear does not have the ability to perceive it. Perception and understanding are always a construct from the blocks of knowledge that we already have to build new knowledge. For example, try explaining what snow is to someone who has never seen snow. You would have to use things within the person's life and knowledge to construct new knowledge. You might use coconut meat to illustrate the colour of snow. You might use cold water to illustrate the coldness of snow. You might use sand to illustrate the brittleness of snow, etc. But until you are either able to bring the actual snow itself to the person or a picture of it, there are some limits to what you can communicate. If you had a block of ice, you could chip the block of ice into tiny bits and then fluff it out 'like snow' to convey to the person what snow is like. Yet there are things that the person can only imagine but not experience, for example, the picture of snow covered trees twinkling in the moonlight with snow capped mountains behind them, the joys of building a snowman or making angel shapes in the snow, the beauty of white fluffy snowflakes falling from the sky, etc.

When God speaks to us, our spirits hear Him but we are always limited by the extent of the blocks of knowledge within us to construct the gist or sum of what He is trying to say. That is why the more we grow, the more we can grow; and the more we experience, the more we can experience. Ask, seek and knock, and it will open the door for more of God (Matthew 7:7). That is why we need to read the Bible, for it contains the recorded experiences of other people whom God has met and spoken with; and as you understand how and why God spoke to them, you will understand how and why God speaks to us.

- c. Our soul limits how much we can know of God by limiting our ability to translate the receptions in our spirit to our conscious mind and understanding. For this reason, we need to renew the soul and the mind through the Word of God (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 1:22). Our soul consists of our mind, our emotions and our will. There are some things which the mind cannot grasp but the emotions can; there are some things which the emotions cannot grasp but the mind can; and there are some things which are completely beyond the emotions and the mind but if we follow our will in the right path, our emotions and our minds with

exposure and time will rise to the occasion and be able to feel and know (with training and growth). We learn to count before we learn to multiply and we learn to multiply before we do calculus. We learn to make friends and we learn what friendship love is, we learn to love our families and we learn what family love is; we experienced companionship, joy, sorrow, laughter and tears through life – and finally gain the capacity to enlarge ourselves in our ability to love and to care for others.

Remember that in every situation you are in, the grace of God has already provided you an answer and a path through (1 Corinthians 10:13). Remember that every situation is an opportunity to learn and grow (Romans 8:28). Remember that there are some areas in life where you have full freedom of choice and some areas where the choice has already been made for you by predecessors or by circumstances but God is always there to show you the right path if your heart is right (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

Understand and learn to interpret every perception in your spirit man, every impression in your heart, every shade of your dream life, every tug of your emotion, every flicker of thought; for within them is contained the translation of the Spiritual voice of God arising in your soul consciousness. Be led by the Spirit and you shall indeed be sons and daughters of God (Romans 8:14). A miss is as good as a mile, so don't miss what God is saying to you today and every day.

In Christ's love

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.05

The Love of God is the NT Shekinah glory

Dearly Beloved

Over the past week, I have been meditating on the Old Testament Scriptures on the glory of God and seeing how they are fulfilled in the New Testament. There are some similarities between the promises of God's glory manifesting in the OT and the promises of God's manifestation in the gospels as outlined below:

Exodus 40:34-38 The manifestation of the glory of God in the Tabernacle. The phrase "Thus Moses did, according to all that the Lord commanded him" repeated in Ex. 40:16, 19, 23, 25, 29, 32.

Leviticus 9:23-24 The manifestation of glory to Aaron the high priest. Aaron was told to complete all the various sacrifices: sin offering, burnt offering, peace offering and grain offering (Lev. 9:2-4).

2 Chronicles 5:14 The manifestation of glory at the dedication of the Temple. The priests and leaders had sanctified themselves and they had completed all the sacrifices, and having placed the ark in the most holy place – musicians and singers were as one – that the glory of the Lord appeared (2 Chronicles 5:1-13).

Jesus in the gospel of John promised the following:

John 14:21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.

John 14:23 If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word: and My Father will love him and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

We need to understand that in the context of John 14, Jesus was especially talking about His commandment to love one another (John 13:34-35) which He repeats in John 15:9-17. He leaves us no doubt that He was asking us to love as He loved. He describes the glory of God in His prayer in John 17 as being related to oneness with God and His love (John 17:20-26).

It might sound cliché in the New Testament, having spoken so much about the love that God has for us through Christ and the love that Christ has for us in atoning for us at Calvary, but the revelation of the love of God and Christ is the most profound revelation that we have in the New Covenant. The Shekinah glory which was so mysterious in the Old Covenant is unveiled in the New Covenant as the great love that God has for us. The Shekinah glory is the substance and energy of God's love.

Think about it. In the Old Covenant, the Shekinah glory was manifested above the mercy seat between the wings of the cherubim (Exodus 25:22). The place of meeting and manifestation was above the 'mercy seat' a place of mercy, kindness, compassion and love. When Moses asked to see the glory of God, God revealed His goodness, graciousness, mercy, kindness and compassion (Exodus 33:17-19; 34:6) – all elements of His agape love. All the sacrifices and shadow types of the Old Testament were fulfilled in Christ who gave Himself in love for us. The musicians in 2 Chronicles 5 were singing of His goodness and mercy – attributes of His agape love. Solomon in his prayer of dedication of the temple, extols the mercy and grace of God (2 Chronicles 6:14-42) and was answered with fire from God (2 Chronicles 7:1-3).

In the New Covenant, we tend to take the love of God for granted and don't realise what a privilege it is to live in this dispensation of grace and love. The inner veil between the most holy place and the holy place has been torn and God through Christ is now able to reveal more of Himself to us. The love of God poured into our hearts when we accepted Christ was only just the beginning – definitely not the ending – of what God has intended for us to experience of His glory. All the passages where it speaks of God indwelling us His New Covenant people always speak of the love of God:
Ephesians 1:17-23 We are yet to know the fullness of all that God has worked for us in Christ.
Ephesians 2:4, 13, 20-22 We are all still growing in Christ's love and redemption to be a holy temple in the Lord.
Ephesians 3:16-21 We have yet to know the fullness of the width, length, depth and height of the love of Christ.

The epistle of 1 John is filled with the revelation of the love of God in Christ and how our union with Christ and God is found in this union of the love of God:

1 John 2:5 The Word of God, the love of God and union with Him are all integral and related.

1 John 3:22-23 Keeping His commandment of love is integral to successful prayer.

1 John 4:12-16 Union with the Love of God is union with God.
1 John 5:1-3 The Love of God and the keeping of the commandments of God are all inter-related and cannot be separated one from another.

How does this revelation help us? Many Christians often meditate and ponder upon the glory cloud and the majesty of God's shekinah presence. All this is well and good. The key that is being revealed here is that one should meditate on the love of God for this is the essence and substance of all of the Shekinah glory of God. The apostle John even asks us to BEHOLD what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us (1 John 3:1). There are three levels of BEHOLDING that we need to do every day as we meditate on God's love for us.

The first level of BEHOLDING is found in the Greek word '*eido*' (also translated 'know') which is translated 'see' and is used in the following Scriptures in 1 John (*eideo, eido, oida, ideo, ido, oida*):

- 1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love...
- 1 John 2:20 Ye know all things...
- 1 John 3:2 We know...
- 1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death...
- 1 John 5:13 that ye may know that ye have eternal life...

Although this 'knowing' includes 'mind knowing' it also includes a 'spiritual knowing' that we need to grow and develop in (Ephesians 1:18 that you might know the hope of your calling...)

The second level of BEHOLDING or LOOKING is found in Hebrews 12:2 where we look to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith. The root word for 'looking' is the Greek word '*aphorao*' which is a combination of two Greek words '*apo*' meaning 'away from' and '*horao*' which is to 'visualise' (the noun form of '*horao*' is '*horama*' which is translated as 'visions' in the Greek – Matthew 17:9; Acts 9:10, 12; 10:3, 17, 19; 11:5; 16:9, 10; 18:9). This means that we must 'look away' from the natural vision of things and 'look at the love of God in Christ' the personification of God's love for us – and have new fresh spiritual images and visions of how things in our life, work, ministry should be through the eyes of God's love for us (through the faith eyes of God).

The third level of BEHOLDING is found in 2 Corinthians 3:18, where we with unveiled face behold as in a mirror the glory of God and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory. The Greek word here is '*katoptrizomai*' which is derived from the root word '*katoptron*' which means mirror. In this place the word 'mirror' has been used as a verb. In a

sense, it is us, with unveiled face, 'mirroring' the glory of God. This would be a passive sense of allowing the image and glory of God to be written into the canvas of our spirit and soul. We become truly the receptacles of His glory which is refracted through us to the world. The context of 'unveiled faces' in 2 Corinthians 3 speaks of the veil of the heart. Our heart needs to be open and pliable to the Lord. The realm of the imagination (Hebrew word for imagination - *yetzer*) and intents is in our hearts (Hebrews 4:12). When God renews our imagination (our *yetzer*) it is a powerful realm (Gen. 6:5; 1 Chronicles 28:9; 29:18; Hebrews 4:12).

How far has the love of God reached within us? Allow the river of God's love to fill not just our conscious understanding but all of our sub-conscious mind and spirit consciousness. Those who succeed in allowing the love of God to so fill them will experience the Shekinah glory of God in their lives; for we are the temples of the Holy Spirit.

In Christ's love

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.06

The Rod of Moses

Dearly Beloved

The Rod of Moses (later it also became the rod of Aaron as Aaron became Moses spokesman – Exodus 4:16-17) represents the Anointing that God had placed in Moses' life. Moses had this rod even before he received the anointing upon his life (Exodus 4:2).

What is that in your hand? (Exodus 4:2)

Moses had been using this rod all through his wilderness years and it had served him well in his natural life as a herdsman. The rod was symbolic of all his years of toil and waiting upon God. When it was all surrendered to God, He used it to be the showpiece of His anointing upon Moses (Aaron)'s life throughout the deliverance of the Israelites into the promised land. No matter what wilderness each one of us has been through, the years of waiting on God are not wasted. Moses, a man mighty in word and deeds, was reduced to a man who claimed inability in word and in deeds (Acts 7:22; Exodus 3:11; 4:10). During the first forty years of his life, Moses was a man learned in all the wisdom of Egypt and a man mighty in word and in deeds (Acts 7:22). All his natural wisdom and training could not help him fulfil the call that God had upon his life. In fact it led Moses to over confidence in his own ability to fulfil what he perceived to be God's divine appointment of him as the deliverer of Israel (Acts 7:25). He thought that by killing the Egyptian, the Israelites would have understood that it was by his hand that God would deliver them. No human wisdom, method or invention can replace the anointing of God.

During the time of David, when they were bringing the ark of God into Jerusalem, they made a new cart to carry the ark but when the oxen stumbled, Uzzah tried to steady the ark and was killed for touching the ark (2 Samuel 6:3-6). Good intentions did not protect the people, neither David nor Uzzah. Obedience is better than sacrifice. It is better to listen to God and do things His way than to do things our way and ask God to bless – no matter how good the intentions. David was angry at God for what happened (because his intentions were right) but human anger does not bother God – for He is bigger than us. It took time for David to realize that he had to bend to God and not God bend to his wishes and desires. Cain was upset that God did not accept his sacrifices but God told him that if he did well, he would have been accepted (Genesis 4:7). When things are not working out, don't blame God or people or be angry; instead examine not just your heart but

whether all your methods and actions are also in line with the Word (of course, the heart must also be well-intentioned and in line with the Word).

Sometimes like Moses, people need to go to the wilderness to have all the self and dross removed from their lives (although it need not be forty years of wilderness like Moses). Remember that it is always we who need to change and not God. Moses had to learn that it is not by might nor by power but by the power of the Holy Spirit that God intends to do His work. Even in the New Testament, Jesus in no uncertain terms commanded the disciples not to leave until they be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49). The rod of Moses in the wilderness represents all of Moses' fears, failures, tears that needed to be removed out of his life (he ran out of Egypt in fear of his life). It represents the death of fulfilling the vision and dream God gave him in his own strength and the burning bush represents the resurrection of the vision and dream God gave him in God's strength.

And you shall take this rod in your hands with which you shall do the signs. (Exodus 4:17)

After the burning bush experience, Moses received the commission, the anointing and the methodology. It is not always true that the anointing needs to be married to a system of methodology but God in sending forth various of His messengers sometimes gave special methodologies to each to manifest His presence and power. In Moses' case the rod (a methodology) was tied to the anointing.

1. Every man or woman of God must discover their own special anointing in God
2. Every man or woman of God must discover the limits of God's anointing in their lives
3. Every man or woman of God must discover the peculiarities and methodologies of the anointing in their lives.
4. Every man or woman of God must develop confidence in the methodology and the anointing that is specific to their lives.

Moses discovered the special anointing that God had for him. He realized that it was limited to the rod that had now been anointed by God as a special instrument of his. He must release the rod and exercise its methodology to release the faith in the anointing that God had for him. He slowly grew to become more confident in the anointing that God had given to him. When Moses and the Israelites were surrounded by mountains on one side, the Egyptians on another side and the sea in front of them, he cried out to the Lord (Exodus 14:15-16). The Lord sort of rebuked Moses for not using the anointing which He had already given to him.

1. If you do not flow in the level of gifting or anointing that God has already given you, you won't lose them since the calls and gifts of God are without repentance but you will become ineffective no matter how much you cry at your personal Red Sea, mountain or hosts of Egyptians.
2. If you do not honour what God has honoured you with (His Anointing and gifting), you will not see any forward movement in your spiritual life and ministry.
3. The more you use the anointing God has already given, the more God can give you.
4. If you are faithful to what you already have from God, you will be in the position to ask and receive more from God.

Moses asked to see God's glory and God was delighted to show as much as Moses could take (Exodus 33:18-23). When you desire to go deeper into God out of your love for Him, God will always go the extra step (still based on principles that are available to all) even to raising Moses from the dead ahead of every other Old Testament saint (Jude 9; Matthew 17:3).

Take account of what gifts or anointing God has already given to you; then check if you have been faithful to them. Your self-answer to this question is important to the rest of your spiritual walk and progress in operating the Anointing of God.

Love in Christ

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.07

The Mantle of Elijah

Dearly Beloved

We continue on the theme of the anointing of God this week.

Then Elijah passed by him and threw the mantle over him (1 Kings 19:19).

The mantle of Elijah represented his prophetic office and the anointing that came with it. Elijah was told by God to anoint Elisha as a prophet in his place (1 Kings 19:16). It is God and not man who calls and appoints. God was the one who predestined that it be Elisha who was to take the place of Elijah. At that time there were probably hundreds of other prophetic candidates from the school of prophets (1 Samuel 10:5; 2 Kings 2:15). Every one called of God to the ministry will have their own special place in the kingdom of God but it is not man's decision as to who is the successor or inheritor of a particular ministerial anointing. It was neither Elijah nor Elisha who chose the succession plan but God who so declared it to Elijah.

When Saul disobeyed God and was rejected by God, it was God who chose David and neither Samuel nor anyone else had any part in the decision. We must all reckon with the predestination of God. Even Paul acknowledged his special call and consecration from his mother's womb (Galatians 1:15). Jeremiah acknowledged his call to the ministry even before he was formed in his mother's womb (Jeremiah 1:5). God had prepared the specific works that each of us are to walk in before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4; 2:10). No amount of human effort or human organizational endeavour can give and impart what only God can give.

If predestination is so powerful, then what of free choice? It is within the realm of free choice to accept the call God has given, to grow into the call that God has given and to increase in the anointing within the limits of God's calling. Can one reject and choose not to accept a designated position and call? Yes. Judas did not flow and function in the designated call and position that God had given to him and another had to take his place (Acts 1:17-20). When someone takes the place of another (like Matthias of Judas), would the same anointing be available? Yes. God's Plan B is as powerful as His Plan A. What would have happened if Judas had been faithful? Well, Jesus would still have been crucified by others' betrayal and we would have a slightly different story to contend with. Remember that God has multiple parallel plans to anticipate every human choice. However, the point that we want to make here is that the office and anointing of God and its successive

impartation and continuity is determined not by men but by God – whether it be Plan A, Plan B or Plan F.

Free choice can only determine the reception and expansion of a particular call and anointing but not its recipient. In some incidences, it is because the original carrier of the anointing is incapable or requests a sharing of the task at hand. Moses complained that the call which he had was too great and he could not do it alone (Numbers 11:11-17). Immediately, God asked him to select 70 other people to share his call and anointing. God did not send an extra measure of anointing but took from Moses a portion of the anointing that was upon him and distributed it to the seventy (Numbers 11:25). This is an important lesson to learn – God has already given sufficient anointing and grace to face everything in this world related to each call; we need to discover the strength and grace that God has already placed within (2 Corinthians 12:9). If we complain or are unwilling to obey, we might not lose our call (if we are still obedient to a certain extent) but we might lose some of the anointing to another who is more faithful to fulfil the given task. We cannot control the call or the office but we can control the degree and level of anointing by our obedience or disobedience. The Word of the Lord going forth is that we must be obedient to what we already are called and are anointed to do. God is patient but if we show Him from our heart and our inner thoughts that we truly do not want to bear the call (burden) or anointing that He has given us, He loves us so much that He will not force us but willingly take it from us and give it to another. The key question to ask is ‘What has God called and anointed us to be and to do?’ The second question is ‘Are we willing and obedient to do it?’ God will always work at the level in which we are willing to work at.

Saul persistently dilly dallied when it came to doing the things that God wanted him to do. He was reluctant to accept the anointing that God wanted him to have – hiding among the equipment on the day of proclamation (1 Samuel 10:21). He went beyond the limits of his anointing and call and tried to offer a burnt offering (priest’s call and not king’s authority) – he overstepped the boundaries of his call and anointing (1 Samuel 13:8-14). He rashly carried out his duties as a king doing and commanding things in the flesh and not in the Spirit (1 Samuel 14:24-33). A leader who rules by the flesh and not by the anointing troubles God’s people and puts an unnecessary yoke and burden upon them. He disobeyed the command to destroy the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:1-9). In the end, God totally rejected Saul; or rather he cut himself off from the blessings and anointing of God by his own disobedience.

The mantles and anointings of God predestined for us may be always there by the sovereignty and love of God for us. But we must accept His gift of

love and anointing for us wholeheartedly to be positioned to function at the optimum level. When God throws His anointing and mantle upon you, accept it wholeheartedly in love and respond with respect and honour toward God.

And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan (2 Kings 2:12-13).

The symbolic tearing of his own clothes is the removal of the old mantle and the reception of the new anointing that he had desired for the past ten years serving under Elijah. There is always a time and place when the old is done away and the entrance into a new phase. Many people cannot enter the new even though they have already received the mantle of Elijah because they are still stuck to the old ways and not willing to move on into the new anointing and new phase. Jesus knew exactly when to give up his life as a carpenter and enter the ministry fulltime (Mark 1:9). He knew that on the day when He left the little town of Nazareth, He would not be returning to go back to His old profession as a carpenter. One fine day in Antioch, the Holy Spirit called Paul and Barnabas to a missionary journey from which their lives would never be the same (Acts 13:1-2).

When Paul was in Lystra, he saw a young man named Timothy whom he knew had more potential if he could bring him along on his missionary journeys (Acts 16:1-5). Subsequently, Timothy grew from being a pastor into an apostolic ministry (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:6). He also received an impartation of gifts through the laying on of hands (2 Timothy 1:6). A lack of willingness to let go the old and move on into the new phase is what sometimes hinders many men and women of God. Elisha symbolically burned his bridges when he took on Elijah's mantle by the tearing of his clothes. There would be no going back if he was to go forward and operate in the new anointing that God had given to him.

The wearing of Elijah's mantle in place of his own clothes was symbolic of him accepting the new phase and changes that God had now commissioned him to do. When he was first called, it was Elijah who threw the mantle at him. Now he had taken that same mantle of Elijah and counted it as his own. The fact that he called out to the God of Elijah is symbolic of the utter and complete acceptance of his destiny and call.

He had seen Elijah taken, as was promised of the double anointing; it was the answer to the desire for more anointing that he had especially expressed in his last conversations with Elijah. It was now his destiny to work out the new level of anointing upon his life. Why did Elijah say that it was a 'hard

thing' to have the double portion? (2 Kings 2:10). It was conditional upon the spirituality of Elisha – his spiritual perception – if you see. The anointing is a spiritual impartation and can only be received spiritually. It is spiritually discerned.

Seeing is always tied to reception in the spiritual realm. That is why the prayer of Paul for the Ephesians was that the eyes of their understanding be enlightened (Ephesians 1:17-18). Elijah developed an ability to see in the Spirit that stayed with him throughout his life. When his servant was in panic as they were surrounded by physical Syrian armies, Elijah had to pray for him to have his spiritual eyes opened (2 Kings 6:17). Jesus was able to operate in the works of God through His ability to see what the Father does and He would do likewise (John 5:19).

There are various levels of seeing in the Bible: seeing physically or perceive (*blepo*), an inner knowing perception/understanding (*eido*), a spiritual vision (*horao*). All the three Greek words have been used to refer to physical seeing, too, but in a sense they would convey the following:

Seeing the unseen with the eyes – *blepo* – 2 Corinthians 4:18

Seeing with the eyes of the mind – *eido* – 1 Corinthians 2:9

Seeing/visualisation with the heart – *horao* – Matthew 5:8

No one who has seen the Lord or seen the things of the Spirit can come out of the experience remaining the same. When the physical, soul (mind) and the spiritual eyes are all opened to the spiritual realm it is an open vision. When only the soul and the spiritual eyes are opened it is a closed vision (no awareness of the physical). When only the spiritual eyes are opened to the realm of the Spirit, it is an inner vision.

The most important are the inner eyes of the spirit man. They can be trained to discern the things of the Spirit all the time. Part of the key to releasing this is through meditation on the things of God.

We need to the meditations of our heart to keep our spiritual eyes turned continually to the Lord (Psalms 19:14; 49:3).

Imagine the fullness of the spiritual possibilities if we could spiritually see as Jesus sees. May the Lord constantly strengthen each of you from within your hearts.

In Christ's love

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.08

The Anointing of Elisha

Dearly Beloved

Of all the men of God in the Old Testament, Elisha demonstrated a measure of the anointing which was unlike any other man or woman of God. The most famous case being how when he was dead, the residue anointing was so powerful that it could raise a dead man from the dead (2 Kings 13:20-21). It was not possible for Elisha or the dead man to exercise faith for both had physically died. It was purely through the presence of God.

1. Elisha was one of the first to link the manifestation of the anointing of God to the instrument of music (2 Kings 3:15) There was a link between the prophetic anointing and the playing of music in the time of Samuel (1 Samuel 10:5). In David's time this link between music and prophecy was firmly established (1 Chronicles 25:1-3). Elisha specifically asked for a musician when the king of Judah needed a miracle. He not only prophesied through music but released a powerful miracle through the anointing, which was quickened through music.
2. He invoked the anointing to resurrect the Shunammite woman's son in an unusual manner (2 Kings 4:32-37). It would seem that Elisha was seeking to impart the anointing that was upon his life into the dead body of the boy. This faith and confidence that Elisha had of the anointing upon his life and physical body was what probably brought resurrection when his dead bones resurrected another dead man (2 Kings 13:20-21).
3. Besides multiplying oil and food, Elisha removed poison from food and caused iron to float – a shadow of Jesus walking on water (2 Kings 4:1-7, 38-44; 6:1-7). Some of these anointings became signs for the believers in the New Testament (Mark 16:17-18). The floating axe head was a spiritual law superseding the natural law of gravity (it is unlikely that the axe floated because the wood thrown caught the axe head and united with it to cause it to float which some scholars have tried to explain away a significant miracle). When Jesus walked on water the same anointing was demonstrated

(Matthew 14:22-33). Some try to explain away the walking of Jesus on water as Him being the Son of God but that would not have explained Peter's walking on water through faith. Elisha and Jesus demonstrated that faith in the anointing of God can supersede all natural laws of physics.

4. The anointing of Elisha was sufficient to withstand the entire army of Syria (2 Kings 6:8-23; 7:1-20). Although Joshua in Moses time demonstrated the power of the anointing of God to defeat the enemies of Israel through fighting (Exodus 17; Joshua 5:13-15), it was Elisha who demonstrated victory purely through the anointing of God without a hand raised to use a physical sword.

There is much that we can learn from the anointing of Elisha. He knew his call even from the beginning but it took time to develop into the powerful man of God that he became. We can trace the following steps that he took, which in principle would still apply today should we want to receive an anointing of God upon our lives:

1. He was called to a particular ministry and office (1 Kings 19:19-21). Ministry office, ministry gifts and callings are predestined before the foundation of the world. No one chooses their office, God chose for us. We only respond to the call that God has revealed. We can take comfort in the fact that the spiritual desires that God has placed within each of us are many times an indication of the call of God as long as our heart is pure before Him. It is many times not just a question of 'what' but a question of 'when.' It also takes a surrenderdness to be willing to accept whatever God has predestined us to be. It is at this first stage that one has to die to self and be willing to be whatever God wants us to be. Unfortunately, it is also possible to be called to a particular office and yet be unwilling or reluctant to fulfil it because of one's perception. God will not force anyone to be what they do not want to be but a truly surrendered heart would be willing to be all that God wants us to be.
2. Elisha served approximately ten years under Elijah purely serving him in menial tasks like pouring water over his hands (2 Kings 3:11). There were many other prophets and sons of prophets in those days which were the results of the prophetic schools of Samuel but only Elisha was especially chosen by Elijah to follow him with a

future of being his replacement. Elisha did not demonstrate a single miracle or power gift while serving under Elijah. As long as Elijah was around, there could not be two of them functioning in the main prophetic office over all the other sons of prophets. Elisha had to be humble and faithful to be purely a disciple and servant to Elijah for about ten years. There has to be the death of a vision before there is the establishment of a vision. Far too many young people are in a hurry to get the anointing of God without a period of solid discipleship and servant hood which would have built greater character and humility for the work that God has called them to. Thus many move in the anointing but with many impurities and mixture – part flesh and part Spirit; part showmanship and part humility.

Character is everything in the Spiritual World. Without character the fruit produced is impure and rotten. Everyone produces after their own kind in the law of the Spirit. Bible schools and seminaries provide knowledge but not necessarily produce character in the graduates. Only tribulation produces character (Romans 5:1-5). The great lack of love and compassion for the lost and the sick in many ministers today is a great sadness to God our Father. Only when we truly love like Jesus loved will we be able to do the works that Jesus did. In Paul's time some served God out of wrong motives (Philippians 1:15). We should serve God only out of pure love (Philippians 1:17; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18; 5:14). Every minister will have to go through a period of purification to build character. Those who avoid this difficult part only compromise the future quality of their anointing.

3. Elisha greatly desired and sought after the anointing and the gifts of God (2 Kings 2:1-10). There must be a deep and great desire for the anointing and the gifts of God (1 Corinthians 14:1). The apostle Paul was willing to pay any price to reach those who needed the gospel (2 Corinthians 11:22-33). Paul reminded Timothy of the tears he shed for the things of God and the ministry of God (2 Timothy 1:1-7). Without deep tears and affection for the things of God and the ministry of God, the deep inner core of our lives have yet to be harnessed and brought in line with the Spirit of God. Desire precedes

faith (Mark 11:23-24). It is what drives us to pursue and establish by faith. The great desires of leaders are what distinguish them from the ordinary. While others set mediocre life goals, leaders set for themselves goals which include others of their generation. Elisha's desire for the double portion was tested and tried both by Elijah and others around him. Even though it was acknowledged as a difficult and hard thing, he was never discouraged by the hurdles set before him. In the end, his desires prevailed and drove him through every place that Elijah told him to stay behind. The mark of a true leader is persistence and patience against all odds. One should be steadfast like Elisha especially if one's goals are spiritual and truly going to be blessings for all those around.

4. Elisha learned to operate the new anointing upon his life and became a master at flowing in the anointing that God had given him (2 Kings 2:14). He moved beyond the mantle of Elijah and used the staff and other things to demonstrate the anointing of God upon his life (2 Kings 4:29, 41; 6:6). He was not bonded to the methodology of the mantle of Elijah. It takes a new level of skill and faith to change the methodology of the previous generation; one which Elisha succeeded powerfully. New wine needs new wine skins. The old wine skins of the previous generation can never be good enough or strong enough for the new wine of the next generation. Boldness is required to move beyond the methodologies and the structures of the older generation. Sadly, no one had the zeal or the tenacity to follow after Elisha and preserve the flow of demonstrative anointing. Gehazi his servant was too side-tracked by the things of the world to pursue the spiritual anointing that would have been his spiritual inheritance as a servant of Elisha.

Elijah described the transference of the anointing to Elisha as a hard thing (2 Kings 2:10). Many things of the Spirit are hard because of the requirement to be persistent in faith – more a rest than an effort but a certain degree of persistence is still required. It is not the persistence of doubt but rather the gentle confidence that will not take 'No' for an answer. Elijah did deliberately try to shake Elisha off; he genuinely wanted to leave Elisha and the sons of the prophets behind so that he could go to a quiet spot and be taken up by the Lord. It was Elisha's great thirst and desire that brought him that wonderful opportunity of being asked what he wanted – to which he had the ready answer of wanting the double portion.

It is truly by faith and patience that the promises are inherited (Hebrews 6:12). Indeed blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled (Matthew 5:6) The Throne room is accessible to all yet the book of Hebrews has to exhort us to come boldly to the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). There is still room for initiative and desire in the kingdom of grace. We also receive in accordance to our hunger and thirst. While many seek natural things let us seek spiritual things and eternal things; knowing that the spiritual things will bring forth natural blessings as a side effect (Matthew 6:33). The next move of God should begin in your hearts and desires right now.

In Christ's abundant love,

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.09

Knowing God's Love for Others

Dearly Beloved

I am on a weekend ministry trip and so I am sending this Talk early.

It is wonderful to know that God the Father loves us and to rejoice and bask in His love for us as individuals. Once this understanding and knowing of how much the Father loves us unconditionally is established, we need to progress to the next spiritual level: experiencing and knowing the Father's love for others around us. Just merely knowing how much God loves us as individuals and rejoicing in that love can produce a type of self-centredness in some who have not balanced the understanding of the purpose for the creation of all life – that we might experience God's love and in turn be an instrument of that same love to others.

1. There is such a thing and concept of being spiritually selfish and self-centred. In the Spiritual World there are those who have sought to just progress spiritually for themselves without concern for others (not knowing and understanding that spiritual progress in the Spiritual World is measured by helping another and not just helping oneself). There are places in the Intermediate realm filled with hermits and mystics who had no concern for the world but only for themselves. They rejected the world and all of society for the sake of a 'selfless' pursuit for the betterment of themselves. From the human point of view, it seems noble and convicting to those who still are involved in the affairs of the world and its responsibilities. Sadly, these people who died and entered the spiritual realm have developed zero skills in loving and caring for others. They were unprepared for the truth of the need to give themselves to others like Christ gave Himself and thus end up in the Intermediate realm until they learn the this concept. In the Spiritual World, it is those who are balanced in the pursuit of spiritual life in God and in the love and care for others who progress easily to higher planes in God.
2. Of course, the true revelation of God's unconditional love for us would produce in us a desire to be like Him and thus love others the way He does. John 3:16 must lead to 1 John 3:16. The fact that John uses the word 'ought' means that there are those who stop at

knowing God loves them and do not press on in knowing God's love for others. He reminds Christians that we 'ought' to love one another (1 John 4:11). The word 'ought' does not come from the normal word 'should or must' (Greek 'dei') which conveys a sense of law-based duty but it comes from the root word 'opheilo' which conveys the sense of a 'debt' or 'need.' (Matthew 18:28-34; 1 John 2:6; 3:16; 4:11). Paul uses it to convey the debt of love we 'owe' others (having been loved by God) (Romans 13:8). Paul speaks about being constrained (Greek 'sunecho') by the love of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14). The root word 'sunecho' speaks of being 'taken by a greater power' (used of people being taken by sicknesses or fear – Matthew 4:24; Luke 4:38; 8:37; throng – Luke 8:45). It speaks of being pressed as Paul sensed the spiritual stirring and pressure in his spirit caused not by his own self but by the Holy Spirit (Acts 18:5). It is the increase of the love of God within a person such that it causes an overflowing and an overabundance within oneself (a sort of internal but delightful compassionate love pressure) that it just causes one to want to love others (God in us loving others through us).

3. The outflowing of God's love through us to others is the affection (Greek '*splagchna*') of Christ (Philippians 1:8). '*Splagchna*' has been translated as 'compassion.' Jesus was moved with compassion for the great crowds and He healed them (Matthew 14:14). He cared for them when He saw them weary and scattered like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). He noticed things and needs in the crowds that people did not pay attention to. He cared that the multitudes did not have a chance to eat for three days (Matthew 15:32). He would not send them away hungry lest they faint along the way. If we are truly loved of God, we will love others the way Jesus loved them. We need to sense the love of God for others. Jesus is always the good shepherd and He loves and cares for the sheep. A hireling is only interested in what he can get out of taking care of the sheep but a true shepherd loves and cares for the sheep and is willing to lay down his life for the sheep (John 10:10-14). To be truly like Jesus we need to love like Jesus loved. The fullness of grace can only come when we are overflowing with love towards others. It is the completion of the understanding of grace when we become loving like God. The eventual outflow of this love will result in us

doing the works of Jesus (John 14:12). All the works of Jesus flowed out from His love to others. All the works that we will do through Him will flow out of love for others.

4. The ultimate sacrifice of love is to sacrifice one's life for another (Romans 5:7-8). The reason the apostle Paul was effective in bringing the good news of the love of Jesus to all of known Asia Minor was because of the great love he had for everyone (2 Corinthians 5:14). Paul was willing to die that others might live (2 Corinthians 4:7-15). He had no other agenda except the agenda of love. His desire to share the gospel throughout the world was born out of a deep abiding love he received from God. In all honesty, most people would be willing to die to save their loved ones but not willing to die to save people they do not know. It is only when the love of God captures our heart that we find the ability to lay down our lives for others that they may know Christ through us. There is the concept of sharing in the afflictions of Christ – sharing in the privilege of laying down our lives (denying ourselves and every worldly comfort in order to bring the love of God to others) (Colossians 1:24). For the sake of bringing the love of Christ to his generation, Paul was willing to face imprisonment, death, beatings, stoning, and all manner of suffering to bring the love of God to others (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). We all need to ask ourselves from time to time, 'How much has the love of Christ changed us?' How much more has the love of God flowed through our lives to others?' Are we willing, through the love of God, to lay our lives down, even unto death, that others would come to know Christ? Only those who are prepared to die for Christ are those who can live for Him powerfully.
5. The ability to sense God's love is a beautiful gift from Him. The ability to sense His great love for us is more precious than diamonds. The ability to sense His love for others is even greater and it completes the work and cycle of the flow of His love. Never be satisfied by just the knowledge of God's love for us. Expand that same perception and sensory experience into the experience of sensing God's love for everyone. This is what Paul prayed for when he prayed that we might comprehend with ALL the saints what is the

width and length and depth and height to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge (Ephesians 3:18-19). The beholding of God's love is a beholding of the manner in which God has loved US (not just me) (1 John 3:1). It is a powerful life changing experience to know how much God loves us – that is salvation. It is an even more powerful life transforming thing to experience and know how much God loves others – that is ministry.

The practical result of this experience of knowing God's love for others is a billion times more powerful than just knowing God's love for us (which in itself is powerful). When I stand to minister to others from the pulpit or one to one – there is sometimes a sensation of the flow of God's compassion and love that passes understanding. It is an even more powerful experience than salvation and knowing God's love for oneself. It is like feeling the life-force of the entire Universe (for God is Love) flowing out through you to the listeners or the particular object of ministry. It is feeling like what God feels. Whenever I see those who do not know how much God loves them, I feel for them and do pray that they come to know His great abundant love. When I see those who already know that God loves them, I pray that they would not stop there but press on into the deeper and wider and higher dimensions of experiencing God's love for others as well. There is nothing more powerful than to experience what God is pouring out to everyone – For God SO LOVED the world that He gave His only begotten Son. It is the most powerful experience of God to experience that “GOD SO LOVED” moment.

May each of you experience His wonderful love for yourselves and for others around your circle of influence.

In the love of Christ Jesus,

Pt Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.10

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God

Dearly Beloved

Christianity is not just a set of rules, regulations, creeds and theology. It includes all these things but the most marvellous revelation is that it is a direct relationship with God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. The whole concept of eternal life is the privilege of knowing God (John 17:3). Whatever our Christian life on earth, whatever our ministry life on earth and whatever our earthly positions or status – the greatest achievement we could aspire to while on earth is to know God. This is the purpose why we are born and the very essence of our creation and existence. This short life on earth was designed that through all of the circumstances and experiences we gather in our lives, we might come to know God and love God; and of course, love our neighbour as ourselves. We can know about everything on earth but if we miss learning to know God, we have missed everything.

Knowing God involves opening all our beings to Him and the first place to start is always in our hearts. God is Spirit and only through our spirits can we know God. God is love and only when we walk in love can we understand Him. God is light and only when we are in the light can we see Him. Many people have expressed to me their desire to see God and know God. Such was also my desire when I first came to accept Christ and loved Him as my Saviour and Lord. In the early days of my Christian life, I have been told that visions and special encounters with God have always been the sovereign will of God and it is God who chooses whom He shows such manifestations. I have since found out that it is true that the gifts of the Spirit (which through the gift of discerning of spirits enables one to experience such) are according to the sovereign will of God but there are aspects of the human spirit development which enables one to grow spiritually and know God.

Many of these Scriptures include the following:

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8).

Do you believe? You will see greater things than these. Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man (John 1:50-51).

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him (John 14:21).

If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him (John 14:23).

When He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever he hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come (John 16:13).

He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine, and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you (John 16:14, 15).

And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one (John 17:22).

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Corinthians 2:9).

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of God (2 Corinthians 3:18).

For it is God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6).

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened... (Ephesians 1:17, 18).

The promise of Jesus to Nathaniel is interesting in that his ease of accepting Jesus and His word of knowledge about him placed him in a spiritual position of potentially being able to see heaven open and angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man (John 1:51). It is this simplicity of faith and sincerity of heart that is important to God bringing a person into deeper and higher realms. The blockage to the spiritual world is more in the mind than in the heart. Nathaniel at first wondered how any good thing could come out of Nazareth but a simple demonstration of Jesus' word of knowledge convinced him of who Jesus was. There was no questioning, no delayed reaction, no mental antagonism; he simply believed.

There are two words that are important in Matthew 5:8; the first is the word 'pure' and second is the word 'see.' There are three Greek words for pure: the word '*agnos*' which means purity from the things of the flesh, the word '*eilikrines*' which speaks of sincerity (true and honest to oneself and others both privately and publicly), and the word '*katharos*' whose root speaks of 'purging and purification.' The word used in Matthew 5:8 is the word '*katharos*' which means that this purity of heart is the result of a process of purification and purging. The same word is used in John 15:1-5, when Jesus speaks about pruning. He told the disciples that they were '*katharos*' (cleansed, pruned) through the word which He had spoken. The process of pruning does not just get rid of filth and dirt, it also gets rid of unnecessary

branches and growth which eats up on the nourishment of a fruit tree or vine – which should be channelled into the fruit of the tree or plant. There is nothing wrong with the branch of a vine, however, when it has borne fruit it needs to be pruned back so that more fruit can grow. In order to see God, we must not only be willing to get rid of sin and impurities (*agnos* and *eilikrines* cleansing) but we must also be willing to get rid of things which are not necessarily sin but are distractions from the truly spiritual. They include worldly thoughts, unnecessary thoughts, anxiety thoughts or any other form of emotions or thoughts which would sap and take away our core desire and energy from the pursuit of God.

Katharos cleansing involves a purging which only the Word of God can accomplish. It needs to enter deep within our spirits and souls, bone and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intents of our heart (Hebrews 4:12). We must welcome the cutting edge of the Word to remove from our lives not only things which are wrong or not in line with the Word but also things which are not expedient, things which have no spiritual value, things which are neutral but which saps energy from spiritual growth in God. This process is not achieved overnight. Jesus took three years with His disciples before He declared that they were clean through the word which He had spoken to them. The words He spoke to them during His three years of training with them changed their world view, their thought patterns, their misconceptions, their doubts and fears. It was obvious from many people who met the disciples of Jesus that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). No one can be with Jesus and come away the same. Imagine spending three years with Jesus and listening to His viewpoints every day and every night (today, we still have this benefit through the Holy Spirit).

From the Spiritual World perspective, what a person believes and the belief system through which the person sees everything, will affect his or her ability to see in the Spiritual World. It will colour (or lack of it) everything they are able to perceive and receive in the Spiritual World even if they die and leave the physical body. For this reason, those who do not know God see only darkness although God's light is shining everywhere in all His creations. And others who are prejudiced see and perceive between the narrow slit by which their spiritual perceptions can operate. For this reason, our belief system must be renewed and thoroughly in line with the written Word of God in order to perceive what is true, right and real in the Spiritual World. To those who are in darkness, the darkness of the devil and demons appear to them like shining light (2 Corinthians 11:14). But it is impossible to deceive the elect and the angels of God because darkness looks like darkness in the light of God's righteousness.

The word 'see' in Matthew 5:8 is from the Greek word '*horao*.' There are 12 Greek words which have been translated as 'see' in the English Bible. The most common words for 'see' in the New Testament are '*blepo*' (emphasis on physical sight), '*eidon*' (emphasis on 'knowing') and '*horao*' (emphasis on 'visualise' from noun 'visions' – *horama*). The eyes of the heart (*horao* – Matthew 5:8) and the eyes of the understanding (*dianoia* – Ephesians 1:18) are two separate and different dimensions that are related. *Dianoia* has been translated as 'heart' in the Old King James version. It is related to '*ennoia*' which is found in Hebrews 4:12. The key to spiritual sight in Ephesians 1:18 is the light that God gives through His Spirit of wisdom and revelation. The key to spiritual sight in Matthew 5:8 would be related to the same Spirit of wisdom and revelation. The apostle Peter speaks of not having seen (*horao*) Jesus and yet loving Him (1 Peter 1:8). The process of '*horao*' starts first in our heart full of love towards God.

When we love Him with all our heart, we will be shown things which eyes have not seen nor ear heard (1 Corinthians 2:9). And the love of God and the light of God are related (1 John 2:10). When we walk in God's love, the light of God abounds in our hearts and in our minds producing a new sight and vision which we cannot normally perceive. Even in the natural, people who love see more in the object of their love than others who don't. Thus Matthew 5:8 is speaking of a heart full of love towards God and others. It is through the heart eyes of love that God begins to reveal Himself to us. The Laodecean church could not see spiritually because they were lukewarm (Revelation 3:15-18). Spiritual blindness comes from a cold heart. The Ephesian church once had first love for Christ (I believe under the ministry of Paul who constantly prayed Ephesians 1:17-18 for them) and were commanded to be restored to their first love (Revelation 2:4).

Thus if anyone wants to develop their '*yetzer*' or ability to visualise in the realm of the Spirit, they need to first fill their hearts with the love of God. It is the only safe environment by which the eyes of the imagination can be extended and exercised in the things of the Spiritual World. The next time you seek to look into the areas of your imagination (eyes of your heart) be filled with the experience of God's love first and see the wonders that it does to the spiritual eyes. The Lord is still sovereign over the gifts of the Spirit which work as the Spirit wills but there is no end to exercising the eyes of your heart in love towards the Lord. Love, joy and peace are the attributes of the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:12). Some of you will experience and see more in the eyes of your heart than you normally would when you bring yourself into that position of love towards God and towards others.

May God cause the eyes of your understanding and the eyes of your heart to be wide open to Him. It is up to God and in the initiative of God as to what He wants to show and will show you. But it is up to us to be able and willing to receive, and to keep our spiritual eyes opened, so that we can perceive and receive all the He has for us.

In Christ's love

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.11

Life viewed from the Spiritual World

Dearly Beloved

What does life on earth seem like to those who have now gone on to heaven in Christ? How short this life is compared to eternity in heaven. While many on earth who have some level of spirituality long to go on to God in heaven, there are those who have gone on to heaven and wished that they had lived their lives differently. Although it only occurs in the early period when they are still adjusting to life in heaven, yet the knowledge and understanding that, had they lived differently, their lives in heaven would have been much, much richer.

After outlining all the great men and women of faith in Hebrews 11, Hebrews 12:1 exhorts us to run the race (this life) being surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. From the Spiritual World perspective, the bland life is not as exciting as the life of faith and adventure in God. Some of those who have advanced greatly and drawn the maximum benefits of their lives on earth have certain similarities which are worth pointing out for those of us who are still yet to finish our work on earth.

1. A life of great passion, purpose and boldness is better than a life of mediocre and 'safe-living.'

Paul had a passion even when young to excel above and beyond those of his contemporaries (Galatians 1:14). At some point in his life, Paul understood that he had a call even from his mother's womb (Galatians 1:15). He obviously misdirected it into the wrong area of religion when he was guilty of being among those who persecuted Christ and the followers of Christ unto death (Acts 7:58; 9:1-5). It is very clear that when the apostle Paul does something, he does not do it half-heartedly. He was a passionate man who put 1000% into everything he believed in. Unfortunately when he got it wrong, he got it wrong in a big way but when he got it right (through Christ) he became one of the foremost apostles. From the Spiritual World perspective, the lives that are interesting to angels and to saints who have gone on before us in the Lord, are lives that are 'colourful.' By colourful, we mean lives that have their peaks and lows, life stories that are filled with valleys and mountains, weaknesses and strengths, difficulties and overcoming, dark nights and bright days, trials and triumphs. And the reason that lives are filled with such is that the owners of such lives are willing to take the risk and adventure of faith. Every step of faith always contains an element of risk. No

venture, no gain. Far too many lives are lived on the 'safe-level' with no boldness or daring to step out in faith on what God's Spirit is challenging to each life. We need more Christians to pray the prayer for boldness, as they prayed in Acts 4:29. We need boldness to believe the Word, speak the Word and act on the Word; especially the specific word that God has spoken into each of our lives.

2. A life willing of self-sacrifice rather than a life of self-preservation. The problem with the man of one talent was that he was not willing to reinvest his only talent and he was filled with fear of loss (Matthew 25:25). Out of his own fear, his perception was that the master 'reaped where he did not sow' and 'gathered where he had not scattered seed' – two impossibilities that are untrue both in the natural and the spiritual world. A seed must die in order to produce more seed (John 12:24) and everything produces after its own kind (Genesis 1:11, 21). One CANNOT reap without sowing. From the Spiritual World perspective, even if a life lived for a purpose and cause such that the overall purpose is not fulfilled but another human achieves what the first does not (because of the way paved by those before the final human completes the purpose), all those who sowed their lives for the same goal and objective receives as much reward as those who come after. Every effort and life produces something in the Spiritual realm even if in the natural world that effort and life does not seem to reap the results in their lifetime. The greatest example for us is the life of Jesus who died on the cross for us that we might live (John 12:24-33).

Although from the earth's perspective, those who sowed their lives for a cause without reaping look like failures, in the Spiritual World their lives are both celebrated and rewarded for the sower and the reaper both are rewarded by God (John 4:36-38). The man with one talent took great care even in using a handkerchief to wrap up the one talent and carefully chose a safe place to hide the one talent so that he would not suffer loss (Luke 19:20). He who desires to save his life will lose it but he who loses his life for the cause of Christ and righteousness shall find it (Luke 9:23-26). There is no gain for those who in this life gain the world but lose themselves. Life does not consist of food, clothing and shelter alone (Matthew 6:25). Those who only succeed at gaining food, clothing and shelter in this life and achieve nothing more than these are failures in the Spiritual World (though they might be heralded as successes by those of this earth). Life is MORE than these things (Matthew 6:25) and we must pursue the invisible treasures where neither moth nor rust can affect and no thief can steal (Matthew 6:19). The best

combination is to pursue the really important things in the Spiritual World and be able to have all of this life's needs met while enjoying the pursuit of the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

3. A life of great experiences – all the fullness of human emotions, all the fullness of the human experience – that are successfully experienced while doing the Will of God on earth.

It is better to have made ten attempts with a total of five mistakes and five successes or even ten attempts with a total of nine mistakes and one success rather than to make zero attempts. The Spiritual World (angels and saints before us) pays very little attention to lives lived without any attempt to accomplish God's Will and mission assigned to everyone who comes to this earth but is especially attentive to those who constantly seek to obey the doing of God's Will on earth. Angels love to encamp around those who do so (Psalms 34:7). They love the joy and atmosphere in participating and aiding those who have risked themselves in the pursuit of God and His Will – constantly delivering them and protecting them. David was a man of great passion, full of tears and full of joy (Psalms 42:3; 126:5; 1 Chronicles 15:27-29; 2 Samuel 12:16; 18:33). Paul was a man of great tears and great joy (Acts 20:19, 31; 2 Corinthians 2:4 Philippians 1:3-4). Being such, he also notes that the same passion and greatness of human emotions is in Timothy (2 Timothy 1:4).

This life is an experience. The same ability that we have to feel sorrow is the same ability to feel joy. The same ability to feel great fear is the same ability to feel great faith. We should not fear the dark side of our emotions nor the dark side of human experience, for in great darkness the light shines brightest. Jesus asked one of His hosts to ascertain 'who loves Him more' – the one forgiven of fifty or the one forgiven of five hundred. And Jesus left him with the answer 'to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little' (Luke 7:47). Our ability to love God and others is DIRECTLY tied to our ability to receive forgiveness from God and our ability to forgive others. No wonder God wants us to forgive others! If we don't we will lose the ability to love which in the Spiritual World is EVERYTHING. This does not mean that one purposefully enter into imperfect situations but rather one should not be afraid of entering into life and interacting with as many people and situations as God brings across our path. By simple mathematics and knowing human nature, the more one expands the circle of interaction there is also the greater potential of more misunderstanding and more wrong interactions which might result in situations where great forgiveness and love is

demanded. But there is only one life! And we should live this life with zest exploring all possibilities and experiences within the framework of seeking to do His Will. Do not be afraid of tears or hurts or misunderstandings. The same opportunity to be tested, tried and tempted is the same opportunity to experience endurance, purification and triumph. There is NO opportunity in the next life to experience some of the opportunities that this life holds for us. Many people, if they had the opportunity to view their lives (and how they had been living it) would change their 'fearfully safe-lives' and start living more boldly for God. The fear of persecution or being viewed wrongly or being ostracized has kept many eaglets from developing their eagles' wings.

4. This short life on earth was undertaken with an eternity of preparation, and will again lead to another eternity of growth. Everyone who comes to earth has been chosen and predestined before the foundation of the earth (Ephesians 1:4). Although it seems like this earth (with 6.5 billion people now) is heavily populated, it is but a drop in an ocean larger in size than the Milky Way galaxy in terms of the true population of the entire Spiritual World. Try to understand that there are zillions upon zillions of spirits who could have been specially chosen to experience life in this 'wretched earth' but you are among those who have bravely considered taking the 'leap of faith' in coming to this earth to fulfil the plans and mission of God for your life on this earth. You have taken a whole eternity (from before the foundation of the earth) to prepare and come here and will enter into an eternity after the short life here.

In the light of all the preparation (billions of years before the earth was made) that it took to prepare oneself to come to earth, why would anyone just want to sit around and do nothing more than mediocre things such as seeking mere food, clothing and shelter while on earth? Why take billions of years in preparation to live 70, 90 or 120 years under the coconut tree? Life is more than food, clothing and shelter (Matthew 6:25, 31-32). We should seek to find our destiny which God has prepared for us before the foundation of the earth (Ephesians 1:4; 2:7-10). We should leave no stone unturned until we have found the destinies written in our hearts before we came here and written in the book of life of that which we are to accomplish on earth (Psalms 139:16; Revelation 20:12). With such eternal preparation for this short life, we should value each day and live it with enjoying all that God has for us to experience (Matthew 6:34). Each day is a fresh new day that the Lord has made to experience His goodness and mercy (Psalm 23:6). Enjoy all the

senses of the physical body, enjoy all the soul sensations (every thought, every emotion and every desire) each day turning them back towards the Lord, and enjoy the openness of the spirit man to all the sensations that arise from the Spiritual World.

No matter whether you are in a valley or on the mountain top, live each day ONE AT A TIME savouring each precious moment, savouring all the experiences given by God through the Holy Spirit. If in the valley, savour and taste the bitterness of the darkness of the trial for such tastes will not be available in heaven; and if on the mountain top, savour and taste the sweetness of the moment for soon you will have to go back down to the valley to live your life amongst the darkness of the physical earth as a light of God. Enjoy every tear, enjoy every laughter, enjoy every pain (yes, it is because you are alive that you can feel the pain) and enjoy every pleasure (in the Will of God, of course) for one day in heaven tears and pain will be no more but only an eternity of joy and pleasure in God (Revelation 21:4). So precious are the moments in this life that God keeps all our tears in a bottle (Psalm 56:8). Don't count this short life by the months or by the years to enjoy and taste the fullness of its rich experiences but count them day by day savouring each passing moment living for God.

No one who has had their life reviewed in spiritual world experiences came back satisfied with the life which they were living to a more passionate and purposeful one. We all don't have to die and go to the Spiritual World before we regret living the life we are living and changing it. Let us learn from all who have gone before us (the cloud of witnesses) and also those who have the testimony of experiences in the Spiritual World (for they were given for the benefit of all, even those who read such experiences).

Be a more passionate, more bold, more courageous person savouring every moment and opportunity in the Will of God opened unto us.

In Christ's love

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.12

The commandment to love: responding to God's Love

Dearly Beloved

It is very clear from the Scriptures that God loved us unconditionally and eternally (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:16). The revelation that God is a God of unconditional, unwavering love is no doubt the revelation that Jesus has brought to us in the New Covenant through the sacrifice of His own life for us. To receive and be open to the love of God is the first step towards a true relationship with Him; in fact, it is the only way to begin a relationship with God in Christ. We cannot come to God on our own merit or by our own works but only through Jesus Christ who gave Himself for us. Although the vast majority of the world do not have the understanding or revelation that the True God is a God of Love and Righteousness, and many Christians have yet to comprehend the greatness of God's love for us, the understanding and revelation that God has loved us greatly is only the first step of our transformation in Christ.

The second step of the transformation is to abide in God's love. Jesus used the word abide as applying to both the Word of God and also to the love that God has for us (John 15:9-10). Abiding in God's love would cause us to be saturated with His love and soon be flowing with His love. It would flow through our lives to others. It is interesting that Jesus should call it a commandment when abiding in His love would cause us to naturally love others (John 15:17). Why is it that He should call it a commandment when it would be easy to abide in His love and allow His love to flow through us? I believe that there are two reasons for it: firstly, this love does not reside in our soul but in our spirits and when we are born again, this nature of love is already in us and we only need to release it through our obedience of love (Romans 5:5); secondly, the quality of this love is such that we need to be willing to lay down our lives for others as Jesus was willing to lay down His life in obedience to the commandment of the Father (John 10:11, 15, 18) and this increase to the measure of the love of Christ would cause us in turn to receive and experience the greater measure of God's love.

Some preachers list correctly the seven deadly sins of modern life as follows:

1. Wealth without work
2. Pleasure without conscience
3. Knowledge without character
4. Commerce without morality

5. Science without humanity
6. Religion without sacrifice
7. Politics without principle

There would be something wrong with our Christianity if we are trying to achieve any of the above without its correspondent principle. Of course, the correspondent principles would be achieved through Christ and not through one's own strength.

The Bible lists seven things that are abominable to God (Proverbs 6:16-19):

1. A proud look
2. A lying tongue
3. Hands that shed innocent blood
4. A heart that devises wicked plans
5. Feet that are swift in running to evil
6. A false witness that speak lies
7. One who sows discord among brethren

The opposite of them would be the things that please God:

1. Humility (1 Peter 5:6; James 4:10). Blessed are the poor in spirit (humility – Matthew 5:3).
2. Speaking and worshipping in truth and in spirit (John 4:23-24; Ephesians 4:15). Blessed are the meek (Matthew 5:5).
3. Care and protection of the innocent (Exodus 23:7; Deuteronomy 19:10; Matthew 18:10).
4. A pure heart (Matthew 5:8)
5. Zeal for righteousness (Psalms 11:7; Matthew 6:33; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6).
6. A true witness of faith, of the True God and of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 11:1-6, 39; Acts 1:8).
7. Blessed are the peacemakers (Matthew 5:9).

In His Sermons on the Mount, Jesus provided the principles and precepts of those things which truly please God. Of course, through the New Testament, we understand that it is only through Christ and the strength of Christ that we can truly fulfil every commandment and every precept. In John 15, Jesus provided us the methodology for all the commandments to be fulfilled in Him. All the commandments of Christ and of the righteous principles of the Bible are possible only in the following manner:

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|------------------------|
| 1. We must BE IN HIM | - | RECEIVING |
| 2. We must GROW IN HIM | - | ABIDING |
| 3. We must DO IN HIM | - | GIVING (BEARING FRUIT) |

Being comes before growing which will then lead to doing; and everything must be done in Him. We must be in His love, grow in His love before we can love as He loved. We must be in His life, grow in His life before we can be like Him. Now the progress will always be in cycles of being, growing and doing. This is expounded by Jesus in His illustration of the vine and the branch. The branch that does not bear fruit is removed and the branch that bears fruit is pruned that it may bear more fruit (John 15:1-5) and the cycle repeats itself again. For those who have received the revelation of His love and grace, there will be a period of BEING in His love and grace which will lead to a GROWING in His love and grace and then to a DOING or OUTFLOWING of His love and grace through us to others. The commandment that Jesus gave is especially to help us to GROW in Him and to DO in Him. Many times, only as we obey Him do we begin to stretch ourselves in the out-flowing of His love through us. For this reason, the commandment to love is given to us to show us that we must not stop at the receiving stage, we must progress forwards to the giving stage. The commandment of Jesus can be rephrased to ourselves as follows: Are we just receivers of His love or are we also givers of His love? If our answer is that we are only learning to receive His love, then we have not reached our fullness yet. We must progress further until we become GIVERS OF HIS LOVE – then are we truly like Christ and like God our Father. Of course, we never stop receiving His love even though we become givers of His love.

The reason for the commandment of Jesus to love one another as He loved is because it is the ultimate goal of receiving His love and life. For Christians who have discovered His love through grace, we must not stop at the receiving level, we must progress until we are so full of His love that we start giving out His love through our lives. This giving out of His love through us can begin in small, small ways through our love, care, help and ministry to others but as one is faithful it will increase until every thought, every inspiration, every purpose in our life is just purely filled with desires and intents to find more and more ways to give of our lives to others in every way possible. The experience of receiving God's love is a tremendous experience in the Christian life in itself but the experience of giving out God's love is a billion, billion times more powerful and we (in a tiny, tiny measure) understand and feel what it is like by giving our lives to others the way Jesus gave His life for us.

Paul declares that he learned from Jesus that it is MORE blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). Now why is it MORE blessed to give than to receive? It is because receiving is based on giving! Giving includes the principle of receiving for it would not be possible to give without having received. And it is MORE blessed because heaven does not measure what

we receive but heaven measures what we give. The world today measures people by what they have received and acquired but God measures what we give. For that reason, a poor widow can be more blessed than the rich Pharisees because she (in percentage wise) was giving all that she had (Luke 21:1-4). This principle does not just apply to finances alone but it applies to every area of life. As we forgive, we receive forgiveness. As we love, we experience love. As we help, we receive help. As we teach, we are taught by the Lord. As we bless, we are blessed. The MEASURE by which we use (GIVE) is the SAME measure by which we receive (Luke 6:38). If you increase the measure of your giving, your measure will be increased. For what we receive will always be determined by our giving. The capacity to receive can only be equal to the capacity of our giving – no more and no less, the exact measure.

From the context of love and abiding in Him in John 15, we can understand now why Jesus gave love as a commandment, for to love and increase in our love for others (through Him) is to increase the measure by which we can receive love and help from God. We can even go as far as to say, it is more blessed to love than to be loved – for to be loved is to be like a child of God but to love is to be like God Himself. And it is never possible to out-give God, and never possible to out-love God; for when we love, the measure of love will always be measured back to us and we never run out of love.

God, in His gentle way, understands our fear of letting go and trusting in Him. He understands our insecurities in becoming selfless which is why He gave the commandment to love knowing that we will begin to experience the fullness of the power of giving and loving when we simply obey His commandments in child-like faith. Immediately after declaring that we love Him because He first loved us, John declares that he who loves God must love his brother also (1 John 4:19-21). There is no receiving love without giving in love. If you think very carefully to the first experience in Christ (born again) it was when you gave your life to Him and made Him your Lord and Saviour that you experienced His love and forgiveness. To the same measure in which you were willing to surrender all of your life, to that same measure did He take all of your life and poured His love into you. This same cycle of giving of our selves must continue for the continual flow of God's life and love within us. This explains why the intensity of the experience that each of us received in Christ, when we were first born again, is directly proportional to the fullness of the surrender that we made of our lives to Him.

Thus for anyone who wants to grow more in Him, the first area of your life to deal with is to give more of yourself to Him and more of yourself to others through His love. The more we give of ourselves, the more we will

increase and grow in Him. If you change the measure of your giving, you will automatically be changing the measure of your receiving. This applies in all areas of spiritual and natural life. Increase and change your capacity to receive by changing and increasing your capacity to give. Do not overdo it beyond your conscience or the measure of your faith but gradually increase the giving of your love and of your life measure by measure. With each increase in measure of giving, an equal and proportional measure of reception will come about. It is also most important that we do not overstretch ourselves but rather like the branch on the vine, just grow by measures steadily with each fruiting and pruning season. Growth is achieved in step by step incremental amounts. Become like Christ, be givers of the love of God which we have received.

In Christ's love

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.13

The Joy of the Lord

Dearly Beloved

The word 'joy' in the New Testament (Greek '*chara*') is related to the Word 'grace' (*charis*). The essence of both words is the root '*chairo*' which means 'to rejoice.' In a sense from the point of experience, *charis* is 'that which delights' and *chara* is 'the joy or delight.' Both *charis* and *chara* are nouns. And both these came from God:

Jesus expressly says that the joy that we are to have is from Him and not from ourselves:

John 15:11 that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full

John 16:22 your joy no man takes from you

John 16:24 that your joy may be full

John 17:13 might have My joy fulfilled in them

Romans 14:17 and joy in the Holy Spirit

Romans 15:13 fill you with joy and peace

Galatians 5:22 the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace

1 Thessalonians 1:6 with joy of the Holy Spirit

1 Peter 1:8 you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory

1 John 1:4 that your joy may be full

And the spiritual substance of grace is also not of ourselves but from God and it affects ministries and the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

John 1:16 of His fullness have we all received, and grace for grace

Romans 1:5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship

Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by His grace

Romans 12:6 according to the grace given to us

1 Corinthians 15:10 By the grace of God I am what I am ... but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

2 Corinthians 12:9 My grace is sufficient for you, My strength is made perfect in weaknesses.

Galatians 2:9 perceived the grace that was given to me

Ephesians 4:7 unto everyone of us is given grace

From the above verses we can see that the effect of these 'spiritual energy impartations' from God – *chara* and *charis* (joy and grace) – have a different impact on our lives. As grace is linked to the ministries and giftings of the Holy Spirit, joy is linked to the glory of God. The impartation of grace helps us experience the 'power' and the works of God – the '*grace of doing*'. The impartation of joy helps us experience the '*joy of being*'.

One has an impact to and through us (grace); the other has an impact in and into us. And both are the ‘experiences of the pleasure of the Lord.’ In a limited way, what the Lord allows us to experience through *charis* and *chara* are the experiences of being one with His doing (grace) and one with His being (joy).

Having understood the place of joy in our lives, and having seen how it is tied to ‘being in God.’ We need to be aware that it is a spiritual sensation which can be used as a barometer of how ‘deep’ we are in His presence. Of course, *agape* love and *zoe* life are still the essence of what we receive from God; and the more love we have the more we are in God because God is love. The reason why joy is brought forth as another sensation after love (Galatians 5:22) is for us to recognise what the ‘true’ love of God does to our beings. Many times people say that they are walking in love but you do not see the joy of the Lord. The reason is that they are ‘not really’ walking in the love of God for the love of God produces joy. They are probably just walking in the other forms of love (*phileo*, *storge*) without knowing it. Although everyone in Christ does seek to walk in love, we sometimes do not realise it when we are actually walking in *phileo* love (friendship love) or *storge* love (family love). Both these types of love feel very much like *agape* love. The sacrificial *storge* love of a mother for a child, the sacrificial *phileo* love friends have for one another – both these feel very much like the sacrificial *agape* love of the Lord. How else can we differentiate these wonderful types of love except for the gift of His joy (*chara*) which acts as the true barometer for us?

The biggest difference, of course, is to realise that we were inwardly already wired to function in *phileo* and *storge* love. There are capacities within us that enable us to love greatly and sacrificially. But this love is still not like that of *agape* love. *Agape* love is a direct impartation from God through His Spirit (Romans 5:5) and not of ourselves. Peter knew his own capacity and admitted his inability to love Jesus with *agape* love and could only love Jesus with *phileo* love (John 21:15-17). There is nothing wrong with loving Jesus and people with *phileo* love – as all types of love, in its pure form, do proceed originally from God (John 5:20; 11:3, 36; 16:27; 20:2; Revelation 3:19). Functioning well in *phileo* love and *storge* love will produce soul joy but functioning well in *agape* love will produce the joy of the Lord. There is a world of difference between soul joy and the joy of the Lord. One produces inner well-being and happiness; the other produces the presence of God and the experience of oneness with God (Psalms 16:11; Matthew 25:31).

In the presence of God, there is always fullness of joy (Psalms 16:11; Matthew 25:31). All our tears are wiped away when we move into the

presence of God in heaven (Revelation 21:4). There will be no more sorrow and no more pain. We who have lived in this world for so long are so used to seeing sorrow that we cannot comprehend the fact that it is a strange thing for those who have lived in the spiritual World in the realms of God to see this 'phenomenon' we call 'sorrow.' Although Jesus experienced sorrow (Isaiah 53:3-4; John 11:35) when He was on earth, He was always undergirded by joy from God even when He was on His way to the cross (Hebrews 12:2). He went to the cross with joy in His heart. Joy does not mean hilarity or boisterousness (although there is nothing wrong with these when they are a natural experience and expression and not a false pretence or cover for our true self). Joy can include these things but primarily it is the sense of the inner being of God. It can be so powerful that even when persecution arises we can still leap for joy (Luke 6:23). It is so powerful that Jesus said for us to be of good cheer when tribulations arise (John 16:33). The word 'good cheer' (root from *tharsos*) speaks of being of good courage or boldness.

The word '*chara*' also implies the reception experience of the attributes of God's pleasure. We become one with the pleasures that God experiences. In the natural world, one of the joys that we experience is the joy of sharing another person's joy and pleasures (*phileo* and *storge* level). What joy is there to watch a sunset alone, to eat good food alone, to look at a beautiful scene or flower alone? We do have some pleasure in those things but the pleasure is magnified when we do those things we love and enjoy them with those whom we love. The pleasure increases exponentially when we are enjoying it together with someone whom we love; in fact part of the pleasure is to see the one we love enjoying the pleasures we enjoy. Every parent can tell you of the joy they feel when they watch their children enjoying themselves. In a similar sense, God is sharing His pleasure with us as we partake of His joy. The thing that makes God happy is making us happy – that is the joy of the Lord. It IS the joy of the Lord – we are feeling and experiencing His pleasure – His joy!

There are some other words which are related to the word '*chairō*' (root word for both grace and joy) - thanksgiving (*eucharisto*) and forgiveness (*charizomai*). For example, the word for forgiveness (*charizomai*) is actually from the same word for joy and grace. This means that when we release forgiveness, we allow ourselves the joy of experiencing the 'joy of the Lord' in giving out His love to another (whom we forgive). It also feels so good when we forgive and the good feelings that we have actually tie to *chara* (the joy of the Lord). We experience the same joy He experiences when He forgives us when we forgive another person. The root behind the purpose of all forgiveness is to release the love of God through us to others so that we can feel the same joy that God has in His being. For that reason,

people who do not forgive are actually robbing themselves of the joy of the Lord since joy (*chara*) is related to forgiveness (*charizomai*). And people who do not give thanks are robbing themselves of the joy of the Lord as the word for joy is related to the word for thanksgiving (*eucharisteo*). The additional revelation in the word '*eucharisteo*' is that there is also the word '*eu*' which means 'good' implying that to be able to fully experience the joy of the Lord through thanksgiving, one must be able to see the goodness of God in everything. As one sees the love and the goodness of God in everything, the flow of thanksgiving will be natural and spring forth like a mighty river.

May God increase the joy of the Lord in each of your lives. Like Paul (who was in prison at that time in Philippi), we should rejoice in the Lord every day of our lives. Every day is a precious jewel of time and opportunities to experience life, we should treasure each day and rejoice in the Lord each day for every day is the day which the Lord has made.

In Christ's love

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.14

The Flow of Consciousness

Dearly Beloved

The conscience seems to play a large role in the New Testament. Paul speaks about the conscience throughout his ministry life:

- He has always lived his life in all good conscience (Acts 23:1)
- He sought to always have a conscience without offence before God and man (Acts 24:16)
- His conduct was always measured by his conscience (2 Corinthians 1:12)

What is the conscience? What is this inner gyroscope that we have that can tell us right and wrong? Where does it get its ability? If it can be seared and destroyed, can it be enhanced and increased?

Besides being the instrument of right and wrong, from the Scriptures, the conscience is an instrument that:

1. Tells us the level of faith that we have (Romans 14:21-23; 1 Corinthians 8:1-11; 10:25-29; 1 Timothy 1:19; 3:9).
2. Bears witness within us of the Holy Spirit and of the inner law of God (Romans 2:15; 9:1)
3. Is the essence of our consciousness (1 Corinthians 8:7; Hebrews 10:2)

There is a very close tie between the conscience and the mind:

1. When the conscience is defiled so is the mind (Titus 1:5)
2. When the conscience is weak so is the understanding (1 Corinthians 8:7)
3. When the conscience is seared or destroyed, understanding is destroyed and doctrines of demons come into the picture (1 Timothy 4:1-2).

How do we define the conscience (*suneidesis* – root word *sunoida*)?

1. It is the combination of two Greek words – *sun* (together with) and *oida* (know) to make *suneidesis* (consciousness). *Oida* is related to *eidon* (seeing/known with the mind – *blepo*, seeing with the body, *eidon* seeing with the mind, and *horao* seeing with the heart or spirit). In essence, the conscience is the linking of our thought/consciousness/mind (the ‘*sun*’ part) to the flow of thought and consciousness that comes from God.

2. It is to share in the knowledge of a thing (to be aware or privy to it – Acts 5:2)
3. It is a present idea, a persistent notion, an impression of reality (1 Corinthians 8:7; 1 Peter 2:19).
4. It is an inward faculty of moral judgment (Romans 2:15; 13:5; 1 Corinthians 8:7, 10, 12)
5. It is the inward moral and spiritual frame (Titus 1:15; Hebrews 9:14).

When we understand that the source of all our ability to think is from God, and that all thoughts are derivations of the thought energy that comes from God, converted into our frequency through the sum of our total being and vibration, then the conscience is a function of that ‘connectedness’ that we have in the flow of the stream of thoughts.

The conscience is our ability to retain ‘consciousness’ in the stream of living and being. When that stream is turned and coloured the wrong way then we feel bad; when the stream is turned and coloured correctly we feel good. The wrong stream causes the sense of wrongness – conviction of sin and condemnation. The right stream produces the sense of rightness – conviction of faith and righteousness. It is the spiritual and soul gyroscope by which we know whether we are travelling in the right stream of God’s spiritual space.

If that is what the conscience truly is, then the more developed the conscience is, the more developed our consciousness is of God. If the conscience can be weak, then it can also be strong. A strong and powerful conscience will bring forth a strong and powerful stream of God’s current into our lives.

Like the eagle soaring into the sky, our conscience will guide us to soar into the skies of God’s glory and presence. An eagle soars higher and higher by catching the thermal currents of warm rising air until it reaches the heights of the skies. Our conscience helps us find the thermal currents of warm rising Holy Spirit flows and leads us to soar higher and higher into the heights of God’s presence. No wonder the apostle Paul so boldly declares that he lived his whole life by his conscience.

When Jesus rose from the dead and shed His blood for us, He gave us the potential to again feel and experience the presence of God in our conscience. He purged our conscience from dead works (Hebrews 9:14). What are dead works and what are they doing in our conscience? Dead works are the consciousness of all the streams and currents of sin and condemnation! Those are the dead skeletons in the cupboards of our mind

and consciousness that still produce condemnation in our lives. There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who walk (soar, fly) in the Spirit of God (Romans 8:1, 2). Every single stream of the consciousness of sin and condemnation flows from these dead bones within our souls that the Spirit of God through the blood of Jesus seeks to purge away.

The word purged is from the same Greek word in John 15:3 where Jesus says to His disciples that He has made them clean (*katharizo* in Hebrews 9:14 – a verb; and *katharos* in John 15:3 – the resultant effect). It is also the same word that was translated pure in Matthew 5:8 where those who are ‘purged, cleansed, purified’ can truly see God. The disciples were able to do so much after the baptism in the Spirit because they had all condemnation stripped away by John 15:3 through the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Jesus made them feel accepted in the Beloved. One cannot have the consciousness of sin and the consciousness of God in the same mind – it is either one or the other.

The final result of Hebrews 9:14 is when the Scriptures declare that there is no more consciousness of sin (Hebrews 10:2). We no longer have an evil consciousness (Hebrews 10:22). We now have a ‘God consciousness,’ a righteousness consciousness, a Jesus’ consciousness. The conscience in the New Covenant is no longer just an instrument for the consciousness of right and wrong (it still is) but it is an instrument to detect faith and righteousness and the presence and consciousness of God. It was the fall of Adam that reduced the function of the conscience to such a low function – like using a golden spoon to scrape dirt off the floor. The golden spoon belongs to the king’s table with all the other cutlery. We are to sense the goodness of God and the love of God with our conscience.

Let us develop our conscience and strengthen it so that it is the daily source of the sense of consciousness of God. What is life but consciousness? And this consciousness was designed to daily connect to the divine flow of goodness, righteousness and mercy.

Be conscious of faith. Be conscious of righteousness. Be conscious of God.

In Christ’s love

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.15

The need for fellowship

Dearly Beloved

The whole body of Christ fitly joined together and ministered to by every joint edifies itself in love to the full measure of Christ (Ephesians 4:16). Jesus never sent His disciples out one by one but two by two (Luke 10:1). The church in Acts had ministry teams not ministry individuals (Acts 3:1; 6:3; 11:25, 26; 13:1, 2; 15:22, 39, 40; 18:5). It is important to be in a ministry team and not just be a successful individual ministry. God has ordained that we all function as parts within the body of Christ and not the whole body in ourselves (1 Corinthians 12:14-27). Of course, each part of the body of Christ must discover its own function to be successful in contributing to the body of Christ. Every member has a gift and every member has a ministry (1 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:12).

1. Ministry in a team helps cover our individual blind spots.

We all have blind spots because of the way our eyes function in looking forward. Our peripheral vision has areas in which we need mirrors in the car to cover when we drive plus we are all taught in good driving to turn and check our blind spots whenever we change lanes. Those are physical blind spots. Soul and spiritual blind spots are harder to find because people don't know how to turn their soul around and look at their soul blind spots. We don't see what we can't see. We are unaware of what we have no knowledge of. Only as we relate and fellowship with others can we be aware of how different we are from others. The prophet Samuel had a giant blind spot. His biological family was dysfunctional with his father having two wives and he was also left behind in the temple to be brought up by others (1 Samuel 1:2, 11, 28; 2:11, 18). His adoptive parents, Eli the high priest had a corrupt family with sons who did wickedness (2 Samuel 2:12).

Eli himself was not a good father (2 Samuel 2:29). I wonder what happened to the wife and mother of the boys? Anyway, as far as we know, although Samuel grew up to be a mighty man of God, his lack of a proper family life resulted in a giant blind spot in which he himself was not a good father. His sons were corrupt and did not walk in the way of the Lord, yet Samuel appointed them as judges (1 Samuel 8:1-3). He did wrong exactly like Eli when he honoured his

sons before the Lord and appointed them when he should not have done so; there were others more capable than his own sons to be judges. Although the Israelites in themselves were worldly and wanted to be like other nations, it was the corruption of Samuel's sons which triggered the request for a king (1 Samuel 8:4-6).

Jacob had a blind spot for his son Joseph loving him above all the other sons (Genesis 37:3). He was not very much like God our Father who loves all of us equally in Christ. Moreover, in a dysfunctional family with two wives, two concubines and twelve children one would have expected the head of the family to love everyone equally especially all of the children. Part of the reason for the strife within his own family was his own fault. He contributed to a very bad situation by unfairly favouring Joseph above all his other sons. The hate which the other brothers felt for Joseph was caused by this unfair disposition of emotional love and favour (Genesis 37:4). And Joseph made it worse by his own bad report of his brothers to his father (Genesis 37:2). All these worsening situations were heading for a major crisis. When Joseph was sold by his brothers to Egypt, Jacob suffered years of grief that he never recovered from (Genesis 37:35). It is amazing to see God working His plans through such a plethora of human imperfection. We can be amazed at the foreknowledge and the long suffering of God's ability to work out His plans despite human frailties but we can never excuse the human responsibilities which caused grief and suffering to all concerned.

If only Samuel had someone who could be bold enough to tell him where his weaknesses were and what he was doing wrong. If only Jacob had someone to tell him that he was doing wrong by favouring one son above ten others. (Some might ask how then would God fulfil His plan; we should not assume that what we see of God's Plan B or C precludes a better plan A if humans had walked right with God). The apostle Paul had someone who was willing to stand up to him in the form of Barnabas (Acts 15:37-41). Later in his life and in his last epistle, he acknowledged the value of Mark whom he had rejected at first (2 Timothy 4:11). Iron sharpens iron and the wounds of a friend are better than the kisses of an enemy.

2. Ministry in a team helps complement our individual giftings and limitations.

The apostle Paul and Barnabas are two contrasting personalities and individuals. Paul was an intellectual who reasoned and debated but Barnabas was an encourager who stood up for those who were

outcasts (Acts 4:36; 9:29). Barnabas was instrumental in standing up for Paul when no one wanted to be with him after his conversion (Acts 9:26-27). It was this same character that made him stand up for Mark when Paul did not want Mark to follow them after Mark's earlier desertion (Acts 15:37-40). In this particular incident, Barnabas was right and Paul was wrong (2 Timothy 4:11). This was not the only clash that Paul and Barnabas had. In Galatians Paul mentioned that he publicly rebuked Barnabas and Peter in regard to not being consistent in their stand against the Judaizers (this was before the Jerusalem Council which adopted a common stand against them) (Galatians 2:11-14). Later it was through the determination of Paul to end the issue of the Judaizers in the church that led him to Jerusalem to get the church to make a stand (Acts 15:1-32). The Judaizers were very influential people and even Peter deferred to them when he was asked about his visit to the Gentiles by saying that he could not help but baptize them since God had already filled them with the Spirit (Acts 11:2, 17). In the manner of standing up against the Judaizers doctrinally and getting the whole church to make a common stand, Paul was right and everyone else was wrong in not dealing with the issue from the start.

We are all growing in the things of God all the time. We can all aim for perfection but not all of us are there yet. In the light of these matters, we should be willing to work in teams so that we can learn from one another. No one person knows everything. The most important thing is to realise that there are many church issues where we can only say "I perceive" and not "Thus says the Lord" and in some other issues, the reverse is true. May God help the person who constantly uses 'Thus says the Lord' and is no longer teachable or willing to listen to others. Even the apostle Paul himself acknowledged that in some issues he had a 'Thus says the Lord' but in others he only says 'it is what he says, and not the Lord' (1 Corinthians 7:10, 12). And since God does not speak in English but speaks Spirit to spirit within us, even our understanding of what He is saying is subjective to our translation and interpretation (Acts 21:4, 11, 14). When we claim that we have been in the light and have been hearing and walking in God, we will delight in joining with others who have been in the light (John 3:20-21). The fire burns brighter when all the flames gather together than to be scattered in individual flames.

3. Teaming together with those of the same gifting strengthens and enhances the gifting.

It was Samuel the prophet who started the school of prophets and was the leader among them (1 Samuel 19:20). When he first started in his ministry as prophet (and priest), there was hardly any word from the Lord (1 Samuel 3:1). The school of prophets raised up by Samuel enhanced the prophetic gifting as they sang and prophesied together (1 Samuel 10:5). Elijah and Elisha came forth from this school of prophets which lasted several generations – sons of prophets; they were the leaders over this school a generation after Samuel (2 Kings 2:15). How was it possible to move from an era in which the Word of the Lord was rare into a time when prophets were all over the place throughout the time of the kings? It was due to the efforts of Samuel who started the school of prophets which lasted for several generations and produced many of the major and minor prophets of the Bible times. The gathering of schools of evangelists or schools of pastors can only enhance and not diminish the giftings. David brought together men of similar gifts which strengthened their respective giftings. Those who were warriors when gathered together became the mighty men of David – spurring one another to acts of bravery and valour (1 Chronicles 11:10-12:8). The skilled musicians gathered together by David to serve the Lord in the tabernacle spurred a whole generation of musicians and worshippers that continued through Solomon's time (1 Chronicles 15:16-24; 28:13, 21; 5:13-14).

The promises of Jesus have always involved the release of a team ministry. Jesus said that where two or three are gathered together in His Name, He is in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20). He said that where any two agree (Greek *symphoneo* – harmonised together like a symphony) concerning anything (yes, anything) on earth, it will be done for them by our Heavenly Father (Matthew 18:19). I believe that this promise has yet to be fully tapped. Many husband and wife relationships have the potential to reach this level of harmony that they become a powerful duo force on earth. Many *phileo* relationships between good Christian friends have a potential to reach this powerful level, where, two chase a thousand, three chase ten thousand, four chase a hundred thousand and five a million. It is such power that God told Abraham that if He had found ten righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah, He would have spared them. Good is more powerful than evil and light more powerful than darkness.

From the Spiritual World perspective, no one reaches their full stature without linking up with the right people (spirits) sent to be their friends, partners, team-mates. Even Daniel had his three friends that helped him reach the pinnacle of the world's greatest empire in God's sight (the head of gold). Think about those whom God has sent to be with you, to stand with

you, to be your friends and to link up spiritually with you to change the world. Sometimes we reject them because they are not like us but you will find the common bond in that each would love God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength. It doesn't matter how different others are. It only matters that they love the same God and Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. When the church has reached its oneness in God, the world will see the greatest manifestation of the glory of God (John 17:22).

In Christ Jesus

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.17

The Importance of Family and Friends

Dearly Beloved

The Bible says that when one is saved, the whole family shall be saved (Acts 16:31). And when one spouse in the marriage relationship is in the Lord, the other spouse and the children are sanctified (1 Corinthians 7:14). The family unit is so important to the Lord that of the ten commandments, commandment number 5 (Honour your father and mother) and commandment number 6 (Thou shall not commit adultery) involves the preservation of the family unit; and, of course, the first four are all in direct reference to relationship with God and commandments 5 to 10 involve our relationship to others (including our family). Why is there such a special emphasis on relationships in the Ten Commandments? It is because relationship is everything in life and the expression of that relationship begins in our own family! For this reason, all the commandments can be summed up in one word 'love' for love (God's kind of agape love) is the key to all relationships.

Even the mystery of Christ's relationship with the church is expressed in the relationship between husband and wife (Ephesians 5:23-32). And the relationship that we have with God is as children to our Heavenly Father (Matthew 6:9; Romans 8:15). And the apostle Paul in the New Covenant reminds children and fathers of their relationship to one another through reminders of the fifth commandment (Ephesians 6:1-4, the first he considers with a promise of long life). Even though in this period of the dispensation of grace where we walk not by the outward law but by the inward love of the Lord, there is no doubt that the family unit is still the base by which the New Testament church grows in its understanding of love and grace.

Although the lack of proper relationships in any life should not hinder anyone from coming to know the Lord, in reality unless that lack of relationship is fostered or nurtured through pure and holy relationships with others, one is actually hindered in understanding spiritual relationships. For if we do not love our brother or sister in the Lord whom we can see, how can we love the Lord who is invisible (1 John 4:20)? And was not the illustration of the apostle John on the need of brethren to love one another taken from the scenario of the breakdown of family relationships between Cain and Abel his brother (1 John 3:11-12)?

What can we learn from relationships in family units that help us eternally?

1. We learn the tenderness of God's love for us through knowing the tenderness of parental love.

One of the names of God in the Old Covenant is EL Shaddai (Genesis 17:1). This was the special revelation that Abraham had of God. God revealed Himself as Yahweh to Moses but He revealed Himself as EL Shaddai to Abraham (Exodus 6:3). The revelation of God as El Shaddai contains both the fatherly and the motherly tenderness of God. Although we cannot blame our genes or our parents for who we are (for we all have free choice despite the difficult circumstances), it is a known fact among criminologists that many of those who have social problems also have problems in their own families. To those who are reading this, remember that whatever lack of parental relationships you have, God the El Shaddai can provide both the fatherly lack or the motherly lack in your upbringing. One of the things that God was pleased with Abraham was his ability to continue to pass on the love for God and His ways to his children and family (Genesis 18:19). Although no one might notice that you were a good child in relating to your parents or a good parent relating to your child, the Lord will notice it and make note of it for the might of a nation builder within you is related to the might of your ability to be a parent (Genesis 18:18-19).

The failure of Eli was tied to his failure as a parent (1 Samuel 2:29). The failure of Samuel in bringing up his sons to love the Lord was tied somehow to his own lack of parental guidance or example in his own life as a child. The self-centredness and the insecurities of Saul can be tied to the fact that he did not relate to people well; he did not even know who David was when he defeated Goliath, even though David had been the only one playing the music for him each night so that he could sleep who also happen to be his personal armour bearer (1 Samuel 16:17-23; 17:55-58). Saul did not respect his own son Jonathan and even tried to kill him (1 Samuel 20:30-33). Saul claimed to be interested in protecting Jonathan and wanting to pass on the throne to him rather than David but it was more his own insecurities that were troubling him rather than his son, Jonathan. Jonathan was even willing to serve under David (1 Samuel 23:17). The troubles that David had in his life came about because he broke God's commandments and sinned with Bathsheba. All his other troubles came about through the dissension within his own family of sons. The problems of Abraham in regard to Ishmael and Isaac all were family problems. The same is true of Jacob and his sons.

The family unit is so important to God that He included promises of long life to the commandment. How many people are now shortening their own lives by destroying their own families and burying themselves in grief? Those who are reading this and are in broken or dysfunctional homes and families, please take courage that God is your El Shaddai and can meet every emotional need in your life while meeting all your spiritual needs. From the beginning of the Bible, God has always been a family God. He wanted Adam and Eve to have families. He saved Noah and his family. He called Abraham and his family. He saved Jacob and his family through Joseph. God saves by families if we will have the faith to believe that He does not divide families but rather unites families.

Although Jesus understood that spiritual relationships are stronger and deeper than physical relationships (Mark 3:31-35), Jesus, though bearing the weight of the whole world upon Himself on the cross, took time to ask John to take care of His physical mother and make her part of his family (John 19:25-27)! How many more Scriptures do we need to convince us that the family unit is very important to God? This is especially so when in these last days, the devil is throwing everything he can to break up families and divide them; and then destroying each person one by one. Treasure your family units, love one another, do not give up on anyone in your family unit. Hold them fast before the Lord and believe that they can be saved because you are saved.

2. We learn sacrifice, humility, honour, balanced authority, and all the other wonderful principles of Christian life through the family, through husband and wife relationships, through brother and sister relationships, etc (Ephesians 3:22-33; 1 Timothy 5:1-2). For if we do not know how to rule our family, how will we know how to rule the church of God (1 Timothy 3:4, 5)? No one is perfect on earth, nor are there any perfect families or perfect relationships at the human level. But we all can benefit and learn from ALL relationships. Through the imperfections, we know where our own lack is and through the strengths, we know where we can excel. Even our Lord Jesus had to learn obedience and balance within His own family unit when He was growing up in Nazareth (Luke 2:41-52).

Although the Lord has expressed that He expects us to love Him with first love above anyone else on earth including anyone within our family, He does not expect us to sacrifice our families on the

altar in favour of church or ministry. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world but to lose his own soul? And what does it profit a man or woman if they try to save the whole world but lose their own families? How can we say that we love God and Christ when we cannot even love those within our own families whom we see every day? The second commandment is not to love those at a distance or those whom you see once in a while (and don't see their weaknesses or the things in their lives that might irritate you) but is to love your neighbour as God loves you (through Christ's love, of course). Your neighbour is the one close to you, whom you see everyday. When a certain lawyer tried to justify himself by excusing himself from loving his neighbour (by asking Jesus, who his neighbour was?), Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-30). Many people remembered the story of the good Samaritan but forget why Jesus told the story. The point of the story is that your neighbour is anyone who is in the circle of your life (passing stranger or acquaintance or constant companion) who has a need (right in front of your nose). He or she is your neighbour to whom you must show love.

The Levite and the priest in the story purposefully pass by on the other side to avoid taking care of the injured man. Are you avoiding loving your spouse, your family and those who come into the circle of your life? Are you ignoring or blind to those needing your love who are in plain sight along your life's path? There are none so blind as those who will not see. Eyes that see not those in front of them, ears that hear not the cries around them, mouths that speak not the words of love their loved ones long to hear, noses turned up against those who are their own to love and care for, and hands that raise not the fallen beside them. By rejecting those who need love and help around them, people don't realise that they are rejecting the Lord himself (Matthew 26:31-46).

If you really want to be like Christ, then **BE LIKE CHRIST**. Love those who need love, care for those who need care, lift up the downcast and encourage those who need encouragement. True Christianity is not about getting your needs met, it is about getting the needs of others met through you. For this reason, God blesses you that you might be a blessing. The rich young man who came to Jesus had everything in his self-centred well provided rich life (Mark 10:17-22). But Jesus said **ONE THING** you lack – and told him to sell all he had and give it to the poor and he would have treasures in heaven, and to take up the cross and follow Jesus (Mark 10:21). It was the only way to free that poor rich young man from the bondage of self-centredness. He walked away sad, grieved and unable to comply. It

was only after he left that Jesus spoke of the hundredfold blessings (Mark 10:30). You cannot out give God. When Jesus told the young man to give everything away, He would have provided more than enough plus a hundredfold for the young man both in this life and in the next. Today, we have the record of that young man standing throughout the ages as the prime example of a short rich self-centred life tied to the world that missed the long eternal and spiritually rich life he could have had in eternity.

The things of this life only have true kingdom and spiritual value if you use them to love someone. For love is the only currency that is used in heaven; all other values of this world pass away into dust. Your words, your smiles to cheer another, your love given through God's impartation, your touch to those who are rejected, these are the things that have value. Don't wait to love, the opportunities to love in small and big ways are always around you. Start in your home and then extend it to those in the family of God and then to the world. By this they shall know that we are Jesus' disciples.

In Christ's love

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.17

Praying for your loved ones

Dearly Beloved

There is no more precious unit of relationships than that which God has organised within the family unit. Within the family, we learn all the various areas of love (*storge* or family love, *phileo* or friendship love, *eros* or love between husband and wife, *agape* love which comes from God). As pointed out in the previous fatherly talk (3.16), the Scriptures have a lot to say about families and family relationship. In a way, you could say that the first fall of Adam and Eve was that they did not know how to relate with each other nor learn to unite together against their common enemy, the devil – when confronted by God, Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent (Genesis 3:12-13). The first murder was a family strife between Cain and Abel, who were brothers (Genesis 4:9-10), leaving us with the question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” with the obvious answer as ‘Yes.’

The first problems that nearly stopped Moses from following God’s call was his quarrel with his wife over circumcision, which nearly ended up with him dead for not wanting to obey God (Exodus 4:24-26). The constant strife that Moses had with the mixed multitude among the Israelites, soon crept into a family strife between him, Miriam and Aaron (Numbers 12:1-16). The rejection of Jesus by His home town was tied to the familiarity of the people with His physical family (Mark 6:3). The Bible is full of family stories – both good and bad. Many of the overall spiritual problems of nations, and of whole communities are tied to family problems – Abraham and his wives, Esau and Jacob, Jacob and Laban, Joseph and his brothers, Eli and his sons, Hannah and her husband, Samuel and his sons, David and his wives, David and his sons, etc.

At the same time, some of the most heroic inspiring faith stories that have arisen have also been that of love and families: Noah and his family, Jacob and his love for Rachel, Ruth and her love for Naomi, Ruth and Boaz’s love story, Joseph and Mary, Jesus and His church, etc. We learn to love by loving our families first before we can truly learn to love others outside of the family unit. For this reason, the devil seeks to break down families and indirectly destroy lives of communities and nations. The family unit is very, very important and we must be willing to lay down our lives to protect our families, our homes, our spouses besides being willing to protect the church

of God and the family of God and the cause of Christ. If anyone of you out there has a spouse or family (my apologies if you already have a broken home or family or are a single parent – but the principles here will also help you in establishing new relationships while being healed of the hurts of the past), you must be willing to ‘fight’ (with God’s strength, of course) for the preservation of the relationship you have with your spouse and your family. Don’t give up so easily. Winning your spouse and family to the Lord and to walk rightly with God should be one of the most important goals and visions in your life.

1. Your family, your friends and your circle of acquaintances around you are there not by accident but by divine appointment.

From the Spiritual World perspective, I have seen how groups and teams of spirits prepared themselves before coming down to earth to take their place in the families and units of relationships and friendships. Eve was especially created to be a help meet for Adam (Genesis 2:18). It is no coincidence that Mary was betrothed to Joseph who would accept the explanation of Mary’s angelic encounter (Matthew 1:18-25). It is no coincidence that even before they met Christ Peter, Andrew, John and James were already friends and partners in their fishing business (Luke 5:10). Indeed, every relationship on earth has some level of foreordination before the foundation of the earth (Ephesians 1:4). If God could have fashioned in detail all the days of our numbered lives on earth, how much more could He have arranged the relationships by which we live from day to day in our lives! (Psalms 139:16). We need to always learn to develop each relationship properly in the Lord’s agape love and in its proper perspective so that our lives would be enriched by all our earthly encounters and relationship with others. After all, the essence of this life on earth is not just about the physical things of the earth but it is about the relationships we have with every other created being on earth. The essence of being like Christ is in learning to give our lives to those around us in the same manner in which Christ has given His life for us (John 3:16; 1 John 3:16).

2. Praying for loved ones

The key to praying for your loved ones who are not in the Lord yet is to pray scripturally. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). The key Scripture for having faith in God saving your loved ones is Acts 16:31. I remember when I was born again and had left for ministry in Penang. Every month, I would receive a small financial support from my father who had not come to know Jesus yet. I often broke down and cried when I saw the envelope and the money order contained inside, crying to the Lord,

‘Lord, please let my father know you for he continually sends me support to enable me to serve you without knowing you.’ For weeks, months and years, I prayed and held fast to Acts 16:31. Sometimes doubts came, and I had to pray them away. Sometimes faith arose strong and I ended up thanking God profusely for answering the prayer even without seeing the results yet. One day as I was praying with tears pouring out, I heard something in my heart say that ‘my father is saved.’ I remember that day vividly as it was just before the afternoon choir practice. I went to practice that day with a supernatural joy in my heart.

At the end of that year, when I returned home on holiday (I was in the Seminary at that time), I learned that it was about the exact time that my father had taken up one of the tracts I left at home (4 spiritual laws) and had been praying the prayers at the end (prayer for acceptance of Christ). When he attended the choir presentation in my home town, that night he had a dream of being at the foot of a large cross. He told me about the dream when I arrived home after the choir tour, and told me about the dream and how he had been praying the prayer for acceptance of Christ for months (started at the same time as me having that assurance of faith for his salvation). I then told my father that God had answered his prayers and truly Christ was in his heart and that he had been born again. I subsequently had the privilege of baptising both my mother and my father in the Straits of Johor.

In the Baptist Seminary, I met my wife Amy. At that time she was not open to the baptism in the Spirit and other Pentecostal doctrines. Our early courting days were punctuated by much doctrinal discussions. Many were the times when we just could not see eye to eye doctrinally even though we had love for each other. In desperation, I prayed fervently for her using Ephesians 1:17-23, asking God to give her the Spirit of wisdom and revelation and to open her spiritual eyes. Many months later, I found that she had attended some charismatic meetings on her own accord and was seeking the same experiences of the Spirit. She subsequently got baptized in the Spirit and spoke in tongues all without my doing. From then onwards, we never had doctrinal issues coming between our relationship. I would strongly suggest to anyone where there is some philosophical or doctrinal difference in any relationship – spouse, family or others – to pray Ephesians 1:17-23 putting the name of your loved one in that prayer and asking God to give them the spiritual wisdom and understanding. And when God does it all by Himself without you in bringing forth the philosophical and

doctrinal understanding (of course, He is not going to convince your loved ones of your own personal views that may be wrong but just bring them to the views that are Scriptural and right), you will be surprised how much your loved one can end up knowing more than you! Then you better pray Ephesians 1 for yourself, too ☺.

3. Learning to balance spirit, soul and body in family life

As Christians, sometimes we end up too engrossed in our churchy vocabulary and spiritual life that we neglect the balance of soul and body in the family especially if we are those zealous for the Lord. Families do need physical time together to relax, have leisure and play time. Spouses do need physical time together to be alone with one another without a third party intrusion. And above all, we need to develop not just *agape* love for our spouse and family, we also need to develop *phileo* love – friendship love. We need to see our spouses as our friends, and also see our fathers and mothers as our friends, and see our children as our friends. Examine the Greek word for ‘*phileo*’ in the concordance and you will notice the many verses that speak about the development of *phileo* love even amongst Christians and within family members. Fathers are told not to provoke their children to wrath (Ephesians 6:4).

Here are some other verses for developing *phileo* or friendship love in families:

- Matt. 10:37 He that *phileo* father or mother more than me are ...he that *phileo* son or daughter more than me ... (In this context Jesus was not against *phileo* but more talking about how our friendship with Him is higher than any other friendship – Jesus is our best friend first).
- John 5:20 For the father *phileo* the Son...
- John 11:3 He whom thou *phileo* is sick...
- John 16:27 For the Father Himself *phileo* you because you have *phileo* me...
- Titus 3:15 Greet them that *phileo* us in the faith...
- Rev. 3:19 As many as I *phileo*, I rebuke...
- Romans 12:10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with *phileo* brotherly love (philadelphia - translated *phileo* brotherly love)...
- 1 Thess. 4:9 But as touching *phileo* brotherly love ...
- Hebrews 13:1 Let *phileo* brotherly love continue ...
- 1 Peter 1:22 unto unfeigned *phileo* brotherly love ...
- 2 Peter 1:7 And to godliness *phileo* brotherly love, and to *phileo* brotherly love ...

Agape love is from the spirit and *phileo* love is from the redeemed soul and both must be developed for us to be fully sanctified in our spirits, souls and bodies.

In the light of the importance of the development of both *agape* and *phileo* love, we need to understand that the context of family relationships is where it all begins and ends. In the end as we progress spiritually, we will understand that the whole creation of God is but one family in the Lord, with all of us having the one Heavenly Father. The small family unit that we have on earth is a unit designed to prepare us for the bigger family of God. For this reason, I cannot look at those I help and train in the ministry as just students or disciples, I have to see you as my beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, as spiritual peers and spiritual children in the one family of God.

In Christ's love,

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.18

First Love for the Lord

Dearly Beloved

The first message to the first church in Revelation was to the church in Ephesus and Jesus had many good things to say to them but specifically pointed out to them that they had left their first love (Revelation 2:4). What qualifies as first love for the Lord? Apparently, one can do all of the following without first love for the Lord (Revelation 2:2-6):

1. Strong in works, labour and patience
2. Be able to stand against evil and testing all things
3. Persevere, have patience and labour for His Name's sake
4. Have not become weary

Many Christians might even fall short of the above let alone fulfil these things and still be short in God's sight. Yet, they were told to remember from where they were fallen, repent and do the first works or else they might lose the position of their lampstand (Revelation 2:5). First love, first works, an interesting combination. If the above list does not constitute first love and first works, then what does?

1. It is obvious that first love and first works must flow from a deep love for God and total dependence on the strength and grace of God. The measurement of first love is not an external measurement, it is an internal measurement of our heart; how much has the love of God transformed our lives and caused us to love God with all of our heart and being. The implication is that we are deeply in love with Jesus and with God our Father. Let us use some internal measurement systems as checkpoints:
 - a. Our random thoughts always meander towards the object of our love – and in this case, Jesus and God our Father. Do we constantly think of Him?
 - b. We also would be constantly conscious of His great love for us. Are we aware of how much He loves us?
 - c. Thoughts of God's love would affect our emotions and all our desires if they were the uppermost thoughts of our lives. Are we deeply passionate in the love of God?
 - d. The object of our love would always occupy the first place in our schedule and life. Does spending personal time with God – on a one-to-one basis – feature as the highlight of our daily lives?

If you answer 'Yes' to the above questions, then you are in love with God as much as God is in love with you. If the answer to any of the above questions are 'No' it is time to check your 'first love' for God. God's answer to that is to repent and get back into Him.

2. Why is repentance necessary to get back first love?

It brings us back to the place of dependence on God and not on ourselves. It is the unfortunately default mode of natural man to constantly be in self-preservation mode and into works of the law and not works of grace. Outwardly they both look the same but inwardly it is as different as day and night. First love and first works bring us back to the position of total dependence on the life of God within us. The call of Christianity is always a call to BE (abide in the vine) and not just DO. The 'doing part' is classified as 'fruit' in John 15. Fruit is always the end result and not the first cause. This, of course, does not mean that a Christian can just mentally acknowledge that he is in God and then go about his own ways. It is supposed to be a 'permanent BE-ing': a permanent attachment to Jesus as the vine and we as the branch (John 15:5). It is a position of surrender, a position of the meek inheriting the earth (rather than conquering the earth). In terms of the works of grace that we are to show forth, it is more a 'walking in them' rather than a 'doing of them' (Ephesians 2:10). It is Christ living through us (Galatians 2:20). The Ephesian church had fallen from dependence on God and become dependent on themselves. How do we know when we are no longer dependent on Him but have become dependent on ourselves? The following could be used as a measurement of when self dependence has entered our consciousness:

- a. When we find ourselves anxious and worried (Matthew 6:25-34).
- b. When we have fear in our lives (1 John 4:18); for fear cannot exist together with first love.
- c. When we use the works of the flesh to preserve or maintain what we originally received by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-24).
- d. When we become focused on the 'what' and the 'why' and 'things' and 'people' instead of on the 'Who' – Jesus and Him alone (Philippians 1:21; 3:8-10).
- e. When we are no longer walking by faith but walking by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 14:23).

If any of the above affects us, we have disconnected ourselves from abiding in Christ and are abiding in ourselves. We need to get back into the rest of Christ (Hebrews 4:10). We would need to let go all

over again and allow the peace of Christ that passes understanding to garrison our hearts and minds again (Philippians 4:6-7).

3. The benefits of keeping first love and first works.
In the Old Testament, entering the promised land was entering into a land flowing with milk and honey where the Israelites had all their needs provided (Deuteronomy 8:7-10). In the New Testament, the entrance into the rest of Christ (abiding in Him) is entering into the place where everything is provided for us (Hebrews 4:1-10). In this position of rest in Christ the following becomes a reality:
 - a. All things (those within our control and those outside our control) work for good because we love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). The only condition in this verse is that we love Him, since in Christ we are already called according to His purpose. The greater the external pressure, the greater our union in love with Jesus must be to powerfully cause all things to work together for good. We must endeavour to allow the love of Christ to be rooted and grounded in us such that we literally are walking in His perfect Will despite and in spite of all circumstances. The love of God – the first love for God – is what keeps us anchored in His perfect Will. It is the power to turn all evil into good, and all good into best.
 - b. We are more than conquerors through Christ who loves us (Romans 8:37). We are MORE than conquerors because we do not need to conquer anymore – Christ has conquered for us. If the Scripture had said that we are conquerors in Christ it would imply that we *still* need to conquer. However, we are more than conquerors through Christ who loves us – which means that there is nothing else for us to do but to enjoy the victory that Christ has wrought for us. We rest in His victory and partake of the benefits of His victory. This becomes a reality when we are one with Christ and in union with Him.
 - c. Joy and happiness (John 15:11). Joy and the pursuit of happiness is what this whole world is about. There are those who have little and keep seeking more things hoping to find joy and happiness. And there are those who have much of this world and yet do not find joy and happiness. Some seek joy and happiness in friends and people. Some seek joy and happiness in books or in knowledge. Others think that social status and climbing the ladder of success will them happy. In the end it is not something outside that should determine whether we are happy or unhappy. It should not be

something we have or do not have that should make us happy or sad. True joy and happiness can only be found in God – where the fullness of joy abides. It is peace, joy and happiness of a quality that this world can never give (John 14:27; 1 Peter 1:8).

Think about it – all that people want is not things or position or a better external environment – all they want is joy and happiness! In their minds or perception, they think that the external environment can give them this joy and happiness but when they manage to get the external into the place where it is supposed to give them joy, lo and behold it lasts but a short wisp and feels empty because it is from without and not from within. I believe that the greatest blessing that we have in God is this wonderful fruit of the Spirit that fills us with His love, peace and joy; and if we allow it, this can be our sense of joy and happiness. In fact, being in Him should be the fullness of all our joy and happiness. When our first love is truly in Him, He becomes the source of all joy and happiness in our lives. This God-sent sense of well-being and joy is a treasure from the Spiritual World that we must value and cultivate everyday of our lives. It is the very essence of what the spiritual heaven is about.

We all need to be constantly reminded that our first love belongs to God and God alone. This does not mean that we are to neglect our spouses or our loved ones; for if we don't love those whom we can see, how can we love God whom we have not seen (1 John 4:20). In fact, unless we have first love for God, we might not understand the true way to love our spouses. Many times the love that people have for their spouses is only a natural love and not true agape love. Natural love still has elements of self-fulfilment involved and is conditional. Pure agape love is benevolent, unconditional and sacrificial. Such love can only come by being immersed in the unconditional love of God. Putting first love towards God will not make you a mean uncaring spouse, instead it will cause you to be a loving caring spouse and father or mother to your children – for you would have the same love that Jesus had when He went to Calvary to die on the cross for us.

It is only when our first love is correctly placed in God that all other human aspects and relationship come into harmony and perspective. One of the things that we can personally check in our lives is to meditate on the love of Christ at the cross and the resurrection. If we are no longer moved by thoughts or meditation of what He has done for us in His death and resurrection, then we have lost our first love for Him. If we are no longer

moved by His tender mercies and we can no longer weep for joy at what He has done for us, then our hearts have become too hardened by this world.

It is only in a humble and contrite heart that God's full presence can be found (Isaiah 66:1-2).

All my prayers are with you.

God bless,

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.19

Revival is coming

Dearly Beloved

During the time of Moses, God spoke of a place in the promised land in which He would reveal the prescribed place of worship after the Israelites had settled in their land (Deuteronomy 12). It took several generations – from Moses to Joshua to the time of the judges, Samuel, Saul and finally David. When it was time for God to reveal the prescribed place of worship to David, Satan showed up and caused the numbering of Israel but through the repentance of David and Israel, God showed the exact place to build the temple (2 Samuel 24:10-25; 1 Chronicles 21:1-30). Interestingly, about a thousand years before, Abraham offered his son Isaac on the same spot (Genesis 22:1-19; 2 Chronicles 3:1). It was exactly 480 years since Israel came out of Egypt (1 Kings 6:1). God spoke to Abraham that his descendants would be in the land of Egypt for 400 years (Genesis 15:13). There is always a predestination involved whenever God brings about a Category 1 revival (Category 1 is that which is a refreshing from the presence of God – Acts 3:19; Category 2 is that which comes forth from the fivefold ministries and Category 3 is that which comes from church growth impact on the community. Category 1 will always lead to Category 2 and then 3).

We do not know what transpired a thousand years ago in the land of NZ and Australia but we do know that Australia was declared the ‘Southland of the Holy Spirit’ nearly 400 years ago and about a thousand years ago the Maori were in NZ (the land of the long white cloud) and the Aborigines were in Australia. It is possible that a thousand years ago, some tribal leader or elder could have called upon God to visit His people or have dedicated the land to the unknown God whom they worshipped. The Maori people had an evangelistic revival which brought them to the Lord many decades ago and have not yet seen another revival since. After staying in Australia these past eleven years, I personally feel that Australia and New Zealand are like West Malaysia and East Malaysia, respectively. East Malaysia has seen several Category 1 revivals amongst the tribal people and West Malaysia has seen a small measure of Category 2 and Category 3 impact on society. Just as East Malaysia has a predisposition to Category 1 revivals, New Zealand seems to have it too. The Maori people are about to see another wave of revival come into their midst. Along with this coming revival is also the timing in which the prophecies of Smith Wigglesworth (1928) spoke of a revival that will come to New Zealand and Australia, of which is something so great that he spoke of it to a young man who had already seen powerful meetings

(Category 2) under the ministry of Smith Wigglesworth. Moreover the centre of Christianity has moved since the time of the book of Acts, when it was in Jerusalem and Antioch. It moved north (respectively to Israel) where England became like the bulwark of Christianity, then it moved west when USA became the bastion of Christianity. Today it is in the East (covers Asia and Africa) where most of the growing churches are found. Then it will be the south (New Zealand and Australia) before it returns again powerfully to Israel.

On the eighth day of meetings in New Zealand (Saturday night 30th August 2008), the presence of God came into the meeting and most of those there (including myself) were on our knees before God in tears. It was a glimpse of what the presence of God (which will only increase in His refreshing from heaven) can do. Certainly, the series of meetings were very special and God is preparing for His coming revival which He has predestined for some time. There is also a hunger amongst the many pastors and their wives who came to the meeting plus a unity brought about by the common goal of revival. God has also already shown many (both young and old) visions and dreams of this coming revival and all the dreams and visions are coming together. While there, I saw glimpses and flashes of the coming revival. Of course, as always, God is already working His works and miracles amongst His people. On the sixth day, I saw a vision of one of the people in the church and knew that God had done a work in his physical body (also saw an angel ministering to the brother on the seventh day). But I had to wait until the eighth day, to deliver the word as it was only on the eighth day that the brother was wearing the exact shirt and in the exact position as in the vision. God's ways of working are marvellous and we are all but instruments of His Spirit to obey and do as He wills; without Him we can do nothing.

What will the nature and attributes of this revival be like? The following will be some of the signposts:

1. There will be a very strong presence of the Lord in these meetings akin to that which was present in all the former revivals (Wales, 1st and 2nd Great awakenings). It is after all, a refreshing from His very throne and presence. In His presence will be conviction of His holiness and His power such that many will be led to cry like Isaiah, 'I am a man of unclean lips' when he saw the Lord sitting on the throne (Isaiah 6:1). It will occur during a year in which many Uzziah's are taken away from the scene (some will die and some will have their candlestick removed from them – Revelation 2:5). Uzziah is a symbol of present church leaders who started well and had done great things in the Lord but have turned aside to pride and

self-righteousness. Uzziah himself became a king at the age of 16 and reigned for 52 years (2 Chronicles 26:3). When he became strong, pride came into his life and he overstepped the limits of his anointing (read Anointing of the Holy Spirit chapter 10). He became a leper all the rest of his life, just like leprosy is now in the churches of God that are not walking in His Will nor in His plans but in their own ways. Isaiah was a prophet in the latter years and God waited until Uzziah died then He brought Isaiah into a new phase. There are many Isaiahs waiting in the sidelines and seeking God's face. In the fullness of time, God will reveal His glory to you from His throne room, and you, too, will cry out in humility at the greatness of God's glory and holiness.

2. There will be a manifestation of His presence which will affect the very physical surroundings and physical atmosphere. The presence of God in Moses' time was visible and tangible to the whole multitude (Exodus 19:18; 40:34-38). The presence of God was so strongly manifested to Daniel that all around him fled in fear of the Lord (Daniel 10:7). Those who were with the apostle Paul in Acts 9 saw the light and heard a sound but could not discern the speech (Acts 22:9). And the presence of the Lord was so strong in Acts that Peter's shadow brought healing to all (Acts 5:15). There are degrees of His presence promised to those who love Jesus and His Word:
Visual presence (John 14:19)
Indwelling presence (John 14:20)
Manifest presence (John 14:21)
Abiding presence – home in us (John 14:23).
3. Signs and wonders are but a side effect of His presence. Healing and miracles are but the normal and natural consequences of His presence. It is His person and presence that we need to always seek above all else. In His presence, a dead rod can produce leaves, flowers, and bear fruit within a day (Numbers 17:8). His presence in our lives and families will cause everything we have and touch to be blessed (1 Chronicles 13:14). David says a day in the house of God is better than a thousand days (that is nearly three years) (Psalms 84:10). When we have the presence of God, we have everything. We should treasure the presence of God in our lives more than anything else in this life. For where our treasure is, there our hearts will be

(Matthew 6:21). We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us (2 Corinthians 4:7). Jesus walked so close with the Father all His life such that the only time that He did not have the presence of God was when He became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). He did not cry when the nails were in His hands. He did not cry when He bore the cross on His bruised and bleeding back, rather He was in compassionate prayer for the women who cried for Him (Luke 23:28). He did not cry when the weight of the cross tore Him as He was lifted up on the cross. He did not cry when the weight of the whole world lay upon Him. But He cried when He felt the absence of the Father – for the first time, the presence of God was taken from Him as He became sin for us. He cried out ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ (Mark 15:34). How precious was the presence of God to Jesus!

- a. Do we value the presence of God more than anything in this life? Adam and Eve had no idea that it was not just the trees or all that was in the Garden of Eden that made paradise the paradise it was. It was the presence of God; for the day they lost the presence was the day they lost paradise. Thankfully, the day we discover the presence of God as the most precious commodity on earth (the greatest glory in heaven and on earth), is that day that we, too, will discover a life of paradise. It was and it is and it will always be that the presence of God is what makes paradise what it is.
- b. The mission in this life is to grow in becoming the temple and habitation of God (Ephesians 2:22; 1 Peter 2:5). It is not a mission to accumulate wealth, nor to acquire fame, nor to taste and touch all the sensual pleasures of life – the mission is to successfully become living stones of the temple of God.

We are transformed from glory to glory – level by level in God’s increasing presence. We cannot change ourselves; it is God who changes us by His presence. Let us be filled with the Spirit. Let us be filled with His presence. Let us be filled with His love. Let us be filled with His Spirit of worship and truth. May His face shine upon you and give you grace and favour.

In Christ’s love
Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.20

Experiencing God

Dearly Beloved

The Scriptures say that our spirits, souls and bodies are to be preserved blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23). This implies, of course, that we are tripartite creatures with spirits, souls and bodies. Our souls consist of our intellect, our emotion and our will. The presence of God dwells within our spirits (2 Timothy 4:22), which was symbolised by the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle of Moses. Our souls are like the gloves (allegorically like the physical hand wearing physical gloves) for our spirit to express itself through and our bodies in turn are the forms through which our soul expresses itself through.

Since God already dwells in our spirit on an eternal basis through Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:17; 1 John 4:13-16), it is our soul through our spirit which grows to experience God every day. Our intellect experiences God through doctrine and teaching, our emotion experiences God through our feelings and our will experiences God through our actions. It is inconceivable for many who teach that faith comes before feelings, to realise that although this principle is correct and true that one still cannot neglect the feelings of our soul; rather we should bring it in line with our spirit. Many illustrate this with a three carriage train where faith is the engine, facts are the passenger coach and feelings the caboose on the train.

Even in such illustrations, one needs to recognise that feelings do need to flow behind with faith and facts for the entire train to move. What happens if the caboose is tied up or jammed onto the train tracks where it stands refusing to move? The entire train would be wrecked. Some Christians have completely ignored feelings in their lives to such an extent that they are only running a two-coach train – faith and facts (they have left the caboose way behind in their childhood). Such people can be 100 years old in their intellect but 10 years old in their emotion. This cannot be the way that our Lord Jesus wants us to live.

Can you imagine a marriage without emotions? Or enjoy the things of this life without emotions? Emotions are like the spices and taste in food. No one wants to live on food without taste, watch movies without emotion, be tourists of scenic places without being moved by natural beauty, play or enjoy a game of sports without emotions. Even low physical activity computer games are addictive because of the emotional attachments that people have to the role plays they have through their avatars. Life without

emotions is like living in black and white TV with only one shade of grey. No matter how great our intellect is (the apostle Paul was a great intellect, too), it is our experiences in life and in the things of God which form the direction and impulse of our understanding, desires and capacity to apply our intellect to understand the experiences we have. A study through the Bible would reveal that it is their experiences which changed the doctrine, practices and direction of those who met God:

1. Adam was a great intellectual with ability to name and figure out the natures of all the animals God brought to him but he and Eve's experience of disobedience through partaking of the forbidden fruit of knowledge of good and evil brought him and all mankind into a totally different avenue of the pursuit of knowledge and understanding (with sorrow, pain and grief). One wrong act to experience the forbidden taste of the knowledge tree brought death and sin into our human psyche.
2. Something powerful and experiential must have happened to Enoch after his wife begot his son, Methuselah, for it was after he begot Methuselah that Enoch started walking with God (Genesis 5:21-22).
3. Noah's encounter with God re-directed the rest of his entire life to the building of the ark (Genesis 6:13-22).
4. Abraham encountered God twice but obeyed on his second encounter after the death of Terah his father (Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 7:2-3), and dramatically left everything that he knew to go to a strange land where God met him.
5. Moses was well trained in all the ways of Egypt but it was only after his encounter with God that his whole life started on the right path (Exodus 3:1-4:18; Acts 7:22).
6. Joshua received the spirit of wisdom from Moses but his own encounter with the captain of the Lord of hosts transformed him (Deuteronomy 34:9; Joshua 5:13-15).
7. Samuel's life was determined by his encounters with the Lord (1 Samuel 3:1-21).
8. Saul became another man (a good man) when the Spirit of the Lord was on him but his own inner weaknesses and insecurities destroyed all that the Lord gave him (1 Samuel 10:6; 13:8-14).
9. David's life was changed when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him (1 Samuel 16:13).

10. Isaiah's vision of the Lord changed him and set up the direction of his prophetic ministry (Isaiah 6:1-13).
11. The apostles' lives were transformed because they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).
12. Saul, the intellectual and persecutor, was transformed into the apostle Paul in one heavenly encounter on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-22; 22:1-21; 26:12-18).

In the light of a sample of men of God from the Bible above, can we truly say that it is our doctrine that changed us or the experience of God that changes our doctrine and understanding? Has anyone come to Jesus purely by intellect? Or rather have people been required to humble their great intellect before God before they could experience Him and be transformed? We are not saying that the intellect and doctrine are unimportant, rather we are pointing to the biblical fact that experience with God actually comes before intellect. The intellect is a fantastic tool as a servant but a tyrant of unbelief as a master.

And in church history we have the testimonies of many great intellectuals who having experienced God became great teachers and defenders of the faith like Paul. What would John Wesley, Charles Finney, John G Lake or Smith Wigglesworth be without their experiences with God? We underline the fact that it is important to experience God and know God through all of our spirits, souls and bodies. In our spirits we are already in union with God through Christ, through our souls we can choose to allow ourselves to experience God on a daily basis, and our bodies presented to God as living sacrifices allow the Spirit of God to be experienced physically as He wills. Everyday our intellect needs to be nourished by the Word of God (Matthew 4:4). Everyday our emotions need to be re-filled by the experiences of love, peace and joy (Romans 14:17). And everyday our bodies need to be presented to God as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2).

Many Christians wake up in the morning and go to sleep every night just focussing on the intellectual aspect of their soul by seeking to do daily devotionals or Bible readings every day. This is good but they must not neglect the daily experience of God in their emotions which is available through the Holy Spirit. The neglect of this area is what causes a number of Christians to be feeling depressed even when they are seeking to read the Word or feeling down cast when they try to lift their spirits up with the Word. Imagine a life of continuous neglect of the 'spiritualising' of the emotions over many years and you realise why Christians have so many problems in spite of having Christ in them. If Christ is in us, shouldn't we be able to experience Him in us? Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to

yourselves in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord (Ephesians 5:18-19). Surely making melody in our hearts to the Lord has to be some area of emotional touch that we receive on a daily basis from the Spirit of God!

Every day we should be able to experience the tangible presence of God in our souls. The experience of the tangible presence of God in our spirits is a surety by the promise of God's Word and by our accepting Christ into our lives. The experience of the tangible presence of God in our souls is dependent on us and not on God. We need to open up our whole soul – intellect, emotion and will – to the presence of God. We seek to do so every day in the intellect by reading God's Word. We should seek to do so every day in our emotions by yielding to the filling of the Spirit of God. The tangibility of the presence of God in our bodies is by the Will of the Spirit and not by our own wills. We have to choose to will to pray in the Spirit and pray with the understanding; to sing in the Spirit and sing with the understanding (1 Corinthians 14:14, 15). God establishes the spirit man in Him, we choose to establish our souls daily in the presence of God, and the Spirit of God establishes the presence of God in our bodies (living sacrifice to Him – Romans 12:1-2), according to His Will and pleasure (we can only yield but not manufacture it by the flesh).

The key in being able to yield our soul to the tangibility of God's presence is in not letting fear hold us back. Fear is the root, the cause and the sum of all the bad emotions. All the negative emotions that you can think of in the human psyche are rooted in one word – fear. People are angry because they are afraid (although they won't admit their inner fear). People are sad because they are afraid (although they won't admit their fear that came through the loss of hope). People are upset because of fear (although they won't admit that it is because they have lost control over their own lives or the circumstances that they have orchestrated around themselves). Fear of the unknown, fear of rejection, fear of losing control, fear of changes in circumstances, fear of losing love, fear of the future, fear of things not turning out the way one expects, fear of loss of wealth, fear of lack of success, fear of loss of reputation, fear of being alone, etc. etc. Fear, fear, fear. That is what puts people in bondage. The devil through fear has held all the human race bondage (Hebrews 2:14-15). The human psyche is constantly tormented by fear. Our modern society hides fear in various forms very sophisticatedly but in its raw form, exposed by the light of God, fear is darkness and unsightly in the presence of God. Perfect love has always cast out fear (1 John 4:18).

Whenever angels encounter humans, their first words have always been, "Fear not" (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:13; 1:30; Acts 27:24). The fallen human

psyche has a fear of the spiritual presence of God which came through the fall of Adam (Genesis 3:8-10). Even now, although we are born again in our spirits, our souls still need renewal and training in the things of God. The slightest emotion of fear can prevent us from experiencing the tangibility of the presence of God in our souls. We need to develop confidence in the love of God our Father. Like in the days of the Charismatic revival, many anti-Charismatics would frighten people away from the baptism in the Spirit by playing on their fear of receiving something not from God. The same Scriptures that were used to comfort those hungry for the Spirit of God can be used today in Christians desiring to experience God – how much more will our Heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask (Luke 11:9-13). Only a revelation of the love of God can remove all fear. For this reason, the childlike faith of a trusting believer who loves God very much and who is confident in the love of the Father is the only type of faith capable of entering and experiencing the fullness of the kingdom of God while on this earth (Luke 9:47-48; 10:21; 18:16-17; Matthew 18:3; 19:14).

As you seek God each day, meditate on His presence and allow His presence to touch not just your intellect but also your emotion and will. Our entire souls must be imbued with God's presence on a daily basis. Remember that one day in the presence of God is better than a thousand days.

May the presence of God always be upon your lives.

In Christ Jesus,

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.21

Listening to the Lord

Dearly Beloved

Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow Me” (John 10:27). Hearing and following the Lord Jesus is the crux of all Christianity – we call ourselves Christ-ians, followers of Christ. How can we follow unless we discern His voice and His leading?

It is possible, in the midst of a good thing to miss seeking and hearing the Lord. Joshua and the Israelites enjoyed victories over Jericho and Ai (with some setbacks caused by Achan) but did not seek the Lord when the Gibeonites came to him (Joshua 9:14). Abraham did not seek God’s counsel when he followed Sarah’s idea to have a child through Hagar (Genesis 16:1-4). Even though the idea originally came from Sarah, she blamed Abraham for the child conceived (Genesis 16:5). Adam was judged for listening to his wife more than listening to God (Genesis 3:17). Sometimes even a good idea seems right to a man of God until the Lord says the opposite; this happened when David wanted to build God a house and Nathan originally said to go ahead but later on brought God’s Word of a big ‘No’ to David (2 Samuel 7:2-17). Paul’s companions and hosts interpreted the prophecy of danger upon his life as God not wanting him to go to Jerusalem but Paul knew that he just had to be there (Acts 20:22; 21:4, 10-14). The apostles had to discuss, debate (argue) before they came to a conclusion on the Gentile question that felt good to all of them (Acts 15:7, 28). Paul and Barnabas had a difference of opinion as to what was good for young Mark (Acts 15:36-41). In his epistles, Paul differentiates carefully the things which the Lord Jesus said and the things which he perceived (1 Corinthians 7:10, 12).

The Lord Jesus did not make all of us to be robots which automatically obey His every command without thought or perception. He allows us to reason through the benefits of obeying Him, the timing and application of His instructions and in some situations, allows us to mature by giving us the freedom to perceive rightness and wrongness by the level of growth of our spiritual man. He did not say ‘His lambs hear His voice’ but rather said ‘His sheep hear His voice.’ There is a process of growth between the lamb and the sheep. Lambs do not know the shepherd yet but follow the sheep until they are old enough to follow the shepherd themselves. Which brings us to the importance of the function of the follow-up of new believers; we ourselves must be capable of following our Lord Jesus and through our lives teach others to follow Him. Additionally, the end goal and result of all the work of ministry is that we train people to directly hear the Lord Jesus and

not just become submissive to us as leaders. For this reason, the Christian life is filled with the process of growth in many areas:

1. Our conscience grows to identify that which is edifying and truth from that which is not (1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Romans 14:1-23). No one is to be forced to do anything to which their conscience is not illuminated yet; each is allowed to grow at their conscience level until they mature in God to discern right and wrong (Hebrews 5:12-14). The Christians in Paul's time struggled with the keeping of the Sabbath laws, the eating of idol foods, the non eating of meats, etc. and each must be allowed to grow into Christ at their pace. The modern Christians in our time struggle with forms of worship, methods of water baptism, use of musical instruments and types of music, etc. Likewise, we must allow them time to grow into the full knowledge of God and Christ. The key as Paul correctly points out is to allow each to grow in the love of God. As they grow more in their love for God and in their love for the Word, some of the idiosyncrasies will just drop out. One can convict another to a better life by merely living the higher and better spiritual life in God – through a loving attitude all the way.
2. Our knowledge of God, His ways and His principles increase as we grow in Christ (2 Peter 1:2-4). We are to become 'partakers of the divine nature.' As new born babes we need to desire the milk of the Word that we may grow (1 Peter 2:2-3). As we grow and digest the milk of God's Word, one day we will be able to handle solid spiritual food (Hebrews 5:12). For he that partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness (Hebrews 5:13-14). Paul says that solid (spiritual) food is for those who are of full age, whose senses have been exercised (trained) to discern good and evil.

Many phrases come into use as we speak about growing and learning to listen to the voice of Jesus: walking in love while our conscience is still tender, desiring the milk of the Word, exercising our (spiritual) senses, partaking of(becoming) the divine nature, etc. Where do we start and how do we start? Firstly, has anyone ever defined what is milk and what is solid food? Apparently, the difference between them is so great that one who is still partaking of milk cannot be partaking of solid food (I assume it would cause them indigestion).

Milk in the Bible is defined as elementary principles and doctrine which we should know like the back of our hand (Hebrews 6:1-3). These elementary principles might be simple but if one is still in error in one's perception of God and of how the Spiritual World works, obviously everything else in life would be affected (poisoned) by that wrong perception. For example, if one perceives that God causes evil or that trees are gods, then obviously everything else in life will be wrongly coloured by the false perception. Or that cows are holy and thus beef can never be eaten (in India, they have the right of way even on the roads). All perceptions affect our lives, rightly or wrongly. They limit our capacity to receive that which is Truth. When men started worshipping the creature as God, and they changed the image of the incorruptible God into an image made by corruptible man, God gave them up to their own evil ways (Romans 1:22-24). When the truth of God was exchanged for a lie, God gave men up to their vile passions (Romans 1:25-26). Note that the wrong perception came first before God gave men up.

Correct perception of the Spiritual World and of the truths in the Bible must be trained into us so that we can mature into the Truth. For Truth is not just a bundle of knowledge or idioms but the very building blocks of life and all reality and existence. To lack truth is to lack a true perception of reality. The Bible is the Word of God and God sends the Holy Spirit of Truth that we might experience and know what Truth and true reality is really like (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). And Jesus Himself is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). What is Truth? Truth is what is true Reality and it contains knowledge but is more than head knowledge, it is life knowledge – the very principles of life – that which causes all life to exist and that which permeates through all life: the cause and the maintaining of life itself. This whole physical reality is only a shadow – like a mist that comes and then passes away (James 4:14). That which is temporal, that which we can see physically, is not the true reality, rather that which is invisible to our physical eyes, is that which is eternal and the true reality (2 Corinthians 4:18).

The Foundational Truth series (Volume 1 to Volume 14) were written based on Hebrews 6:1-3 to provide Christians with the milk (basic principles of Christian life), so that having absorbed them, they could move on into solid food. (If you have not gone through the 14 volumes yet, I would suggest that you give them a good read – they are freely available in eBook format). Besides that, hunger and read through the Bible (at least through the New Testament) until you have a good grasp of God's Word. This will form the foundation for the rest of your Christian life. Christ is the centre of all our Christian life and of all the readings in the Bible; I personally regard the life of Jesus and the words of Jesus as central to everything else in the Bible.

His life, His words, His principles, His teachings, His methods, etc, all form the basis of our Christian life.

When we have succeeded in the above, something becomes a reality within us – the nature of Christ. Through desiring the Word of God and reading the Word, we partake of the divine nature. Through time, this divine nature begins to help us to hear Christ and resonate at the same frequency as Christ. Only as our nature grows mature and partakes of the divine nature can we begin to hear Christ better and better in our lives. All who are in Christ can hear Him but those who walk with Him and allow His nature to be a part of their lives hear better. At the solid food stage, we begin to handle and deal with that which is invisible to the world but which is eternal to us. Like Paul, even though the outward man is perishing, the inward man is being renewed daily and is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17). The solid food lifestyle, the mature Christian life style, is that which is no longer based on the physical and the temporal. We no longer look at things which are seen and physical but only at things which are invisible and eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18). We regard no one according to the flesh, but only the things of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:16).

By faith we understand that the things which are made were not made of things which seen which are visible but rather they were made by the invisible power of God's Word (Hebrews 11:3). We walk in the true and real world and reality which unfortunately is still invisible to those who are in the flesh. We become ministers of the Spirit and not of the law. Those who handle solid food handle the forces of righteousness which influence and affect the currents of the world. Through the forces of righteousness released through grace, the power of this world is subdued in Christ. For grace reigns through righteousness through Jesus Christ unto eternal life (Romans 5:21). Those whose senses are trained in righteousness, see the invisible Christ, hear the invisible Christ, feel the invisible Christ and obey Him. While others only hear the thunder, they hear the voice of God (John 12:28-29). While others only hear a sound, they hear the voice of Jesus (Acts 9:7; 22:9). Where others see drunkenness, they see the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel (Acts 2:15-16).

The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14). The Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' time had no idea of the importance of the time that they lived in; instead they made themselves the mockery of history in their rejection of Jesus. History is flowing today in this decade such that those who position themselves in God will be part of a mighty revival. Much is taking place in the Spiritual

realm, we who live on the physical plane of the earth need to hearken unto the voice of the Holy Spirit and of our Lord Jesus speaking unto us. The command to us who are busy like Peter on the mountain of transfiguration and wanting to build our little three tabernacles (one for Moses, one for Elijah and one for Jesus) is the same, “This is My Beloved Son (Jesus) whom I am well pleased, HEAR HIM!”

In Christ’s love,

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.22

Five levels of living the natural and spiritual life

Dearly Beloved

In the light of the world financial crisis, it is good to look at the Word of God to know that God's promises of provision will continue on those who continue to trust in the Lord.

In this world the question regarding the purpose of life is not frequently asked because we are more occupied with the "busyness" of trying to live this life the best we know how. The Bible also says that the devil is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4) who has blinded men to the light of Christ. As long as the devil succeeds in keeping people busy about their lives – food, clothing, shelter – he has succeeded in preventing them from having time to discover the purpose of this life. Although much of education is learning and acquisition of knowledge, part of it is also for the purpose of being able to get a better job or better earning abilities. Thus the decisions of many people in their careers (besides the good cause of their inherent desire and interest) are also partly influenced by how it would affect them economically.

Having been to the Spiritual World, it is strange because in the many schools in the Spiritual World, the purpose of knowledge and wisdom is solely to know and to understand and not to further one's career (as on earth). Thus in the Spiritual World, philosophy, life and its purposes, etc. are the favourite topics and not areas like trades or skills which are treated like passing fancies and hobbies. How opposite this life is from the Spiritual World life!

The question can be asked, why can't it be that this life could also provide for one's quest for knowledge and wisdom and understanding of God while providing for one's basic needs? From a study of God's provisions and promises in the Scriptures, it seems to be possible (Matthew 6:33). For verses like Matthew 6:33 and Psalms 23 were not written just for those who serve God fulltime in the ministry; they were written for every Christian to put God first in their lives. While acknowledging that each person must always be responsible for their family and provide for their loved ones and children, there seems to be five possible levels of living life on this earth.

1. Animal level.

The most basic level is to live merely for food, clothing and shelter – and have all of our lives revolved around these needs. This is life at

its most physical base. If possible, the devil would like everyone on earth to live at this level and forget about eternity or the hereafter. For this reason, he has slowly through recorded history manipulated the world system such that it now takes more and more time from dawn to dusk for people to just put food on the table. Life consists of living for the next day and earning money just to survive physically. Living, sleeping and eating is the day to day routine with no respite. Even the animals live at this level, every day foraging for their food. Even civilized people live at this level, the only difference being the quality of their food, clothing and shelter. This is no way for a spiritual person to live. Many thousands live and die with no concern for their spiritual purpose or eternal welfare in the afterlife. The book of Ecclesiastes finds this routine of life boring and vanity of vanities. The question to be asked is why are Christians (and some ministers) caught up in this trap? The following are some possible answers:

a) Greed for better food, clothing and shelter

Instead of being satisfied with what they have and living within their means, Christians get caught up in a never ending cycle of the pursuit of physical things. We are not opposed to Christians who have prudently grown prosperous and are faithful to God in their life and in their giving for whom the luxuries of this world are only a small percentage of their income, and who continue to do many good works in God and live spiritually honourable lives. It only becomes problematic when Christians who cannot afford such things overstretch themselves such that they have to work many long hours to support their physical acquisition of goods, leaving them with zero time to pursue their spiritual growth in God. It is Scriptural to live within one's means (Proverbs 30:7-9). Godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Timothy 6:6). Having food and clothing, one should be content (1 Timothy 6:7, 8). Instead of teaching Christians to learn to be contented, many Christians are wrongly taught to pursue more and more of the things of this world. The sad thing is that for the majority of those who do so, their lives may be full of worldly luxuries but become spiritually empty.

b) Love for the things of this life and the worldly status in this life.

Apparently, the Bible is clear that love for the world and love for God are highly incompatible (1 John 2:15). God is not opposed to His people being prosperous and having the best in this world; but God is definitely opposed to people having the world in their hearts. Sometimes it is hard to differentiate the two types of

people for outwardly they seem to be the same but inwardly they are worlds apart. The test is whether one can do without those worldly things and whether or not, one is willing to use those things for God. It must have been a rich man who provided Jesus with the room for the Last Supper and also the donkey He rode on. It was a rich man who provided Jesus with the private tomb to put His body in after His death on the cross. Would the owner of a luxurious car (equivalent to donkey in Jesus' time) be willing for it to be used for ministry or those in need? Or the owner of a luxurious house (equivalent to the Last Supper room in Jesus' time) be willing to use it for the ministry or those in need? These are the tests as to whether one is still attached to those things. What would it profit us if we are to gain the whole world and lose our own soul? A part of our soul is lost in darkness when we are attached to the love for this world. The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other worldly things choke the word of God and make it unfruitful in one's life (Mark 4:19).

c) Pride of life

Pride of life surrounds itself with status symbols that bring worldly recognition. Many times, it is not the worldly things that one is after but what they represent that one is actually after. Perhaps they represent status, success, pride, recognition, etc which we cherish from the people of the world. It is possible to have all the blessings of worldly goods without the pride but the test is always in a person's heart which God alone can see. However, pride and all its sin does cause a foul smell in the spirit world which those spiritually discerning can see right through. If one is humble and meek, one will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). It is possible to have all the world without the world having us but it takes as much prayer to maintain a spiritual lifestyle surrounded by such luxury as it does surrounded by destitution.

2. Mark 11:23-24 level.

The second level of living life is to be able to learn to ask God for our daily bread and live a life of dependence on Him (Matthew 6:11). This dependence is acknowledged for everything in this life – job, work, vocation, food, clothing, shelter, etc. At this second level, one is still learning to exercise faith for food, clothing and shelter through prayer and faith in God. It is a good growth process and there is nothing wrong with exercising faith for physical things (like asking for bread in the Lord's prayer) as long as one asks within one's faith level (Mark 11:23-25). Most Christian teaching of

exercising faith for natural and physical things is living life at this level. It is a step in spiritual growth as one learns to exercise faith for physical things but it must not stop there. One can believe God for physical jobs, careers, cars, houses, provisions, etc. but these must be seen as only living at level 2 – a training phase in one’s spiritual growth and faith. There are three other levels to grow in. This level 2 phase is an important phase although it looks like spiritual laws have been applied for natural things and natural success. There is an acknowledgement involved in recognising that God is the provider of both natural and spiritual things.

3. Matthew 6:33 level. Read Matthew 6:1-34.

At this level, one has gone through understanding what it is like to pray and exercise faith for physical things. After some time, one is challenged to believe God for spiritual things and allow natural provision to take its own course. In fact, at the height of this level, one hardly thinks of natural things any more but is fully reliant on God to provide them. If there were any asking, it is more in the area of thanksgiving than an energising sapping exercise of faith through God. Entering into this third level is like entering into a rest where the natural does not become a struggle any longer. The muscles of faith in natural provision are so developed that its use is no longer felt as a strain any more. The evidence of people walking at this level is that:

- a. They show zero anxiety with the things of this life – whether in lack or in plenty. It no longer worries them or causes them anxiety.
- b. They have conquered mammon and only God is their Master.
- c. Unlike level 2 where most are giving tithes, offerings and living on the balance, level 3 people live on a percentage of their income and give the rest to God and to helping the poor and needy – keeping their treasures where neither moth nor thief can steal in the spiritual realm.
- d. Their needs are simple because they are more concerned with the spiritual things of life.

4. Abraham’s blessing level (Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:13-14).

At this level one is not so concerned with oneself as one is with helping and being a great blessing to all the families of the earth (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). Being the head is important not because of oneself but rather one becomes the provider for others in helping others have jobs and blessings. Most of those who reach this stage

are leaders over hundreds and thousands and are actually more interested in helping others in their level 2 to level 3 walk. They are often gifted with talents and abilities such that they open doors (through their own organizations or through directly helping others into their own pursuits). These are the Josephs and Davids who provide for their entire tribe or clan – but in the New Testament provides for a wide section of society – the kings and priests of the New Covenant. Sometimes, the organisations and foundations that these leave behind outlive them and continue to provide and be a blessing to many other generations after them.

5. The New Testament gift of giving (Romans 12:8).

This is a special New Testament gift of the Spirit. One becomes a financier in God's kingdom with the special gift of giving. Barnabas in the New Testament had this gift (Acts 4:36-37). Joseph of Arimathea was a rich man who also had this gift, being a disciple of Jesus (Matthew 27:57-60). Those who have this gift are richly blessed by the power to get wealth but yet become disciples of Jesus in the distribution of their wealth. They understand that it is God who gave them the power to get wealth to establish His covenant on the earth (Deuteronomy 8:18).

Handling wealth and money is an important part of the test of true spirituality. For how one uses money is also an indication of what one's priorities are. How one shares their blessings is also an important indication of how great one's love for others is. The question to ask is not whether God can provide great wealth and abundance but what we will do with it when it comes. When the answer to that question in our heart pleases God, it is a simple thing for God to cause His angels to bring those blessings along one's path. Though the times we live in seem to be filled with financial crises, in God these are only greater times to prosper in Him. As Isaac and Joseph prospered in famine, so shall the people of God today (Genesis 26:1, 12-13; chapter 41). Do not be alarmed when the time of famine comes upon the earth, for God always provides for those who are His and causes them to prosper as they place their trust in Him. However, we do need to move out from greed into generosity to move into God's abundance of provision.

In Christ's love,

Ps Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.23

God's love for us before the foundation of the world

Dearly Beloved

Lately, I have been meditating on God's love for us and it is good to share a little bit more of that wonderful vision of God's love for us. All of us who have come into Christ have the revelation within our hearts of the greatness of God's love for us through the cross of Calvary (John 3:16; Romans 5:7). Our understanding of this greatness of God's love needs to grow and expand in this life and in the next life (Ephesians 3:17-19). How and in what manner we grow in knowing God's love that passes understanding is still being revealed to all of us. In the light of this growth in God's love, we shall consider some of the areas of growing in God's love.

1. Knowing the love of God and Christ for us at Calvary (Romans 5:6-7).

As the Scripture reveals, there is no greater love than the unconditional love which Christ had for us when He died for us while we were yet sinners. We are greatly moved by His unconditional love for all of us. For those Christians who are struggling to be accepted in God's love, remember the following:

- a. God's love is unconditional. He loved us first before we loved Him (1 John 4:19). We do not have to 'try' to make Him love us or 'earn' His love for us. While we yet sinners and enemies of God, He loved us (Romans 5:10). Understand and absorb this revelation that it is God who initiated the love towards us while we were in our most unlovable state of being. If you understand this revelation, you will never ever 'try' to earn God's love any more. You know that He loved you in your worst state, so whatever you do now and whatever you become can never stop that unconditional love from always reaching to you.
- b. True love begins in God. In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10). True Christianity is not confidence in our love for Him but faith in His love for us. We live because we have faith in His love for us (Galatians 2:20). We are more than

conquerors because of our faith in His love for us (Romans 8:37).

- c. True love is an energising spiritual life substance that is deposited into our hearts when we accepted Jesus into our lives (Romans 5:5). It is this same energising quality of the substance of love that energises His substance of the gift of His faith in us (Galatians 5:6). Our ability to love God and others is due to this substance of His love being in us first (1 John 4:19).
 - d. God's love is the basis, the rock, the foundation behind all principles, laws and commandments (Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 13:8-10). Laws are the external expressions of principles. Principles are the expressions of God's attributes and nature. And God is love (1 John 4:8). Too many times, people apply laws, principles and rules within organisations and human societies without realising the foremost purpose of all laws, principles and rules is for the edification of the individual and society as a whole. Where love is removed from rules of order, we are no better than the Pharisees who neglected principles of mercy, kindness and love in pursuit of their religious laws. Even in the application of rules of order for conduct and correction, we are exhorted to apply them gently and meekly in love (2 Timothy 2:24-25; Galatians 6:1).
2. Knowing the love of God for us before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

One day as I was meditating on the greatness of God's love for us at Calvary, the Spirit of God took me into a realm before the foundation of the world and revealed the greatness of His love for us even before we were created or existed and at our creation and existence. It was a realm of glory that Jesus prayed about in His prayers (John 17:5). If the intensity of His love for us at the cosmic point of time at Calvary was great, the intensity of His love for us before the foundation of the earth and at our creation was quintillions times more! It was so great that it included our eternal future and even included the plan of Calvary in the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

- a. God does not just love us all generally in Christ but He loves each of us specifically (individually) and has a very unique and specific eternal plan for each of our lives (including also the portion of life on earth). It included the tenderness of His loving and detailed plans for our individual lives even before we had a life (Hebrews 4:3). All His plans for our lives were completed and finished in His book of life. We need to have faith in His plans for us. Before the foundation of the earth, we were chosen to be holy and without blame before Him (Ephesians 1:4). We were predestined to be His sons according to His good pleasure (Ephesians 1:5). God's special and individualized love for each of us is so great that He keeps a special unique book of each of us with detailed daily plans that were fashioned for us even before we were created (Psalm 139:16). He knew your name before you were created (John 10:3, 27).

- b. God's love for each of us individually led Him to specifically design and imbue us with our unique characteristics and attributes. We are first His workmanship before we walk in His works (Ephesians 2:10). We can thus declare that we are what we are by the grace of God within us (1 Corinthians 15:10). It is His predestination that we all become like Christ (Romans 8:29). Yet, we will all retain the uniqueness of our individuality in Him. There is no situation which He will allow you to enter where He has not already given you the grace or strength to successfully come through (1 Corinthians 10:13). With every situation, He has already placed a special strength and gifting which, when tapped, will bring you victory through Him. In His love, He has designed that you will succeed and not fail. The only people who fail are those who have yet to acknowledge and receive His love. Wherever His love is acknowledged and received, all things work together for good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28; Proverbs 3:5-6). All it takes to succeed in this life and in all eternity is to open up to His love and be in union with His love!

- c. The glory of Jesus before the foundation of the earth is the love of the Father before the foundation of the earth (John 17:5, 22-23). There awaits for us in eternity the greatest and brightest

revelation of God's awesome glory from before the foundation of the earth. It is the desire of our Lord Jesus that we experience this greatness of His love and glory. The greatest effect of this glory and love is that we will have the 'Trinity level' of union with God – the same union that Jesus has with the Father (John 17:21). This level of love and glory can now begin with the indwelling of Christ within us; with us being rooted and grounded in His love (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Only when we touch the love of God for us before the foundation of the earth can we understand and fully know God. The glimpse of His love for us through Calvary is but the beginning of a spiritual journey of the greatness of the eternal love of God for us.

May we grow to know God our Father through our Lord Jesus Christ by the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

In Christ Jesus,

Peter Tan

Fatherly Talk 3.24

Experiencing the Father's love from before the foundation of the world

Dearly Beloved

Many people have asked me how is the experience of the Father's love before the foundation of the world different to the experience of the Father's and Jesus' love at Calvary. Although both together would constitute the same love and many other future eternal experiences that we have of God's love would be from the same source and love, to us who are recipients of God's love measure by measure (until we reach the fullness of His love – Ephesians 3:17-19) each experience 'feels different' qualitatively. Of course, when we are in heaven it will be even more powerful experientially. It is like the hymn says that even if we have a thousand tongues, or even a million lives to live, we would not have but touched a drop in the ocean of God's love.

Qualitatively, the experience of God's love at Calvary was one filled with the compassion of God. In January 1986, after Jesus manifested Himself to me, I could not sleep for the entire day and during the following evening, I was sitting at the foot of my bed meditating on His message when a bright light came into the room and stood a few feet away from me. I could sense the presence of God and was not afraid. As I acknowledged the Lord Jesus and welcomed His presence, the light formed into the words 'Holiness unto the Lord' and when the words came near me and touched me on the forehead, I was in the spirit world looking down upon part of the earth. At that moment, I could feel the intensity of God's love. If you could multiply the compassion that you feel for those who are sick and suffering on the earth billions of times, that would be something of what it felt like. It felt like this love was just embracing the world and every single thing that was not in God's perfect Will was causing Him grief. Even if a small sparrow were to fall to the ground and die, God's heart would feel it and for me it hurt so much that I could barely stand it for a few minutes. It is humanly impossible for us to understand the sorrow and grief He bore for us because of His love. This sorrow and grief is caused by all the imperfections and things that are not in God's perfect Will. I cried and cried when I felt His great love for the world. I knew that what I had experienced was only a glimpse of what the reality of John 3:16 felt like from God's point of view. Every blade of grass and the birds of the air feel the love of God (Matthew 6:26-30). How much more should we, the redeemed of the Lord, know and feel His love and care for us (Matthew 6:30).

When God took me into the realm before the foundation of the world and showed His Fatherly love, I felt a joy like I have never felt in my entire life. It was more powerful than the joy unspeakable and full of glory that Peter talks about (1 Peter 1:8). It was more powerful than the joy of the Holy Spirit that fills us (Acts 13:52; Romans 15:13). Imagine the tender joy of a father or mother upon receiving their new born baby. Multiply it zillions of times and you have a glimpse of what the experience of the Father's love was like before the foundation of the earth (Job 38:4-7). The love was a joyous tender love bursting with life and brilliant glory beyond a googolplex of suns. It was qualitatively different from the feeling of compassionate love of Calvary. I am most certain that such quantitative feelings are only subjective to us, His creation, as from God's point of view it is the same love all the time. We do grow in our ability to experience all the different facets of His love. The Fatherly love of God when He first created us before the foundation of the world subjectively felt as follows:

1. There was a great tenderness, a great gentleness, filled with joy at our creation (Read in KJV for correct translation: Genesis 33:13 – Hebrew *rak* meaning *soft, tender* – 1 Chronicles 22:5; 29:1; Proverbs 4:3; Matthew 24:32 Greek *hapalos* meaning *tender*; James 5:11 Greek *oiktirmon* meaning *tender mercies*; Luke 1:78 Greek *splagna* meaning *compassionate mercy*; Ephesians 4:32). That same tenderness and care is still flowing from our God and Father. It has never stopped for we are still the apple of His eye.
2. There was great satisfaction and joy (no words to describe here, but a type of 'Fatherly *pride*' – apologies for the use of that word but human vocabulary has no good word to describe this aspect of satisfaction – this sense that we are the cream, the best, the ultimate prize of His creation, the best of the best that He takes joy in showing us around to all the rest of His creation). There is a sense of loving completion of the best of the best creation – finished from the foundation of the world (Hebrews 4:3). We are the culmination, the apex of all His creative work. Every human born on this earth has a vacuum in their heart that causes them to seek approval or recognition from their parents, friends, peers or society. This is because we have shut ourselves from experiencing the approval and recognition of our Father God. God was pleased with us and He saw (after the creation of man) that it was VERY good (Genesis 1:31). God unconditionally already approved of us in His love. Before the

foundation of the world, He has already made us accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:4-6).

3. There was a great Godly loving confidence (God's kind of faith – God's loving faith in us) that we will succeed and eternally be united with Him despite the varying potential free will paths that are open to us both on the earth and throughout eternity. God saw our past, our present and our future in all its fine details and with every innumerable counter choice that human free will has against the plan of God, God has an answer, a plan and a pathway which He has already planned ahead that will ensure that we will end up in Him and with Him. There is nothing that free will could choose that could outmanoeuvre Him. His omniscient love has covered every ground possible that we, His little babies, could choose. The way by which we can always find our way back to God no matter how dark and dim our free choice lead us is to start responding to His love. When we love Him (the only condition) ALL things (created by our free choice) will work for good (Romans 8:28). He has set it so that nether death, nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from His love for us, which was revealed in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39). He knew that we, His little babies, will one day grow and become more than conquerors through His love (Romans 8:37). The sense of that confidence is zillions of times more powerful than ordinary human confidence. It is as if it is already done because He has planned and determined it (by two immutable things – He Himself and His Word – Hebrews 6:16-19).

4. There was a great loving Godly delight that He had in the joy of showing us all of Himself and His creation. On earth we have a very tiny, tiny experience of that when we find joy in showing someone we love all the things that we enjoy, that give us pleasure, that make us happy; things that we find beautiful, places that we enjoy visiting, things that we enjoy doing, etc. that we delight to share with those whom we love. Multiply this feeling zillions of times and you will have an idea of what God felt when we were created before the foundation of the world. God takes great loving joy in showing us

His creation throughout eternity and for the rest of eternal life, He joyfully and lovingly and patiently reveals to us the majesty of His Wisdom and omniscience (Matthew 13:35; John 17:3; Romans 1:19-20).

In the light of the omniscience, the omnipotence and the omnipresence of God, what can we do, what should we do? The greatest and most beautiful response that you can bring to God is your love. For God in His creation of our free will cannot make us love Him; it is the most beautiful thing that we can do out of our fully fledged free choice. Every other offering that you bring to God is His in the first place – life, property, money, assets, talents, gifting, etc. – but when God created our free will, He gave us the choice to reject Him, to put Him last below His creation, to ignore Him, etc. When instead of doing these things, we choose and keep on choosing in ALL circumstances to love Him, it brings the greatest tender joy from the face of God. If we could say that God smiles (which is a little bit too humanising of God but we lack the vocabulary to express this attribute of God), the sweetest and most powerful smile we get from God is when we say to God – how much we love Him! The closest Bible expression is that God's face shines - smile is probably too human an expression - on us (Numbers 6:25; Psalms 31:16; 67:1; 80:3, 19; 119:135; Daniel 9:17). It seems from the number of Scriptural references that David was a man who knew how to make God's face shine (smile) upon Him. He understood that the way to God's heart is to love Him.

Romans 8:28 is a powerful Scripture that covers every possible circumstance that everyone can experience with the sure way back to God's grace and favour merely by responding to His love and loving Him. If it is so powerful when we are in adverse circumstances and outside of His perfect Will, think about how much more powerful it is when we are in God's perfect Will and we choose to express our deepest and fullest love to Him. Eye has not seen nor ear heard, the things that God has in store for those who love Him (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Tell Him a million times each day (not necessarily with words, of course, otherwise you won't have time for normal conversation) but deep from your heart, how much you love Him each and every minute of each day, of each week, of each month, of each year and throughout all of this life and throughout eternity.

Father God of our Lord Jesus Christ, we love you with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength, with all that is within us. Amen.

In Christ's love,
Ps Peter Tan