

GRACE *news*

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illustration by Tham Yoke Peng

"...A Living and Holy Sacrifice..." (Rom 12:1)

by Pastor Arnold Wong


"A believer is a 'living sacrifice', when he dedicates himself to God, which is reflected in a changed lifestyle and a new way of thinking."

When we think of the word *sacrifice* in the Bible, our attention is naturally drawn to the animal sacrifices prescribed in the Old Testament. It is noteworthy that these sacrifices were a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins. When Christ died once-for-all on the cross for sins, the Old Testament sacrifices were no longer needed (Heb 9:11-12).

However, this does not mean that the word *sacrifice* is no longer meaningful or relevant. In Romans 12:1 the Apostle Paul says, "Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy *sacrifice*, acceptable to God..." This raises some questions: "What does it mean to be a living sacrifice?" and "How is this manifested in a believer's daily life?"

A *sacrifice* is defined "...as anything consecrated and offered to God". A sacrifice represents the total commitment of one's life and activities to God's plans and purposes. As a result of God's mercies shown to them, everyone who has placed their faith in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection for their salvation from the consequences of sin should surrender themselves totally to pursue God's plans and purposes.

This surrender reveals itself in a believer's changed way of behaving and thinking. This becomes clearer in verse 2, which in the New Living Translation says, "Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world..." A summary of the guiding principles that govern the world's behaviour and customs is found in 1 John 2:15-16, "...the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life". These can drive us to give in to sinful cravings to satisfy physical needs, and draw attention to the sinful lusts of man's covetous and envious nature and the sinful desire to live a proud and pretentious lifestyle. These ways of behaving and thinking must be "...transformed by the renewing of your mind" which happens as God's Word changes and controls our thinking.

A believer is a "living sacrifice", when he dedicates himself to God, which is reflected in a changed lifestyle and a new way of thinking. 



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SACRIFICE? NO, IT'S A BLESSING

Grace News interviewed four members to find out what sacrifices they may be making, or have made in the past, to contribute to the church building programme. We were humbled to realise that despite considerable contributions, all of them regard it a privilege and a blessing to be able to serve God in this way.

A Member in his Late Fifties

I was a young adult who had just started working in the early 1980s when GBC embarked on its first church building project. As a new entrant in the job market my salary was not very high, and I could only give a little towards the church building fund at that time.

Over the years the Lord has blessed me with a steady job, and in the last few decades He has helped me to prosper. I see it as an honour now to be able to contribute and present to God a portion of what He has so abundantly blessed me with over the years. The amount I have pledged to give is significant in that it does consist of a large chunk of my retirement nest egg. However, compared to what God has so graciously blessed me with, it is nothing. Of course, in terms of absolute amount one can think of how much one could buy or how many personal needs one could meet with that amount, but as we see it from God's perspective the truth is that all the money we have on earth is only temporal.

I am sure God can move people to give towards His purpose and ministry. I am thankful that I can be a part of this purpose. It is with a spirit of gratitude that I am giving and so I do not see it as a sacrifice.

Grace Baptist Church is my family and we have a clear responsibility to share with others for His glory's sake.

“ Grace Baptist Church is my family and we have a clear responsibility to share with others for His glory's sake. ”

Huang Wei Quan

When Hui Jing and I first considered contributing financially to the church rebuilding project, we had just spent a considerable amount of our savings on our new home and we also had to set aside the medical expenses for Kayla's birth as well as the costs associated with providing for her. After discussions and what we thought was prudent planning of our resources, we did arrive with the minimum amount we are committed to give with the possibility of more if we find ourselves able to in the next couple of years. We also considered and are committed to accepting the inconveniences that may result when GBC moves off-site, for example the additional time we may need to spend travelling and the possibility of less adequate facilities, especially with the need to bring Kayla along. There is definitely a fair amount of uncertainty, but we reminded ourselves that we are in this together as a church and will make the necessary sacrifices and arrangements to adapt if required.

Part of the uncertainty that all of us face as we plan ahead comes from unexpected situations. When we first considered the financial support we wanted to commit, it was before Kayla was born. When she faced medical complications and mounting medical bills after birth, we did waver in our plan and wondered if we could or should still stick to the plan. As God led us through those trials, He didn't just keep Kayla safe and well, He even took care of the finances as well. Through financial subsidies and schemes, and help from social workers to downgrade Kayla's ward, the final bill for Kayla after four weeks of hospitalisation, treatments and surgeries did not require any cash payments at all. In the end, we could give financially to the church rebuilding as we had planned.

We really don't know yet what blessings we may receive as a result, but we truly believe that our sacrifice for the church is something we are called to do, and have to do. It was God who called us to GBC. It was God who sacrificed His son to redeem us. It was God who called us to a personal relationship with Him and provided so much for us even in this life. That should be reason enough for us to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of the church – His church. God has led GBC into this project to rebuild the church physically and spiritually, and we believe that we, being a part of it, will be truly blessed in due time.



A lovely new family: Wei Quan with his wife Hui Jing and their daughter Kayla.

Krystal Yao

To contribute to the church rebuilding fund, my mum and I decided to start selling personalised pens with words like 'love', 'joy' and 'peace' woven onto them. After I mastered the technique, I started getting special orders from friends. Using embroidery thread, I weave their names, along with any icons they request onto the pen. All proceeds go into a special coin bank my mother has set up to contribute to the building fund. I don't feel like I am making any sacrifices because I enjoy doing such crafts. It's also just a joy and privilege to be able to contribute to the rebuilding of the church building – the place where I can worship God and the place my second family resides.

As I am in the midst of my school term, my greatest challenge for the project was putting aside the time to finish the pens. I still have yet to complete all the orders. While on this journey, I have met a few who were unwilling to contribute. However, I have been blessed by several generous friends who were willing to donate much more than the minimum price of \$3, which more than made up for any shortfall.



Some of the attractive pens with inspiring motifs made by Krystal to raise money for the church rebuilding.

“ Praise the Lord who works in mysterious ways to perform His wonders in our lives when we commit to Him in trust. ”

Jimmy & Pat Chan

We wouldn't consider our contributions, whether in terms of effort, time or finance, as sacrifices per se. Rather they were privileges and sources of blessing to be able to serve in the church leadership and to share in the giving at that momentous period of our church's need.

I was involved in looking for suitable land. Scouring the classified ads frequently, I came upon our present land, which was then a metal scrap-yard. It was far away from our old church at Kg Silat and the city, but the proximity of the Macpherson HDB estate was a draw in terms of ministry and outreach potential. So our building committee went to work. The rest is history.

In addition to ongoing contributions to the building fund, Dr Poulson initiated the 'faith pledge' project to encourage members to stretch their faith by pledging something above and beyond what they had or felt they could give, trusting God to provide. There were many accounts from members testifying how God honoured their pledges and provided in unexpected ways.

For our family, in a miraculous way the Lord enabled us to give a sum from the profit of selling our first HDB flat and upgrading to a landed property. Let me elaborate so you can see that it was really the Lord at work. One day we met up with a Christian sister who told us that her neighbours, an elderly couple, were migrating to Canada and wished to sell their property. Although the thought of living in a landed property was very inviting, we really couldn't afford to upgrade due to my limited income and the fact that the church was in the midst of the building programme. Reluctantly we went to take a look. Though it was an old house, the location and land were very attractive.

After praying and reviewing our finances, we told the Lord that if He really wanted us to make the move, He had to convince the sellers to accept two 'ridiculous' conditions: 1) Our offer was conditional upon selling our HDB within one month and at a certain minimum price. This was so that we could have enough profit to put down the 10% deposit, a small budget to renovate, plus a sum to give to the building fund. 2) We would only make a \$1000/- 'serious intent' deposit which must be refunded to us if we couldn't sell the flat in time. The Lord enabled us to find favour with the elderly couple who after a long deliberation accepted our conditions. We proceeded to advertise the sale of our flat and sold it in time and at the price we needed. Praise the Lord who works in mysterious ways to perform His wonders in our lives when we commit to Him in trust.

As we face the challenges of the current rebuilding project, we would likewise want to exercise our faith to give according to the exhortation in 2 Cor 9:7 "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."



Jimmy and Pat with their children Daniel (left) and Mark, in a photo taken during the first church building project some 35 years ago. Young as they were, both boys saved their ang pow money to help buy 'bricks' in the new church building.



Without belittling the act of tithing, it is important for us to understand that we are to render ourselves to Him and His purposes. Our mind (intellect, gifts, talents) and hearts (affections) belong to Him. God wants more than our tithes.

Rendering the Image of God to God

Tan Yee Kiat takes a fresh look at the issue of tithing and asks if we have truly understood its deeper significance.

"Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matt 22:21b, ESV)

For a long time I have understood these words simply to mean 'pay your taxes and pay your tithes'. It seemed a straightforward application of the text and I gave no further thought to it, though it has always bothered me as to why the Pharisees 'marvelled' at Jesus' saying. What is so marvellous about 'pay your taxes and pay your tithes'?

Until of course, the Lord decided to help me gain a full sense of what Jesus is trying to say. The words that Jesus asked the Pharisees before giving this reply are crucial for us. To jog your memory, here is what Jesus asked:

"Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" (Matt 22:19-20, ESV)

What does this question have to do with the theme of sacrifice? Much in every way. The word translated as 'likeness' is the Greek word, *eikon*, from which we obtain the word 'icon'. That question may well be translated as "Whose image and inscription is this?"

It is only when we understand this qualifying question that we will understand what to render to whom. The denarius coin bore the image of Caesar and Caesar's inscription just as our notes bear the face of President Yusof Ishak and the inscription of the Monetary Authority of Singapore, indicating that they ought to be rendered to Caesar and the State of Singapore respectively.

What then are the things that bear God's image and His inscription?

It is us. What God wants is not so much for us to render tithes to Him but to give all of ourselves, the image bearers of God, to Him.

The New Testament shows us in a few places how to understand sacrifices post-Christ. Remember that the lambs offered as sacrifices must be without blemish? See how Paul writes in Phil 2:15: "... that you may be blameless and without blemish ..." That Old Testament description of lambs now describes people. Remember also how the burnt offerings are a pleasing aroma to God? Again Paul writes in 2 Cor 2:15: "For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing ..." The aroma also describes people.

The significance of all these things must not escape us. Without belittling the act of tithing, it is important for us to understand that we are to render ourselves to Him and His purposes. Our mind (intellect, gifts, talents) and hearts (affections) belong to Him. God wants more than our tithes.

And in doing this, we follow the One who sacrificed Himself to God. Jesus was the perfect image of God and He rendered everything to God. He was without blemish, the best possible sacrifice placed on the altar. And God certainly was pleased with the aroma that came from Jesus' sacrifice. To follow Christ is to render ourselves to God.

Ω



The DMF Taskforce consists of (from L-R): (back row) Pastor Oliver Chia, Elder Wee Thiem Heng, Ngo Thian Chye, Mok Chuan Hao, Elder Jonathan Yao, Leow Wen Pin, Richard Tan; (front row) Samuel Tan, Patsy Low, Neo Yi Ling, Carrie Chow; (below) Toshiyuki Mori and Tan Yee Kiat.

The Disciple-Making Framework Taskforce

When we confess that ‘Jesus is Lord’, we are saved (Rom 10:9, 1 Cor 12:3, Phil 2:11). This confession recognises that Jesus is our Lord who saves us – we are called to be disciples and to obey our Lord. Moreover, from our Lord’s Great Commission, we are also called to make disciples (Matt 28:19-20).

As part of moving Grace Baptist Church (GBC) towards her vision of becoming “a disciple-making church that transforms lives with the gospel and love of Jesus Christ”, the Disciple-Making Framework (DMF) Taskforce was commissioned on 18 January 2015 by the Pastors and Elders of GBC before the English Congregation (EC).

The DMF Taskforce, chaired by Pastor Oliver Chia, comprises 13 GBC members of varying demographics who are actively involved in different ministries in the church. These include the Worship Ministry, the Care Group (CG) Ministry, the Young Adults Ministry and the Christian Education Ministry. Samuel Tan and Ngo Thian Chye serve as deputy chairpersons to assist Pastor Oliver in leading the team. There are also two Elders on the Taskforce, Wee Thiem Heng and Jonathan Yao. The secretariat consists of Patsy Low and Neo Yi Ling.

Together with the help of the English Congregation (EC) leadership, ministry leaders, and input from church members, **the Taskforce seeks to develop a framework to embed a culture of disciple-making into every EC ministry at GBC.** By doing so, the EC leadership seeks to further grow GBC towards our vision.

As a key part of building up this culture of disciple-making, the EC leadership has identified the Care Group (CG) Ministry as a key enabling ministry. This is because **the CG Ministry serves the widest range of adults in GBC and thus has the potential to serve all other ministries.** Hence, the Taskforce will propose concrete

plans for integrating disciple-making into the CG Ministry. This will include changes to the way CGs are currently run or how CG leaders are trained to promote disciple-making. The Taskforce will work closely alongside the EC leadership team to ensure that the framework is driven and grounded upon sound biblical principles. Please continue to partner us in prayer as we serve the church for the glory of Jesus Christ in GBC! **Ω**



17 Jan Enjoy Ministry - Kampong Glam Heritage Trail

As some of our members wandered through Kampong Glam, they were amazed at how through the vision of one man, Sir Stamford Raffles, early Singapore was transformed from a fishing village into a trading hub and a community of diverse ethnic groups. A look into history became an opportunity for present-day friendship and fellowship as our members bonded over a shared interest in the past.



22 & 29 Mar Block Visitation

All ready for block visitation! On 22 and 29 Mar 15, GBC volunteers reached out to the MacPherson neighbourhood by going door to door to issue personal invitations to our Easter celebration.

24 Jan Young Adults Ministry - Cycling

The Young Adults Ministry (University students and NS men) had a revamp of the care group structure this year. They are now meeting three times a month instead of twice. One meeting is given to Bible studies in small groups; one to a combined gathering for worship, prayer, teaching and discussion; and the last for fellowship – either with one another or with other groups in church or to serve others in the community. They went cycling at East Coast for their first fellowship activity in 2015.



20-21 Mar Melaka Sunrise

"The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork." Psalm 19:1

37 members headed up to Melaka for a wonderful time of worship and fellowship, including a special sunrise service with the youths leading the worship while Ps Arnold preached from Psalm 19. We thank and praise God for His glorious creation! Participants also thoroughly enjoyed a cruise along the Melaka River, taking in the cultural and historical sights along the way.



28-29 Mar Mission Weekend - Love Your Neighbour

Over two days participants were challenged by our guest speaker, Tim of Pioneers, to be doers of the Word, as he shared with us the exciting work in East Asia and urged us to commit ourselves to a missional lifestyle. He reminded us that while every promise of God is for us to keep, it is just as important for us to obey every commandment. Workshops and booths from different mission organisations were also set up to share with us how we can play a part in praying, participating and partnering with missions.



Impact of Kairos

GBC will be adopting the Kairos Course over a period of three years as of 2015. It is hosting its first Kairos Course every Saturday from 1 to 4 pm, 11 April to 30 April. The integration and graduation day is on 6 June from 9 am to 4 pm.

Nine GBC members attended the course held at Calvary Baptist Church in 2014, and all felt that this course could help support the spiritual awakening of our members in mission and would also reinforce GBC's mission of making disciples. Two of them shared how the course has impacted them:

“ The theology and practice of missions is undergoing rapid changes in this century and every believer, new or mature, will have their perspectives on the Great Commission transformed by the Kairos Course. ”
- Tony Chan

“ Learning of God's plan to reach the nations that started from creation has helped me to better understand the privilege of being blessed by Him. This course has made me realise that there are abundant opportunities all around me to be a part of world missions, and provides a lot of useful and practical advice on how to go about supporting this effort. ”
- Neo Yi Ling

In addition, **Teh Seng Chuan** has also introduced the course to the churches in China and in his update in January 2015, he shared how the course has impacted the churches there:

“God is doing an amazing thing here. Last week we ran a Kairos Course (5 days) in Northern Jiangsu for the '3-Self' Church, with 105 participants, mainly church leaders. This week we are running the course in the same city but for the House Church, with 53 participants, mainly leaders. Last Saturday we organised a Kairos Course alumni meeting (we have conducted the Kairos Course in this city many times) and nearly 200 people came. There are many in the city who are excited about missions but do not know how to put their convictions into action. A small group of leaders is coming together to plan strategies and organise ourselves, so that we can combine our resources and put these convictions into action. Appreciate your prayers. Thank you.”



Kim Cheng sharing about how the course impacted him and describing possible strategies to be implemented in GBC.



Sacrifices of the Heart

Often, it is the sacrifice of the heart that God desires (Ps 51:16-17). What greater sacrifice than the one our Lord Jesus Christ bore for us on the cross? As we imitate our King, the sacrifices we willingly undertake in pursuing Jesus matter in how they direct our hearts towards Him. Here, some members of GBC share about what they have given up, taken up, or willingly struggle with for the sake of the cross.

"When I had to leave Singapore to help set up ACTS (Australia Cross-cultural Training School), my dog Benji was 14 years old, blind and deaf. I could not bring him with me due to his poor health and it was just too expensive. I told the Lord to take the dog 'home' so that I could at least personally say 'good bye' but that did not happen. Eventually I put him into a pet home at \$350 per month. I told myself that my priority was God's work and to be careful not to let my affections for anything hold me back from following Him. Two months after I arrived in Sydney, I received a call that Benji had passed away. Because I was anticipating this to happen, I had given the pet home my red T-Shirt and told them to wrap Benji with it, to symbolically represent my carrying him to the end."

– Sylvia Chong

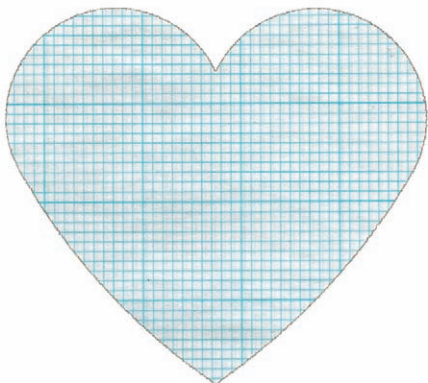
"I am learning to make a conscious, daily effort and commitment to follow Jesus by showing love to those around me. It is especially difficult at the end of a long day, or when I am busy, and sometimes the opportunities to serve others pop up unannounced. But these moments teach me to confess my own inability to love, and allow me to learn to trust Him for the strength to do so."

– Bibianna Yeo



"Joining the CG-SDS Ministry Skills Training is a new spiritual exercise for me. Initially I hesitated to join because with my hectic work schedule, I was not sure if I could cope with the long assignments and readings. However, as I realised my limitation in interpreting the Scriptures correctly I took a bold step to join them in being equipped with the skill of doing so."

– Dan P Rodis



"Having decided to go into full-time ministry, I have been reading more theological and practical Christian books to help me in my new responsibility. I have not done this in a long time. Learning from Christian authors is enriching. My thinking is sharpened as I grow towards maturity and am pointed to God and His Word."

– Carrie Chow

"The death of both my parents in a car accident initiated an interest in my roots. This led to visits to my ancestors' place of birth in Kuching, and the 'Chan Village' in Zhao An, Fujian. Fresh impetus came in 2014 when I was invited to write a chapter on my roots in a book soon to be published. A sermon I had heard on 'A New Generation' impacted me to journal aspects of my own journey with God, for the new generation of the Chan Clan. This will cost time and effort. May God help me to complete this new venture."

– Eric Chan



"Since the start of the year, my best friend and I have committed to weekly meet-ups to study God's word together. We thought it'd be good discipline, nudging one another to take time out to spend with God during our busy schedules. Pray with us as we learn to keep up with this practice. (Heb 4:11-12 ESV)"

– Rachel Chua

