

Rochester Chinese Christian Church

ECHO

June 2006 Volume 24 No. 1



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Rochester Chinese Christian Church
Three-Year Plan (2005–2007)
Main Emphasis: Outreach And Evangelism

2005

Motivation - Focus on equipping our people

Theme: **You Will Be My Witnesses**

Theme Verse: Acts 1:8

Goals:

1. Equip every person for short-term missions
2. Every church member serves in at least one capacity
3. Identify outreach ministry groups

2006

Mobilization - Focus on reaching out to the unsaved

Theme: **We Must Preach the Gospel**

Theme Verse: Mark 13:10

Goals:

1. Support and send out at least 30 short-term missionaries
2. Every person brings at least one friend to church
3. Mobilize outreach ministries

2007

Multiplication - Focus on assimilating newcomers

Theme: **Lord, Send Out Workers!**

Theme Verse: Matthew 9:38

Goals:

1. Every person has a short term missionary experience
2. Send out at least one full-time worker from RCCC
3. Multiply outreach ministry members



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English Sunday Worship
9:30 am

中文主日學
上午九時三十分

English Sunday School
11:15 am

中文主日崇拜
上午十一時十五分

Rochester Chinese Christian Church West
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主日崇拜
Sunday Worship
下午 4:00 - 5:15 pm

主日學
Sunday School
下午 5:20 - 6:15 pm



I Will Do My Part

Pastor Herman Tang

The most effective way of evangelism is through reaching out to individuals by individuals.

Like LEGO

Since I grew up in the country side, I played with snails, frogs and butterflies. These little living things were my "toys". Therefore I knew very little about children's toys. But I do remember LEGO. I clearly remembered the first time I played with LEGO bricks, I was fascinated by this toy. Years later I saw some LEGO exhibits in the Ontario Place in Toronto. I was just amazed to see the objects made out with these tiny pieces of LEGO bricks. I think we all are familiar with the LEGO bricks. With their knobs and holes, they can be easily joined together. By linking the pieces together, even houses, ships, planes and different life-size animals can be constructed.

As I think of outreach and evangelism, I can envision individual Christians as LEGO bricks. When each individual Christian reaches out to a few other unsaved persons, shares the gospel with them and by the grace of God, leads them to believe in Christ, the number of God's children will definitely be multiplied.

The Bible says, "*You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*" (1 Peter 2:5).

Importance of Personal Work

Basically there are two kinds of evangelism: Mass Evangelism and Personal Evangelism. If we consider it further, even Mass Evangelism depends on the personal relationship of individuals to make it successful. Without the individual Christians' personal invitation of their unsaved friends and relatives, a Mass Evangelism meeting would not be effective.

The value of personal work cannot be underestimated. If our church really wants to be effective in saving the lost, we need everyone in

our congregation to participate. Evangelism is one of those spiritual ministries that a Christian cannot avoid by simply saying "I do not have the spiritual gift". Every Christian has to do it. We all have to do our part. You do not have to be an evangelist like Billy Graham in order to share the gospel with your friends. You can be like a LEGO brick which can grasp onto a few other people and bring them into the body of Christ.

God's Clear Command

I believe that the Lord has clearly commanded every Christian to get involved in doing the personal work in leading the lost to Christ. No one can deny this fact if we can simply heed these Bible verses.

1 Corinthians 9:16-17

¹⁶ Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷ If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.

Romans 1:14-16

¹⁴ I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. ¹⁵ That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome. ¹⁶ I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Our Lord Jesus was a great personal soul-winner. He shared the good news with Nicodemus, the Woman at Sychar in Samaria, Matthew, Zacchaeus and many others. The apostles and the Christians in the early church made a great deal of efforts in doing personal soul-winning. (Acts Chapters 1-8).

The Lord is good! His Holy Spirit has been using some of our Brothers and Sisters to bring their unsaved relatives and friends to church in the last few months. As a result, some of them got saved in wonderful ways.

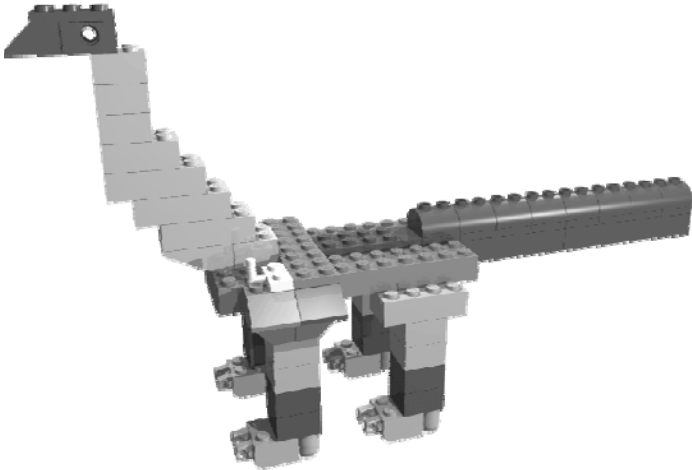
A Song

I have learned this old song by Charles W. Naylor. It always encourages me. Let me use it to encourage you.

I Will Do My Part

It may be little that I can do,
Nor may I have much to say,
But in that little I mean to be true,
And do what I can today.
From the depths of my heart I will do my part
With a ready and willing hand;
And I will not shirk, I will faithfully work
In the place that my Lord hath planned.

One of the 2006 church goals is: Every person brings at least one person to church. Are you doing your part?



Just Shine It

Andrea Dye

A few weeks ago, the editor of ECHO asked me to write an article for the magazine, and I've been thinking for a while about what I should write. Reflecting back allowed me to realize how much Christianity influenced my life. After accepting Christ two years ago, my life remained on autopilot. This past winter, however, there were recent events that helped me realize his control and His presence.

This year was my third year as an RIT student, which meant working on my first co-op. I was due for my first co-op in the winter quarter, and was fortunate enough to find one in East Syracuse, NY. Being on co-op meant putting 8 hours per day into work, and then having the rest of the time to relax. Since it was an hour and a half from home, I was able to go home during the weekends. I was back in Rochester when I ran into a friend (who wasn't a Christian) I met a year prior while hanging out with other RCCCF brothers and sisters. We got caught up briefly on life, and then he asked how RCCCF was going. We talked about it for a little bit, and then started talking about Christianity. We then agreed that we should get together sometime in the near future to pursue the discussion further. When we got back together the next time, he pressed some difficult questions from a very intellectual perspective, which I was trying to answer myself as well. At the end of our visit, I felt pretty raw about my knowledge and what I knew about Christianity. It was then I realized, it was my wake up call to shape up my relationship with God.

A few weeks later, a co-worker at work and I were exchanging a few e-mails because I was new, and it was a friendly gesture. Oddly enough, we never talked face to face, rather we communicated through e-mail. Somewhere along those e-mails, Christianity came up. I said that I am definitely open to new ideas, so we agreed we could discuss our stance on the Bible; I was for, he was skeptical. It wasn't too long before the few lines became a page long, and I decided that it was no longer work appropriate, and gave him my private e-mail address. In the process, I realized that he pulled random passages from the Bible, and used them out of context. His wording was just downright strange, trying to sound intellectual. It was definitely frustrating, also because I was getting bored at what he had to say and reading his response took so much time. I had my brother read his response, and got him to scratch his head. I wanted to ignore his responses, but felt as though I was obliged to

respond. Whatever paragraph arguments I gave, he picked it apart sentence by sentence believing he was being skeptical of the Bible. I kept on mentioning that his argument was way out of context, but he continued to argue in the same manner.

Finally, the annual college retreat came up. The speaker preached about two-faced Christians in everyday life, providing biblical examples of models we should be following. He mentioned that we should not be two faced; rather we should be one faced in our belief and that we should wear our Christian identities proudly. More applicably, the example that stuck with me was when he used General Von Zeeland as an example of a one-faced Christian. He was a Prussian general under King Frederick the Great. Zeeland willingly stood up to his faith when the king made a crude joke. Zeeland said, "Sire, you know I have not feared death. I have fought and won 38 battles for you. I am an old man; I shall soon have to go into the presence of One greater than you, the mighty God who saved me from my sin, the Lord Jesus Christ whom you are blaspheming. I salute you, sire, as an old man who loves his Savior, on the edge of eternity." When I returned back to Rochester, and then back to Syracuse, I decided that I'd give it another shot with this co-worker.

This time, I really felt the Lord's presence with me. I keep my cool, which in returned caused the co-worker to get angry in his response. A few responses later, it finally came to the point where he mentioned something as 'crap' in one of his e-mails; I finally snapped. Before I attempted to respond, I went outside for a power run to vent, and then responded stating that we were getting nowhere, and his choice of word was very poor. I then told him that I would no longer respond to his arguments and I'd provide my point of view for his taking or not. In his next response, he mentioned how he was deeply hurt. I pursued in reminding him that it was only a discussion and I was only coming from a discussion-based point of view. That was the end of the response of our communication in any form.

After this experience, God's presence is prevalent more than ever. It was definitely a learning experience. It was unfortunate events turned out the way they did, considering this co-worker got along with the previous two co-ops before me that were in the same cubicle. It is also unfortunate his image of Christianity most likely has not improved; rather it has most likely worsened. I learned that one has to really open up to the Holy Spirit rather than keeping scopes closed at a secular point of view. My personal relationship

with God also improved as well, seeing as to how we're tighter buddies now.

It is a blessing to have faith in the Holy Spirit. Shine it proudly every day.



Experiencing God In The Midst of Growing Pains

Young Senior

When our esteemed editor referred us as “young seniors” to write something to share in ECHO, we felt flattered. In your 70’s, your body lets you know you are not young! As for sharing, we often commit the sin of repeating ourselves!

Looking back we are amazed at God’s grace and patience with us as we stumble along in our Christian walk. Facing trials, testing, backsliding and temptations are all too many to be counted. No one welcomes trials and hardship, but when you weathered through them, you can see the silver linings and blessings behind each one of them. Without them, we cannot grow by leaps and bounds in our faith, knowing God in a personal way and be more mature.

We recall the time we face unemployment. When we focused on the unknown and insecurity, our emotions went through a roller coaster ride, missing all the signs that God's hand is holding us up. Specific verses from the Scripture, hymns, the beauty of early spring with new leaves peeping from barren branches after a hard winter, concerns and caring from friends, both Christians and non-Christians, are some of the ways God show us His presence is with us.

Little by little we learned to trust and submit ourselves to God. Submission was the hardest lesson to learn. When we first settled in that mid-size city after graduation, we thought we would be there for the rest of our lives. Three years later we bought and built our first home. Much thought, planning and work went into it and it was difficult to uproot from our comfortable surroundings and friends.

Through an unexpected lead, a job offer came from Rochester. After joining the company, we learned that job opening was the last one in the company before a hiring freeze was implemented. Throughout the years, there were almost yearly downsizings and the specter of unemployment again reared its head. We were able to use these opportunities to teach our child to trust and to rely on God, knowing all that we have comes from God, including the means of our livelihood.

As we learn from our Sunday school lessons, there are correcting storms, directing storms and perfecting storms in our lives. By natural instinct, we would want to avoid them as they would cause us pain and anxieties, but we have learned to embrace them, knowing God's sufficient grace will always be there to steer us through. The most precious part is the first hand experiences of God's words and promises coming alive in our lives in such a personal way. We will not trade them with anything .

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials. Knowing this, that the testing of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing." (James 1:2-4)

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are excercised by it." (Hebrews 12:11)

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench;" (Isaiah 42:3)

A Piece of RCCCF

Daniel Hu

Exactly what constitutes a fellowship? Everyone knows the Sunday school definition down to the letters. It occurs when more than two people gather in the name of God, and are therefore in His presence. What defines RCCCF, the college fellowship then? Now the answer wavers and the line blurs. Is it the people? The fellowship entirely changes hands every four years; it absorbs new blood; it lets go of the graduates. Is it God's presence? How is that different from any other fellowship? Is it the way we study the bible? The way we hold our Sunday school? The format, the focus, and the methodology all change more than once to remain effective with different make up of the group. Is it the way we interact with each other? The answer to that is obvious, as it is ever changing as well. Just about the only things unchanging in the fellowship are Uncle Johnny and Auntie Shirley, and the fact that they prepare refreshment afterwards, sodas and chips, always. After all, is it just a name—an acronym that even old timers cannot remember for sure? (Is it two 'C's or three?)

I have never planned on being so involved with a fellowship when I attend college. I have imagined my college life to consist of friends, recreational activities, occasional studies and perhaps church and fellowship on the side. God doesn't take any chances. I have been completely oblivious to the road God has been paving to bring me to RCCCF until I look back now. Before school even starts, He brings me to Auntie Shirley. Before the first semester is over I am taken into a small English speaking fellowship—the English division of RCCCF. We all fit into one van (a normal one); we hang out every weekend; and we would study the word of God every Friday night together and devour it like beggars in front of a feast. Of course there are slow days, but generally the group has no problem whatsoever with having bible study every Friday night without a break. The group consists of, not surprisingly, relatively spiritually mature Christians, in the company of which I learned tremendously.

At the blink of an eye, they all have left. All of the sudden, we no longer have the resources for the same format of study, nor does the format of study remain effective and engaging for the new group. The size of the group quadrupled over the years, and intimate discussions we have only become more intimidating. Not many speak up during the bible study, and it seems like everyone can't wait for the study to be over to socialize afterwards. It is quite

a disheartening phenomenon. Eventually, to counter and alleviate the group size problem we move to small group discussions augmented with structured worksheets, and we are still in the process of regenerating the passion for studying the word of God. The transition of course is not without its own dramas, and the group has come a long way to where it is now.

However, I have had a hard time letting go. I have not realized that God has taken the opportunity to teach me about letting Him lead a fellowship in a direction where it needs to go, not a direction in accordance with my own preferences. I have always held onto the glorified past with my close friends in the fellowship, refusing to see the new group as what it is, not recognizing God's intention and direction for the current fellowship, and always hoping that it would somehow, in one way or another, return to that past. My longing for the past and my constant resentment, "it's just not the same anymore," have held me back from bonding with the younger people for a very long while, therefore preventing me from doing effective work for God in the fellowship. The more secluded I am, the more distanced I get, the more resentful toward the fellowship I grow.

It isn't until an old fellowship friend from before returned that I realized what is happening to my spiritual life, and that the nature and spirit of the fellowship remain, though God has a different intention for the fellowship now. Originally I have found the fellowship hard to work with as varying levels of spiritual maturity seem to be a hindrance to any attempt in devising an effective form of bible study. There are always uninterested members, and there are always unhappy people with the format of study. But, as I am told, I have been looking at it the wrong way the entire time. I can never just leave it up to God. I can never let go of what is passing, and what is ephemeral. On the one side, I have been prideful in thinking that I can shoulder alone what is the responsibility of God and the Holy Spirit. On the other, I have not realized that God has provided the work ground for me the entire time. Only if I have the will to carry out His will, only if I have the right heart to work in His field, all the seeds have been sown for me. I have only needed to reach out, and God builds relationships around me with a snap of his fingers. I do not even have to knock, and doors are already opened. I have never understood God's providence so lucidly and so personally. In my last semester at Rochester, God has given me more friendships, more love, and more joy than I have ever expected. Working with the fellowship in this last fleeting moment of my college years has taught me the joy and comfort in leaning on God, and letting Him lead me and the fellowship in a direction that

pleases him.

Learning to let go of the old isn't easy. Learning to embrace the new is harder. However, when we do leave our own comfort zone and do learn to have faith in Him rather in our own past, we will learn of what beautiful things He has in store for us, for God is infinitely more imaginative than we can ever hope to be. In order for the current fellowship to blossom, it is not only necessary to comprehend its past and its heritage, but also to understand its past as past, and to trust God's guidance presently. Though it is hard to disentangle our memories and our emotions from our present interactions and expectations, faith in God should be our guiding light as we live our every day lives instead of being captured and haunted by our past, no matter how glorious or how disgraceful it has been.

RCCCF is not just a name. It isn't just the people, past or present, nor is it just God's presence. It is the inimitable and reassuring air that surrounds and embraces us when we are together in God's presence; it is the intangible but certain, and contagious spirit that each of us possesses; it is an infectious and fervent passion for God that permeates the fellowship. When I first attend the fellowship, everyone seems so different that it is baffling how we even become a fellowship to begin with—disparate values, clashing visions, dissimilar habits. But when I look back, it is so clear that common yearning for God draws us so ever close to one another. While the flame has its highs and lows, it's always burning. While it may not be easy to see, but the seed of the flame has always been there, and I have faith that it always will. Some members in the fellowship feel dispirited because the fellowship seems stagnant and people seem disconnected. But it is only a cocoon before a great metamorphosis, and it can only be broken through prayer, active communication and the communion of humble and obedient hearts. After spending the last semester working with the fellowship, I have faith in both God and the fellowship that when each of the members graduate, and look back, they will no doubt see the same vision: God with outstretched arms, reaching out to us through the relationships He has prepared for us, and smile, as I do now, because I know, with certainty, that God is with me, and when I walk in His way, he will open the doors for me, always.

What “Purpose Driven” Means to Me

Sam Ng

Throughout our lives we work long and hard to achieve numerous life goals we set for ourselves. If I understand correctly what the psychologists tell us, the urge to reach these goals originates in our various needs as human beings—from the more basic needs such as things that sustain our lives, to more profound needs of humans to self actualize and fully realize one’s potential to grow and achieve. No wonder we, Christians and non-Christians alike, constantly find ourselves making resolutions and struggling to fulfill them. Goals give us a sense of purpose, and a sense of purpose makes us feel our lives are worthwhile and meaningful. One must always have a purpose and must overcome all kinds of obstacles to fulfill that purpose. To many, this is the formula of a meaningful life.

In truth, achieving a goal often gives us more than a sense of fulfillment; it also creates a deep void. Last year was a major milestone in my life, as I finally finished my PhD after six years of intense dedication to the end. I had anticipated my graduation for years, thinking that the day would be filled with momentous joy and pride. In some sense, my life in those six years had a clear goal—to absorb as much knowledge as possible and to pass all the exams and requirements for the degree as fast as I could. Working toward that goal gave me a sense of purpose, and I thought I was living a worthwhile life because I had a worthy and noble goal in sight. Yet, to my utter disappointment, passing my defense last July created little of the anticipated feelings, and instead aroused in me an overwhelming sense of emptiness and numbness. Rationally, I was grateful that God helped me accomplish the mission. Emotionally, however, I was lost and insecure. Now that the goal had been achieved, the sense of purpose had instantaneously vaporized. If working toward a goal promotes a meaningful life, achieving the goal destroys it. What is the antidote? I can think of two: Either one procrastinates so that one may remain in the goal-not-yet-achieved status as long as possible (and thereby avoids killing the “meaningful” life), or one may immediately set another goal and begin to work toward it. On the one hand, usually what happens in the former situation is that after a while the goal mysteriously disappears, and one finds himself/herself having to search for new goals later on. (Many of us do this every year with our New Year resolutions.) The latter case, on the other hand, brings frustration and further doubts to the meaning of life, as one realizes that no matter how hard one tries to achieve and fulfill, the need for self-

actualization can never be satisfied. (Think of George Eastman.)

Eventually, this dilemma leads me to rethink what a “purpose-driven life” of a Christian ought to be. What distinguishes between a Christian “purpose-driven life” and a secular one? Is it only that in a Christian one the goals are more “Christian”? But what exactly does it mean that my life goals are “Christian”? If I constantly set “Christian” goals and work to fulfill them some time in the future, will I not analogously get stuck in one of the above two scenarios?

Perhaps living a purpose-driven Christian life is not primarily about setting goals and fulfilling them. I believe that it is indeed important to have goals; sharing the gospel with certain people, reading the Bible within a year, and memorizing a certain number of Bible verses are all examples of venerable Christian goals. But the goals are after all not the ultimate purpose of a Christian life; instead, they are *means* that lead us toward that purpose. To me, God created me for a simple purpose—one that does not require forty days of studying any book written by man to be “discovered.” It is the purpose for us to be like Jesus, and all my actions and goals spring from this one purpose. I was created in God’s image, but I am a far cry from Jesus’ holiness because I have sinned. Yet, through God’s wonderful plan of redemption, my sin is covered by Jesus’ blood and I am counted as righteous like He is. And through Jesus’ grace and His words in the Bible I learn and keep learning to be more like Him *day by day*. This is a purpose with no tangible destination, for I can never be completely like Him. A purpose-driven Christian life is thus not defined by setting life goals and fulfilling them in any given time span, but by our *daily* involvement with God’s process of molding us to be more like Him. Every moment of our lives is part of that purpose.

In *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers gives us the following insight on Mark 6:45-42:

We are apt to imagine that if Jesus Christ constrains us, and we obey Him, He will lead us to great success. We must never put our dreams of success as God’s purpose for us; His purpose may be exactly the opposite. We have an idea that God is leading us to a particular end, a desired goal; He is not. The question of getting to a particular end is a mere incident. What we call the process, God calls the end. ... His end is the process—that I see Him walking on the waves, no shore in sight, no success,

no goal, just the absolute certainty that it is all right because I see Him walking on the sea. It is the process, not the end, which is glorifying to God.

Since completing my PhD and moving to Baton Rouge, I have yet to pinpoint my new goals. Baton Rouge still feels very much a layover, and my original plan to get involved in the student ministry of the Chinese church in Baton Rouge is currently halted at a roadblock. Though we await our next assignment, our purpose remains the same—moment by moment we are learning to submit and look upon God, to be joyful and thankful under all circumstances, and ultimately, to be more like Jesus our Lord in every way. I pray that we live out what God commands through Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 *“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*



WIJD?

William Leiserson

I assume you have all heard the catch-phrase WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?). A person considers whether this or that action is moral and asks, "WWJD?" It is a nice platitude and one hopes that it keeps people out of trouble by resolving perceived ethical ambiguities. But for all its uses it does not capture the essence of the Christian life. The Christian life is not equivalent to a series of ethical dilemmas to which the right question is always, "WWJD?". This question deals, almost exclusively, in the negative. One only asks the question when situations arise. It does not encourage an

individual to move outside of the imminent circumstances. To be sure, Jesus would move outside of his imminent circumstances ("We Must Preach the Gospel"), but this is not the context of the question as it is applied. As has been stated, one discovers an ethical dilemma and asks, "WWJD?", thereby concluding (usually) one of two alternatives.

Of course, it does not help merely to complain about the particulars of Christian pop-culture. What is the alternative? Is there a question a Christian can ask that will provide a meaningful response in the face of the Christian life?

It might help to analyze what is meant by, "the Christian life." As Christians, one has an obligation to avoid sin, but this is only incidental (bear with me, here). Sin is not the object of the Christian faith. Saying one ought not to sin is, again, merely stating things in the negative. The positive is, "One ought to find the will of God and align oneself within it." The Christian life is equivalent to fellowship with God. That sin is avoided in the process is purely incidental. It is like saying, "stay out of the darkness." One becomes aware that a particular place is in darkness and moves away from that place. But that movement is not necessarily toward the light. Instead, God calls on men to seek out the light. Directing oneself toward the light is intentional, not incidental.

Therefore, a more meaningful question might be WIJD (What Is Jesus Doing?). When one identifies the work of Christ in the world, right now, one is empowered to align oneself with the will of God. So, what is the will of God? What is Jesus doing? Where is Jesus in the world? Clearly, he is in the places where there is suffering *"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; Naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."* (Matt. 25:35-36, KJV). This is where a Christian's eyes should be. In asking WWJD with respect to a particular quandary one may decide not to do a thing and yet stagnate. In asking WIJD in general, a Christian is not permitted to remain stagnate, but is required to act.

None of this is to condemn the condemnation of sin. Needless to say, sin has no place within the body. However, it is not enough. It is not the direction of the Church. It is incidental. The direction of the Church is to identify and engage in the will and work of God. Where, in the world, is there suffering? Where is your heart broken? WIJD?

The Death Row

Yan Cretacci

Inspired by a real murder case, Theodore Dreiser portrayed the life of a young man named Clyde Griffiths, in his famous novel: *An American Tragedy*. Clyde grew up with a sense of shame and rebellion towards his devoted Christian parents. He hated the fact that as a boy he had to go with them to sing Hymns on street corners and that they were very poor. His parents seemed always too busy carrying out their religious duties to pay attention to the children's feelings. Therefore, young Clyde determined to pursue success in society. Hired by his uncle to work in his factory, he fell in love with a rich girl, but in the meantime, made a poor girl, Roberta, pregnant. He plotted to kill Roberta by taking her canoeing on a lake. However, he never acted on his plan as Roberta, fearful of losing his affection, fell from the boat and overturned it while hitting her head. Clyde did not try to save Roberta and allowed her to drown. In court, Clyde argued that Roberta's death was an accident. Nevertheless Clyde was sentenced to death. Traumatized by the fact that his young life was soon going to end, he kept asking himself, "Is this it for me?" In great despair and urged by his mother, he started to read the Bible. He finally realized that he was a sinner and only Jesus could save his soul. Although he knew he could be pardoned of the death penalty by sticking to his lies, he decided to tell the truth and admitted that he was responsible for Roberta's death. In the statement he wrote, he regretted that he didn't give his life to Christ earlier and claimed that because of his newfound faith, he had won the true victory. In the end, Clyde went to the electric chair peacefully and willingly.

I love this story not only because it was very well written but also because it makes me consider life. We all start here on earth with birth and end with death. But is death our final destiny? If that were the case, our lives would be no different from other creatures. The truth is we are very different. We were created, as human beings in the image of our God, our creator. What distinguishes us from other creatures is that each one of us has a soul. We learn about our physical body through science and God's Word. However, only the Bible can teach us about our soul. It tells us that our life span on earth is so short and unpredictable that it is like mist (James 4:14), grass (Psalm 103:15), and a breath (Psalm 39:5). It is foolish to live a life driven by worldly desires since it will soon be gone like the wind. We should live a spiritual life rooted in Scripture that can lead us to eternity. How? According to the Bible, we have all broken

God's Law (Roman 3:23), so in God's eyes we were all "criminals" and that our offense has earned us a spot on "death row." Dr. David Jeremiah puts it this way, "we were all doomed." But our God is a merciful and loving God. He does not want us to perish. He gives us a savior and He is the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He died for us on the cross so that our names could be removed from the "death warrant" and placed instead, in the Book of Life (Revelation 20:12). By believing what Christ did for us, we identify our deaths with Christ on the cross and become born again with a resurrected spiritual life and therefore have eternal life. Contrary to life on earth, Christian life starts with death. But those, who don't accept God's grace by refusing to believe that Jesus died for them, remain on "death row" and will face the second death (Revelation 21:8), the eternal separation from God. Jesus said nobody could see the kingdom of God unless he is born again (John 3:3).

Dear friend, is your name still on the "death warrant" or in the Book of life?



The RCCC Family

Lyriss Pat

I accepted Christ three years ago, knowing that my life was forever changed. Now, even on my weakest, most self-indulgent days, when I am frustrated and angry by the path God has chosen for me, in the end, He always permeates into my heart. Even in my darkest moments, He always reminds me of the night He came to me, the night that He spoke to me loudly and clearly like a resounding bell. I will never forget what it was like the day after I came to Christ. It was as if the shroud that had been covering my vision for 20 years had finally been lifted and my perception of the world forever changed. I often contrast the experience of the re-born Christian with the loss of Paradise in the book of *Genesis*. After Eve bit into the fruit from the tree of knowledge, no longer could she or Adam perceive Paradise without a realization that they had *lost* Paradise. The remnants of Paradise were everywhere, but tainted by sin. Paradise in its perfect form was only a distant memory. But when people are re-born as Christians, accepting in their hearts the miraculous salvation of Christ, no longer can they perceive the world without a realization that they had *found* Paradise. Though sin is still pervasive in today's world, we can all trust that with Jesus, the shroud of sin can be lifted.

As I'm nearing the end of my college life, it is fitting that I look back and reflect on the past three years since I became a Christian. One of the ways that God blessed me the most was providing me with a church family who I could grow and mature with. In many ways, RCCC was my family. Like a mother, the church nurtured and cared for me from the time I was a newborn Christian. RCCC educated and enriched me by providing me with biblical and real-life examples of how to live. She also encouraged me to grow by gently pushing me to do things that were out of my comfort zone, such as sharing my testimony, playing on the worship team, and leading bible studies—all things that were highly uncomfortable for me, but undoubtedly helped me mature as a Christian. She comforted me when I was anxious about school and career by reminding me of her constant support of me, and she soothed my wounds from a sordid past by reassuring me and helping me rebuild my life.

Like a father, RCCC was a provider. He provided me with safety and shelter. If I was in any kind of trouble, I knew that RCCC would pray for me and help me in a heartbeat. He also provided me with food and transportation—so many times. Breakfast and lunch were

provided for me and the other students, with nothing expected in return. I also knew that if I needed to go anywhere, for any reason at all, someone from RCCC would take me without hesitation. Like a father, he also set rules and boundaries for me to live by, and held me accountable to my actions. He disciplined me with strict biblical principles and was righteously angry with me when I behaved in an ungodly way. Like a father, RCCC guided me, protected me, and loved me.

The RCCC college fellowship was like my siblings—my brothers and sisters in Christ. With our common RCCC parents, we grew up together, and built precious relationships with each other through our shared experiences. When I first joined the group, I had many older siblings who gave me counsel and provided me with living examples of Christ that I could identify with. Christianity became tangible through the college fellowship. It became concrete and real, not only for scholars and theologians who could argue and understand complicated doctrines, but available to everyone with enough humility to accept it. Christianity became comfortable, familiar, and accessible, and through my interactions with the college group members, Jesus became a part of my daily life. I found myself openly talking about Jesus to them, openly worshiping the Lord, and openly professing my faith. He became a part of my conversations, my thoughts, and my dreams.

As years passed and my older siblings graduated and parted ways, I found myself in an uncomfortable position. I became one of the oldest in the fellowship, which was initially very discouraging to me. I felt like I could not learn or be fed spiritually by my younger brothers and sisters, and I did not like having the increased responsibility that came with being the oldest. But God proved me wrong by showing me that age was irrelevant when it came to doing work for His kingdom. I forgot that throughout the years, God had also been working in my younger siblings' lives to mold and refine them. No longer were they the fresh and bewildered newcomers to the fellowship who lived footloose and fancy-free. The Lord blessed them with eager, earnest, genuine hearts to serve the fellowship, the church, and Him. In the last fellowship meeting of my entire college life, a list of all the potential leaders for the upcoming year was written on the whiteboard. Seeing the names of my younger siblings on the board was almost too overwhelming for me, as I realized how much God had moved and changed them, and also how much they had grown up in the Lord. It was as if I'd just witnessed the graduation of my own kid brother, ready for new challenges and responsibilities, preparing to move on with his life

and out of the house we grew up in; the same brother that I'd played with, laughed with, fought with, and took care of for years. The pride and joy I felt that day for my RCCC siblings prevailed over my mounting sadness that I would be leaving them soon.

Like all siblings, the college group had conflicts and disagreements, and truth be told, we were not always the best of friends. We sometimes had vastly different interests, as we were scattered across three different campuses with different degrees and majors, and came from different countries across the continent and different continents around the globe. And like all families, the RCCC family didn't always share the same perspective, as the members were all at different stages in life, with different occupations and career paths, with different roles and responsibilities, and with different backgrounds and testimonies to tell. But remarkably, it was the merciful, magnificent, perfect, piercing love of God that bound us all, the fellowship of Christian believers, together forever.

