

@connections

After the I DO's

By MELANIE SHIH

She slips nervously into her elegant satin gown adorned with sparkling sequins as she reflects back to the months of wedding preparation that led to this big day. Everything seems so perfect and amazing. As she walks gracefully down the aisle, the groom's heart skips a beat as he gazes at the beautiful woman he will soon call his wife. As the couple says their "I Do's" and leaves the altar as the newly wed Mr. and Mrs., the strings and bells resound at the church announcing the beginning of

a lifelong journey. Immediately after, they are met with the chorus of applause from the audience. But marriage doesn't stop at the altar. However, for many, the excitement of the wedding quickly fades as reality of married life kicks in.

"All you need is love, love. Love is all you need." is an old Beatles tune that echoes a lot of the sentiment of today's songs with just a spin of a dial. With such an overused word in many of today's songs and mass media, it soon begins to lose its intended meaning. Even with this thing called "love", the polls say that 1 in 2 marriages will end in divorce, not excluding those in the church. Feelings of love can quickly fade as the reality of life overshadows the initial heart flutters during the courtship years. The husband walks through the door after work exhausted after a long day of office politics. The wife had just endured a day of countless messy cleanups, doing multiple loads of laundry, trying to



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maintain her cool during her children's temper tantrums, and cooking a meal for the family. She couldn't help but try to straighten up her frazzled hair while attempting to mutter something loving as she greets her husband. Fatigue and frustration makes it difficult to love on some days. After a long day of household chores and caring for the children, it's hard for a wife to respect her husband when all he wants to do is come home and collapse on the couch. The difficulty can be compounded when both the husband and wife have full-time jobs.

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MY PERSPECTIVE

By Pastor JOHN CRANDALL

At the beginning of the year, I began a series of messages about being a "Great Church." While there have been a number of focal points for those messages, each has the word commitment in it. It takes specific commitments for a church to be great! Moreover, it is equally true that commitment is the

mainstay of our lives. This is where things begin to get complicated.

We have developed the catchphrase for church ministry: 20% of the people do 80% of the work. This is completely inconsistent with virtually every area of our personal lives. If we have a job, we have made a commitment. We arrive at work at the appointed time and do what we are required to do. Our employer is also obligated to pay the agreed upon salary and benefits.

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We have made a commitment if we are married. While most couples will say, “we got married because we were in love,” they actually recited “vows” to one another. A “vow” is a commitment. That not only applies to a marriage, but to all other areas of our lives. Scripture tells us that making a “vow” is extremely serious: When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it. (Ecclesiastes 5:4 – 5)

There are many other examples of “vows” or “commitments” that we have all made. Each of them is important and each has consequences when they are broken. That is no less true of our spiritual lives.

The curious thing is that some of us will say that we have made a commitment to be a “Christ-follower”

when we received Him as Savior. We will sing songs of sacrifice and devotion, such as “it’s all about you Jesus...” or “where you go, I will go...,” yet often fail to make the connection to our real life.

Here’s the bottom line: We are called to take up our cross daily and follow Christ. (Luke 9:23) Every day, we face decisions that reflect our commitment to being a Christ-follower. Our relationships, use of money, places we frequent, time we spend, and even our service within the church all express the level of our commitment to being a Christ-follower. The song “I Will Follow” says it well with these words: I will live for you alone, You’re the one I seek, Knowing I will find, All I need in you alone.

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Pastor John loves ma po tofu.

A Wonderful Christmas Present

By ANGELA LIANG

On December 19th, 2010, a 7 pound, 11 ounce bundle of joy was born into the Lin family. She is a baby girl named Allison Lin; her proud mama and papa are Billy and Cathy Lin. She is as cute as her older sisters Cara and Hannah. They absolutely adore her. Allison arrived just in time before opening Christmas presents with the added benefit of a tax credit for their 2010 tax return, the Lins jokingly said. They are very grateful that God gave them the privilege of being parents to three beautiful girls. It’s a joy for the parents to see the older sisters’ faces light up every time baby Allison flashes a smile!

Billy and Cathy were worried during the pregnancy that Allison would be born prematurely. There was also the fear of losing her. They took the doctor’s advice, and Cathy was able to take time off from work for bed rest. During that difficult time, they were able to lift up their prayers to God and hand over their worries to Him.

The powerful peace of God overcame their fear and anxiety. They were also greatly reassured

and encouraged by the love, care, thoughts, and prayers of brothers and sisters in the Chicken Soup family. They were thankful daily that Cathy could get the rest that she had long-desired during her years of working, as well as focus on seeing her pregnancy end successfully. She was able to find some quiet time to read and meditate, an answer to her prayer just a few weeks prior. God has an amazing way of answering prayers!

According to the Lins, Cara and Hannah are more independent now. The age gap between the girls is good because taking care of the needs of the older siblings are now more on an emotional level while Allison’s is more on a physical level. It’s wonderful for the parents to see how the sisters have grown as they witness the care given to Allison. They are learning quickly to multi-task, prioritize, and delegate.

Cathy is very thankful that Billy is such a caring father who tries his best to take care of everyone in the family. It wasn’t easy for them to give up certain activities before the baby’s arrival, but the rewards were



so worth it. They are looking forward to the experience of raising each child with their unique and challenging differences, striving to raise them up to love God and enjoy a relationship with Him. They feel blessed to have the support of a fellowship of parents with similar goals and values. The DVD series “Shepherding a Child’s Heart” and the book “Bringing Up Girls” have been a great help in giving them wisdom and know-how.

Billy and Cathy request that we pray for God’s wisdom and knowledge in teaching and guiding their children and the good health that they need to be available for them.

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Angela likes all kinds of seafood.

AFTER THE I DO'S *continued from page 1*

Is love really all that we need? Marriage has tragically been distorted by different cultural messages on what constitutes a normal family. This is where the Word of God needs to stand as the pillar of truth where love loses its meaning. In order to have a marriage based on God's truth, it is extremely important for married couples to be accountable to other married couples within the church. We do not stand alone. We need to encourage and strengthen each other so we can stand against what the world throws at us on a daily basis. It is because of this very purpose, in late Fall of 2007, Bob, my husband took the opportunity and the initiative to start a couple's ministry group. There were 4 couples --2 newly engaged, 1 newly married, and us "old-timers" who were the 4 yr. veterans of the group.

It's been almost 4 years and counting that we've been a part of this group with all of us married now. I must say that facilitating this group has been quite a humbling experience. A lot of the topics/ issues we discussed, we've also dealt with on a daily basis. God has been faithfully molding us and refining us year after year, as we

encourage and learn from each other. We discovered that many of our own struggles in our marriage were commonly shared and resonated with the group. We were not alone on our journey. The Lord met us each time and many of the principles that we learned from God's Word can be timeless and valuable to any marriage:

- Husbands need to love their wives and wives need to respect their husbands. (Ephesians 5:25-33). Husbands are



commanded to love because they are not wired to love as women are and vice versa.

- Men are wired differently from women in how they relate. The reward comes when we understand these differences and apply it in our marriage relationship.

- Marriage is not just about "me" or "you" or making each other happy but is centered on the Gospel, on

Christ Himself and bringing honor to God.

- Marriage is built on God's grace. Both partners are redeemed from their past. We learn to forgive because we have been forgiven. Sin no longer has a hold on us because we have the power to overcome it and bring healing in our past hurts and failures.

These are just some of the many lessons we have learned in our group that include many other practical tips on how to keep our marriages strong. For example from

the book "Love That Lasts" by Gary & Betsy Ricucci, God's Word was interwoven in a number of examples of how a husband can lead his wife in love, how a wife can walk in wisdom, how a couple can attain relational intimacy, intentional communication, and much more.

No matter where we are at in our leg of the journey, we have the tools to equip us on this road called marriage whether we are enjoying clear skies or enduring through the stormy or rocky terrains. So, "love is [really not] all we need." We need so much more than that.

 Melanie is connected to Chicken Soup Fellowship. Trying not to take life for granted as a mom and wife. Mother of 1 rambunctious 3-yr. old boy and another one on the way! Every day seems to get sweeter as the years together are growing.

The Bridge

by KEVIN CHUNG

The Bridge is a new fellowship group comprised of the former "Cornerstone" and "Charis" groups. It bridges the relationships of college students and young professionals for the glory of God. The focus of The Bridge is building strong relationships through small groups of no more than 4 members to foster genuine accountability and life-long friendships.

We are currently discussing topics related to the theme of living intentionally. Each week we tackle topics that affect our daily lives. Best of all, we are sharing our lives and encouraging each other as the day of the Lord draws near.

The Bridge meets on Thursdays at 7:30PM in Chapel 2. If your schedule conflicts with that meeting time and you are interested in joining a small group, we can help your group to meet at a more convenient time.

New Year Baptism



Interviewed by ESTHER CHEUNG

On January 16, 2011 we kicked off our new year with a unique baptism service in the backyard of our gracious sister Pauline Kao's home. It was a beautiful sunny day. I believe it was in the high 80s! With family members and close friends of the baptism candidates, there were at over 100 people in attendance from all three congregations. Connections provided a wonderful potluck lunch, including Auntie Nicole's icy green tea boba to refresh us!

Roxanna is a "regular" in Connections. Kristen Chen, Cindy Lam and Tammy Li are all college students. Kristen and Tammy attend Berkley, and Tammy is a student at Cal State LA. Kristen's parents attend our Mandarin services, and Cindy and Tammy's parents attend our Cantonese services. This was a wonderful celebration of what God is doing in their lives.

In an interview with Pastor John, while each had a unique story, they affirmed that they had indeed accepted Christ as Savior. Roxanna, for example, had done so in one of our services during an

invitation time, and Cindy's dad led her to the Lord.

Since receiving Christ, each woman shared the results in their life. Roxanna expressed her desire to "live a life that will glorify Him." She said, "I want my everyday life actions to glorify God and to bring me closer to Him." Kristen said, "When I accepted Christ, I felt so relieved and new. I was able to let go of everything that had happened and all the sins that I had committed." Cindy her reason for accepting Christ as "a combination of many things. But mainly, I felt God's love through the love of my brothers and sisters at church, allowing me to truly let me feel God's

presence." Tammy powerfully voiced her experience this way: "After receiving Christ, I discovered that I could lose everything in one day and God would still be there and care for me."

Each story unique, each experience distinct, and each of their lives belongs to Christ. They wanted to express that reality by being baptized in obedience to the Scriptures. They conveyed why baptism was significant to them personally, and Kristen may have captured it best, when she said, "Being baptized means being born again, and telling the world of my faith. And rejoicing in all that God has done for me."

A new semester at school is underway; let's remember to pray for those in college and for Roxanna as they continue their walk with the Lord.



Living Radically

By Pastor JOHN CRANDALL



The pastoral team and several church members attended the Radicalis 2011 Conference at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, CA. Pastor Rick Warren is the founder and Senior Pastor of this congregation that sees approximately 20,000 people attending each weekend. They come from all walks of life and from all ethnic backgrounds. In fact, there are over 70 languages spoken by people attending the services. Pastor Rick has focused on the spiritual development of those who have come to Christ for over thirty years. Radicalis fits that focus!

Radicalis is the Latin word for “from the root.” The conference is designed to challenge church leaders from across this nation and from other parts of the world to return to the basic truths of God’s Word in their personal lives and in their ministries.

Powerful and inspirational worship music led by Grungor, Matt Papa, and Jeremy Camp greeted the participants each morning to begin the day. Pastors of growing churches in the USA also presented equally powerful challenges from God’s Word. Then, Pastor Rick gave insights into a number of areas that deepened everyone’s understanding of what it means to be “radical” in living for Christ. Special seminars filled the afternoons.

They were designed to help participants gain practical help for sermons, worship, women’s work, children, youth, short-term missions, recovery, small groups, orphans, and serving with spiritual gifts. Everyone left with a new sense of urgency, expectancy, and faith to move into the next phase of our church’s journey for God’s glory.



calendar of events

March 6, 2011
Missions Celebration
Connections Potluck

March 9, 2011 Ash Wednesday

March 13, 2011
“God’s Word, The Bible”

March 20, 2011
“God is Uniquely Singular”

March 25 and 26, 2011
FECA Social Concern Conference

March 27, 2011
Guest Speaker

April 3, 2011
“God Works in Marvelous Ways”

April 17, 2011 Palm Sunday
“The Life and Death of Christ”

April 22, 2011 Good Friday

April 24, 2011 Easter
“The Resurrection and Return of Christ”

May 1, 2011
40 Days of Purpose

May 8, 2011 Mother’s Day
Special Message: Mother’s Day

May 15, 2011
FECA Pulpit Rotation

May 22, 2011
“What Am I On Earth For?”

May 29, 2011
“You Were Planned for God’s Pleasure”

June 5, 2011
“You Were Formed for God’s Family”

June 12, 2011
“You Were Created to Become Like Christ”

June 19, 2011 Father’s Day
“You were Shaped for Serving God”

June 27, 2010
“You Were Made For A Mission”

July 2-4, 2011
All church retreat

The Communications Ministry welcomes Melanie Shih and Esther Cheung to the @connections publication family.
*Thank you to all the contributors!
Graphics courtesy of shabbyprincess.