

A LETTER to YOUTHs



and...

*Parents May Peep
if They Wish*



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*And
PARENTS MAY PEEP IF THEY WISH*

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A Letter to Youths

Parents may Peep if They Wish

Dear Friends

You are probably between 11-19 years of age. Some of you came into this increasingly fast paced world just before the personal computer came into the familiar environment of the Malaysian home. Others came knowing no other social and technological milieu than what we have now. All of us are growing up (or old) at a time when the world around us is shrinking and changing faster than since she began.

However, I reckon that, probably, you won't notice this as much as the older folks in town do. Why? This is because the current stage of history is all you have. Further, back in 2001, a 18 year old teenager once commented, as he watched two five and six year old boys' unruly behaviour,

“Those boys are rather different from my peers when we were at that age”.

Personally, when I was in my late twenties, I thought that Malaysians had changed fast enough between 1971-1980.

Having left Malaysia at 18+ for further studies and work, and then, having returned as an adult 10 years later, I had time and breathing space to reflect on my changing homeland.

My husband and I were still childless. I learnt much by reflecting on joys received and errors made in the 60's while I was a teenager in good old Penang. However, when mothering took most of my waking hours, I had little interaction with teenagers until my own three children reached that stage of life. They were born between 1983 and 1988. In a way, each of them became adolescents overnight within a five year period, since the later half of the 1990's. Well, at least it felt like an overnight series of unending changes for me. Each one of the three somehow managed to take turns to change so much so that I have not yet been able to enjoy the irregular lapse between the yoyo of mood swings and hormonal fluctuations. I miss some of our more relaxed and happier days when I could adequately give attention to each of them at a time or all at once. This mode of communication is no longer totally acceptable now. Increasingly, their views demand attention for decisions concerning their energy and time.

Now, I am constantly caught up with their merry-go-rounds of loud music and the chit-chatting about friends in school the moment they step into the dining room. Mum does not seem to exist, at times. Added to this are those prolonged phone calls with shoes and clothing left at the most convenient corner and then also instantly and conveniently forgotten. I have had to view the world through their eyes many times over. This having to view things all over again not only has a somewhat deja vu and therapeutic effect on me but also a humbling one. I can no longer assume that the views of what my Mum and many of your Grannies used to say, as truth ... for example ...

*“Why can’t you be like us when we were your age?
We were so obedient even if we were boiling
inside! That has not done us too badly but made
us more disciplined in life!”*

Well, for one thing, it does not work as well with your peers as with mine ... we were, perhaps, I think, more sober (?) and filial. Even if our parents were wrong, we were more willing to comply out of respect for our elders. But before I make you mad or think I am out of touch with you, please let me write down some of my observations and conclusions of today’s young people in our nation. I want to let you know that I, together

with many other adults your parents' age and older, do think about you. We do try our best to understand you and to be understood by you ... even though we are often coming from our worldview, some of which may not coincide with yours. Humans are humans, whatever we may argue about hence, please lend me your internet lenses and astute musical auditory nerves. Here we go ...

Observations



Young people have more material resources than even 10-15 years ago. This is probably due to the economic boom years of the 90's in Malaysia. Though the economy has taken a steep dive, what consumer goodies that were available to the general public then, is still available today. Hence, those born in the 80's, like my children, already feel different from those born in the 90's ... what with the technological advances that have reached our shores since the 90's. My son, born in 1983, only had the TV and general knowledge books to entertain him in his preschool days. By the time he reached primary school, he used the personal computer and, by secondary school, the whole world was at his doorstep through the

internet services. Finally, with some help, I too learnt how to send and receive emails from my five overseas siblings. We have not lived in the same country since the 50's and the 60's and I missed them a lot. Snail mail was too slow and phone calls were just too expensive. But on that day, my deep longing to be with them evaporated! The internet has since brought us closer due to our faster means of sharing our thoughts. For a while, I really rejoiced and could not stop thanking God for the wonderful gift of electronic technology!



Money has brought the easier availability of daily goods plus technological advances. Without the television, we would not know much about who has more than us; without the internet, we would not get those goodies as fast. Sensual and material desires can now be easily gratified – at times too fast for limited mankind like us to handle with care.



However, with speed comes superficiality in communication for many. Why stop to think of deeper issues of human existence e.g. the meaning of life. Why worry? We probably will die any time ... what with the El Nino effects around the world,

terrorists attacks at any time, AIDS (relatively unknown in our part of the world till the late 80's), cancer, streptococcal infections that gobble up our flesh and senseless accidents caused by thoughtless hit and run drivers, apart from those which are "authentic" accidents. As long as the tangible desires of today are met,

"Let tomorrow take care of itself ... who cares!"

The above statement is a gross distortion of what the historical Jesus meant in His statement:

"Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" (Matthew 6:27)



In the late sixties, I once heard my father reading the newspapers to my mother. He was amused by the news that high-school graduates were working as street sweepers in the cities of Japan. In the Malaysia of those days, a Form 3 or Form 5 certificate of education would have enabled a young person to get a reasonably dignified office job, whether one is Malay, Chinese or English educated. If you could enter the Malayan University then, you would be highly regarded as having made it and the whole family and local

community (e.g. school, society, village or religious group) would rejoice with your proud parents. To become a teacher would earn you much respect as a lady or a gentleman. To become a nurse, too, was acceptable though some parents saw it as a dirty job. At least, it showed that you were willing to care for the sick, which was and still is a noble task. Further, nurses make good wives as they would not panic so easily during medical emergencies in the family! And ... to be able to study overseas?

“Wow, you are way above average! Easy to find a wife or husband-lah ... but must also marry one who has gone overseas or richer than your family! You are worth a lot to your parents ... ”



Patience and humility have become synonymous with inefficiency. Sensitivity to one's neighbours' needs may cause decent and good men to be labeled as “*Pondan!*”. Respect for authority at work seems to have declined unless your boss pays exceptionally well! If you are a more thinking (logically inclined) person, the world respects and accepts you much more than if you were a more feeling and compassionate one. You climb the corporate and social levels faster, despite its dangers to one's personal and family life.



Loyalty to people or companies have also seen the downturn. No institution, including families, schools and, even religious organisations, have been immuned from this disease of pride in personal ambition and achievement. The destructive germ of individualism has hit us hard and fast. You don't like the salary, just change your job; you don't like your pastor, change church; you don't like your parents, answer back, don't return or chase them out into nursing homes or, easier still, leave them without addresses at hospitals. Don't like your looks, change your facial contour; you don't like your baby, abandon him/her; you don't like your spouse's idiosyncrasies, replace him/her! These observations need no proof as they have been publicised enough through the press.



Young people today are becoming not so much immoral but "amoral", not that they know the difference if their upbringing has not taught them what morality is all about. In some western nations which have suffered from decades of social and personal upheavals beyond repair (short of a miracle), humanly speaking, they just could not be bothered what the rules

say as long as they can have the ability to survive for themselves i.e. be healthy and wealthy enough to live on their own.

The question is: If someone lives under the amoral worldview, does it mean that there is really no morals or no need for one? Or is the person a delinquent?

If morality does exist, how could an amoral person relate with a moral one?

Is immorality better/worse than or the same as amorality today and in the long run? (Also read Freedom & Morality, Reconre Publications 2004)



Monetary gain (availability of money being a symbol of controlling power, status or necessity) has become the motivation and goal for many activities, be it in families, religious institutions or societies. This end stage of the love of money infects the person and spreads through to the family, institution and whole communities faster than the hottest bush fires in the forests of our world today.

When I was about your age, I could not see the subtle steps that lead to this sin.

Now, I am forced to accept that truly *“the love of money”* is the root of all evil.

What does money symbolise? It is only a medium for exchange of goods that we need, but don't have, with the other person who has what we need and can spare it if we give him something that he needs in exchange. Note that I use the word *“need”* and not *“want”* to clarify that money is not an evil in itself. It is pretty neutral. It is when we want it at all cost that the addiction for it becomes a vice.

Essential Expectations Ordained by the True and Holy Creator God

I believe these basic expectations are few and manageable though many misunderstand His intentions and run far away from His love. If they are not manageable and with His knowing that we are imperfect, how does the good and gracious God expect us to live as He has designed for us? Do we really trust Him who has a purpose for our lives, who means good and not bad for us?

Below are some aspects of who He is and who we are. The details will be elaborated in other booklets from Reconre Publications 2004:

**Our Humanity came from
His Personality
'Presuppositions and Framework'**

- God is the God of order, not chaos
- God is all loving
- God does not force us to love Him because He has made us to enjoy the freedom to choose. God is all powerful and has done everything required for us to return to His love and orderly creation

Our Gender

- Human beings are created in two basic genders, wholly male or female, before the fall mentioned in Genesis 2, to reflect God's perfect personality in the Trinity Community (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit).
- Something went wrong in the gender personalities and roles after sin entered the world through human beings trying to be like God.
- God the Father is re-creating human beings according to His original design and desire for us i.e. to become like

His Son Jesus, who is one with Him as the Triune God (Three Persons in unchanging Oneness of thought, word and action.)

Our Childhood

- Children are ordained by God to trust and lovingly obey their parents so that they would learn to trust and lovingly obey the God who created them in the first place.
- Even when parents and children fail Him, His original intentions for them remain the same.
- God, our eternal Father, has done and continues to do all in order to bring us home to His huge family of truth and grace, order, joy, purpose and fun ... where fear is only of Him who loves us and is the beginning of wisdom (the ability to use the knowledge we have according to His creation rules for our good)!
- If at any time a child needs to obey God rather than his parents, then it must be done only with a very heavy heart and not out of the desire to be independent or free. In normal circumstances, such a decision to obey God is rare. Patience during the waiting time to follow Christ all the way will win our parents' heart more

than impulsive disobedience, which will look like outright rebellion. God is happy when we submit to our parents in order to learn submission to Him. Simply tell Him all about your struggles and seek His wisdom each day to live for Him alone, above all else. God sees the intentions of our hearts more than, for example, whether we go to church or not, if you are still underage. He will always find a way out for us that honours Him and the parents He has given us if we seek His help, often through others who care for us.

For example, in the 60's, a Form 4 girl was born again in Christ through her School Christian Fellowship. She was not allowed to have Christian friends at home or attend any Christian functions. However, she remained faithful to both parents and God till her age of independence. How? She sat in a public park to read her bible and talk to God each morning while on her way to catch a public bus to school. (Note: Parks were safer then ... if you need do the same, find a safe place.)

Our Marriage

- Earthly marriage between a man and a woman is to teach us how to live as Christ's prepared Bride when the time is ripe.
- It is not meant for romance or reproduction only.
- Physical sexual activities are an aid to fulfill God's purpose for marriage, not a license to indulge in other sexual relationships, temporary or permanent. God gives us the freedom to choose whom we marry (unless there is a specific reason to marry only that one person) and then to stick to the one spouse as long as they both are alive on earth, for better or for worse.
- After marriage, unless it is due to adultery or to avoid violence, personality clashes or non-consummation is not a license for divorce, as the commitment to care for each other has been made.

However, in our utter inability to be perfect without God's final redemption through Jesus' sacrifice of His life for us, He knows that sometimes, it is a matter of the lesser of two evils, when He allows a divorce as given in the counsel through Moses in the time before Christ came. That is why a decision for any divorce needs to be made with a very heavy heart and not for self-fulfillment. Why?

This is because, ultimately, we are to be Christ fulfilled and not self-developed. The Bible calls for dying to self-will so that the life of Christ will grow in us for His glory and our good. Further, children's emotional tanks can best be filled by parents who are committed to each other, even if it is just for the children's sake.

For decades, secular psychology (rooted in the period of western enlightenment) has influenced us to believe in and apply research hypothesis and theories which many current psychologists have found irreversibly damaging to individuals, families and societies. One of these is that each man or woman must seek self-fulfillment at all cost because only "the fittest survive" (according to the evolutionary theory). This wrong belief has caused many broken marriages worldwide, especially in developed countries. Why? This is because if we believe in this hypothesis, then it is our human duty to go in separate ways if we feel the other is hindering our survival. Sadly, children of divorces are often left to fend for themselves. Hence the tragedy of vicious cycles of unhealed children who grow up into unhealed adults who repeat their parents' mistakes because they have little means to help themselves, even though they know they were the victims before.

External rescue is required for these adult who were victims of childhood abuse.

If you recognize them in your family, pray and look for help for your parents, siblings or yourselves.

Without God's patient grace,
where would we be??

However, Asian nations still have some opportunity to stall this influence though time may be running out. Hence the urgency to prevent marital damage and renew marriage vows, not wait to witness increasing broken marriages and children before trying to do the impossible work of repair, as in the west. That "prevention is better than cure" still holds true in the 21st century.

Our Parenthood

- Parents are God's agents of passing His truth and grace to the next generation.
- But the first parents failed Him and therefore all parenting has been damaged since then.
- God's longing is to redeem parenthood so that each subsequent generation will more and more reflect His character of truth and grace.

Let us keep moving ...

Our Vocation

- Young and even older folks, believe me, are confused about the meaning of careers and vocations. Hence, the search for a job in the hope of vaguely feeling good and right as people made for good works.
- Overworked, tired and disillusioned professionals are a pitiful sight, especially during long stretches of high unemployment in nations due to external and internal factors. Why so fussy as long as you can put food on the dinner table?
- Meanwhile, family relationships take a back seat ... "No time to talk gently, work must come first ... for your good, you know ... I am serving God ... in the market place and in church-lah!"
- It is not too early to start thinking about preparing for a vocation (including marriage and parenthood) even if you should decide to stay single or childless eventually. Pilgrims are in for a long distance run while being one's best in the immediate short distance action. Both perspectives are necessary for the abundant life in Christ.

Remember:
*God's word is a lamp to our feet
(a short distance) and a light to our path
(a longer distance).*

Psalm 119:105

Our Stage of Life

- Where you are as a growing and changing person in your personal history affects your thoughts, words and actions significantly.
- Therefore, you need to make an effort (that sounds lousy to sloppy teenage ears ... like discipline??) to find out about your place in history. This will give you a sense of belonging and direction for your unknown todays and tomorrows when suffering from positional vertigo ... no motivation to do anything ... get depressed ... feel moody and hopeless.

Look up the booklet on the eight stages of life to cheer yourself up and be ensured of your place in the history of your family, school, society, nation and world. Nothing offered back to God is useless in His eyes. He specializes in the recreation of people.

Hope is still alive!
Romans 8

We shall meet again in the next
seventeen booklets, written for your
generation and mine ...
Shalom!

With Warm Regards from
Aunty Bee Teik
(A Fellow Malaysian)



<http://www.reconre.org>

About the Author

Dr. Lee Bee Teik (MBBS, Monash University) practised medicine till she turned fulltime homemaker.

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Having heard God's call for her to write in 1992, Bee Teik has penned books on prayer, pastoral counseling and her experiences as a Malaysian Christian woman.

This series of 18 titles, classified under the overall theme, On Being Human, is drawn from the positive feedback from her seminars.

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