



ANG MO KIO METHODIST CHURCH

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Fifth Pastoral Letter to the Ang Mo Kio Methodist Church Family on the Covid-19 Situation (8 Apr 2020)

Dear Family and Friends of AMKMC (TRAC),

Today marks the second day of Singapore's Circuit-Breaker in action whereby all non-essential work has stopped, and schools have implemented home-based learning (HBL). I am pretty sure we are all well aware of that.

What you may not know is that this evening marks the start of the Jewish festival of Passover, which will last until 16 April. Significantly, not since the very first Passover have we seen all of God's people similarly stopping work and staying at home.

And so, as disruptive as these circuit-breaker measures are, perhaps there is much to be gained when we stop our usual work and start making the most of our time at home.

As a parent with school-going children, I am glad that our first HBL lesson today was a time of family devotion. You may be surprised, but my family have found it difficult to have family devotions all these years. You see, Val and I take turns to drop our son at school very early on weekdays before heading to our respective offices. When weekends came around, I practically have to work almost every Saturday and definitely every Sunday. By the time we come back from work, we are too exhausted to have any meaningful time of family devotion. Thus, I thank God we were all "forced" to stay home for this period, and we now can have a conducive time for family devotions every morning – including Sundays!

I hope to share with you what Val and I did this morning as one simple example of family devotions, in the hope that you may also do likewise. First, I prayed and asked the Lord, "What is the Bible lesson you want us to focus on today?" The Lord brought to my mind the story of Jesus calming the storm. And so, I dramatized the story out for our children. (You may of course read out the Bible story if you are uncomfortable with dramatization.)

After telling the story, I wanted to ask some reflection questions, but my children insisted on asking the questions instead. Their questions began innocently, "Why did Jesus and the disciples get onto the boat? Why is there thunder during a storm?" etc. We tried our best to answer all their questions. And then, a very profound question was asked by my 5-year-old, "Why did Jesus answer the request of the disciples (to stop the storm)?"

That question completely dumb-founded my wife and I for a while. Then we decided to let everyone attempt to answer this question. My 8-year-old answered plainly, "To get to the other side." Val answered, "To let the disciples know that Jesus understands their fears." I answered from a typical parent's point of view, "To keep the disciples quiet so that Jesus can go back to sleep." Now, what would your answer be?

Subsequently, we took turns to share our own individual fears before we sang that classic Sunday school song “With Christ in the vessel, we can smile at the storm.” Finally, I wrapped up the time of family devotion with a simple prayer of committing all our fears (including of COVID-19) to the Lord.

What I have just related to you is not prescriptive; it’s merely a descriptive account. Nonetheless, I hope you have picked up a simple way of doing family devotions.

1. Begin by asking the Lord for what Bible passage He wants to focus on that day
2. Read the Bible passage (or tell the story in your own words)
3. Let the children (and youth) begin by asking their questions (and it’s perfectly OK if you don’t have the answers too!)
4. Use the Bible passage/story as a launchpad to share as honestly and openly as possible
5. Close with a song and/or prayer

This simple method requires little to nil preparation beforehand. However, it does require us to remain honest and humble throughout as to what the Lord may be teaching you and your family. Importantly, remember the goal of devotion is not information transference but heart transformation.

For your info, this whole family devotion took less than 25 minutes, including 5-7 minutes scolding the children and getting them to settle down. You may face your own challenges as you begin your own family devotions, but let’s not allow the foreseeable challenges to stop what God intends to do.

As I mentioned last Sunday, I believe it is very timely and prophetic that our church theme “Home with a Heart” begins right in our own homes. I close with Malachi 4

⁴ “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.

⁵ “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. ⁶ And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

They who have ears to hear what the Spirit says, let them hear.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Lee', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rev Anthony Lee