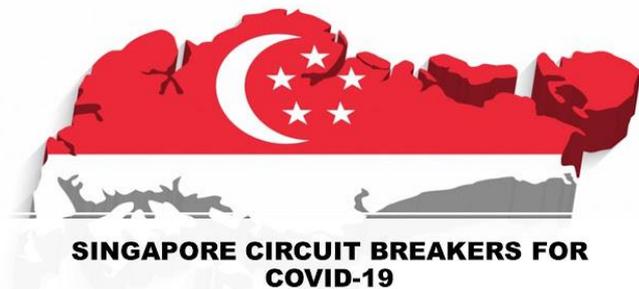


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THE CIRCUIT BREAKER: WILL IT BREAK OR MAKE YOUR FAMILY?

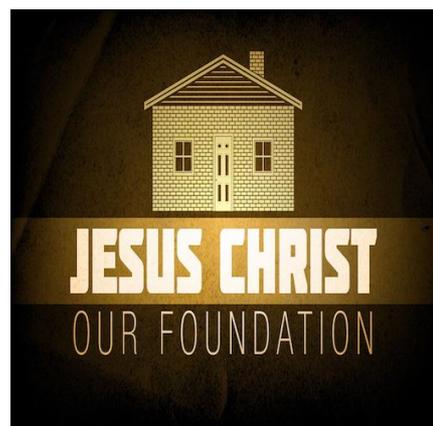
It has been about a month since the circuit breaker was enforced on 7 April 2020 and many are trying to sustain or manage a happy home. In the midst of the circuit breaker where everyone is stuck in their own homes together, many families face challenges with their children (not only in their studies but also



behaviour, discipline and time management), with their work, and the greater potential for spousal conflicts and including parents, in-laws and domestic helpers if they are in the same household. No overseas vacation is also a challenge for many during the school holidays. Our society is challenged and adversely affected when the basic foundation of the family is under siege. How then can a Christian couple or family build a home that can stand the test of these trials in the midst of this pandemic? The Bible gives us instructions to manage our family during these difficult times.

The Foundation of a Covenant Home

Firstly, it has to be founded on Christ, the Solid Rock. It is conventional wisdom that if we are to construct a building, we need to have a sound foundation. So to build a block of flats, we need piling and it certainly requires sufficient depth. We need concrete and are required to meet certain stipulations. The last thing we want is a sudden collapsed building. It is vain for the watchman to do his job when God is not protecting the city. It is fruitless for us to work so hard when there are holes in our pockets as the prophet Haggai puts it when we neglect God and his church (Hag 1:9).



In other words, there is more than human effort; there is a divine side to things which that we often fail to recognise. Consider our ability to buy a bed but not sleep; food but not appetite; weapons but not peace; sex but not love; insurance but not security. Only the Almighty Jehovah who is our Redeemer and Lord is sovereign over the affairs of our lives. Do you know, believe and submit to Christ? Do you seek Him first and honour Him? So, **the secret of a happy home is one where Christ is the Head, honoured and revered not just occasionally but in**

a real sense, everyday and all the time in our decision making, conflict resolution, bringing up children, leisure, values and conflict resolution. (2Tim 3:15) But you and your family must first know Christ personally as Lord and God and the repentance of sins. Rom 10:9–10 says, *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*

The Building of the Covenant Home

The tedious construction process requires planning, digging and materials. It is elaborate and requires hard work, time and effort. Its success also depends on other factors like weather that affects its progress. It is not wrong to want to build a home but how we build it is important.

The foundation has to be strong in the Lord and His Word: The basis is firm grounding, not money, not intellect, not worldly advice or beauty or degrees but the LORD, our Jehovah God, our Creator, our Saviour and His Word. A covenant home is God-centred and Bible-based. This affects relations, decision-making, communication, solving problems and conflicts. Sadly today, our divorce rate in Singapore is high for a conservative Asian country and even with our family courts in conciliation services. In the US, more than one out of two marriages has resulted in divorce in some states. Traditional families in the East are also breaking down. What is the secret of strong family ties, if any?



What are the elements in the establishment of a happy home then? There are at least four and we will consider them using the acrostic ABCD as follows:

- **Authority**

God is the supreme authority in the home and is to be unconditionally submitted unto. However, He has delegated the authority to the husband as the head of the home. Often, problems in the family erupt when we do not have a proper authority structure. God has sovereignly given the burden and responsibility to the man (Eph 5:23–25; Col 3:18–20). So, wives and children, you are to obey and submit to your husbands and fathers, as you have covenanted in your marriage vow (Mal 2:14). Being the husband and leader, men we are to remember that domestic leadership comes with its privilege and obligation. It is a fearful thing to lead and you must keep close to your God, who is **your ultimate Ruler and Leader; you are to lead by example and love your wife and children in action as they are worthy of all your affection and care. Irresponsible infidelity and non-submission to God are totally unacceptable which will destroy the marriage and family relationship.**

AUTHORITY

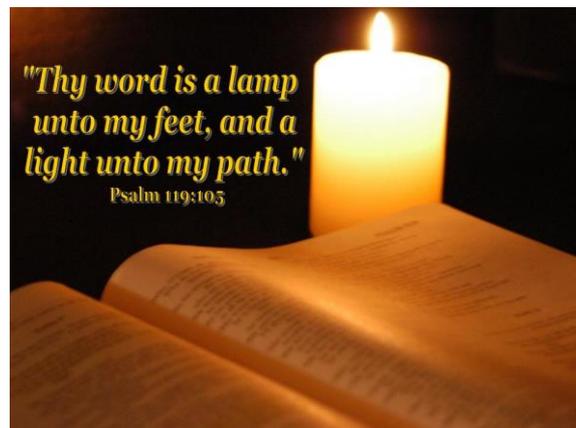
In our premarital counselling for more than two decades, we often remind the **man of the home to practise the 4L: Learn, Labour, Love and Lead.** Likewise, the **wife or woman of the home need to practise the 4S: Submit, Supplicate, Suggest and Support.**

Wives are to remember to pray daily for your husbands because whatever he does will affect your life greatly. A godly leader should humbly listen to all views before making a decision. The wife can share any thoughts and opinions in the discussion with the head of the home. In leadership and the direction of the home, the husband or father can have the final vote, subject to the will of God. Fathers need to be careful to set a good example before your children so that they have a model to follow or else the children will emulate you in ways you may not even know.

- **Bible**

Any sound authority should not act without a guide or basis. The inspired Bible is to be central to the life of the Christian home, just like the hymn writer says, "O give us homes where Christ is Lord and Master, The Bible read, the precious hymns still sung."

The infallible standard for the direction and management of the home is the Manual authored by the Maker, the Holy Bible, verbally inspired and sufficient as given by the Almighty Creator for our benefit .(2Tim 3;16,17) Refer to it often (not only when things go wrong), read the instructions carefully again and again and obey it . This will prevent many unnecessary quarrels, problems that could undermine a happy home in the Lord. Let the Bible



be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Ps 119:9, 11). Cherish and love it. Study and do it. Meditate upon it daily and assimilate it into our lives (Jos 1:8, 9). Have a regular family devotion as suggested below:

Family Worship for Every Household

- Every covenant home should have family worship led by the head of the home who is the father or husband.
- The whole family worship can take about 20 mins to 30 mins at most. Family worship should be regular, either once or twice a weekly or fortnightly.
- Find a suitable time for everyone and a suitable place as well. Turn off the TV, internet surfing , phone games, YouTube or social media Ipod, Xbox, playstation , video or CD player or computer; and you may be surprised how much time you actually have in a day/week now that we are all at home .
- Honour God together as a family and God will surely honour you with the



blessings of His grace and mercy (Josh 1:8).

- Habit is second nature. Develop good family practices like regular prayer or reading or singing together, family dinners and worship, Sabbath worship and rest, christian service and fellowship , and coming together for Sunday worship services, (including the virtual ones during these 2 months) attending prayer meeting and other opportunities to grow in the knowledge of God.
- **Do not deprive or forfeit yourselves of the opportunities for edification and mutual encouragement from the church in attending the service, prayer meetings and other edifying activities.**

One may ask, “What are we supposed to do during family worship?” To answer that, we have delineated some useful guidelines in the conduct of a simple family worship meeting using the following **5 S’s**.

1. Song

Begin with the singing of some choruses or hymns (Col 3:16). The songs of praise and worship should be carefully selected to fit in to the occasion in the life of the family. The family members can have a favourite choice of songs they want to sing. Open with a word of prayer. And choose a suitable place i.e. in living room dining area, or patio or even in the bedroom or the garden area if any.

2. Scripture

Chuck Swindoll says, “Each day of our lives we make deposits in the memory banks of our children”. The head of the home should lead in a short devotion for about 10–15 minutes, beginning with the reading of Holy Scriptures and a short exhortation. If you feel inadequate to share on a specific text/theme, you may read from devotional book such as the *Daily Remembrancer*, *Day by Day with Spurgeon* or *Oswald Chambers* or other good Christian literature. (Angie uses *365 days with John Calvin* while I like *Milk and Honey- A Devotional by Joel Beeke*.)

3. Sharing

If there is time, there can be an occasion for thanksgiving, testimony and sharing. I was encouraged by one family who uses Sunday afternoons to discuss the sermon preached during the worship service, especially for the sake of the children. (2 Tim 3:16–17; 2:15) Allow time for interaction and discussion (i.e. on lessons from this pandemic or other issues). Let everyone share where possible. (Heb 10:24–25)

4. Supplication

This is to be followed by a time of intercessory prayer when the family will uphold one another before the Throne of Grace. Ask for prayer requests followed by either taking turns to pray, or 1 or 2 persons can lead the whole family in corporate prayer (Phil 4:6; Matt 18:18, 20) Let the children

pray as well for specific needs of the church, family salvation, studies, health, , including those affected by the virus and the migrant workers. Prayer lists such as the one included in the SHBPC weekly bulletin are useful. **A family that prays together stays together. Remember that the parent's heart and soul bared is the child's practical learning classroom.**

5. Snacks

This is optional. You can have this together with the sharing or after. Some drinks or some light snacks or finger food will do although this is not absolutely necessary. The idea is family time or bonding or fellowship over some light refreshments and as opportunities to talk. Silence is not golden here.

It is not impossible to preserve the unity of the Christian family during this difficult time of the circuit breaker of the pandemic but there is much commitment and effort needed to keep it intact. Spurgeon says, "Let no Christian parents fall into the delusion that the church is intended to replace them of their personal or parental duties." The first and most needful activity is for Christian parents to train up their own children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and family worship is one of the ways .One father told me that he started weekly family worship and he was surprised that it went well for them. A Christ-centered home is a vibrant and cohesive unit that is focused on the Lord, in the meditation of His Holy Word and the knowledge of His Will and Work. A family that worships and serves together is rarely easily broken. Remember Psalm 127:1, *"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."*

- **Communication**

One of the common problems in family or marital relations often leading to divorce is the breakdown in communication. Firstly, communication begins with our relationship to God. **Do we pray often and do we constantly intercede together as a family before the Throne of Grace? If you are backsliding from the Lord, it does not help to build an edifying marriage or home.** My wife and I pray every morning before breakfast for the past 30 years. In our counselling, we noted that sometimes when Christians are in trouble, they often tell someone else except God.



Secondly, do you share and talk frequently and honestly with your loved ones? Do you share your visions, emotions, aspirations, hurts and feelings? Do you take time to listen to one another? Now, husbands may sometimes be tired from a long day's work and the spouse has a lot to tell and vice versa. Make an effort to pause and listen carefully to what your spouse and children have to say even though you may be tired or have much

work to do, and remember to put down the mobile phone or tech devices.

We are all social beings and while social distancing is necessary during this time, note that it may have different effect on people who have different affiliation needs for companionship. Relationship building and socialisation through frequent conversation is one way of bonding together. Husbands, you must be all ears to your wife and children, and vice versa. Spend quality time together. Deepen relationship by purposeful interaction. Do not always email or WhatsApp but speak directly to one another to show that you really care and making a conscious effort to build up each other in the Lord.

- **Discipline / Diligence**

There is a sense in which discipline and diligence are responsible for the success of anything; from our studies (including Home Based Learning in last these few weeks) to our work, to the church and the Christian home. God expects us to do our part in both heart work and hard work. There is blessing in Christian self-discipline and labour. **Discipline also keeps us away from mischief as an empty mind is the devil's workshop. The Christian home requires both the husband and wife to cooperate and work hard on their spiritual and family lives in the midst of this crisis.**



The rearing of children in the home during these challenging times and the responsible stewardship of the talents God gives is our duty and privilege. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. There is nothing that cannot be done with the help of God. There is no elevator to success; you have to use the stairs of diligence. “*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men*” (Col 3:23). Glorify God by honest hard work and heart work and God will surely bless and prosper your family.

The priorities of the Christian home should be:

1. **God First**—Matt 6:33, “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*” Matt 6:12, “*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*”
2. **With Eternal Values in View**—Col 3:1, “*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*”
3. **Bible /Prayer and Sabbath Worship** for “*the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever*”.
4. **Christian Fellowship and Responsible Stewardship** to the Lord in a local church.
5. **Catechising of Children with the WCF**—teaching them to honour God in word and deed (Deut 6:6,7); to have a sincere desire, and aspiration, to please God. Heb 11:6 says, “*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*”. This will save us from many troubles and pain later when they grow into teenage years and adulthood.

Conclusion

Will our families survive the circuit breaker and this pandemic? God has a purpose for keeping all of us at home during this circuit breaker. These 2 months of staying at home need not break your family but instead make it better and strengthen you. As you embark on a journey in reaching out and building up your Christian home during this pandemic, there is great opportunity to bond together as a family and to teach them the Fear of God and His Love. We need to hang in there and be disciplined and prudent as a family during these turbulent times and especially in a treacherous, decadent and perverse world, including the internet (Prov 9:10). Jesus Christ is the sole Guarantor of the covenant home. The wife or mother is the partner in the building of a blessed covenant family with the husband or father as the head.

Nothing is impossible with God. All things are possible but it will take discipline, diligence, hard work, heart work and a faithful dependence on God together with our human responsibility. Start on the right track from the beginning of each day with God, His Word and prayer. Do not be self-centred or work centred only but Christ-centred during these trying times. One sure way of happiness and joy in the home during the vicissitudes of life is to consciously reach out to one another at home and beyond in love and genuine positive action. **Ask the Lord to guide, lead and preserve your marriage and your covenant family. Do your part responsibly and stay together safely at home, stay in Christ and on His Word and in prayer together as a covenant family. By the end of it, may your family grow closer and stronger In the Lord as you benefit from this extended circuit breaker or even any other testing from the Lord.**

Jack Sin



Pray for the Chinese Fellowship ministry via Zoom on Sunday at 7pm as we minister to China brethren working here in SG. (in photo: Tiying, Chenxia, Jianlian, Tangshuai)

Memory Verse

Dan 4: 37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

Announcements

1. We thank God for many who are participating in our Facebook Live streaming worship service which will continue till early June or as otherwise informed.
2. Rev Jack Sin speaks today on “An Earthly King Exalts the Heavenly King” (Daniel 4: 19 - 37).
3. Rev Jack Sin speaks next Sunday on “Handwritings on the Wall Explained” (Daniel 5:11-31)
4. Do join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom and WhatsApp Video Calls.
5. Those who would like to serve the Lord in any area in the church, please see the Pastor or the Deacons.
6. Those who have a testimony to share may submit to Pastor for the weekly.
7. Pastor is still available for counselling via WhatsApp, Email or Mobile.
8. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
 - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church** and mailed to church address. (Kindly write the full name of the church as indicated.)
 - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB** Account **392-308-825-1**
 - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**

Join us in our virtual prayer meeting via Zoom on Wed nights at 8pm!

