

NACC Newsletter (Nov 2014 – Jan 2015)

EDITORIAL

As we look back over what the Lord has accomplished through us this year, we give Him the glory and honor. About 600 foreign and local delegates participated in the first-ever Asia Summit and Conference where we focused on the development of Christian Counselling with greater biblical and theological depths to be effective to the contextual needs of Asian culture. The other major event was the National Pastors' Retreat in which 80 pastors from across the country participated. From feedback received, most of them were very appreciative and would want it to be duplicated in their region in due course. As we look forward to 2015, we are confident that God who started this good work in us will complete it (Phi. 1:6).

MEETING WITH MALAYSIA COUNSELLING BOARD

Through divine appointment, we were able to have a meeting with the Minister of Women, Family and Community Development and her top officials on 27 Oct this year to discuss on matters on counselling and other mutual concerns. She appreciated our presence and our wanting to contribute more to society and has instructed her department to tap into our expertise and call upon us to send counsellors when the need arises. Sensing our sincerity, she has also instructed her department to look into the possibility of licencing some of our members who may not meet the official criteria but has the experience and training from Christian institutions. One of her officers pointed out that this is in accordance to the clause 24 (2) of the Counselling Act which states that “Where a person holds any qualification which is not specified in the Second Schedule but the Board is satisfied that such qualification is not less than any of or equivalent to the qualifications specified in that Schedule, the Board may approve the registration of such person as a counsellor if he satisfies the Board that he is a Malaysian citizen or a permanent resident of Malaysia, is not less than twenty-one years of age and is a fit and proper person to be registered as a counsellor.”



WORKSHOP ON MINISTERING TO SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

About 45 people participated in this workshop where the speaker Eunice Ng, used her expertise and experience to share on what we can do to minister children having Separation Anxiety, Obsessive Compulsive Disorders (OCD), Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Asperger and Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD). Having worked as a Behavior Program Specialist in the psychiatric department of a children medical center for eight years, she shared many case studies to help the participants understand on how these children receive, process and express information. Some of the tips include conducting group therapies to improve social skills, identifying and nurturing their strengths, giving clear and consistent instructions in showing them what to do, showering praise and reinforcement and finally be patient and gracious.



UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

1. Jan 24: Workshop on Eating Disorders by Dr Hera Lukman, a behavioural psychologist
2. March 28: Workshop on Ethical Issues in Counselling facing Christian Counsellors, by Dr Charis Geevarughese, a clinical psychologist and Rev Dr M.G. George, a veteran and well-respected pastor.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2015

Theme: Christian Counseling for Asia – Deepening the Foundations

Date: July 3-4, 2015 (Fri-Sat)

PLENARIES: These sessions are foundational and open to all participants.

Plenary 1: Christian Counselling for Asia – What Is, Is Not and Can Be

Plenary 2: Christian Counselling for Asia – Ethical Considerations

WORKSHOPS

Unlike other years, we will be offering concurrent in-depth skill equipping workshops during the 2-day event. Apart from imparting theoretical knowledge, the workshops sessions will comprise of role-plays and case studies to enhance practical application.

Workshop 1: Harmony and Emotions - A Theological, Sociocultural and Clinical Approach to Effective Counselling Outcome (Level: Intermediate)

Speakers: Dr. Ben Lim and Soh Leong

Dr Ben K Lim is a professor of marriage and family therapy at Bethel University, San Diego while his wife Soh Leong also licensed marriage and family therapist, lectures at San Diego State University, USA.

Workshop 2 - The War Within Us - The Flesh vs. The Spirit. Identifying, Understanding, Treating, and Restoring the Defiled Heart (Level: Advance)

Dr. Jeff Sim is an Associate Professor at the Department of Psychology in Western Illinois University-QC Campus. He is also the Central Regional Psychologist Administrator for the Illinois Department of Corrections in the USA and supervises the mental health department of ten adult prisons.

Workshop 3: Basic Christian Counselling Knowledge and Skills (Level: Elementary)

Patrick Cheng works with the National Association of Christian Counsellors as its Executive Director. Besides his theological training, he also has post-graduate degrees in counseling. He is also a part-time lecturer at a local university

More details to come...

BASIC COURSE IN COUNSELLING SKILLS

This 10 week course aims to equip participants with the basic skills and knowledge to strengthen lay counsellors in the church. It will examine the “what, why and how” of basic counselling skills. Fundamental counselling concepts and techniques will be discussed and examples shown from both secular and biblical narratives. The training will also increase one's self-awareness so that the self will not be a stumbling block to helping others. Participants will see the importance of creating the right therapeutic environment with their help-seeker before any attempt to solve their problems. Participants will be shown how to build rapport with their counsees through attending skills and body language. Basic counselling skills such as restatement, paraphrase, reflection and questioning will be discussed, demonstrated and developed.

There will also be practical sessions where participants can practise their learned skills using the triad method. Sessions will be video-taped and transcribed using the 4-column method

to help in the consolidation of counselling skills and the heightening of self-awareness. The video recordings will be reviewed on a group and/or individual basis. When participants are more confident with these attending skills, they can then move on from that “lab environment” to be more effective in helping others as home-cell leaders, people-helpers or lay counsellors.

Time: 8.00 - 10.00 pm

Date: Starting Feb 4 (Wed night)

Venue: St James Anglican Church, Sentul, KL

Registration Fees

RM350 (for members)

RM700 (for non-members)

Payment can be made via:

A) Crossed cheque in the name of “National Asso of Christian Counsellors” and send by post to the NACC Malaysia, 2-2B, Block K, Jalan PJU1/3A, Sunway Mas Commercial Centre, 47301, Petaling Jaya.

B) Online registration at www.nacc-malaysia.org

ARTICLE: ADULTERY A MARTIAL GETHSEMANE

By Dave Carder

Adultery is epidemic today. Many online surveys suggest rates of 50-60% with rapidly diminishing differences between men and women. In one survey, 68% of female respondents said they would have an affair if they thought they would not get caught. Forty percent of Christian marriages experience adultery by the time one of the spouses has reached the age of 40.

When a professional association of family law specialists identifies adultery as the single greatest contributor to divorce, and the American Association of Marital and Family Therapists calls adultery the most difficult of spousal issue to treat, the situation appears almost hopeless. Not true. Affairs come in different classes, show up at predictable times, take place in specific age groups, develop in foreseeable ways and are all based on a single substance: infatuation. This is solvable- and answers to the following questions will provide much-needed protection.

Are affairs more frequent today than in the past? In so, why?

Much of the current research focuses on frequency rates, but those numbers have only been around for 20 years or so. Adultery has been an issue since Old Testament times. However there *are* current cultural practices which will continue to escalate rates of adultery: 1) men and women spend more time together doing a wide variety of activities; 2) the delayed age of marriage and the increasing practice of cohabitation prior to marriage; 3) an injured person’s ability to trust when coming from a family history of divorce; 4) the inability to delay gratification and tolerate unhappiness (as evidenced by the increasing use of alcohol, prescription medications, street drugs and even extreme sports); 5) the far-reaching effects of childhood sexual abuse; and 6) the Internet (more about that later).

When do affairs happen?

The single most frequent time period for first-time adultery in America occurs within the nine months of a couple's pregnancy and the first year after delivery of the child. Every parent understands this. Pregnancy can create nausea, changes body shape, contributes to extreme fatigue, adds new responsibilities both financially and behaviorally, provokes hormonal variations and changes emotional focus. Oxytocin levels (often called the 'bonding hormone' and in the same family as the street drug, "Ecstasy") are never higher in women than when they are nursing a newborn child. Emotionally satisfied and bonding with their newborns, it can be easy for wives to forget their 'hubbies.'

Most first-time sexual betrayals are all about meeting two distinct needs – comfort and distraction – and pregnancy can add to this vulnerability. In one large study of males, 75% of first-time infidelities occurred between the ages of 31 and 40. When reflecting on family life during this decade, it is easy to spot vulnerabilities stemming from transition and recovery after college/graduate school, getting established in a career, paying off student loans, starting a family, moving to a single income, working long hours, children consuming family and marital resources, etc. Life can be difficult at this juncture, especially when compared to adolescence.

What are the differences between affairs and pornography use?

Betrayal of trust comes in three forms: 1) visual betrayal as pornography, 2) sexual betrayal as adultery, and 3) affective betrayal as emotional infidelity, all of which create similar feelings within the betrayed spouse and require a comparable recovery process.

Though some suggest the impact of pornography use is less than that of actual adultery, most would say the emotional effect on marriage is similar in both kind and intensity of pain. Its use creates shame feelings of 'not being enough' *for* your spouse or *of* a spouse ... or 'not being with you' during lovemaking (as they recall pornographic images to enhance their own sexual pleasure).

A primary distinction between the two lies in the recovery processes; sobriety from pornography use must be achieved *prior* to starting couple's therapy, while in affair recovery, separation from the girlfriend/boyfriend occurs *simultaneously* with the couple's therapy. This is because the history of a pornography addiction is usually in place prior to the marriages, while affairs can happen as a result of poor marital interactions.

What about opposite sex friendships?

In the one large study referred to earlier, 50% of first-time adulteries by men occurred with a "friend". Emotional infidelity often starts as a simple, platonic friendship, but moves to betrayal when three criteria are met:

- The relationship becomes a mood-altering experience (i.e., one's mood changes with a text from the other party; when hearing his/her voice; when anticipating seeing him/her at church, work, the gym, etc.)
- The conversational topics move from professional to personal, from "outside" to "inside".

- The depth of the relationship, or even the simple attraction, is hidden from the spouse knowing it would cause distress and injury to the marriage.

How do affairs get started, especially in a Christian environment?

Consider some factors already mentioned – the need for comfort and distraction, age risk, cultural factors... then plug in some genuine appreciation for the other party, add more admiration, provide a little attention or accommodation to their needs and desires, change the conversation to what is going on within each of you – and infatuation begins to grow.

When two people share a similar heart's desire, job, focus, vision or ministry that they might not share with their spouses, they are already in a high-risk category. This does not mean they must leave the shared experience, but should be extra cautious and report this emotional attraction to their spouses.

What about Old Girlfriend/boyfriends on Facebook, Classmates.com, etc.

Clinically, it appears that the fastest growing threat to marriages occurs when a spouse reconnects, often quite innocently, with an old girlfriend or boy friend

Remember infatuation? Those first love experiences are powerful. In marriage, one had to focus on others; in adolescence, you only focused on yourself. However, if you stay in touch with that old girlfriend/boyfriend for 30 days, you might become confused about your marriage. You may wonder if you married the wrong person, simply because that old infatuation gets stirred up (even if the person has gained 50 pounds and looks nothing like the knockout you used to know). If you stay in touch for an additional 30 days, you may find yourself talking about ways to meet for sex. Zero to 60 – and you have committed adultery.

What should a couple do if they find their marriage experiencing an infidelity?

Recovery in any type of infidelity will probably require some assistance. If a spouse is involved in compulsive sexual acting out, he or she will need to become sober first. This kind of behavior is not about the marriage or the spouse; it commonly comes from a wound that one spouse brought with him or her into the marriage. If the wound happened before the marriage (molestation, rape, pornography use, etc.), then that individual is responsible to “fix” it. The spouse did not cause it, cannot change it, and cannot cure it. To attempt couple's therapy initially for this kind of acting out will typically not work.

What does forgiveness look like and how does one rebuild trust after betrayal?

This healing process must be completed whether or not the marriage survives and should follow a very distinct path. To the degree that a spouse can *forgive*, to that same level he or she can begin to rebuild *respect* for the other... and to the degree that respect can be rebuilt, a renewal sense of *trust* can follow... and when trust is once again present, the choice to rebuild *love* again exists.

Forgiveness is mandated; reconciliation is not. Forgiveness is free; reconciliation is earned. The secret of thorough forgiveness lies first in listing the details of the injury and, secondly, in

identifying the emotional injuries at each step. People can only forgive what they know. They cannot forgive that which they are unaware.

Sometimes an individual's history is so injured that the sexual betrayal, once it is discovered, is just more than the person can live with. So I say to my couples, "Don't stay with a spouse out of duty or obligation after adultery." That often creates a terrible marriage, one that your children will hate. We all want our spouse to desire us. Second, "Do not stay married if you feel your spouse can't forgive you." That, too, makes your children hate the marriage modelling they received.

Adultery fractures marriages, but with forgiveness, respect, trust and love, a couple can create what they have always wanted. Jesus said "...the person is forgiven much, love much" (Luke 7:36-50).

DAVE CARDER, M.A., has served as Pastor of Counselling Ministries at the First Evangelical Free Church of Fullerton (California) for more than 25 years. He is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, specializing in adultery prevention and healing, and the best-selling author of *Torn Asunder: Recovering from an Extramarital Affair*.

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