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Pastor Tung Muses

By Pastor John Tung

People are very angry and violent these days. I am not saying this is the most violent time in history – surely other times and ages have been violent. But if we follow the news even somewhat, incidents are jumping out at us at how violent people are, and frequently against non-battle combatants. In other words, “innocent people” are now open to attacks due to the anger or viciousness of one or a relatively small group of people.

I am referring to events such as the rape and killing of a woman in India riding a bus home. There is also the reckless violence in Syria, including the use of chemical weapons against citizens. There is the suicide bombing at a church in Pakistan killing many worshippers. In the US, there is the Navy Yard shooting deaths. And then also the al-Shabab attack of shoppers in a Kenyan mall.

In politics, people are also angry, and occasionally violent. Issues are polarized, from Obamacare to budgets, government shut downs and political nominees. Political ads attack opponents brutally and repeatedly – and often unfairly.

Parents are angry at kids, kids are angry at parents. Spouses are angry at each other. The “new atheists” have contempt for religious people and mock them, and religious people sometimes speak in a way that is uncaring towards people they disagree with. Some work supervisors are hostile toward their workers and their workers do not respect their supervisors.

Are these things totally new? No, definitely not. But put together, it seems more and more of it is

occurring and more and more violence is perpetrated against people we don’t agree with.

Guns are accessible to the general population, and chemical weapons are available to dictators. People feel besieged, and they hunker down and watch out.

It is enough for Christians to look to heaven and think that Christ shall soon return to make things right. At the least, Christians are deeply sad that things in our world and society have come to this.

Where are the understanding, compassion and mercy that we need to resolve problems? Where are the dialogue and discussion that can help us reach a better understanding? Where is the humility to admit that we are not always right and there is still much for us to learn?

There are too many evil things to count; there are too many possible causes for us to have easy answers. We feel overwhelmed, almost impossible to put our minds around it. And when we try to think about them, our heads spin.

There are many things I don’t know. But one thing I do know, sin multiplies. Sin expresses itself in many ways, including clouding our thinking and confusing our sense of what is right and wrong. Another thing I know is that Christ means so much more to believers in times such as these. It’s being confirmed to me piece by piece that there is nothing we can hold onto for hope and dependability except for God. Christ himself experienced human anger and violence at His cross. And He overcame it with His Father’s help. The world’s violence and anger draws us closer to Christ, and in Him, we can find our hope and our security.

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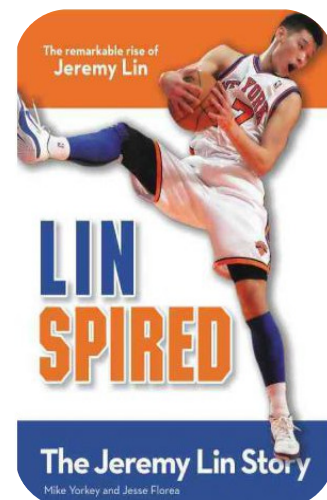
*“Just because
I had a couple of
good games,
it can’t change
who I am.
My identity is
in Christ,
not in basketball.

I love playing
basketball and
it’s my job but
at the same time
I still recognize
that I’m a sinner,
and that’s not
going to change
regardless of
how well I play
on the court.”
- Jeremy Lin -*

On Linspired

*Book review by Garret Wong,
edited by Nina Jen*

Upon reading his biography in February 2012, I was intrigued by Taiwanese American Jeremy Lin in the period that became known as “Linsanity.” During this phase, Lin performed miraculous feats no one would have seen coming, including a fourth quarter comeback against the Minnesota Timberwolves and thirty-eight points on the Los Angeles Lakers. There was one crucial game that proved to me Lin’s potential as a player. The New York Knicks (the team Lin was on at the time) had an away game against the Toronto Raptors. The score was tied at eighty-seven with 10 seconds left and the Knicks had the ball. Lin stood at the top of the three-point line, waving away his teammates as he waited to take the last shot. As the clock approached zero, Lin took a step and shot the game winning three-pointer. Although these physical feats cemented Lin’s reputation as a good player on the court, his life off the court showed his humility and reputable character. In Linspired, Mike Yorkey discusses the struggles and accomplishments Lin embraced during his first years in the National Basketball Association.



In my opinion, Yorkey wrote from an impartial viewpoint, providing equal insight about both the highs and lows of Lin’s NBA journey. It would have been logical to present only the highlights that make Lin one of the greatest basketball players, but I was impressed by the way Yorkey presented Lin’s struggles and doubt about his playing ability. By writing about Lin’s lowest point, getting cut from the Golden State Warriors, Yorkey allows readers to see that Lin experienced the same emotions ordinary people feel when they get fired, laid off, or discouraged. I really liked how Yorkey used Jeremy’s personal journal to describe Jeremy’s depression. I remember reading a quote that went along the lines of, “This is the worst day in my entire life. I should just quit basketball.” Jeremy’s relentlessness to never give up,

get better, and trust God through trials has inspired many people, including me. Although Jeremy was an “underdog” who had to overcome different trials such as ethnicity and athleticism in his career, he would thank God and his teammates after each win, something that is not common in this self-centered generation of basketball.

Linspired has inspired me to be a leader like Lin on the basketball court, but also a leader off the court. Entering my senior year of high school, I’m going to be one of the oldest teens at my Teens Group at church and among the students at my school, which starts by setting an example for those younger than me. In order to be a leader, I have to set an example for those younger than me by being more involved in Teens Group, even if I don’t always feel up to it. This is my new goal for the 2013-2014 school year: to inspire others, just as Jeremy Lin inspired me.

**Jeremy’s relentlessness to never give up,
get better, and trust God through trials
has inspired many people.**

How My Parents Became Christians

By Lydia Tan

My Dad acknowledged Jesus as his savior when he was 76 years old and my Mom when she was in her 60s. When my siblings and I became Christians during our school days, my parents were against our conversion as they practiced traditional Taoist worship and they threw away our Bibles if they found them.

On one occasion, my sister and I plucked up courage to share the Four Spiritual Laws with my Dad. We did not go beyond the second law that all men are sinners and separated from God. My Dad disagreed vehemently and said he is a decent human being who has good moral values – and indeed my Dad is a man of integrity whom I respect greatly. It was difficult to help my Dad understand that with our self-righteousness, we cannot approach God. I was discouraged and felt there was little we could do except pray.

Over the years, my parents became less opposed to us being Christians. By the grace of God, my siblings and I remained steadfast in our faith and my parents could see the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Whenever there is an opportunity, we would invite our parents to church and sometimes they would go. I believe the Word of God that my parents heard had a major impact on their lives. My Mom decided to become a Christian during one of these church meetings. She did not experience peace worshipping Taoist gods and knew in her heart that there is only one true God who is loving and kind. She also said that Jesus had appeared to her in a dream.

My Dad was upset when Mom became a Christian and stopped her practice of putting joss-sticks at the ancestral altar. He felt that our family has forsaken our ancestors and he continued with the ritual of asking our ancestors for blessings. The rest of my family continued to pray.

One day my Dad heard a preacher share that our first ancestor is actually Adam and we do not worship him because he is a man like us and a sinner who needs God’s pardon. That helped to open my Dad’s eyes that it is futile to worship dead ancestors. My Dad was also impressed by another sermon that God is our Creator and we should be grateful to Him. As my Dad is fond of quoting the Chinese saying Yin Shui Si Yuan (meaning we should think of the source when we are drinking water), he began to understand that he should cultivate a heart of gratitude for God, the source of everything.

In His amazing way, God used a medical issue that my Dad had to speak to him. My brother brought him to a Christian doctor and he saw a wall hanging that says “Only Christ is the Everlasting Physician.” My Dad felt the stir of the Holy Spirit and mulled over that for an entire year. We were pleasantly surprised when he decided to throw away the ancestral altar! My Mom and Dad were baptized together in Dec 2005. There was great rejoicing in the Sin family and also by the angels in heaven!



Dad giving testimony at baptism

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The Least Of These

By Galene Wong



Nathan, Joel (2nd from left, student from duke), Derek (3rd from left), Klaus (4th from left, another homeless man we interacted a lot with) and Matt, at the cafe where we shared a few meals together and where they accepted Christ.

This past summer, young adult Matthew Lu served a less fortunate community in Queens, New York. His team leader, Boto, took note of Derek, a homeless man terrorizing the plaza in which his team was working, and encouraged Matt and his team members to pray. In response, God sent Derek in Matt's direction.

"Then I saw a homeless drunkard hobbling around harassing others in the plaza. He took milk cartons and smashed them on the floor. He dropped the F-bomb left and right. He grabbed sandwiches out of peoples' hands and then threw those to the ground. I wasn't quite sure what to think. There was a bit of disgust towards the man, but also some fear. I prayed in my head that I wouldn't have any encounters with the man."

Despite his fear of being harassed and innate abstergent behavior of his generation, Matt opened his heart to the "least of these," and began talking to Derek. Matt had been washing windows, and Derek graciously offered constructive criticism to improve Matt's unfortunate performance. Through God's grace, their conversation on the proper way to wash windows turned into a series of discussions about Jesus Christ. At some points, Derek's robust profanity distilled into heartfelt tears.

Derek embodied the husk of a middle-aged man and boasted the raspy voice from years of smoking. Derek's father had been a pastor and helped Derek ground his faith. Derek had dreamed of becoming a trauma surgeon, but death, drugs, and alcohol plagued his youth and adulthood, and wove him in and out of incarceration.

In the following days, Matt and Derek's acquaintanceship grew into friendship as one began to discover more of the other. Derek no longer reeked of concrete jungle but radiated knowledge and passion. With his love for Christ reinvigorated, Derek in turned witnessed to other members of his community.

Many of us live in a fool's paradise and convince ourselves our "mission" is limited to certain degrees of separation and deny ourselves and others the opportunity of living God's evangelical mercy firsthand. We equate the idea of "missions" with the task instead of the people. However, Matt's experience reminds us to not withhold His love but to overflow our community, wherever that may be, with Christ-like humility.

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EXALTING JESUS CHRIST
EDIFYING THE BELIEVERS
EVANGELIZING THE WORLD