

## DEC 2003 EMAIL TEXT

From: "GFI admin" <admin@gfi-singapore.org>  
Subject: December Mailer  
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Clear Day

Sorry folks. We have forgotten to plan ahead for the December mailer because of the conference! And we went away visiting Suan Ai's mum in Penang - we D-R-O-V-E! It was a wonderful trip - strangely, for us, it was just being with the mum (80) and the second sister (who is a little mentally unstable) that mattered most for us. OK, the mailer...

For those who were at the conference, thanks for your support and we hope you had a good time. For the volunteers, thanks again - you have been a wonderful bunch. The dream is to have families who believes in bringing up morally upright children coming together, putting aside smaller differences, and working towards communities for the glory of God!

Have a blessed Christmas and New Year - let's continue to be a better parent every day!

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but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint Isaiah 40:31

Greetings from Jeremy and Suan Ai

log on [www.gfi-singapore.org](http://www.gfi-singapore.org) for parenting resource

## CONFERENCE THOUGHTS

Mum was asking her daughter about her honeymoon...1

"Oh, mother," she began, "The honeymoon was wonderful! So romantic, we had a terrific time. But, mother, on our way back, Andy started using really horrible language. Stuff I'd never heard before. Really terrible four-letter words. You've got to come get me and take me home. Please, Mother!" the new bride sobbed over the telephone.

"But, honey," the mother countered, "What four-letter words?"

"I can't tell you, mother, they're too awful! Come get me, please!"

"Darling, you must tell me what has gotten you so upset.... Tell mother what four-letter words he used."

Still sobbing, the bride said, "Mother, words like dust, wash, iron, cook."

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The conference a few weeks ago was a wonderful opportunity for our family to serve together. Even Elliot contributed by looking after the T-shirts! He was proud to be responsible too! Sure, there were slack times, so the children brought cards to play while waiting. To their surprise, Mr. Ezzo showed them a card trick and Samantha was simply thrilled to learn something first hand from someone she knew from the video!

We believe that's what family ministry is, being together, being busy and even waiting together. Looking back, we realized this is possible because we always assumed we would do things together – even when it is an activity that maybe 1 out of our 5 members is involved, the rest comes. Perhaps that is not possible for some families and we thought about that. Of course for teenagers there may be other programmes and there will be more conflicting demands for family togetherness and we appreciate that but for younger ones, we believe it should not be an issue. That brings us back to the 'red cup/blue cup' issue when children are young. If children get to decide too much too soon, chances are that it's going to be difficult to have any form of unity. Some call it 'freedom' but to us that freedom to do as one pleases loses opportunities to build a family identity. It is the same in adult life isn't it?

We hear of disappointed parents saying that their children do not want to follow them on outings when they are not even twelve. In the Singapore context, children will stay home baby-sat by either the TV, the internet or computer games. There is an alternative - why not involve them such that they feel part of the family. There will be times when it might get bored, bring a book to read, for the younger ones, colouring books are fine too. We remember bringing Elliot for a 2-day training course (we sought permission) and he did colouring most of the time and did not fuss too much! Of course when children are given too many choices when they are young, they will say no if the lure of the computer games or TV at home is greater! Then they would miss out on the occasional unplanned fun during outings – for us, it could be the way Elliot plunges during swimming competition (er, not a pretty sight!) or as simple as someone dropping a fishball accidentally at meal time and how the whole family watched it 'bounced'! So, when your kids are young – just bring them whenever and wherever possible – don't have to ask them for permission – you are the parent, remember?

That brings us back to an issue with helpers. They are very convenient – we had one for seven years too. Up to a point, we decided that all outings are just us and the kids. Of course, there is the argument that helpers are part of the family too – we don't deny that but what happens is that when we have the helper with us, there is a tendency for them to look after the kids more than we do or we conveniently allow that. Then we thought – if we have kids and let someone else look after all the time, why have them? So, that was what we decided and we believe it helped build relationships and self-control for us parents! It is a lot more work doing it that way – try visiting the toilets when you have more than one and they all go at different times!

Now that the conference has ended, work has began, including plans for next year. Scheduling new classes and leadership conference are part of the plan. We will never have enough volunteers, so if you wish to volunteer, drop us a note – remember, there will be many moments of waiting as well!