

APRIL 2004 EMAIL TEXT

From: GFI
Sent: Monday, April 05, 2004 08:56
Subject: April Mailer

Hi folks

Slightly late this time. Apologies. No photos this time, was in a rush and forgotten to take the stuff with me to China. Actually had the picnic photos to share with you - was a wonderful day and gathering. (Yes, you are receiving this from China, isn't technology great?)

I am steering a little away from techniques and Q & A this time as I realised attitude plays a big part in our parenting and once we don't believe in a principle strong enough because of obstacles or whatever, our daily lives will not be right. I believe that we don't live up to our own standards and God's standards because of shame and if we can remove that, we definitely can strengthen our families!

Don't forget May 1st leadership conference.

Till next time.

Jeremy and Suan Ai
for Andj and Dorcas.



SHAME AND PARENTING

About shame and parenting

Contributed by Jeremy

Recently I have been meditating on 'The Pilgrim's Progress' and the topic of shame surfaced. I cannot help but ponder on how shame has robbed Christian parents of their power to lead their family and by failing to lead, caused an absence of shame in the younger generation (which is educated and numbed by the media messages).

I would like to concentrate on a Chinese saying '恼羞成怒' which means shame turning into anger. Perhaps that's where I sometimes find myself lashing out at my family unnecessarily? **It is shame, not anger that is the root!** Jesus was shamed as His disciple betrayed Him, as He hung on the cross and yet, He did not display His anger.

As a man, shame comes when I feel I cannot provide well enough for my family (though 'enough is never enough'). I may stop communicating with my wife – couch time can be thrown out the window. When the 'cold war' unnerves my wife because she is waiting for someone to talk to but I do not respond, arguments develop. Further shame came because I feel I cannot handle my family, now that my wife begins to 'nag' at me (she doesn't really but I feel that way)! Instead of trusting the Lord and be self-controlled, I look for a better job, take out the anger on my wife or kids to show I am in charge. I could gather the energy from feeling shameful to be a better father but sometimes I don't. While as a husband I struggle with all these, all my wife want is for me to be by her side, in sickness or in health, in wealth or poverty. How simple but I keep complicating it!

A can feel shameful because her husband is not up to a certain standard or some call 'new age' husbands where they help with everything in the household. She can also feel shameful because her kids are not angels (whose are?). Shame may drive her to look for other more 'fulfilling' things outside without balance, be it career or ministry, or take it out on her husband or kids. Shame basically prevents a wife from looking for better ways to care for her spouse or the family, channelling that energy elsewhere. No complaints about my wife here though – I am the one who needs to balance life!

So how can we turn shame into something good for building up the family rather than allow shame to become anger or bitterness? Well, in all our classes, the foundation is always the couple's relationship. Every time we feel dejected or angry, we want to retreat into quietness and not do anything or lash out at someone, perhaps we can stop and ask, "**do I love my spouse?**". It takes lots of energy and humility to pause, stop and ask that question. Yes, it is self-control. Confession: In my earlier years, I grumbled about why my wife cannot take care of my kids better. I stopped and told myself "If I can do what she does, why don't I help? If I cannot, why complain!" Folks, this is not for the wives to go beat up the husbands with, OK? Husbands reflect, wives wait prayerfully (indefinitely) or vice versa!

Does it apply to single parents? Definitely. For those whose spouse has passed away, the shame exist - perhaps for not providing enough for the children. For those in divorces, shame exists in just the incident of divorce, regardless of circumstances. The energy is channelled to providing for their children regardless of principles unintentionally. That would make executing principles learnt in classes difficult because the overriding principle is provision for the children regardless.



We have heard that respect is earned. Perhaps we missed this: respect is also taught! In Chinese there is a saying, if the son is not taught well, it's the father's fault! 子不教父之过

Shame is a lie from the devil but a very real struggle. To overcome it, let's start appreciating our spouse for who they are and what they are already doing – like my wife tells me, I can be without a job, so long as I am with her, we can die and go to heaven together! Isn't she lovely? If we exercise self-control, the examples we display as parents is enough learning for our kids. The same principle applies with our children, when they are angry, maybe they feel shameful somewhere, maybe we did not show them respect or friends and teachers in school were disrespectful?