

# Vice Chairperson - Dawn Chow

**Years at CCF:** 2  
**Years as a Christian:** 10-12  
**Current Church:** Richmond Hill Chinese Community Church  
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## Vision Statement

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### "The Courage To Be"

#### PART I: THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SONS

I believe two things: (a) that everyone deeply desires to be loved, and (b) that everyone desires to be known as someone of worth and to be accepted as such.

In the Parable of the Lost Sons (yes, plural; Luke 15:11-31), we see that both sons were lost in different ways, but each desired the same thing: to be loved and accepted by their father. Both sons lived their lives in fear: the younger feared that he would not get to live his life, and so demanded independence. He left home and 'lived his life' (squandered), only to find that acceptance and love was best found in the place he once called home.

The elder son feared that he would not be accepted by his father, and so lived a good, obedient life in attempt to gain his father's love and acceptance, only to entrap himself in a world of entitlement, where he became god ("These many years I have been serving you. I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came [home], who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fattened calf for him.").

When we are afraid, fear drives us to do fearful things.  
We are all afraid of something.

#### PART II: WHAT IS THE COURAGE TO BE?

*Courage: (n.) Strength in the face of pain or fear.*

To have courage does not mean that you are not afraid.

To have courage is to have strength to face whatever it is you are afraid of.

But one can have courage and not be courageous. It is much like holding a sword, and refusing to use it.

Being courageous is a choice.

The courage to be is a choice to live free from the fear of not being enough, of not being loved.

In the Christian context, the courage to be is an embrace of the Gospel that Christ has offered to us — in despair, it is the choice to hope. In pain, it is the choice to clench your fists and wait because you know there will be a brighter tomorrow. In persecution, it is a loving endurance of what is happening because you will one day hear the words, “well done, good and faithful servant”. In moments of unworthiness, it is remembering that Christ has redeemed you, that God has called you ‘beloved’, that the Spirit intercedes and is working through you. That you are enough. That we are all works in progress.

And on days when you believe you cannot be loved, it is the choice to run into our Father’s arms to weep, sob, but ultimately, to hear Him say, “My child, I AM here. I love you”. And you rest knowing you are loved, knowing you are known. And you rejoice because this God has allowed you to know Him and thus, love Him.

The courage to be is an embrace of grace. despite despair, despite pain, despite unworthiness, despite hate.

When you say, “have courage, dear heart”, you tell yourself that these things (the despair, the pain, the unworthiness, the self-hate) do not matter because you have been made well; you are fully and extensively loved and known and have been made worthy.

Because when you embrace forgiveness, you forgive. When you embrace grace, you cease judgement and demands to entitlement. In that ceasing, a space is freed up — a space that grace fills, love fills. And when Christ’s love fills you, it overflows to touch the people you come into contact with.

### PART III: SO WHAT?

When we become people of grace — people who continually choose the courage to be fully human, but with a deep hope and love that runs through our veins — then we begin to love (others and ourselves) the way Christ loved us. We no longer cower from our fears (of rejection, of saying the wrong things, of being judged, of not being good enough) because we know what we have chosen is ultimately so much greater than our fear. When we despair and hate and love and struggle, God puts His hand on our heads and says, “it’s okay. it’s okay to be (sorrowful, tired, angry, in despair...). It’s okay. Come. Find rest in Me. I love you”. And so when others despair and hate and love and struggle, we too, can say, “It’s okay. It’s okay to be (sorrowful, tired, angry, in despair...). I love you.” (1 John 4:4-19).

There is no distinction in the Kingdom of God. No hierarchy. No 'better than' because God is the penultimate of 'better'. There is no greater 'better' than Himself.

Grace is knowing we are nothing, but we have been made into something beautiful.

Turn and look at the person next to you - they are the same. We all, having once been lost sons, lost daughters, once driven by our fears and desires to be loved and accepted, have been brought to a place where we are becoming. Becoming beautiful in our own ways. Just be. There are no expectations save to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind, and love your neighbour as you love yourself, under the meta-umbrella of the love Christ has extended you. There is no fear with love.

And there is no need to strive with grace. Because striving only brings about fear, and entitlement.

We are not entitled to anything, and there is no fear in grace. Only love and assurance. And this space, this grace only prompts us to love and extend it to those around us. If we have been brought to our knees by grace, we will loathe to take it for granted. No entitlement.

I want to enlarge ccf's capacity for grace. Because this kind of love, this grace, is how Christ loved everyone He encountered. It is how God loves us. And the space for grace, for acceptance regardless, despite, is what everyone desires. Because Christ tells us, "beloved, I AM." and that is enough for any void in our finite hearts. We can rest. We can love. We (can) live. We be. We are.

#### PART IV: HOW?

Let us pause for a moment and jump to the book of Acts, the book where the early Church was established, when the Holy Spirit came and filled the disciples, where the Church was expanding and the Gospel was being preached to all the corners of the Earth.

Let us take a look at how the disciples have been transformed by the Gospel, the most prominent example being Peter. Good old Simon Peter whom Christ rebuked, who was rash and quick-tempered. Who was over-eager to show Christ how devoted he was. Who had enough guts to walk on water, but lost sight of Christ in the torrent of wind and waves and began to sink.

We see Peter in Acts, boldly proclaiming the Gospel with words that are clearly far more mature than before. We see him healing the sick and the lame, rejoicing that he and others were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's name.

I don't think the coming of the Holy Spirit made the disciples fearless.

I think the Spirit gave them courage. I think they were still afraid. They just knew who was stronger. Better. Instead of focusing on their fear, or being consumed by it, they had faith in

their empowerment and embraced their fears. They faced them head on (definition of courage), knowing that they would be okay.

Being doesn't mean to try.

Trying isn't being.

Being was meant to be restful. But 'being' has now been equated with 'doing'. And in doing, we find ourselves faced by expectations. And expectations (and our attempts to meet them) is not are not restful.

Grace.

(Hear it? Like a golden drop of rain in the midst of a drought)

Grace: "It's okay. It's okay to be (sorrowful, tired, angry, in despair...). Come. Find rest in Me. It's okay."

Being was meant to be restful.

And the Gospel allows us to be.

But being requires honesty.

Because trying is our attempt to meet expectations.

And when we fall into the habit of meeting expectations rather than being honest, we lie to ourselves, convinced that their expectations are really what we want. We become dishonest.

All honesty requires courage, and if being requires honesty, and honesty requires courage, then being requires courage.

Honesty goes something like this:

"Am I afraid?" Yes.

"What am I afraid of?" *Not being good enough. Not being loved. Not meeting expectations. Not being of value.*

*Unbeing: because if no one affirms who I am, or my work, my writing, then I feel as if my existence is worthless.*

"Why am I afraid?" *Because there is always the risk of someone not affirming my existence. And it hurts. And i don't want to hurt.*

"How does the Gospel free me from my fears?"

"Do I want to be freed from these fears?" Yes, and no... Yes because I know it's the right thing to say and do, but no because I don't know how. No, because I don't know what it looks like. What if i come off as pushy? What if i come off as arrogant? What if my work really isn't good but I just think it is? There are too many uncertainties. It's scary.

It is always easier to only have to fight one dragon in order to save the prince(ss) and win the game. In the same way, it's always easier to only have to fight this battle of fear once. It is infinitely harder to fight a dragon every hour of every day.

But this is what the Gospel demands of us if we have decided to embrace it. It demands that we continually choose and hold onto Him (hope: that things will be okay; joy: that things are okay; love: that i can be, that others can be).

So, courage (Courage: the strength in the face of pain or fear).  
Have courage.

No, you have courage. Take hold of it.

"Is the Gospel truly Good News to you?"

"How does the Gospel free me from my fears?"

Each of us have different fears, so I cannot answer this question for you. But I hope that as you continue with me on my own journey through this vision, that you ponder through this question on your own, and that perhaps, you will also reach your own answers.