

GOD MOMENT: an interview with Monica & Larry Chow

by Stephanie Woo

Don't read this.

Seriously, don't. You don't have time to hear about Monica and Larry Chow, who have been attending VCBC for nearly 30 years. Many of you haven't even lived that long. You're too tired to listen as Monica speaks passionately about the bird migration in Cape May, or to focus as Larry describes exploring Bryce Canyon on cross-country skis. You couldn't be bothered to know that when Larry isn't practicing Optometry in Port Coquitlam, he enjoys spending time outside with his family, on a bike or on foot. You don't care that it took Larry a full 5 minutes of silence to think of an annoying habit of Monica's, only to conclude that he "accepts her the way she is, and there is nothing [he] would change." (Of course, Monica was listening at the time.) You do notice (hard to miss) that they have two very bright daughters, Lindsay and Beverly. But you have no idea that when Monica was a child, she liked to hide above the stairwell at her house and scare her unsuspecting younger brother.

You have no time for this.

Which is why at VCBC we cut to the chase. We're family. When it comes to investing in each other's lives we have no time to lose.

This is the Chow family.

The Interview

S. How did you become a Christian?

M. I was 7 years old. My parents were believers and they brought me up telling me about God and bringing me to Sunday School. They were part of a children's ministry similar to Pioneer Clubs, and each year they held a big event with all churches of the same denomination: a sports day event held at Swangard Stadium. At the end of the sports day someone presented the Gospel and asked if anyone would like to accept Christ. I stood up. I was too young to think "all these people are watching me". I just responded to the invitation.

L. The more significant moment was in first year, at a UBC Chinese Christian Fellowship meeting. I had been going to VCBC for a year and a half before that. In my mind I had already accepted Christ a year earlier. But I hadn't really turned my life over to Christ at that point. At that

fellowship meeting it was a "what are you waiting for" moment – realizing you need to step out and declare your faith, instead of it being a quiet journey.

S. What has God been teaching you recently?

L. He has been helping me to realize that the things I go through on earth can be difficult, but pale in comparison to what other people are going through. I should be, and am, thankful for what God has provided for myself and my family.

S. What's one of the hardest moments God has pulled you through?

M. Being a parent has an incredible challenge because it brings out the best and the worst in you. Children become a mirror to reveal some of your weaknesses as they inadvertently push your buttons. It's one way God shines a light on areas where I need to be transformed. I'm trying to learn patience. I'm trying to be able to respond kindly even when I'm tired. That's a real challenge. It's totally God who changes us – we can't change on our own. With those really hard habits or character traits, we need God to transform us.

S. Speaking of change... How would you have answered the following questions 10 years ago, and how would you answer them now? What is most important in your life?

M. God and God – that doesn't change.

L. I would agree.

M. Material things are becoming less and less important to me.

[Larry also agrees with this.]

What do you look forward to most?

L. 10 years ago I was most looking forward to Lindsay being born.

[Monica agrees.]

L. [chuckles] Now, I look forward to a Saturday when I don't have to work.

M. We look forward to having free time to spend doing things we enjoy.

L. Time is something we can always have more of.

M. It's a precious commodity.

S. Thank you for sharing some of that "precious commodity"! What is your greatest fear?

M. I'm not a worrier in general, because when I was very little it was instilled in me that God is sovereign. I feel very blessed

because I don't fear a lot. What's the worst thing that could happen? I'm not afraid of death because I know where I'm going. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. I have a certainty in my heart, which has only been shaken once, when my mother died. I remember that exact moment. I don't know if it was Satan, but just for a few seconds I was at a standstill, thinking, "what if all I believe really isn't true"? But then the confidence and peace of God (peace that passes understanding) just flooded through. God is sovereign and in control.

L. 10 years ago I feared becoming a widower, because Monica was going through some health difficulties. I didn't know what the outcome would be so I was fearful I would lose my soul mate. Now, I can't think of anything I'm particularly fearful of. I am thankful that God has given us so many years together.

The Juicy Stuff

S. How did you meet?

L. You answer. M. No, you answer.

L. No, you answer and I'll correct you.

M. We met at Daniel Fellowship, which was for grades 8-12 at the time, in the summer of '85. We started seeing each other in 2nd year university.

S. Larry, what's the biggest thing God has taught you through Monica?

L. That God is in control of everything we go through. We have to trust that He will do things for the good of those who love him.

S. Monica, what's the biggest thing God has taught you through Larry?

M. That you can trust God for your future. We were going through a difficult time and didn't know what was going to be ahead. He taught me you don't need to play all the different scenarios in your head. He said, "we'll cross that bridge when we come to it".

S. How do you grow together in Christ as a couple?

M. When we met each other, we had quite different backgrounds – I came from a believing family so I had the benefit of knowing God since I was little and growing up in the faith: knowing the words. Larry was just beginning to learn about God. There seemed to be gaps, which was a challenge because I felt we were in different places. But over time, that resolved because what was

more important was that he was really pursuing God and putting God first.

It didn't matter if he knew more or I knew more. What matters is how you put it into practice. When making a decision we both seek God about it and we work it out. In anything that is difficult we pray together – prayer breaks down any barrier before God. Before God, whether you know more or less doesn't matter because He knows everything, and that levels it out!

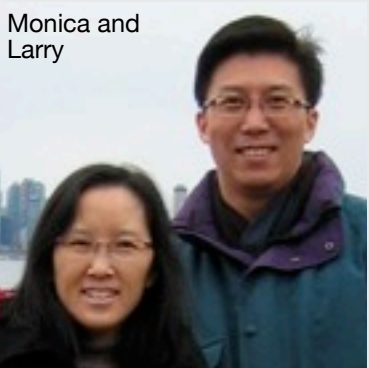
L. We're each being used by God in different ways. Just because we're together doesn't mean God is using us for the same purpose. We have different strengths. I think I work well with teenagers, whereas Monica works well with ladies.

S. Any final words of advice for a 22-year-old?

[Monica and Larry take a few moments before responding, busy reminiscing about that "time of freedom, to explore and find out about the world".]

L. James 1:2-3 – "Consider it pure joy... whenever you face trials of many kinds, because... the testing of your faith produces perseverance." At 22 I just finished at UBC and was at a crossroads. I'm an optometrist now, but the year I first applied to Optometry, they didn't accept any students from UBC. I was devastated when I got the letters of rejection. The verses in James helped me remember God really did have a plan. When you look back, that big thing that didn't work out may turn out to be less world-changing, even if it felt like the end of the world at the time.

M. As a young adult, I was very much guided by Proverbs 3:5-6 – "Trust in the Lord with all your heart..." Life has all sorts of twists and turns – not a straight A-to-B pathway between what you think and do. When you seek God for wisdom it won't always make sense at the time, but later it does.



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the lui &chian families

Compiled by Linda Yang



Ian and Sandy Chian



William and Pearl Lui and their children: Wesley and Meghan.



who's who at vcbc

In every issue, we feature families of the English congregation.

Sandy Chian

Age: 26 | Years at VCBC: 7ish

Day job: Pharmacist at London Drugs

Happy place: My new home with Ian

VCBC Ministry of choice: teaching beginner's English at English Well and singing on the worship team

Fondest VCBC memory: I have lots of those! The first one that came to mind was during lunch the day I got baptised. Olivia challenged me to eat the lemon rinds left over from my lemon tea as an "initiation." In the end, she ate them with me.

Favourite music: I listen to many types of music but my guilty pleasure would be music by Wang Lee Hom (a Taiwanese pop artist). I also like to follow Wong Fu Productions (an independent production company that creates short films/music videos) on the internet/YouTube.

Read her full bio on the insert.

Ian Chian

Age: 26 | Years at VCBC: 2

Day Job: Photographer & Volunteer Management

Happy place: Home

VCBC Ministry of choice: Teaching the young adults Sunday LIFE group with Pastor Cindy, leading one of the "guys' groups" and singing for worship ministry

Fondest VCBC memory: Back when Caleb Fellowship used to meet on occasion in the VCBC sanctuary, after fellowship, our guys group would have a pool-noodle sword fight with the other guys' group. One member of our group would always betray us and side with the other group when we didn't expect it. He shall remain unnamed.

Have you experienced a God moment recently and want to share? A "God moment" is an experience in which God has shown Himself to you, through a trip, a story, a new revelation from His Word, or just an ordinary encounter. We'd love for you to share it on iConnect! Email us: congregational_life@vcbc.bc.ca. Read a God moment on the back page.

Childhood/current ambition: I didn't really know what I wanted to be when I grew up—it kind of changed with my life stage. But recently I've been trying to build up my photography business. I was taking a marketing seminar on photography and the photographer was sharing about the moment he "knew" that he truly wanted to be a photographer. I remember being at a friends wedding, and having this moment where I thought to myself "I wish I had my camera". I'm hoping to build things up where I can take photos full time. That's my dream job.

Movie preferences: Artsy, thinking movies but also "Cube" and "The Rock" with Sean Connery. Cube paints a good illustration of society if you read between the lines, and "The Rock" is filled with all sorts of killing goodness. I'm currently going through a Zombie phase. Friends can attest to that.

Read more about Ian on the insert.

Pearl Lui

Age: Forever 29 | Years at VCBC: 26

Day job: bank teller and CEO of the Lui company

Ministry of choice: PowerPoint "clicker" during Chinese service

Current ambition: not to be awoken by the alarm clock for one day. No achievement so far.

Fondest VCBC memory: summer conference

Favourite recording artist: Most of them are dead, such as, Jim Croce (Linda's note: I had to search him up on Wikipedia to find out who he is.)

Happy place: by the beach

Read more about Pearl on the insert.

William Lui

Age: 52 | Years at 27

Day job: Businessman

Ministry of choice: Sunday School teacher, member of Congregational Life Team and Church Expansion Committee

Favourite VCBC memory: The same week that Pearl and I got married is the same week during which Nathan Chiu, Pearl and Eddie Chiu's son, was born. The Sunday bulletin for that week read: Congratulations to Pearl who was married yesterday and also congratulations to Pearl who has a baby son!

Read his full bio on the insert.

Wesley Lui

Age 17 | Years at VCBC: 17

Day job: Student | Ambition: Make it to university

Fondest VCBC memory: Orange beef

Favourite music genre: Rock

Favourite movie: The Dark Knight

Happy place: Wherever my friends are!

To Meghan: "Meeegghaaan!" Wes describes his dad as hilarious and his mom as caring. He likes his family because they don't keep secrets from each other. He admires how his parents never go to bed angry.

Meghan Lui

Age 14 | Years at VCBC: as long as I can remember

Day job: Student | Ambition: Doctor

Favourite VCBC memory: Making angels in Daniel Fellowship

Favourite recording artist: Rebecca Black

Happy place: on the rugby field

Meghan thinks her mom is the one who's funny and her dad just likes telling lame jokes. As for her brother, he is very tall and likes to eat a lot. She thinks her fish is very cute. Meghan wants to thank her parents for cooking yummy food.

that’s so Vickie

by Vickie Chow

A few weeks ago our class attended the annual MedBall, a fancy dinner held in order to fundraise for the second year students’ rural rotation this summer. This year’s theme was “Masquerade”—an excuse for us to get out of our normal study attire of hoodies and sweats and instead dress our best and hide the top halves of our faces with lavishly embellished masks. The night was filled with good food and good company and it was all captured with the flashes from digital cameras and smart phones.

As per tradition with any event worth capturing on film, Facebook activity peaked after that night with photo albums of my classmates at the dinner, providing perfect sustenance for procrastination. Coming down from the high of that weekend, we all reconvened via buses and bikes to our regular routine of classes and problem-based learning. Instead of the obligatory “hey” and “how’s it going” said through the Monday morning blues, I was greeted by quite a few people with some permutation of the following words: “I was looking through my album the other day and you were in more than half of the pictures.”

What can I say, I’m not surprised—I’m a self-professed camera hog. Be it birthday or bar mitzvah, if I spot a camera, some part of my face will be in front of it. I wouldn’t really label it as narcissism—I’ll cringe at the sound of my own voice like any other person—it’s more of a habit that has been embedded in me as far back as I can remember.

Exhibit A: this is a photo of myself when I was a little under three years old. I distinctly remember that day: my mom was coming home from picking up my two older sisters from school. They were already dressed up from having their school photo taken that day and the skies were impeccably blue. My mom wanted to have an impromptu photo shoot on the front yard of our house, and not wanting to leave me out, she beckoned me to come outside from the open front door.



“But I’m not wearing pants!” I answered, with what I would consider a pretty valid excuse for not 1) Going outside 2) Having your picture taken. “Who cares? You’re only 2!” Succumbing to my mother’s reasoning I put down my sippy cup and went outside to where my mother had already positioned my sisters beside a flowering shrub. And that’s where my memory stops and the pictures fill in the rest of the story. There are initially several photos of me nonchalantly posing with my sisters, then the photos gradually wean down to of just me casually sprawled onto the grass, rocking my bowl cut and showing off my baby legs like I was too good for pants.

Looking through old family albums, there is a plethora of pictures spanning my childhood that depict me in photos with my sisters in not the most photogenic of states. There are some where I appear to have just woken up and some where I’m pretty sure I had just finished having a nose bleed. As a result, I am conditioned to see a camera and automatically think that I should be in front of it, no matter what the circumstance. So, the next time you whip out a camera, don’t blame me for my unnatural affinity to be wherever your camera points, blame my childhood.



in the eyes of einar: the art of Bible study

The Thirty-Six Stratagems are said to be collected from various Chinese generals from ancient China, masters of strategy and warfare. Einar Wong once read a Wikipedia article on strategy and warfare.

The fastest way to get youth unexcited for a week’s program is to use the two magical words “Bible Study” in the promo e-mail. It’s like asking, “Who wants to pray?” when you want a room to be silent for a few seconds, works every time. A few years ago, I was stumbling around the Internet when I came across the “Thirty-Six Stratagems”, a compilation of thirty-six strategies used on ancient Chinese battlefields. Looking back at them now, I realize that a lot of the principles can translate into the classroom and into lesson planning. Here are four observations:

借“Kill with a borrowed knife”

刀 I am always on the look out for things I can unashamedly steal for the next lesson I have to prepare. To illustrate, I have used an activity from a History of the British Isles tutorial, a warm-up from a play rehearsal, campfire games, YouTube videos, and Justin Bieber’s “Baby” to either teach a lesson or illustrate a point.

聲“Make a sound in the east, and strike in the west”

東 The most ineffective Bible studies that I’ve participated in are the ones where I can figure out the main message or lesson five seconds in. The most effective Bible studies, that I remember learning from, were never predictable. They used seemingly random activities or games that tied in surprisingly with the main lesson, or they took a well-known Bible passage and approached it from a different angle.

打“Stomp the grass to scare the snake”

草 The original point of this strategy was to do something so unusual, strange, and spectacular to force your enemy to react or disrupt their thinking. The same principle applies to Bible study. A ridiculous, silly activity can easily break the ice at the beginning of a lesson to ease the group in, while an abrupt, pointed question can knock students out of their complacency and force them to think on the spot.

誘“Entice the tiger to leave the mountain”

虎 Never directly attack a student who doesn’t want to do something (like not wanting to read out loud). When leading the Bible study, it is your job to make them interested enough in the lesson to do what you need them to do.

離 All thirty-six strategies can handily be found on Wikipedia and I strongly recommend that anyone who’s interested to go check them out. It goes to show that you can use anything to further God’s kingdom. Seriously, anything.

Lillooet? Where’s Lillooet?



by Emily Ho

That was the most common question people asked me when I told them that I would be going to Lillooet for my 8 week community rotation. As someone who is geographically challenged, I require landmarks to orient myself. Lillooet is about a 2 hours drive away from Whistler, about a 4 hour drive from Kamloops or Vancouver, and 45 minutes from Lytton (although I’m not sure that actually helps...). Lillooet has a population of 2500, and services the surrounding (smaller) communities.

Also, the best way for me to describe a place is to describe its food (because we know that’s one of the most important characteristics). There is one A&W, one Subway, and a couple of family restaurants including two Chinese restaurants and a sushi place. My craving for good Chinese food was at full force after the 8 weeks (for those of you whom I dragged out to eat once I came home). Of course, you can’t mention Lillooet without acknowledging its gorgeous location: It is surrounded by ginormous mountains. Imagine waking up everyday to massive mountains towering over you. I mean, sometimes the snow storms would turn everything into a white blanket preventing your field of vision from extending one metre, but on most days it was gorgeous (and walkable). A 10 minute drive outside of the town brings you to some of the best “hiking” (by hiking, I mean hiking for non-hikers) that I have ever experienced. If you are a nature buff, I would definitely recommend a trip to Lillooet.

I found my home church in Lillooet Gospel Chapel. I was pretty adamant about finding one during my stay, and I did some research checking out the different types of churches in the area, and if they had a website, to check it out and their doctrine. Lillooet Gospel Chapel is a small church with a regular attendance of about 20 people, but they are 20 incredibly dedicated and sweet Christians. Lillooet is ripe as a missions field. There are several Native tribes in the region, and there was a surprising large number of faiths in the town. The town is pretty ambivalent to Christianity, but the church does what it can to open up the doors through outreach programs such as God’s Girls, which is targeted at elementary girls in the community. It’s exciting to hear what they do for the community and how they plan to reach the unreached.

Lillooet Gospel Chapel really became my home during those 8 weeks. I ate with them after service, came out for Sunday school and to the Monday night faith discussions. Lorraine and Richard took me under their wings and showed me the town and invited me over for dinner. They really live out their faith in their lives. Don and Gloria provided me with rides every Sunday and Monday night. Pastor Al and Marlene were a source of stimulating conversations on Monday nights and where always available to answer my faith questions. Naoko was the first Asian I met in Lillooet (she’s in Canada on a working VISA for one year, but don’t ask me why Lillooet) and she became one of my closest friends at church (and one of the youngest as well, but she’s 31, so that gives you an idea about the general age of the congregation). The congregation was a constant that kept me grounded every Sunday, worshiping with them, learning with them, and fellowshiping with them.

All in all, a wonderful experience. You won’t hear me saying: “Lillooet? Where’s Lillooet?”

Studies show cows wear bells because their horns don’t work. Studies show whenever you call a wrong number, you won’t get a voicemail. Someone will always pick it up. Studies show corn oil comes from corn, and baby oil comes from... never mind.

Studies show even if you have a broken clock, it is right twice a day.

Studies show practice makes perfect. Studies also show, nobody is perfect, so why practice?

Studies show the best contact solution: Glasses

Studies show Buzz Lightyear does not understand the word infinity.

Studies show whenever Buzz Lightyear needs toiletries, he goes to infinity, Bed Bath and Beyond

Future Studies: Do fish get thirsty?



what is this? I don’t even...

by Silas Tsui

This is a paragraph talking about the church youth ministry. It was written in a hurry. It is riddled with inconsistencies. And it never quite arrives at whatever point it sought to make. But remember: the time spent reading this steaming mess of prose may inspire others to bring newcomers to our church, increasing the overall level of happiness in the world.

Ever since I kindergarten, I went to Pioneer Clubs. I sung the theme song, recited out, “Your word is a lamp to my feet a light for my path,” then went to do whatever was planned on the program. Now as interesting as memorizing Bible verses is, after six years, it gets a little dull. Near the end of grade five, I wondered where I was going to go, hoping it wasn’t an evolved version of Pioneer Clubs.

Turns out, it wasn’t. I arrived at church at seven o’clock that Friday and wandered around a bit until a guy with funny-looking glasses invited me to come into a room with a bunch of people looking about as confused as me. He introduced himself to me and then invited me to come into that room, the place where Elim was held.

The second visit was still somewhat uneasy but by the fourth week, it was actually a place I wanted to go. The main reason I still go is probably how easy it is to interact with your leaders as well as the fluidity of the night. As crazy as it can get sometimes, when stuff is being taught, it’s condensed and simplified in a way we can understand easily. In other words, it’s perfectly suited for a bunch of seemingly hyper-active kids who can’t stand memorizing bible verses.

I’m not sure what lies ahead in Daniel but I hope to see a gradual transition building up more serious talks over the year. For the future of this youth ministry, I think it should really be based on what the leaders think would suit the kids most while building in some information every night, even if it’s just a little bit.

