

WEEKLY REFLECTION

What would the apostle Paul say to us today if he were at the dinner table with us? What would he make of our customs, such as dressing in red, passing out *lai see*, or our Chinese New Year's blessings? How might he respond to the anxiety felt at big family gatherings when someone asks an insensitive question or comments negatively on our appearance?

Remember that in Acts 17, Paul was in Athens only because he was waiting for Silas and Timothy. Yet he became so provoked by the idols in the city that he chose to dialogue with people from different faith backgrounds while he was there. If Paul were here in Hong Kong today, he might do the same!

Let's remember that these fears might not be altogether irrational. Beneath the Chinese obsession with wealth might be a desire to provide for one's family, especially when people were unsure where their next meal would come from. To this, Paul reminds us that God is the One who made the world and everything in it. (v.24) He alone gives to all mankind life and breath, and He will provide for us what we need. (v.25)

To those feeling anxious about meeting with family and what they might say, Paul reminds us that God made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth. (v.26) God's intention was and is for every one of us to seek and to find Him. (v.27) Instead of being preoccupied about what others might say, why not take the opportunity to point back to the one God who is Father of all?

As for those who cling on to superstitions and remain bound by fear—if you repent and turn to the Lord Almighty, there will be nothing you need fear. God has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness (v.31), but He alone is mighty to save.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

What is the most memorable superstition, custom / tradition, or question from a “nosy relative” that you’ve encountered during Chinese New Year? How did you handle it, and what is your strategy for surviving the holidays?

QUESTION TWO:

Although the apostle Paul was in the city of Athens only because he was waiting for Silas and Timothy, he was so provoked by the idols he saw that he could not help but instigate discussions with people from different faith backgrounds in various settings.

Have a think about those in your workplace, in your social circles, and in your own heart. What are the idols that we sacrifice our time and peace to, and what are the “altars” on which we sacrifice to them? Why is it so easy for us to trust in and to sacrifice to these idols rather than God, who gives us “life and breath and everything?” (v.25)

QUESTION THREE:

Oswald Chambers once said that *“The remarkable thing about God is that when you fear God, you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else.”* What is one specific fear that you need to surrender to Jesus in the coming week?

How can you take the opportunity of the Chinese New Year holiday to demonstrate or strike up conversations about your faith with your friends and family?