

# How to be the Worlds' Greatest Mum

Dr Alex Tang  
Mother's Day Sermon  
10 May 2009  
Holy Light Church (English)

## Sermon Statement

Seven principles of how to be the world's greatest mother

## Introduction

Mother is a role not a title. Unless you belong to covenant and they appoint you in a supervisory role and give you a title like Mother Teresa, motherhood is a role. What this means is that motherhood is not limited to those who have biological children. It applies to all those who function as the role of mother to children, teenagers and even adults. Note Jesus with his dying breath commits his mother Mary to the care of John the disciple. Mary became John's mother. Thus mother in this sermon refers to anyone who takes on the role of a mother – a biological mother, a step-mother, adopted children, a guardian, a god-mother, a grandmother or a single parent. All these may be properly called mothers and today I shall teach you how to be the world's greatest mother.

There are seven principles of how to be the world's greatest mum. They will say of you as the woman in Proverbs 31

PR 31:28a Her children arise and call her blessed;

## 1. Don't be a *kiasu* person

From the Wikipedia

“**Kiasu** (Traditional Chinese: 驚輸; POJ: kia<sup>n</sup>-su) is a Hokkien (a Chinese spoken variant) word that literally means 'fear of losing' (Mandarin Chinese 怕輸). However its actual usage would imply a meaning more approaching that of "dog in a manger", and yet not quite. Examples of kiasu behaviour includes accumulating too much food on one's plate during a buffet lunch in case there is no more later, or joining a queue many days in advance just to ensure that one successfully gets hold of the limited free tickets to events, promotions and shows such as Singapore's annual National Day Parade.

This word is so widely used by Singaporeans and Malaysians that it is incorporated into their English vocabulary (in the form of Singlish). It is often used in describing the social attitudes of people, especially about South East Asian society and its values. Its widespread use is often because these attitudes are common—to not lose out in a highly competitive society (e.g. by above-cited examples), or to the extent of parents imposing heavy study labour on their children in their wish to make them at the very top of all other students. Growing up with this attitude, these students often become ambitious businesspeople, with the desire to be on top in wealth and prestige regardless of whether the most prestigious careers are aligned with their true capabilities.

It is often perceived as part of Ah Beng culture.

The word kiasu was added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 2007”

#### **a. Kiasuism is self-centeredness**

One prime example of kiasuism is running to head of buffet queue so as to get the top choice of the food on the table

- piling your plates full of oysters, lobsters and other expensive seafood
- taking more than you can eat because you have paid for it

Kiasuism is basically saying I want what is rightfully mine and I don't care about you

#### **b. Kiasu mothers produce kiasu children**

One incident I always remember is when one of my daughters was still in secondary school in Johor Bahru. She and one of her classmate were tied for the first position in class with the same marks. This classmate's mother went to see the teachers and when the results were released; her daughter was in the first position beating my daughter by half a mark. Where did this half mark come from I never did find out because we did not bother to go to the school to make a ruckus. The irony was compounded when she brought her daughter to see me because she was sick. At the end of the consultation, the mother has the audacity to ask for a discount!

Thank God, my daughter did not take that incident to heart. Both of them actually went together to Trinity College in Melbourne to do their foundation course. Unfortunately, away from her mother, this child mixed with bad company. She did so badly that she had to repeat a few of her courses.

Mothers are a model for their children. Kiasu mothers produces kiasu children.

### **c. Kiasu uses the culture of shame**

Some mothers uses shame to get their children to behave.

“Why can’t you be a good as Auntie Janice’s son?”

Instead of telling the child what is the right way to do things, they say compare their child to other people’s children and ask why they cannot behave like them.

“Mummy will be very unhappy if you do that”

This implies that if the child do not do what their mother wanted, they are failing or shaming their mother.

The lesson children learned from this way of teaching by shame is that love is conditional to the mother not be shamed. They therefore have to behave well not because it is the right thing to do but to avoid shaming the mother.

## **2. Speak the five love languages of children**

Prov 3:1-6

<sup>PR 3:1</sup> My son, do not forget my teaching,  
but keep my commands in your heart,

<sup>PR 3:2</sup> for they will prolong your life many years  
and bring you prosperity.

<sup>PR 3:3</sup> Let love and faithfulness never leave you;  
bind them around your neck,  
write them on the tablet of your heart.

<sup>PR 3:4</sup> Then you will win favor and a good name  
in the sight of God and man.

<sup>PR 3:5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding;

<sup>PR 3:6</sup> in all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make your paths straight.

Psychologist Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell discovered that we need to show our children we love them by using love languages that they understand. Their book, *The Five Love languages of Children* (Chicago:

Northfield Publishing, 1997) is worth reading. Mothers need to “fuel” their emotional tank with love.

These are:

**a. Physical touch**

- i. Infants and toddlers
- ii. School-age child
- iii. Adolescent

**b. Words of Affirmation**

- i. Words of affection and endearment
- ii. Words of praise
- iii. Words of encouragement
- iv. Words of Guidance

**c. Quality time**

- i. Being together
- ii. Positive eye contact
- iii. Sharing thoughts and feelings

**d. Gifts**

- i. Grace of giving
- ii. Distorted gift giving
- iii. Meaningful gift giving

**e. Acts of service**

- i. You should do for your children what they cannot do for themselves
- ii. Loving service

**f. Discover your child’s primary love language**

**3. Don’t expect instant results**

<sup>EPH 6:4</sup> Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

<sup>COL 3:21</sup> Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

- a. Repeat, repeat, repeat
- b. Set appropriate boundaries
- c. Behavioural modification

- i. Positive reinforcement
- ii. Negative reinforcement
- iii. Punishment
  - 1. punishment fits the crime
  - 2. immediate
  - 3. not out of anger
- d. Age appropriate teaching
- e. Teach them to learn

#### **4. Be and teach gratefulness**

Col 3:16, 17

<sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- a. Be grateful yourself: children are a gift of God

PS 127:3a Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him.

- b. Teach gratefulness

#### **5. Learn to let go**

Proverb 22: 6

PR 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

- a. Be ready to let go

One of the more difficult things for a mother to do is to let their children go. As when a child is learning to walk, there will come a time when you have to let go and let him or her walk alone. The child will fall and fall and fall. However, one day he or she will be able to walk alone without help. The difficulty is for mothers to let go.

- b. Develop spiritual and social immunity

Sometimes I think Christian mothers (and fathers) especially tend to be overprotective of their children. Afraid of the evil influence of the outside world, they keep their children in an artificial cocoon. Some of them even opt for home schooling to protect their children. They over-control the books they read, the television and movies they watch and their internet access. Here I may clarify that I am not saying we do not exert some control over our children media exposure. What I am saying is that some Christian parents

over-control and that is a sign that they do not trust God and their children enough to let go.

The danger of this is that their children are not streetwise. They have not developed the social techniques of dealing with evil or undesirable influences. They do not have spiritual and social immunity. That may be the reason why so many Christian children rebel against Christianity when they leave home. Nowadays they leave home after their form five to do foundation or pre-university courses away from home. These children are totally unprepared to handle the outside world because they have been so protected in their Christian home.

### **c. Cut the umbilical cord**

I have a doctor friend of mine who is a specialist. He is married with children. His mother who has a house in Skudai, however stays with him. Everyday, his mother will serve his breakfast, lunch and dinner. His mother forbade his wife to do that, saying she has been looking after his son for more than forty years and will continue to do so until she dies.

## **6. Walk in the faith**

Deu 11: 18-21

<sup>18</sup> Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>19</sup> Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>20</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, <sup>21</sup> so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.

### **a. Most of our faith is caught not taught**

This Deuteronomy passage teaches enculturation. Enculturation is teaching the faith by total immersion. Instead of a set of rules to be memorised, the children are actually introduced to the faith by seeing it being lived out and also living it out themselves.

### **b. Routine, rituals and telling of Truths**

Part of the process of enculturation is have certain consistent routine like family prayers, saying grace before food and reading the Bible together. Then rituals such as going to church service, Holy Communion, acts of service are incorporated. Finally, interpretation of Biblical teachings at the level of the understanding of children must be done at the family level.

## 7. Stay close to the Source

John 15: 5

<sup>JN 15:5</sup> "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. <sup>8</sup> This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

- a. Living a life in Christ
- b. Prayers
- c. Bible

## Conclusion

The seven principles to be the world's greatest mum are:

1. Don't be a *kiasu* person
2. Speak the five love languages of children
3. Don't expect instant results
4. Be and teach gratefulness
5. Learn to let go
6. Walk in the faith
7. Stay close to the source

Soli Deo Gloria

10 May 2009