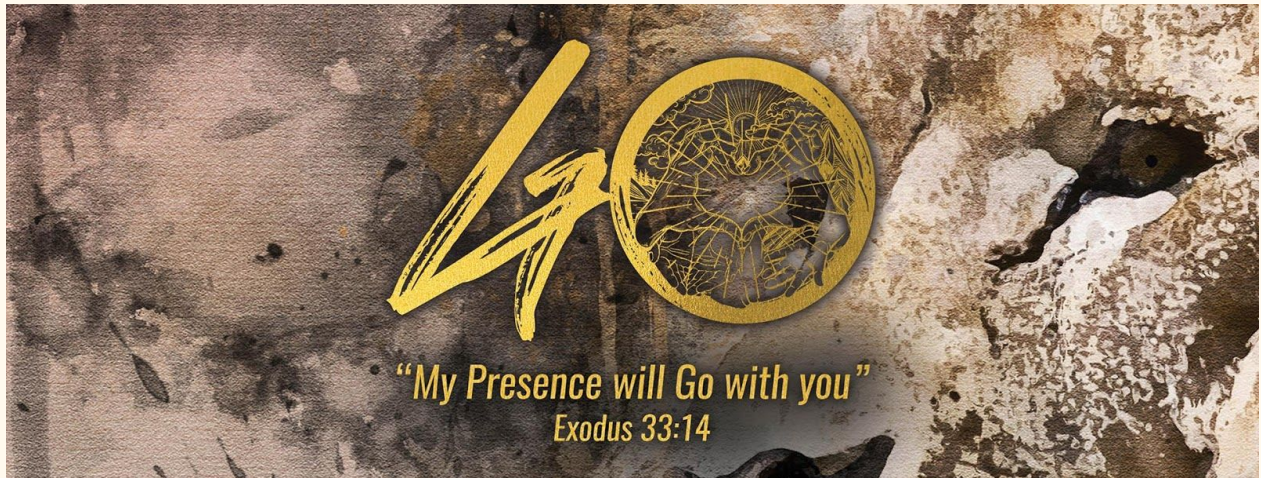

Ignite

“Holy Spirit, our teacher and counsellor, as we dive into the Bible would You awaken our hearts, expand our minds and shape our identities today. Amen.”



SERMON SUMMARY

Note to Word Facilitator: The sermon notes below is a summary of the sermon.

You may choose to further summarize it according to the needs and context of your CG members. The goal is not just to go through it “verbatim” but to prepare well, allowing members to recall and engage the message in the best possible way.

What's Next?: You, Me & the Nations

Pastor Kelvin Yong

Acts 8:1-4 NIV

And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

Introduction

Six months have passed since **ImpactNOW** was launched to serve the community affected by the pandemic. Since then, various individuals, families and cell groups have testified of being deeply impacted in the process of serving the communities around them. There have been many [inspiring stories](#) of how God has worked in powerful ways to enable His people to step out and meet a need greater than their own.

BIG IDEA: IMPACT is not just for others, it is also for us.

DUMC have embarked on **ImpactNOW** to provide the opportunity for us to be a blessing to the nations and to help grow us as an outward looking church that loves God, serves people and makes disciples. This is God's missional blueprint call which Jesus gave us before He left this earth and went back to heaven. The early church heard and heeded the call. Here are three things we can learn from them.

Rooted Faith

As followers of Jesus Christ, it is crucial that we have a faith that is deeply rooted in Christ because

- It produces courage and confidence **Deuteronomy 31:6, Acts 8:1b,1c NIV**

Courage is the greatest manifestation of our faith and is based on confidence that this all knowing, all present and all powerful God cannot and will not fail us. Moses had that rooted faith when he confidently told Joshua not to be afraid

before crossing the promised land. The early church believers acted with that same courage and confidence. In spite of being threatened with severe and relentless persecution, they did not give up their faith but continued to share the Gospel as they dispersed to other regions.

- It yields extraordinary outcomes [Acts 11:19, 8:1a, 8:3 NIV](#)

We may not fully understand the grand scheme of God in this pandemic and global economic crisis and some of us might be asking “*God, what is next?*”. Perhaps God is asking us to root our faith in Him and trust His good and perfect will. Then He can use us for His extraordinary and wonderful purpose that begins with responding to the needs around us. The disciples never would have imagined, whilst fleeing Jerusalem, that Antioch would be a historic mission center sending the very same man who violently persecuted them (Paul) as their missionary. What an extraordinary turnaround!

Responsive Service

We reflect and grow to be more like Christ when we respond selflessly to the needs around us.

- We become Christ to others [John 10:15 NIV, Acts 8:2 AMP](#)

We are called to love and serve others like Christ because Jesus regularly ministered to the marginalized, poor and the sick. He demonstrated servanthood when he washed His disciples feet. The early church did like Jesus when they chose seven men to serve the needy widows and one of them being Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, a courageous and powerful witness for Christ who eventually became the first martyr for his faith. His death was deeply felt and grieved by the people because he was a man with a great servant heart that touched many lives through his service.

- We grow to be more like Christ. [Matthew 9:36 NIV](#)

Jesus will mold us into becoming the person He wants us to be through responsive and selfless service. As John Stott puts it, “*God wants His people to become like Christ, for Christlikeness is the will of God for the people of God.*”

We shift the focus from ourselves to others and begin to see through the compassionate eyes of Jesus for the poor, sick and marginalized.

Missional posture

- It requires us to live missionally **Acts 8:4 MSG**

Wilbert Shenk aptly described a Christian believer when he said , *“To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to live a missionary experience in the world. There is no doubt that this was how the earliest Christians understood their calling”*.

Living missionally means living and acting like a missionary even if not all of us will be packing our bags and leaving behind our current lives. It must become the way and the rhythm of our lives as we partner God in His redemptive plans for His nation wherever we are. This happened to the early believers in Acts as they were forced to leave their home base and became instant missionaries overnight, bearing witness to the Gospel not just in Jerusalem but also in Judea, Samaria and ends of the earth.

- It involves every believer **Acts 8:4 NIV**

The call is for all and not just for the selected and privileged few. Often, it is the ordinary people that God uses to testify of His goodness. Early believers embraced this earnestly by preaching the Word wherever they went. They were not the apostles nor professional missionaries but they were ordinary followers of Jesus just like us.

Conclusion

We are all called to live a missional life by preaching and living the Gospel through serving others around us. It is such responsive and selfless service in Christ that we will be molded to become the person He wants us to be.

SERMON REFLECTION

In this week’s sermon, Pastor Kelvin encouraged us to model the three attributes of the early Christian church - Rooted Faith, Responsive Service and Missional Posture. It is easy to dismiss this as irrelevant in this day and age since life was less complicated back then. However, let us pause and consider things more deeply, less we too hastily jump to conclusions. Here is what I found. *Note: At the risk of not*

making this a painful history lesson, findings are briefly summarized and references are included for the history geeks among us who may be interested. Here is what I found.

1. Political stability and religious freedom

Similar While Malaysians experience a relatively stable political environment with the constitutional freedom to practice our faith, Christians around the world from Algeria to Syria still experience persecution.¹

Different The persecution was far reaching across the Roman empire. It was a tumultuous time where Christians were relentlessly persecuted by non-believing Jews (shared by Pastor Kelvin on Acts 8:1-4) and the Roman Caesars. The inscription under the statue of Caesar Augustus: "The God Augustus, Son of God.." ²³ gives an idea of just how dangerous it was to publicly declare the Gospel.

2. Society and Culture

Similar The early Christians were a diverse group of people made up of many Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, free men and slaves.⁴ This also meant that there were different cultural practices between a Jew and Gentile (Acts 15:27-29). In some sense, we too live in a similar society with diverse income levels and cultures.

Different Today, slavery has been abolished in most parts of the world. Another difference is that the early Christians were more communal whereas not all of us urbanites may even know the neighbours living beside us! Another differing trait was that every day, the early Christians continued to meet at the temple courts, broke bread in their homes and ate together with sincere hearts and a heart of praise for God (Acts 2:46-47).

3. Time for spiritual worship

Similar The number of hours in a day has not changed since then. We all still try to make the most of the same 24 hours a day.

Different Whilst there is some indication that Romans work only around 6 hours per day, some professions were more labour or skill intensive and took more

time e.g. Paul, while working as a tentmaker in Corinth referred to it as 'worked night and day' (2 Thessalonians 3:8) and 'hard work' (Acts 20:34-35). Furthermore, everything in life also required more effort and time to obtain e.g. they mostly cooked at home since there was not the luxury of ordering GRAB food delivered to their doorstep. We also catch glimpses of how fellowship, prayer and worship happened late into the night as we see when Peter went to Mary the mother of John's house where people had gathered and were praying after miraculously escaping from prison (Acts 12:12).

Dear Lord Jesus, forgive me for having preconceived notions of how much easier the early Christians' lives were. Thank you for opening my heart to see that while there are differences in some areas, we live in relatively more peaceful and comfortable times. What matters most is the choice we make to be your radical disciples who find ways to invite you into the way and rhythm of our lives. I ask that you show us ways to live a more missional life by making the most of the time we have. Amen.

References: 1 [Christian persecution 2019](#) ; 2 [Augustus as Emperor](#) ; 3 [The term Son of God \(Wikipedia\)](#) ; 4 [Life of the early Christians](#)

Contributed by Darren Lim and The Ignite Team



APPLICATION

Note to Word facilitator:

As you prepare for this session, this is a great time to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you to use the questions efficaciously. You can select, modify or entirely create your own questions, according to the needs of your CG, especially if you feel that there are too many questions than required for the allocated time. The questions

below are crafted with a certain flow in mind. You could use these towards the end or insert them in between your own sermon reflection and summary.

Suggested Icebreaker Question (for Welcome that would link to the Word time)

- Share a famous quote that you feel you can relate to. Why do you feel that way? (e.g. *"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."* -Nelson Mandela, *"Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans."* -John Lennon, *Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear--not absence of fear.*)
- Do you have a favourite cafe or restaurant? Why is it your favourite?
- Fill in the blanks: "Despite the current covid situation, I am thankful for ____"

Suggested Word Introductory Question:

- Are the three attributes of the early church (Rooted Faith, Responsive Service and Missional Posture) still applicable in today's context? (*Note to facilitator: It would be good to draw insights on the life of the early Christians from this week's Sermon Reflection*)
- Agree or Disagree? "Life of the early Christians was easier than life in the 21st Century." Share why you agree or disagree.

Suggested questions linked to the main points:

Rooted Faith

- Share your favourite Bible verse or a quote that speaks to your current season in life. What does your favourite verse say about God's nature and character?
- Share a situation in your life where God **has/hasn't** come through for you in extraordinary ways. What does that say about God - His power, character and promises? (*Note to facilitator: This could be a breakout session where one member pray for another for continued faith and trust in His good and perfect will - Gen 50:20 [Joseph]: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." or Rom 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*)

Responsive Service

- What does it mean to "grow to be more Christ-like"? What are some practical steps we can take to be more Christ-like?
- Are there any unmet needs you observed around your circle of family, friends or neighbourhood? Share and reflect prayerfully on how you/your family/CG can be of help.

Missional Posture

- As we approach the Christmas season, discuss how you/your family/CG can help others feel the love of Christ e.g. it could be as simple as connecting with a relative/friend you have lost touch with or giving thoughtful gifts and kind gestures.
 - Who inspired and led you to Christ? How can we model them in our mission of sharing the Gospel?
 - How would you describe the character of Jesus to a pre-believer friend?
-

Question Bank *(Extra questions you can use to bring discussion further as you see fit):*

- What are some of the challenges in applying the three attributes to our own lives?
 - Who are the unsung heroes in our lives? Share how they have impacted your life. *(Note to facilitator: Often times, it is ordinary people and simple gestures that deeply impact us)*
 - How has the Lord provided for you in times of difficulties? How has that built your faith?
 - Share a story of how someone has positively impacted your life and helped you in your walk with Jesus. What did they do and why was it impactful?
 - "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16). How do we navigate around being taken advantage of in our goal of embracing a Christ-like heart of servanthood?
 - What can you do this week that will be of significance to a family member/friend/neighbour? *(Facilitator note: If this was touched on in previous weeks, continue encouraging members to reflect prayerfully on who they can be a blessing to this week.)*
 - Are you moved to consider going for a short term mission or outreach trip or do you feel there is a calling in your life to be a missionary? What would it cost you? What steps do you need to take to reach your goal?
-



WHAT'S YOUR STORY?



Photo by Judit Peter from Pexels

Story of the week...

"I left Chiang Mai feeling fulfilled but yet wondered if I had it in me to serve in full time ministry when I observed the life of my missionary friends there. I felt inadequate, perhaps because I did not yet have the intention of doing something so bold and extreme. Being a missionary means trusting God 100% and I did not have that then; even till today! Hence I told God "Lord, please do not call me into full time ministry or have me become a missionary as I am not ready for it..."

- Dr Felicia Chang, PJN3

* Read the rest of Dr Felicia's story on dumc.my/blog

"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."

- Maya Angelou

If you or your CG member(s) has a story to share related to today's Word or any other story that speaks of His goodness or of IMPACT Now, **share their/your story** [\[HERE\]](#)



PRAYER

Note to CGL: You (or someone you assign this portion to), may lead by praying OR reading these prayers together as a CG during worship.

- 1. Covid-19:** Let's pray together as a cell group and church in Christ, seek God to contain the COVID-19 chain in the Name of Jesus Christ. May we continuously confess and repent from our sinful ways. Let the blood of Jesus heal the land, especially in the red zone areas across the country. We bring an Impact through our prayers.
- 2. IMPACT locations throughout Malaysia and beyond:** Some of our IMPACT locations are very affected by Covid-19, flood and food crisis. Let us pray for those full time workers who served in those areas that God will look after their needs and also to protect them in ministry. Pray for the people of God to encourage and support each other during this pandemic period.
- 3. All CGs in DUMC :** That God will show the way how they may meet the needs of the churches and communities around and beyond during this pandemic. Pray for a heart of discernment and wisdom. As we approach the season of Advent, to prepare ourselves to be grateful to God for His providence and be an IMPACT to those in need and share the gospel to those who are lost.
- 4. IMPACT Taskforce team:** Continue to uphold the team in your prayers - for heart of discernment, wisdom, strength, joy and unity.




OTHER RESOURCES

Below are some links to resource you. Do **CLICK** on the images below!


FEATURED


In view of our current changing landscape that affects us individually and corporately, here are some featured resources for you this month!



 **Methodist Prayer**
methodistprayer.org
Methodist Prayer is based on Daily Prayer, the Church of ...
[Prayer & Spirituality](#)
[Website](#)



 **Following Christ in a Pandemic: Philip Yancey**
59 minutes
biologos.org
In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, "science" has be...
[Philip Yancey](#)
[Social Concerns](#) [Christian Living](#)
[Video Clip](#)



The Psalms Dare Us to Bring Our Whole Sel...

Short

christianitytoday.com

Praying the Psalter can give shape to the river of our emo...

Tish Harrison Warren

Prayer & Spirituality Christian Living

Article

OTHER RESOURCES

Discover a host of other resources curated for you here!



DUMC STORIES

Be blessed by a compilation of inspiring DUMC Stories that you can share with others!

