

ISSUE 101

APRIL TO JUNE 2019

DUMC

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IN CHRIST

FLOODGATES

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The church office is closed on Mondays.

From the Editorial Team:

We are living in an era of constant change, and we witness something new every day, to the point that we may be numb to it. Nothing surprises us anymore. With instantaneous information available through social media, and the constant bombardment of “news”, today’s generation can be overwhelmed by what used to be considered “unusual” or “shocking” in times before, and begin to believe that this is “acceptable” and “normal”. But it should not be “acceptable” nor “normal”.

Romans 12:2 tells us **“Do not conform to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.”**

Floodgates was created to be a vessel, a platform where we can publish articles and testimonies to bless and inspire God’s people towards Godly renewal of the mind mentioned by the apostle Paul, and which will stand out from the daily bombardment of confusing and possibly unhelpful “information”.

In Floodgates, we, as a Church, the Body of Christ, can share stories and bear witness to God’s amazing grace and give Him the glory. Also, we can remind ourselves that we are nothing without Jesus, that we would just be part of a dying world and hopeless.

On the cover, “G” is at the centre of the title, Floodgates, just as we need to place God at the centre of our all. Our name Floodgates originates from Malachi 3:10 **“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”**

Father God, may we all, children of God, be blessed when the “floodgates of heaven pour out...” and be reminded that the presence of God in our lives is the blessed life.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A FOLLOWER >>> OF >>> CHRIST?

by Chris Kam, Senior Pastor

The Easter Day attack in Sri Lanka aroused a dreaded fear in us that this could happen to any church. Circulars were sent out by the respective denominational leaders in Malaysia encouraging churches to set up appropriate security precautions. Other well-meaning members have even suggested putting up certain measures, which in reality would be highly impractical, and on top of that evoke unnecessary fear and unease among members, considering that the church building is a public place of worship. This would inevitably invoke in us a certain measure of anxiety which would commensurate with our theology of suffering.

This killing is not isolated. This had happened in Egypt on Easter of 2017. 47 Egyptians were killed and 126 injured when Coptic churches were bombed. On the Easter of 2016, 70 Christians were killed and 300 were injured in Lahore, Pakistan. Three days before Easter on Maundy Thursday in 2015, 148 Christian students were killed at the Garissa University in Kenya. The list goes on.

Our hearts go out to our brothers and sisters suffering for their faith. Each year, we remember them through the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. As I reflect on this matter, I am reminded to continue praying for fellow church workers who were forcibly abducted in Malaysia. How do we navigate this theologically? Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32). How do we bring about a freedom in our lives, not lived with a spirit of fear, but of liberty?

This brings us to ask a fundamental question: What does it mean to be a follower and disciple of Christ? What did He call us to be and into? Let me point you to this passage entitled in NIV as "The Way of the Cross".

Mark 8:34-38 (NIV)

34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? 37 Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

There are four active verbs in verse 34 — "*wants*", "*deny*", "*take up*" and "*follow*". As a disciple, it is a willful choice of denying our rights, desires, apprehensions and fears. Let's look at them one by one.

Firstly, when Jesus said, "whoever **wants** to be my disciple", he is making an invitation to anyone who would choose to be His follower. The Christian faith is one where we choose to follow a Master by our own volition. We are never forced into it as the nature of love is such that it is always

marked by a voluntary response. The act of water baptism is an outward expression of an inner reality, meaning we choose to die and be buried like Jesus through obedience. This reminds me of the song "I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back, no turning back."

Secondly, we must **deny** ourselves. This self-denial is not about denying one's personality, to die as a martyr (although that is possible) or to deny things (as in being ascetic in life, although it may mean that too.) Rather, it is the denial of "self", turning away from the idolatry of self-centredness. "Dead" people have no rights. We are reminded too of our watchnight covenant renewal where we declare "*I am no longer my own but Yours Put me to doing, put me to suffering Let me have all things, let me have nothing I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal*" It is a reminder that the Christian faith and the entire biblical narrative is not about me, but of God's glory.

Thirdly, we are to **take up** our cross. Interestingly, Jesus did not say to take up His cross, but our own cross. Each of us needs to be clear what that cross is that we are carrying. The cross had never been



a part of Jewish metaphor but was in the context of the Roman occupation. It brought to mind a condemned man who is forced to submit to Rome by carrying his cross to his place of execution. It is to publicly demonstrate one's submission and obedience to the authority against which one has previously rebelled. This has tremendous implication.

When we become a Christian (wants, deny and take up), we are inviting the world to hate us. "You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved." (Matthew 10:22) Therefore, Apostle Peter reminded us, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you." (1 Peter 4:12) And Jesus comforted us by saying, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

According to *Voice of the Martyrs*, 70 million have died for their faith since the time of Jesus.¹ A recent Guardian report stated that a century ago, Christians comprised 20% of the population in the Middle East and North Africa, but since then the proportion had fallen to less than 4%, or roughly 15 million people.² The research on Christian martyrdom is extensive on the internet and it is not within the scope of this article to highlight this but the point is clear. There is a price to pay to be a follower of Jesus Christ and this has been the pattern of Church history from day one.

And having considered all that, Jesus finally said, "and **follow** me". The Greek grammar of this verb is one of a present imperative, which if contextually translated would mean "keep on following me". The path of discipleship is an ongoing narrow path (Matthew 7:13-14). That call of discipleship remains the same as the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), to make disciples

and to teach them to obey all that He had commanded. Apostle Paul summed up succinctly in Philippians 3:10, "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ..."

The call to discipleship demands that we choose to want to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him, meaning we are to give our all and our best. We need to repent from calling believers into a nice and cushy Christian life, into convenience rather than convictions, wanting only blessings but not paying the price of sufferings. I do not mean that we are to ask for sufferings, but when it happens, we are not caught by surprise. How often we cry in pain due to a paper cut when we have not yet been called to give up our life for His sake. We thank God that we live in a relatively peaceful nation with a freedom to gather and worship. Maybe we do not fully understand what it means to suffer for His Name. But there are believers in our nation who are asked the following questions before they are permitted to be baptised and I am encouraged by their faith.

- Are you willing to die for your faith?
- Are you willing to go to jail for your faith?
- Are you willing to lose your job for your faith?
- Are you willing to be kicked out by your family for your faith?
- Are you willing to go to rehabilitation camp for your faith?

May this give us a biblical reference when we assess our response to the current security risk and all future demands. When Christians are persecuted and killed, their responses have been similar through all the centuries. They forgave their aggressors. Such response can only come from a firm theological conviction in the minds of the Christians. "Lord, give us courage to be followers of Jesus. Maranatha! Amen!"

¹ <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/70-million-christians-martyred-faith-since-jesus-walked-earth/38403.htm>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/02/persecution-driving-christians-out-of-middle-east-report>

Essential2019: Anchoring On The Word Of God

by Eileen Wong, PJN5

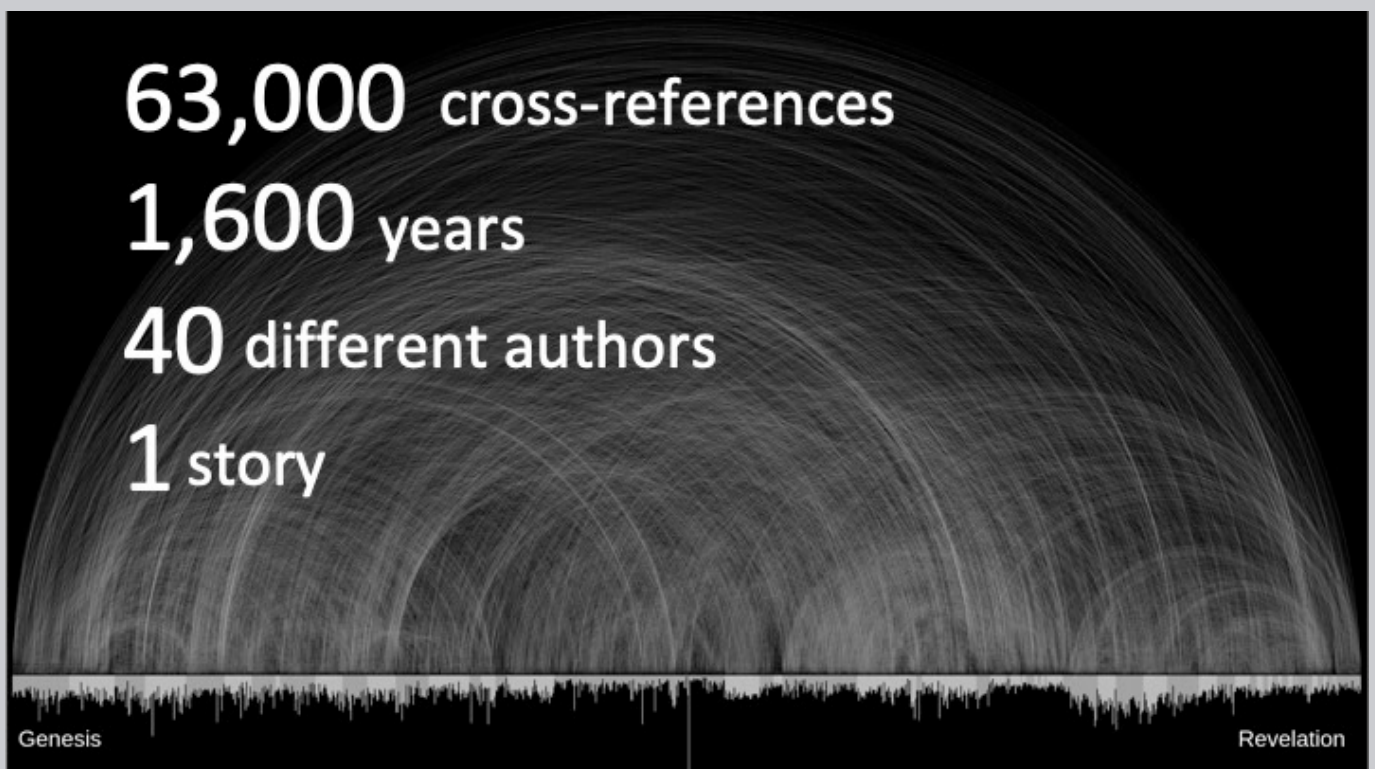
In March 2019, DUMC held the Essential Conference, its biennial women's conference, themed "Anchor" taken from Hebrews 6:19. The four plenary sessions covered being anchored on Christ, on the Word, in times of trial and in community.

In the session on Anchoring On The Word Of God, I touched on why we anchor on the Word and how we can do so.

INTRODUCTION

The Word of God – inerrant and credible

This chart shows a stunning visualisation of the Bible's 63,000+ cross-references. The bar graph that runs along the bottom represents all the chapters in the Bible, starting at Genesis 1 and ending at Revelation 22. It wonderfully provides a sense of the Bible's internal integrity despite its palpable complexity. Even though the Bible was put together over



a span of 1600 years by 40 different authors, it points to one story. And that is only possible when there is a divine being who inspires the words in the Bible through human beings – God Himself.

The Biblical Narrative

It is vitally important that people know the overarching storyline of the Bible – Creation, Fall, Redemption and Consummation. If we are to live as Christians in a fallen world, we must be shaped by the grand narrative of Scripture.

The one story line of the Bible is God’s salvation plan through Jesus Christ. Everything in the Old Testament points forward to the promised Messiah, and everything in the New Testament points back to Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, God Himself who ushered in the kingdom of God – born through a virgin birth, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death on the cross for the sins of humanity, resurrected bodily, ascended to heaven and today reigns in heaven at God’s right hand, reconciling us back to God.

The more we read the Bible, the more we see that God is the main character, not us. Bearing in mind the big story of Scripture helps us keep our focus on Jesus, and off ourselves.

WHY WE ANCHOR ON THE WORD

1. To know God

Christianity is founded upon the theology of God revealing Himself. It is not what we understand, assume or think about God. Scripture is a fundamental path towards knowing God. We need to grow to know who He is, what He is like, what He is doing, and what His ways are. Otherwise we worship a God of our imagination, we make Him conform to our image and we build our own kingdom, not His.

God desires that His people know Him. In the book of Ezekiel alone, seventy-two times God said “that they may know that I am God”.

Knowing God is critical for a Christian to live in this broken world. J.I. Packer, in his book, *Knowing God* says, “Knowing God is crucially important for the living of our lives. The world becomes a strange, mad, painful place, and life in it a disappointing and unpleasant business, for those who do not know God.”

A.W. Tozer similarly says, “What comes to our minds when we think about God, is the most important thing about us.” How we see God is critical because you become what you behold. What absorbs our interest? What do we give our attention to most? What shapes our thinking and trains our affections? For example, if you are absorbed with money, soon you will look like money, or if you keep focusing on your problems, you will end up looking like your problems!

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important that
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Conversely if you behold God – His majesty, supremacy, glory, beauty – it will shape your thinking and train your affections – you will want to be more Christ-like.

Being Christ-like is not a moralistic thing where we whip ourselves into following a set of rules in the Bible. We become more Christ-like when we behold God and Christ and yield to the Holy Spirit to do His work in us. The more we behold God in all His beauty, splendour and majesty, the more we would then naturally desire to choke out and starve and kill the pleasures and sins of this world. Sin's enticement and the things of the world become less appealing.

2. To help us see all of life through biblical lenses

The second reason we anchor on the Word of God is because, through the Gospel, Jesus has ushered in the Kingdom of God. What we have now is a Kingdom of God that is here, but not fully yet. And God's Kingdom is an upside-down kingdom with counter-cultural values. For example, those who want to be great must be the very least; bless those who curse us; it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Let us take the Church for example. The world sees the church as an institution, but the Word of God shows us that the Church is Jesus' bride, and in Ephesians 3:10, it says: *His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.*

The Church is the manifold wisdom of God to be known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. Here is what that means. God saved individuals into the Church (Jews and Gentiles are both partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel). The Church is the masterpiece, showpiece to the principalities and the world. This mystery that was concealed is now revealed. That is why the unity of the church is so important, the personal and corporate sanctification

together is so important – because it is God's showpiece to the principalities and powers.

3. To pull through storms

We anchor on the Word because the Word of God pulls us through storms. Having been in DUMC for 20 years, I have been in between eight to ten different cell groups over my time here. And I have seen the different storms that people have faced – from sicknesses leading to death, to work, relational, financial and emotional trials.

The Christian community plays a huge and valuable role in these times of crisis. But the community can only do so much for the person going through the trial. The spiritual being needs to be ministered to, and only God can get in there. For those of you who have gone through storms of life, you know there are certain places in your life that no man, no spouse, no child, no friend can reach, but only God can. And

So build deep in the Word of God when times are good, so that in bad times you can stand.



one of the most tangible assurances of God's presence is through His Word.

So build deep in the Word of God when times are good, so that in bad times you can stand.

4. To engage in spiritual warfare

Anchoring on the Word arms us to engage in spiritual warfare. To be a Christian is to be a warrior. The good soldier of Jesus Christ must not expect to find ease in this world: it is a battlefield. Neither must he reckon upon the friendship of the world, for that would be enmity against God.

In Ephesians 6, Paul uses the Roman soldier's armour as a visual example of how a Christian arms himself for battle, i.e. a belt, helmet, breastplate, sandals, and a shield. The one offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

The sword referred to here is the gladius, roughly 20-24 inches in length. It is used for close-combat warfare. Paul does not say we use javelins or arrows or darts but swords. So it means the enemy is so close, you can feel his breath. You have to slay your foe, or your foe will slay you. It will not suffice for the Christian to guard against sin, and ward off temptation; he has to assail the powers of evil.

If there is one thing that Satan wants to do to the people of God – he wants to destroy our faith through unbelief. And he does it in six ways – deception, doubt, distraction, discouragement, disobedience and division. If Satan can weaken our faith, he can immobilise us. If he can destroy our faith, he can destroy us. Satan will try to weaken and destroy our faith and, through us, the faith of others. Isaiah 7:9 reminds us “If you do not stand firm on your faith, you will not stand at all.”

5. To pass down the Word to the next generation

We anchor on the Word of God, so we can pass it down, the Word and the Gospel, to

the next generation. This is not an option. We do the greatest service to the next generation of Christians by passing on to them undimmed and undiminished the noble concept of God. If we pass down a dimmed and diminished view of God different from what He actually is, that is heresy of the most insidious and deadly kind, because their notion of God would affect their affections, their values and ultimately, their moral behaviour.

As Pastor Edmund Chan would say,

“What one generation neglects, the next generation forgets and eventually rejects.”

So this really is our responsibility. Pass the Word of God down. Pass the Gospel down. Tell them who God is as He has revealed himself in Scripture in all his fullness. Do not just pass down your experiences. Do not just passively sit there and expect the church to do the work of discipleship. Discipling begins at home. Teach the next generation how to read their Bibles well, so that they do not take verses out of context and that they do not take God flippantly.

To pull this together, we are living in a post-modern time where truth is relative and where what is truth to you is not truth to me. But truth is the unseen currency of God's Kingdom. He is the Author and Creator of life and this universe, and He has His definition and plumb-line of what Truth is. Jesus Himself is the Truth! Therefore, as His created beings who live under His Kingdom's rule and reign, we need to know Truth as God Himself has defined it.

We are living in an increasingly confused and chaotic world. There are many difficult issues that confront the Christian's values

and ethics, such as abortion, euthanasia, LGBTQ+ etc and if we do not have God's Word as the compass for Truth, we will be living in a lot of subjectivity and relativism.

Christians will only be able to be the effective "light of the world" if we live in accordance to God's Truth, counter-cultural to the ways of the sinful world.

HOW WE ANCHOR ON THE WORD OF GOD

1. Study Scripture in context

It is important that we read the verse in the context of the paragraph, the paragraph in context to the bigger passage, the passage in context of the theme of the particular book of the Bible and the Bible in the context of the narrative of Scripture.

For example, the theme verse for the Essential Conference is "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19). The context of the book is that it was written to Christians facing intense persecution under Emperor Nero and many were falling away from the faith.

The author of Hebrews sets out the supremacy of Christ in this book – Christ is greater than angels, greater than the law of Moses, greater than the sacrifices, greater than the priests like Melchizedek. So the theme verse is that because of this proven, unchanging, perfect, absolute nature of God, we can anchor our hope on Him!

2. Learn in community

God has given us the Christian community for accountability, encouragement and clarity. Study Scripture in community. Go for DUMC's Equip classes. Learning in community helps us to appreciate perspectives around the table (not one person says we understand all of God fully). It also protects us from error, and having that "one revelation" that no one else has.

**In your church or Christian communities, love all.
Grow with a few.**

So church, anchor on the Word of God because the written Word is a living Word!

ZONE

CAMP

by Samuel Low, PJN3

It was an exciting and refreshing time for PJN3 Zone to go on a three-day two-night camp at Bayu Beach Resort, Port Dickson. There were more than 120 campers ranging in age from 5-year-old children to seniors above 70. The theme of the camp was "Spiritual Renewal and Legacy". We specially invited our Founding Senior Pastor Dato' Dr Daniel Ho to be our camp speaker. It was a topic which both the speaker and the audience were very interested in, as many campers were in the transitional period of passing the baton to the next generation.

In these brief three days, in addition to the solid sermons from the speaker, we packed the days with activities, games, food and corporate devotion and prayer – to ensure everyone would be satisfied not only physically but also spiritually. It was heart-warming to see the campers of all ages get to know one another more deeply, pray for one another and build stronger bonds.

CHEE LIAN

It was refreshing and soul-searching as it was my first CG camp. Looking forward for more to come in the future.

DAVID & HELEN CHANG

We enjoyed the camp especially the messages from both Pastor Daniel and Pastor Kee which ministered very much to us. We were very blessed by God through them. It was also great to know other campers better.

DEBBIE LOH

The PJN3 Camp was a wonderful opportunity for me to bond with my CG core team – serving together and hanging out together, as we were looking forward to a multiplication this year. Although the programme was packed with activities, it allowed me the opportunity to have some extended time to observe my core team, discover and rediscover their gifts and interests, and to encourage them in different areas. Apart from that, it was a good time of mingling with other members with conversations of life and sharing of experiences.

TAN KIM HUAT

What does it mean to leave a good legacy? Pastor Daniel posed a simple question, asking where the richest places on earth were. They were not the diamond mines in Africa, the uranium mines in Russia nor the oilfields of Saudi Arabia and Iraq; the wealthiest places on earth were in the cemetery. There lies the companies that were never started, inventions that were never made, best-selling books that were never written and masterpieces that were never painted. In the cemetery is buried the greatest treasure of untapped potentials. In conclusion, the greatest tragedy in the life journey is not death but a life lived without purpose.

BERNARD LIM

It was the best PJN3 Zone Camp ever! Great venue, fun programme and highly engaging activities. The Spiritual Renewal and Legacy teaching by Pastor Daniel Ho was most refreshing as it taught us how to renew ourselves in the Lord and to leave behind a lasting, impactful legacy. This great 'family' camp also enabled me to know many fellow brothers and sisters across all ages from the zone.

JULIE LEE

I had a wonderful experience. I enjoyed the camp and also Pastor Daniel's sermon which was very clear and easy to understand.

KRISTIN KOH

The organiser did a fantastic job putting together a programme that was enjoyable and fun. Pastor Daniel's message on Spiritual Renewal and Legacy was excellent and timely. Also, the camp presented a great opportunity to make new friends.

SARAH ONG

It has been more than a decade since the last DUMC church camp, an event which I had looked forward to as a kid. I really did not know what to expect for this PJN3 Zone Camp. After all, we were the "younger ones" in a zone where the "aunties" and "uncles" were easily more than double our age, retired and enjoying life!

I am glad I went. It was a meaningful weekend away, learning and being in teams for games (and even a talent skit night!) with these sporting aunties and uncles. We could talk and fellowship together like peers! The theme on Spiritual Renewal and Legacy very much resonated with young and old alike. I also got to see how our Zone Pastor, Pastor Kee and his wife, Auntie Eng Lih loved and shepherded the zone. We were truly blessed!

This was indeed a fun getaway, and I am thankful for the fellowship that we could enjoy with these "older ones". Without the camp, I would not have crossed paths to get to know them...and this is one of the reasons I love the church being an intergenerational church.

Our church will be celebrating our 40th anniversary in early 2020. It will be an important milestone for the church, and for many of us who have been in DUMC for some time. We would like to keep our spiritual fervency and leave a good legacy. But who are we?

I think our Church leaders have put it well at the back of the FLOODGATES magazine (and on our www.dumc.my website):-

"We are DUMC. A church for all generations – an exciting community of families, senior citizens, young adults, teenagers, and young children doing life together. Our primary purpose is not to make nice religious Christians. Our purpose is to build passionate disciples of Jesus Christ."



After7 is an initiative - not an event - where all are welcome to spend time with friends and family after our Saturday Celebrations. Held once every month from 7pm to 10pm, **After7** aims to create a life-giving platform between generations and between people of diverse interests and backgrounds. Each **After7** features various choices of food, live music performances and talks, board games and occasional trivia quizzes where one can win a prize!

After7

Got young kids? The Kidz' Space is available with interactive activities and toys while you eat and look out for them there! Stay as long as you can and leave whenever you need to! If you have any enquiries or are interested to help out as a volunteer, feel free to go to the Info Kiosk during **After7** and talk to the volunteers, and they will gladly help sort out your needs. Alternatively, you can also email after7@dumc.my





TUESDAY ENCOUNTER NIGHT



Tuesday Encounter Night (TEN)

is a time for God's people to encounter Him through worship, prayer and personal ministry. It is also open to all pre-believers who want to seek truth and breakthrough in their lives. **TEN** is part of the Forerunners ministry, and focuses on seeking the presence of God and providing an avenue for ministry time, which includes prayer for salvation and transformation, healing and deliverance.

This invitation is open to all.

Join us on the
3rd Tuesday of every month,
from 8:30pm to 10pm
at the Auditorium
in Dream Centre.
For more information,
contact: forerunners@dumc.my



Repentance Renewal Restoration

5-Day Fast & Prayer

Auditorium | 8:30pm

22-26 Jul 2019

First DUMC's Multisite Location

DUMC@Puchong or D@P



DUMC has embarked on a multisite strategy to grow the church and extend the reach of “Building God’s Community and Making Known His Glory” in the Klang Valley. We recently commissioned our first multisite location in Puchong, in a new building called Skypod Square, in the heart of the commercial area opposite IOI Mall and in the same development as IOI Business Park. Here are some insights into this new initiative...

FROM SENIOR PASTOR CHRIS KAM

Why Multisite?

The multisite model enables the expansion (outreach) of the church without having to commit to larger facilities in the central location. It enables the church to move closer to the community where her worshippers are from, thereby reducing commute time and enhancing community presence (identification and visibility). It also creates multiple opportunities for serving and raising of leaders.

Is DUMC planning more multisite locations?

Yes, we are. We hope to have at least three other locations by 2025.

How do multisites fit into DUMC's long-term strategy?

A multisite church serves to bring God's love closer to the community by being in the community. In creating the opportunity to minister to communities further away from Dream Centre, it extends our ministry space across the Klang Valley. In this way, it increases our capacity to minister and grow beyond our existing facilities in Dream Centre.

Is DUMC@Puchong a satellite church, an outreach point, or a stand-alone church plant like Dream Centre Ipoh? What are the differences?

Technically, DUMC@Puchong is an extension of our Celebrations. Instead of having another celebration in the same location, we merely move it out from Dream Centre (DC) to another location. Livestreamed worship and sermons will maintain a similar feel to Dream Centre. When it is live worship or preaching, we will strive to maintain a consistent feel. The preaching program at a multisite location is the same as that at Dream Centre. The different locations will retain the DNA of DUMC, where people and ministries are concerned.

We will also eventually offer vernacular worship services like those in Dream Centre. The objective is the same - to bring the ministry of DUMC closer to those communities. Similarly, other ministries (e.g. children and youth) will be extended to these locations at the opportune time. Each location will have a lead pastor with his or her core team. Overall leadership and strategy direction are still from the Senior Pastor of DUMC.

Will there be any difference between members worshipping at DC and at D@P?

There should not be a difference between worshipping at DC or D@P. We hope members will use this new location as a platform to reach out to their friends living around the area and make a difference to the community surrounding D@P.

FROM PR TAN MOY HOW, LEAD PASTOR D@P

What possibilities do you see in having a multisite location like D@P?

To put it in a nutshell, D@P is an extension of additional space to use, like a "Hall 5" at DC. It is an outreach ministry of DUMC that seeks to bring Christ closer to people who are not reached through the main location at Dream Centre. This Puchong location also provides a platform for other vernacular congregations (e.g. Myanmar) to meet, worship God and impact the community there.

What were the considerations in deciding on the location?

It needed to be situated within a reasonable commute radius, i.e. within a 30-minute or 30 km radius from Dream Centre. This could be in a totally new area or an area where there was a high concentration of current church members.

What challenges were faced in setting up D@P?

The processes of seeking approval from various parties including regulatory and local authorities, renovating the three units in 2 months, with a "soft" launch on 3 February, meant that being able to hold the first "official" Celebration within three months of this date was nothing short of a miracle.

There were numerous meetings and mountains of paperwork to coordinate the main and sub-contractors, with constant attention needed to adhere to the tight time-lines for the purchase and installation of equipment, furniture, fittings and the other nitty-gritty details. We are most grateful to the core, planning and project teams in pulling all these together. Kudos, they truly did wonderful God-honouring work!

How do you mobilise and motivate members to serve in multisite?

We have a clear vision for DUMC@Puchong.

The challenges of “know why we do, and what we do” and the exhortation from Ephesians 5:15-16, “...making the most of every opportunity” are clarion calls to own this vision together.

Hence our shared vision is:

- Build a Celebration of Great Belonging
- Bring Kingdom Impact to the Community
- Be Connected to the Community

We needed a great team of core leaders, and passionate, persevering and focused team leaders to know, to show and to go the way. We are so pleased with the volunteer recruits which comprised of First Touch, Resonate and DEW Crew. We clustered these to ONE Team, with two main functions of Welcome and Worship. The Welcome team is essentially First Touch, which are the Ushers, Connectors, Info-counter and Security, while the Worship team consists of Resonate (worship leading) and DEW (covering all media matters).

In what ways can D@P be a blessing to the members? To the community?

The venue will be used for weekend celebrations, monthly prayer and community outreaches. In this way, we can extend the blessings of DUMC into the community at Puchong namely:

- Allow DUMC to extend its reach across the Klang Valley.
- Provide more avenues for people to come into relationship with the church and Christ.
- Offer more opportunities for people to serve in various capacities across DUMC at two locations (and more in future).
- Enhance mission in the local community.
- Utilise the gifts and creativity of people.





How do you see ministry growth at D@P?

The potential for ministry growth is huge. Puchong is mainly a Chinese-speaking enclave. In the near future we have a great potential to set up a Celebration to cater to this. By the Lord's help and favour, we believe there will also be a multiplication of another English-speaking Celebration before this year's end.

Any stories of blessings or thanksgiving in setting up D@P?

There are so many stories of thanksgiving!

Even at the beginning, at our first 'test' Celebration on 3 February, we prayed for a lady who lived in the condominium just above D@P. She happened to notice some renovations going on, and simply enquired. At the end of the Celebration she gave her life to the Lord!

Within a short time-frame, we have seen amazing favour from the Lord. On average we have been seeing eight new visitors each Sunday. Members and participants have felt the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit during our various events, and many have received various blessings and healings.

The premises are also being increasingly utilised for various functions (Resonate, First Touch Vision Casting), events ('Open House' Launch) and many training sessions (Volunteer, Mission, Healing & Deliverance) and meetings (Tuesday Encounter Night, CGs, Discipleship 1). There was also a Treasure Hunt held on the 22 May.

We thank God for His bountiful blessings in providing DUMC with the D@P premises, and trust that His Kingdom will continue to grow in Puchong, the Klang Valley, Malaysia, and the world!

CALLED TO THE MARKETPLACE

by Dato' Dr Daniel Ho,
Founding Senior Pastor



In common parlance the marketplace is often used to refer to the place of commerce, industry and business. It is synonymous with the workplace and it encompasses some 65% of the people in a nation when educational institutions are included.

Writing about the marketplace, Neal Johnson observes, “.... perhaps the only institution that touches, directly or indirectly, virtually every person on planet earth. In one way or another, it is a pervasive part of every society, culture and people group. It is found in the midst of every religion and every political system in every historic era.” Indeed, the marketplace is so pervasive that when we impact the marketplace, we influence almost every segment of human society.

The marketplace is critical to the mission of the church. Billy Graham says, ‘I believe that one of the next great moves of God is going to be through the believers in the work-

place.’ As Christians are scattered everywhere in the marketplace, the potential for influence, impact and transformation in the marketplace is massive.

Christians can play three important roles in this regard in the marketplace.

Firstly, the role of being a catalyst. Jesus uses the metaphor of the yeast: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough” (Matthew 13:33). Just a tiny amount of yeast can catalyse and transform the whole dough.

All of us are to be like yeast in our workplaces. We bring the Kingdom of God and Kingdom values expressed in truth, justice and righteousness to our workplaces. For some of us who are blessed with a positive and healthy work environment, what a pleasure it is to work, serve and contribute in such workplaces! Though the atmosphere may sometimes be

pressurising and intense with huge expectations to constantly produce results, it is still a good place to work in.

On the other hand, some of us may find ourselves in work environments that are unhealthy if not toxic where there is envy and distrust, politicking, backbiting and even backstabbing. Many caught in such an environment would like to throw in the towel. It is in such situations that Christians should consider staying on rather than take the easy way out by resigning. I am sure we would have prayed much about it and probably consulted various people before considering that option.

We need to remember our calling as yeast and as salt and light in our workplaces. We are not only to arrest corruption and decay. We are to catalyse, bring and inspire change for the better. It will take time and a huge amount of effort. Patience and perseverance are needed to slowly chip away at the bad and ugly parts of the work environment. It is easy to see and blame what is wrong but it is the calling and role of Christians to transform the marketplace for Christ. With the Lord's help and strength, I believe we can do it.

Secondly, as Christians, we also have the role of creating:

- A community of love, care and support in our workplace if it has not already existed.
- A community which seeks to encourage and inspire one another in work and in relationship .
- A community where everyone is accepted and has a sense of belonging
- A community where there are no factions and divisions, and
- A community that goes even beyond our workplace to play and have fun with one another.

A community in the workplace is like being in a big family where everyone belongs,

is cared for and is treated with dignity and respect at every level of the company. That is the best kind of company to work in. Cleaners and sweepers in the company are accorded with as much honour and appreciation as the senior management. Indeed, Christians should play that kind of role in any organisation or company and not just in so-called Christian companies or Christian-owned companies only.

Finally, Christians must play the role of chaplains in their companies. Like a pastor, we should be personal with people, taking time and making time for people. It is good to take an interest in our colleagues, not just only about their work but also about their lives and their families. We can offer love, care and support and visit them or their loved ones when they are unwell and offer to pray for them too. Indeed, we should be regularly praying for the workplace, our colleagues and their loved ones. Pray that there will be opportunities to share Christ and possibly lead them to faith in Christ and to follow them up. That would be the greatest good we can do to our colleagues and friends.

I say the same to CEOs of companies. They need to show their love and care for their staff. Staff members can quickly pick it up if we are truly sincere and genuine. People do not care how much we know until they know how much we care for them. When staff members can feel the love and care, they will go all out to serve the company. Hence a company CEO is a pastor, a chaplain, to his/her company. In fact, all Christians must play that role as well at whatever level they may be in the company, especially with the colleagues around them.

It is therefore acting as catalyst, working to create community and serving as chaplains in our workplaces that we will begin to see the marketplace transformed for good, for God and for His glory.



Second in a two-part series on couples struggling with infertility, this article features the life of a couple for whom child-bearing became a matter of life and death.

Hope for childless couples depends on the lenses they look through. For as long as the instinct to have biological children endures and the body is physiologically able to reproduce, no matter how slim a chance, hope continues to knock on the open door.

In the case of Joshua and Stella Lee, fertility was not the problem, it was a genetic disorder that the two possessed that made having a normal child a slim possibility.

Joshua, 37, and Stella, 31, both have Thalassaemia Minor, an easily managed blood disorder on its own. However, when two people with the same condition come together, complications abound. The improbability of the Lees' situation is compounded by the fact that 3-5% of Malaysians are Thalassaemia carriers.

The Lees did not have their condition confirmed until they conceived their child in 2015. Initial scans showed the baby had a half-formed arm and abnormal blood flow.

by Karen Lam, PJN5

part 2



a FERTILE GROUND *of* DISCONTENT

Can Couples Longing for Children Have Their Happily-Ever-After?

Genetic tests later confirmed the baby had Thalassaemia Major, a blood condition that can cause severe anaemia and a shortened life span. In the meantime, Stella's blood pressure was so high and her body so bloated, she had to sleep sitting up as lying flat caused excessive water retention in her feet. She had to be carried out of bed every morning.

They were advised by doctors to abort the pregnancy at four months because of the risk to mother and child.

"Stella looked completely different," recalled Joshua. "Her feet were so bloated that every step she took hurt." As he pondered further he revealed his struggle over the decision. "When you look at someone you love suffering like that, you wonder, is it really worth keeping the baby and losing my wife?" Joshua was told that the pregnancy could lead to long-term health issues for Stella.

But the decision was clear for the couple from the start, even though Stella's parents encouraged her to abort the pregnancy. "We didn't believe God gave us a baby to give up on her," Joshua insisted. It was their hope that the child would be healthy enough to live a manageable life although they were fully cognizant that it would be a "difficult life" for all.

Stella struggled through the pregnancy despite the odds. By her eighth month, however, her blood pressure had shot up to such a dangerous level, her doctor insisted that delivery be induced. Still, she remained hopeful.

But the baby did not survive and Stella's life hung in the balance from complications during delivery.

Recalling her thoughts at the time, Stella said pensively, "Somehow I felt that this was going to be a testimony."

And it was a story that did not end there.

While Stella recovered physically after five days in the intensive care and high dependency units, it took her one and half years to recover emotionally. During that time, the sight of babies and young children would bring a rush of bitterness and hurt and she knew she could not return to her job as a pre-school music teacher.

The thought of getting pregnant again was extremely tempting, but the chance of having a child with Thalassaemia Major was 25%. It was too big a risk for Joshua after what he went through, losing his child and almost his wife. But Stella could not let it go.

"I just wanted to give myself a last chance," she said. This led to friction between the couple.

"She was crazy!" Joshua recalled. "She wasn't thinking straight."

"Looking back, I was being selfish," Stella conceded. "I refused to believe that I could not have a normal child."

As time passed and as the couple sought to get their relationship and lives back on track, people who recognised the vulnerabilities in the Lees began seeking them out for empathy and counsel. As they provided practical help and advice where they could, instead of feeling defeated, the Lees were empowered by their experience.

"That was the time we began reaching out to others, instead of hiding ourselves in our own cocoon, licking our own wounds and not caring about what happened to others," said Joshua. It occurred to them that their experience enabled them to comfort others in a way they could not if they had not gone through the fire themselves.

Then, one ordinary Saturday as the couple was having breakfast together, it clicked. "We may not have had our child but we had the capacity to help others," Joshua concluded. "That was when we realised we were happy; we were contented with what we had."

By then the Lees had turned to adoption. But they had heard that it could be a long wait of up to five years. Having had their epiphany, they were at peace with the wait and even the possibility of being without a child at all.

As things often pan out in God's economy, when the Lees were able to release the disappointment and bitterness, they received a call from out the blue – would they be interested in adopting a four-month-old boy? This was five months after they submitted their application, instead of the requisite five years.



Today, Zachary, one, has found his home with the Lees. Their story that seemed to have ended devastatingly three years ago, has found its happy ending - at least on the outside. For the Lees, however, their resolution was reached even before Zachary came into their lives.

"I really wanted my child," Joshua said, of his healing process. "Yet I realised that sometimes life is not just about what I want and what I expect. And even though I may not get what I want, I can still be happy."



I was **restless** till I found **rest** in YOU
 I was **hopeless** till I found **hope** in YOU
 I was **reckless** and in **turmoil** till I was embraced by YOUR **love** and **peace**
 I was **sinful** and lacked **forgiveness** till I was shown **grace** and my sins **forgiven**

YOU gave me the key to YOUR heart
 YOU planted the seed of **FAITH, HOPE and LOVE** into my heart
 YOU made my heart sing with songs of praise, psalms and hymns each day
 YOU gave the assurance of an **abundant life** that was so undeserved

Each day I bow down on my knees to **worship** YOU
 Each day I am filled with **gratitude** for more than the gift of salvation from YOU
 Each day I **hunger and thirst** for YOU
 Each day I **yearn to be your witness** till the ends of the earth

YOU taught me to **LOVE** my neighbour as myself
 YOU taught me to give **HOPE** to even the most undeserving person
 YOU taught me to deny my flesh and work by **FAITH**
 YOU taught me all things and reminded me of everything YOU said

Lead me to find the joy of reaching **YOUR heart**
 Lead me that my will be enthralled by **YOUR love**
 Lead me that my body can be a living sacrifice for **YOUR glory**
 Lead me that I can bear much fruit as a testimony of **YOUR love**

Lord, I want to lift **YOUR NAME** up high
 Lord, I want to **THANK YOU** for the works you've done in my life
 Lord, I trust in YOUR **unfailing love**
 Lord, YOU alone, are **God Eternal** throughout earth and heaven above

Thank You, Jesus!

Note: In reading this article, it would be helpful to have open with you the following portions of scripture — Matthew 13:1-23 in NIV, Luke 8:4-18 in NIV and Mark 4:1-20 in NIV, ESV and at least one other version of your choice.

THE PARABLES OF JESUS, GENERALLY

In most modern Bibles, the publishers have been helpful to identify and print Jesus' words in red for easy reference. A study of these red texts would reveal that Jesus' teaching oftentimes comes in the form of parables, which makes studying these parables of significant importance if we are to glean from Jesus' teachings. But what are parables?

In a nutshell, parables are narratives or stories which typically, though not always, contain an element of comparison. Hence, we often find that before Jesus tells a parable, He would start by saying "the Kingdom of God is like...". In this way, Jesus is able to impart heavy theological concepts in a relatable earthly context which His audience would understand. Jesus' parables are thus metaphors of earthly stories but with heavenly meaning.

But as metaphoric as parables may be, Jesus' parables are far from myths. Robert Stewart, in his *The Quest of the Hermeneutical Jesus*, describes Jesus' parables as metaphors structured in normal reality while myths are metaphors structured without normal reality. John Crossan, borrowing the words of poet Marianne Moore, describes it further this way:

ROOTEDNESS IN THE WORD OF GOD:

A BRIEF SURVEY ON JESUS' PARABLE OF THE SOWER

by Alex Tung, PJN1



Parables give us “imaginary gardens with real toads in them”. While myths give us imaginary gardens with imaginary toads in them, a parable tells a story which, on the surface level, is absolutely possible or even factual within the normalcy of life. A myth tells one which is neither of these on its surface level.

THE MOST IMPORTANT OF JESUS’ PARABLES

Of Jesus’ many parables, the Parable of the Sower has been acknowledged as His most important. According to Lim Kar Yong in his *Jesus the Storyteller: Hearing the Parables Afresh Today*, there are three reasons for this.

Firstly, the Parable of the Sower provides the most amount of explanation and guidance on how it should be interpreted. In most of Jesus’ other parables, Jesus leaves a great deal of homework for His audience to mull on; His audience is meant to come to its own conclusions. But with the Parable of the Sower, Jesus provides His own interpretation of the parable’s meaning to remove most of the ambiguity.

Secondly, the Parable of the Sower is one of the few parables that appear in all three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Luke and Mark). For example, the very familiar Parable of the Talents appears only in Matthew (25:14-30) and Luke (19:12-27) and is absent in Mark, while another familiar parable, the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, is found only in Luke (19:9-14) and is absent in Matthew and Mark. More on this below.

Thirdly, at the core of the Parable of the Sower (i.e. after He had told the parable narrative but before He provided His explanation thereof), Jesus quoted from Isaiah 6:9-10. The significance of this reference to Old Testament scripture, especially at this point of Jesus’ ministry, cannot be overstated. This will be discussed in greater detail below.

MATTHEW AND LUKE, VERSUS MARK

This is how the Parable of the Sower appears in the three Synoptic Gospels:

	Matthew 13:1-23 (NIV)	Luke 8:4-18 (NIV)	Mark 4:1-20 (NIV)
Background	Matthew 13:1-2	Luke 8:4	Mark 4:1-2
Parable Narrative	Matthew 13:3-8	Luke 8:5-8a	Mark 4:3-8
Reference to Isaiah 6	Matthew 13:9-17	Luke 8:8b-10	Mark 4:9-12
Explanation Thereof	Matthew 13:18-23	Luke 8:11-18	Mark 4:13-20

On the surface, it seems that all three Synoptic Gospels recorded this parable with a high degree of consistency. Even the structure of the parable is consistent across all three books – they all begin with a brief introduction of the setting in which Jesus spoke this parable, followed by the parable narrative itself,

Parables give us “imaginary gardens with real toads in them”.



then Jesus' reference to the Old Testament book of Isaiah, and finally concluding with Jesus' explanation of the parable. But take a step back and view how each portion of scripture fits into each book as a whole, and we will see that it is only in the book of Mark that this parable is narrated as part of a larger story, a component in a linear string of events.

Chapter 1 of Mark starts with an introduction to the concept of "Kingdom of God" and the ministry of Jesus. Thereafter, up to chapter 3 verse 6, the book recounts the five incidences of conflicts Jesus had with the authorities: Jesus had (i) forgiven and healed a paralysed man (Mark 2:1-12), (ii) eaten with tax collectors and sinners (Mark 2:15-17), (iii) disputed the practice of fasting (Mark 2:18-22), (iv) harvested grain on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28), and (v) healed a man on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-6). Through the rest of chapter 3, we see how Jesus delegated His authority to His freshly appointed twelve disciples to cast out demons in His name (Mark 3:13-19) and even managed to annoy his family with the large crowd that followed Him (Mark 3:20-21). Some scribes had even come from Jerusalem to appraise Jesus and thereafter accused Him of being possessed by the demon Beelzebub (Mark 3:22-27). Before chapter 3 ends, even Jesus' family was dragged into the controversy (Mark 3:31-35) and even they started accusing Jesus of being mad (Mark 3:21).

It is key to note that throughout Mark 1 to Mark 3, these were recorded as a quick succession of events. The idea is to reflect that these preceding events that led to the Parable of the Sower were not isolated events but rather had a role in setting the atmosphere of tension for Mark 4 to take off from. When Mark 4 starts, it continues from this string of events up to the end of chapter 3 and also picks up from chapter 1 where Jesus first introduced the concept of the Kingdom of God. Here in chapter 4, Jesus tells of this Parable of the Sower and through it expands on what the Kingdom of God is.

OVER-ALLEGORISING PARABLES

The practice of allegorising a parable as a means of interpretation can be a risky tool as over-allegorising a parable can lead to derailment of its intended meaning. The often-quoted example of a parable that has been over-allegorised is the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) as allegorised by Saint Augustine of Hippo. See chart on next page for Augustine's allegorised interpretation:

For reference, and to see how Augustine's interpretation had greatly swayed from the original text, the original parable reads like this:

In reply, Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

Luke 10:30-35

While it is granted that Jesus' parables are, in some ways, an allegory of Jesus' depicting a divine lesson (think how Jesus oftentimes starts a parable by saying "the Kingdom of God is like..."), the risk is in going too far in the allegory. Jesus' parables are not intended to be highly allegorical in nature, unlike allegories like John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Approaching Jesus' parables as though they are highly developed allegorical pieces is missing His intention altogether. As such,

The plot of the parable	Augustine’s allegorical representation
the man from Jerusalem	Adam
Jerusalem	City of Heavenly Peace
Jericho	mankind’s mortality
The robbers	the devil and his angels
stripping of the man	taking away his immortality
beating of the man	persuading him to commit sin
leaving the man half dead	due to sin, the man should have been dead spiritually but was nonetheless kept half alive due to his knowledge of God
the priest	priesthood of the Old Testament, the Law
the Levite	ministry of the Old Testament, the Prophet
the Good Samaritan	Jesus Christ
binding the man’s wounds	a restraint had been placed on sin
the oil	comfort of good hope
the wine	exhortation to spirited work
the donkey	the body of Jesus Christ
the inn	the church
the two denarii	the two commandments of love
the innkeeper	Apostle Paul
the return of the Good Samaritan	the resurrection of Jesus Christ

Augustine’s approach of an over-allegorical interpretation of the Parable of the Good Samaritan is certainly inaccurate.

THE SANDWICHED REFERENCE TO ISAIAH 6:9-10


Jesus’ reference to Isaiah 6:9-10 here may come across as rather harsh as His disciples had merely asked for clarity on this parable. But if Isaiah 6:9-10 is understood within its larger context in the Old Testament storyline, not only do we see its relevance, but we are also given a better understanding of The Parable of the Sower and its place in the New Testament, as well as why, out of the four sowing attempts, only one was successful.

In Isaiah 6, we find the Kingdom of Judah in desolation after King Uzziah’s death. To alleviate the state of Judah, the prophet Isaiah had met with the Lord and had availed himself to the Lord’s service – it is here we find Isaiah’s well-known words “Here I am [Lord]. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8). Studies on

Isaiah 6 commonly stop here and fail to realise that the weight of the Lord’s command comes after this verse.

He said, “Go and tell this people: ‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’ Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.” Then I said, “For how long, Lord?” And he answered: “Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the Lord has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.”

Isaiah 6:9-13



We are to give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord as no labour for the Lord is ever in vain.

The Lord had instructed Isaiah to go forth to proclaim the message that people would hear him but never understand and that they would see him preach but never perceive, as they were spiritually blind. When Isaiah queried how long he needed to do this seemingly futile work, the Lord assured Isaiah that he should continue to proclaim this until judgement was complete. What a depressing job this must be to know that for all his effort, hardly a soul would respond. Still, the Lord gave Isaiah a glimmer of hope in the final verse – that the “holy seed” will be stumped in the land.

The wisdom to gain from Isaiah 6 is more than to emulate Isaiah’s willingness to avail himself for the Lord’s work. It is also to continue to declare and proclaim the Lord’s message to all peoples even if such effort does not seem fruitful to our human eyes.

With God, there will always be hope (Isaiah 6:13b) and hence, we are to give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord as no labour for the Lord is ever in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

PARABLE OF THE SOIL?

Though this parable is titled the Parable of the Sower, sermons and materials on it tend to focus on the soil rather than the sower. Our usual interpretation of the parable’s intended message is focused on having the

right soil in our hearts so that the Word of God may germinate to a bountiful harvest. Reflection and application points on this parable encourage us to emulate in our hearts the good soil so that the Word of God can grow within us. Whilst this interpretation is not wrong, it is hardly holistic.

Lest we make a lesson out of only the soil reference and streamline our sharing of God’s Word to only those who we consider “good soil”, let us be reminded of the holistic message of the Parable of the Sower. When we focus our attention to the sower rather than the soil and appreciate this parable within the reference to Isaiah 6, we see the lesson Jesus is looking to teach us. Like the sower and like Isaiah, we are not to be selective of who we share the Word of God with, but rather we are to cast the net wide and to scatter the Word of God on anyone who is willing to listen regardless of the condition of soil they may be in.

Like the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, we should avail ourselves to preach His Word to all and sundry without bias. And we should accept that like Isaiah, though much of our effort may seemingly be in vain, there will always be that fourth attempt that our sharing of God’s Word may fall onto good soil.

Three books were used as the author’s main reference material for this article, they are:

1. *The Quest of the Hermeneutical Jesus: The Impact of Hermeneutics on the Jesus Research of John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright* by Robert B. Stewart, from which the author gathered his understanding and bird’s eye view on parables as a whole;
2. *Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation* by Craig L. Bloomberg, from which much of the author’s understanding of allegory and interpreting parables comes from; and
3. *Jesus the Storyteller: Hearing the Parables Afresh Today* by Lim Kar Yong, from which the main structure of this article is based on and from whom the author was privileged to attend his lecture series on parables.

Hearing *from* GOD

by Sarah Lye, PJS2

What is hearing from God? Hearing from God means you having the capacity to listen to, or hear what God says to you. It also includes knowing or discerning the intentions of God for that particular season in your life. John 10:27 says “My sheep listen to my voice, I know them and they follow me.” As a child of God, do you know that you have the privilege of hearing from God?

You may think that you are not worthy or good enough to hear from God. God is no respecter of whether you are worthy or good enough for Him. God desires to speak to you and He wants to communicate with you. He finds pleasure when we spend time talking to Him and waiting on Him, to listen to Him. He delights in you having communion with Him.

Psalm 37:4 says "Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart." This means that when you love to stay or linger in His presence, He will satisfy your heart and this includes hearing from God! God takes pleasure in you when you long to commune and speak to Him. He too wants to talk and listen to you! In fact, God looks forward to you spending time talking to Him and hearing from Him as well. There must be a two-way communication – you speak to Him and you take time to pause to listen to Him. Do not rush God or dash out from His presence. Let God have the chance to commune with you. Let Him comfort and lavish you with His supernatural peace and fill you with His love!

You may ask these questions, "But what if I don't know how to hear from God or I can't recognize His voice? Does God speak in an audible voice?" "What if I am hearing a voice from the devil? Or what if I am listening to my own thoughts?" "How can I be sure that what I am hearing is from God?"

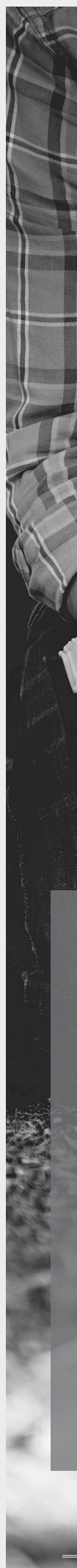
Hearing from God requires surrendering all to God. All means everything. Surrendering requires giving all things to God. This will include your thoughts, fears, anxieties, concerns, worries, pain, hurts, anger, disappointments, frustrations, failures, sins, accolades, achievements, successes, etc. You lay down everything at the foot of the Cross. God just wants you to surrender and when you do, He comes and gets you. The storms might come crashing in but at that spur of the moment, when it looks like you


might die, God's grace scoops you up and brings you back to safety. And the moment you give up, you know it is God who will intervene and save you! So, you just come to God as you are with a simple and pure heart and cry out to Him. He just wants an honest cry from you and you will hear from Him. Psalm 51:17 says "My sacrifice, O God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, you, God will not despise."

How do you hear from God? I can think of three ways you can hear from God. The first one is through the Word of God. God speaks to His people through the Bible. The Bible has all the instructions and guidance that you need for your life.

Psalm 119:105 says "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path." The more you read God's Word, the more God will reveal or show you His ways and mysteries. You will be surprised to discover the nuggets that you receive when God speaks to you through His Word! The more you know God, the more you will have the fear of the Lord. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, fools despise wisdom and instruction." Proverbs 1:7

At the same time, God will also expose the sins in your life. He will expose your own heart's deceitfulness! Jeremiah 17:9 says "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" When God shows your wrong attitudes, wrong thoughts, wrong actions, do not be defensive because He desires to restore you. God is always looking for opportunities to restore and make you whole, not to condemn you. Hence, thank God for revealing the ugly part of you and ask God for His forgiveness. Repent of whatever sin and ask God for His grace and strength to move on. Do not dwell on the past or let the past hold you back from moving forward. You also need to check if you are involved in any unhealthy habits or relationships. Confess to God your sins and constantly ask God to help you turn away from the wrongs in order to lead a godly and righteous life.





Proverbs 19:20-21 says “Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise. Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails.”

You can also hear from God through the people who surround you. They could be your parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, siblings, your Cell Leader, your Pastor, your mentor, your friends etc. These are the people that God put in your life who help to shape and influence your life. When God speaks to you, one of the main keys to know that you are hearing from God is that you would have the peace of God. You would have a clear sense of understanding and feel the peace of God. You would not feel doubtful or confused. If you are confused, then do not act upon it. But the best thing to do is to request for advice from the godly counsel of mature Christians. Proverbs 11:14 says “For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers.” The English Standard Version (ESV) says “Where there is no guidance, people fall but in an abundance of counsellors, there is safety.”

Proverbs 19:20-21 says “Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise. Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails.”

Ultimately, when you pause to hear from God, God will show you His way, and His purpose for your life will be manifested when you act in faith.

God will also speak to you through the situations or circumstances that you are experiencing. It is not easy to hear God when you are going through the difficult and challenging seasons of your life. This is because you tend to ask God the following questions:

1. “Why is this happening to me?”
2. “Why does God not care for me?”
3. “Why does God not deliver me from this suffering, pain or hardship?”
4. “When will this pain or torture end?”
5. “When will God heal me?”
6. “When can I see light at the end of the tunnel?”

As a child of God, you know that God loves you. Thus, you should also realise that God works all things for your ultimate good, even your pain and difficulties. Romans 8:28 says “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.”

The reason why God is doing what He is doing in your life is because He is stretching your faith and moulding your character into Christlikeness. He is shaping your patience, endurance and character. He knows how much you can be stretched. Pain breaks you but ultimately it makes you! Just as Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:9 –

“But he said to me, **‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’** Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”

In the fullness of God’s time, when you have completed the process of suffering/pain in the challenging situations in your life, you will have overcome all those challenges and you will have become beautiful fine clay. Isaiah 64:8 “Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.”

God the Father is the One who moulds us and transforms us into Christlikeness as we journey through this life on earth.

After having heard from God, you need to follow through with action. If you do not, you will be like what the Bible says in James 1:22-25 “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and,

after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.”

You must act in faith and in obedience to what He has told you to do. Faith is obedience whereas doubt is disobedience. Faith is saying ‘yes’ to God and taking God at His Word. In the NIV, Paul says in Romans 10:17 “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.” In the NKJV, it says “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” The Israelites did not go into the Promised Land because of their doubt. Hebrews 3:19 “So we see they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.” Avoid letting this happen to you. Instead, make a decision to enter into all that God has for you by taking the important step of obedience.

In every single small step of faith that you take, you will be rewarded. So learn to wait upon the Lord. Allow God to instruct and teach you. Psalm 32: 8-10 says “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you. Do not be like the horse or the mule which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you. Many are the woes of the wicked, but the Lord’s unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him.”

God promises in His Word that He will guide and direct your path as you trust in Him. Proverbs 3:5-6 says “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him and he will make your paths straight.” Hence, take time to hear from God, surrender to Him and act in obedience to His Word!

I Met Jesus At Last

by Adrian Ng, PJN6

Before I came to know Christ, I was a very quiet person but underneath, I had many issues brewing. I was fearful, jealous, greedy, unforgiving, proud and short-tempered. I could hide all these behind my quiet demeanour. However, I was suffering inside from all those issues.

I grew up believing only in my own strength. I remember turning down salvations and church invitations offered by friends and strangers. I was not keen on exploring Jesus then. But I had always wondered how we humans came to live in this world. I knew there was a higher “figure-head” that created us.

Between 2014 and 2015, my family suffered a devastating court case which took a toll on everyone especially my father and grandmother. At that time, I felt hopeless and had no one to turn to for help. I was hopeless to the extent that I “prayed” to the higher “figure-head” to ask for help. Miraculously, my “prayers” were answered and our family did win the case. I was very happy then.

So, life went on until January 2016. I was involved in an accident on the North-South Highway from which I escaped alive but the vehicle I was in was totally wrecked. Again, I wondered to myself, why I was spared from death. I did not walk away unharmed. The following months were difficult as I suffered a series of vertigo attacks as well as gastric attacks on and off. I was on medication and the illnesses got better but did not go away.

In September 2016, a friend suggested visiting a church to get to know the Lord. This was the first time I was receptive to knowing more about God. So, I enquired further and asked my aunt, Sock Leng, for a choice of churches to go to. She suggested DUMC and nowhere else as this

church consisted of young adults and family-based groups of people.

I clearly remember that I came here alone on September 24, 2016. I knew no one but took courage to ask a stranger, whose name is Uncle Steven Ng (who coincidentally is from Muar like myself), to accompany me into the auditorium. It was a Saturday and Pastor Alex was delivering his sermon that evening. When it was time for prayer, Uncle Steven invited me to the front for prayer and asked if I would like to be prayed for. I accepted Christ that evening by praying the sinner’s prayer. The rest is history.

Ever since I accepted Christ, I have felt a burden lifted off my shoulder, knowing God was in control. As an infant Christian, I was thirsty to know more about this amazing God. I attended my first Alpha course immediately after that weekend. It was the first time I had heard about this course and felt the course was relevant for me. Ever since, I have even volunteered in subsequent Alpha courses to share about life with Jesus to pre-believers who were like myself before. I find joy serving God in Alpha. I have hope that with Jesus being introduced to the pre-believers, they too can enjoy the love of God in their lives.

In 2017, my mum was diagnosed with cancer. I was shattered. But this time, I felt much at peace knowing God was in control. Our CG collectively came to pray for my mum. Thank God for His healing power, the cancer was successfully removed through surgery and she has remained free from it until today. All glory to Him. Since then, my faith and love for Jesus Christ has continued to grow even with much challenges in life. I pray for the Holy Spirit to continue to minister to me and my family. Thank you, Lord Jesus and all these I commit into your mighty hands, Amen!

Anchor of My Life

by Adeline Loh, PJN1

When I was in primary school, the teacher asked us to write an essay on our dream job. One of my dreams was to be a fashion model. Little did I know that this forgotten dream would be revived by the one Person other than my teacher who knew about it – My Heavenly Father. It reminded me that God never forgets, not even our most insignificant and impossible dreams.

It started with a message from one of the W2W Core Team members to pray about being part of a fashion show, the opening act for the Essential2019 conference. After a day of praying, I agreed to it.

Practices with the team started about two weeks before the conference. We had only one full lesson, after which we were given some YouTube links to practice to at home. When I was informed about the colour of my main costume, my excitement fizzled out as it was not a very exciting colour. In the meantime, we were given other tasks to accomplish.

One of the tasks was to find matching accessories and clothing for my full outfit. As I started my research, the Holy Spirit impressed upon me that I had been having a “one-track mind” in certain areas of my life, in the way I thought and lived. It was not easy for me to move out of that “comfort zone”. I told myself “Okay, one step at a time.” And the Holy Spirit gently said to me, “That’s fine, will take it slow for you.” Coming from the One who knew me the best, it was comforting.

Then came another challenge. I had a difficult time remembering my steps. As I was trained as a dancer, I had certain standards set in my mind. Darren (our Production Director) patiently provided me with some guidelines. I only wanted to get the “walk” perfect. (I feel good about myself when I get it “right”.) However, no matter how I practised that night, it was not right. The next day, I happened to read a comment made by Pastor Bill Johnson of Bethel Church. He said “Perfectionism is the counterfeit of excellence. EXCELLENCE is Kingdom, while Perfectionism is religion. Whatever

you do, do it with all your might, and as unto the Lord. That is EXCELLENCE.” It “hit” me then that I was not living a kingdom principle but I was just being religious/legalistic in my life. The Holy Spirit gently reminded me that in my life, I had been working to get things (career/relationships) perfected so as to be accepted by my audience. The truth was that the only audience I needed to get my affirmation from was my Heavenly Father who did not need me to be perfect but to be just doing my best and then offer it back to Him. It was less burdensome and more enjoyable. Coincidentally, the theme on the t-shirt I was assigned to was EXCELLENCE.

On the day of the conference, I was very nervous. I told myself to relax and just do my best. As we walked on the runway, we had to pause and pose at certain designated points. Upon reflection, I realize that the Holy Spirit was reminding me that in my life, there are many stops/pauses too. God wanted me to remember how He was my Anchor in the midst of storms. It was never to just stop at one point but to move along. Our faith journey was one that I must walk as part of the maturing process to be more like Christ. Towards the end of our performance that day, we lined up in front of the audience. It spoke to me that, at the end of our journey on earth, I would be standing in front of the crowd of witnesses and I would be hoping to hear our Heavenly Father say, “Well done my good and faithful daughter”.

As I reflect, I pray that in my journey I will intentionally and continuously live out these lessons as the Holy Spirit reveals them to me. There will be times I may not get it right, but as I move forward, one step at a time, depending on Him, I do hope I will reach the goal which is my upward call of God.

“Brothers/sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:13-14.

I HAVE BEEN SET FREE!

An Interview by Lynn Foo, PJN6

Recently, I had the privilege of speaking to Janet Lai from PJN6 and was so encouraged after hearing the story of her walk and her personal encounter with God.

STARTING THE JOURNEY OF FAITH

Janet accepted Christ five years ago, and started attending DUMC. Ever since, it has been no turning back as she began attending cell group, joined the Alpha Course and grew in her new-found faith. During the Alpha Course, she developed meaningful friendships with her group members, of whom one was Elaine. In June 2017, Elaine invited Janet to participate in an Emotional Healing Workshop in Penang, conducted by Pastor Seumean Kuon from the United States. She agreed and went with her mother and sister.

The workshop impacted Janet deeply and she decided to attend a second time in November 2018. This time, she attended the workshop with her ex-boyfriend of three years. On the last day of the workshop, she experienced strong negative emotions and frustrations.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

For reasons she could not really explain, Janet started feeling very upset and she got into a heated argument with her ex-boyfriend. She was raising her voice and felt like she could not breathe. Elaine, who was also at the workshop, tried to calm her down, and prayed for her. Janet was now sobbing uncontrollably and all of a sudden, she felt as if she was in another dimension, in a dark room. Outside the room was a box with demonic-looking figures around it. These figures were supposed to be in the box but were refusing to enter. Janet felt a deep sense of fear. There was also a human-like shadow with an extremely sad face which kept looking at her.

At that point of time, she was reminded of an event in the past. Previously, she had been told by her mother that as a young child, she was brought to a temple for adoption by the Goddess of Mercy.

In another picture, she saw three shadows coming out from her body. She was prompted to open a door to allow them out and quickly shut it back to prevent them from coming in again. After that, like a soft spot light above her, she felt a calming and peaceful presence. The sweet presence of Jesus Christ began to minister to her in the form of a hug, almost literally like the warm hug of a human body, as she felt a sense of freedom.

HEALING AND RESTORATION

Putting into practice what she had learnt during the workshop, Janet began to apply the biblical truths into her life. She shared about how we might have hurtful memories

of lies, sin and anger from the past, and how by unlocking them and surrendering to God, we would be able to experience the freedom that God intends us to have.

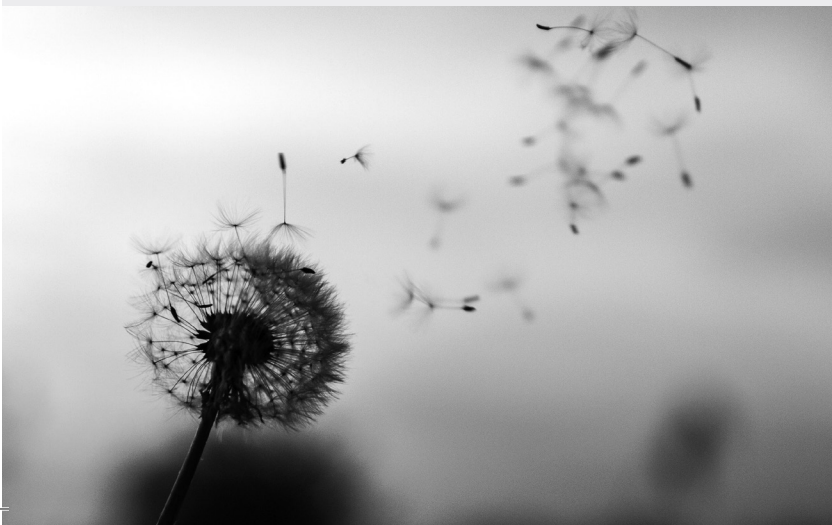
She also shared some steps and processes of this emotional healing which included:

1. Willingness to receive freedom
2. Identifying negative emotions (such as hatred, unforgiveness and fear) and renouncing them
3. Dealing with sin such as addiction and the occult
4. Getting rid of the 'junk' (such as lies, pains and hurts) from our lives so we can grow in Christ-likeness
5. Letting go and surrendering to the power of God

Through this workshop, Janet learnt principles of emotional freedom and healing and discovered their Biblical basis, why they worked and how they could be applied. She mentioned she was able to apply these in her life because it was not just a methodology, but one that was based on biblical principles that she could relate and connect to her daily life. She added that those who were willing to deal with doors of negative emotions, fear, sin, the occult, and who were willing to obey and listen to God's word, were transformed to glorify the Kingdom of God.

SET FREE IN CHRIST

With the emotional healing and freedom that she experienced, Janet testifies to an increase in her capacity to forgive and love the people around her, including those who have hurt her in the past. Through regular discipleship, she continues in this process of sanctification, growing and maturing in Christ. She also experienced the healing power of God in the area of physical pain. For a long time, she had experienced persistent pain in the right side of her waist resulting in an uncomfortable posture most of the time. After she experienced emotional healing, she prayed for complete physical healing and God answered her prayer! Praise and glory be to God!



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Our primary purpose is not
to make nice religious Christians.
Our purpose is to build passionate
disciples of Jesus Christ.