

A bi-monthly
publication of the
National Evangelical
Christian Fellowship
Malaysia

Berita NECF

 Editorial


UNITING THE GENERATIONS

the way **Forward**

The feedback for this year's 40-Day Fast and Prayer booklet has been positive and encouraging. However, it has kept many wanting: what is the way forward for the Malaysian Church?

NECF office has, in the last few weeks, been organizing meetings to brainstorm with various groups on how we can unite the generations, both physically and spiritually. Our greatest concern is that we do

not want our churches to end up like those in the west. Failure to raise effective leaders and to pass the baton successfully to the next generation has led to the decline of churches there.

To begin with, the senior generation needs to understand the thinking, shape and expectations of the generations after us. Some of the perceptions and expectations that the seniors have will differ

significantly with what the next generation holds. There is a need to breach that gap so that we will be able to understand each other and come to a middle road to resolve this generational ambiguity.

At our deliberation with the younger generation and after hearing them out, we have been able to list some pertinent points raised by them. Suffice to say that it is consistent with and affirms

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THE COUNCIL AND STAFF OF NECF WISH ALL OUR READERS...

**a Blessed Christmas
and a Fruitful New Year!**

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By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

Pitch Tents, Build Altars!

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Two very different structures are mentioned in Gen 12:8 – “he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.” (NKJV)

Portability is the defining characteristic of a tent, whether it's made of canvas or goat's hair. It is not a permanent structure and is an appropriate dwelling only for people on the move.

Altars, on the other hand, are more permanent structures. They are not as portable as tents. Altars represent the deep commitments that people make that binds them to the particular deity whom they believe has the power to give them stability, permanence and meaning. Altars express our desire for a link with the eternal.

In this verse, we see the contrast between the portability and transience of tents and the solidity and permanence of altars. Three times in Gen 12:1-9 we find that Abraham moved on, in response to God's call, and went to a new place, and “there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.”

This activity of pitching tents and building altars is a very appropriate metaphor for the Christian life. However, we frequently get it backwards. We do it wrong much of the time. As we move through our life's journey, we often make the mistake of pitching our altars and building our tents.

Why do I say that? I see the top five issues that plague the church of Jesus Christ in this nation today as the following:

1. Prayerlessness - just look at the attendance of prayer meetings in most churches, if they still hold them. Most believers would hardly spend more than 15 minutes in prayer daily. Where is the altar in our lives?

2. Migration - this is symptomatic of lack of trust in God who has placed us in this country for good and not for evil. Barring a sovereign word, every migration speaks of our unhappiness with our lot in life in the country God has placed us in. We worship our happiness rather than obey the will of God.

3. Materialism - we succumb more and more to the desire to acquire and enjoy. We are more holiday conscious. We have no qualms about spending thousands of ringgit on ourselves but gripe so vehemently about the few dollars we have to pay for Christian courses and seminars which we need to improve ourselves.

4. Content to be Christians, but not disciples - lukewarmness characterizes so many in our churches. We are prepared to “surrender” a few hours to our God on Sundays and no more. Many could be mistaken as “Christian atheists”, as far as their lifestyle and faithlessness is concerned.

5. Reluctance to be sent - Jesus Christ's command to “Go...make disciples”

Continued next page...

wherever He sends us is but a good suggestion for a few to do. The church has become “immoveable” for the wrong reasons.

The call to Abraham, and to us, is to get up and move out. Abraham could, because he pitched his tents. Today, far too many build our tents and pitch our

altars.

Where is that life of faith, where we are willing to move in response to God’s leading? God’s call is always a call to trust, to be a pilgrim, to travel lightly (and to live modestly) so we can be open to the unforeseen future toward which He beckons us. Only when we

have learned to pitch our tents and build our altars will God’s blessings for us and for our nation, become a reality as it was for Abraham and his people.

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...continued from front cover: The Way Forward

the research report that NECF conducted in partnership with One Hope Ministries. The following are some salient pointers raised by the younger generation which churches would do well to note:

1) Believe in Team Leadership

We should no longer identify one single leader like in the old days. We have to coach a team and then pick one or even two from the team to provide direction with others in the team playing complimentary roles. It is clear that the younger generation prefers plurality of leadership so that the talent and gifting of each one will complement and strengthen the entire leadership team.

2) Cut Across Denominational Lines

The younger generation strongly identifies themselves as being “denominationally blind”. They are prepared to work across the board with peers who have the same mindset and ethos rather than on denominational affiliations and traditions. Relationships and shared values matter to them. This explains why church membership is less important to them.

3) Importance of Biblical Worldview

Many do not have any clue what and how they can participate in nation-building or how to seek the welfare of the nation--for the simple reason that they lack the biblical worldview and understanding. This may be due in part to our theological heritage. Seniors with a broader vision in terms of ministry have an important role in guiding and shaping the younger generation towards a right biblical perspective and foundation.

4) Harnessing Potentials and Energies

We have to admit that the younger generation is energetic, creative and bold. They will speak up for what they feel is right; and will act boldly upon their convictions and beliefs. It is incumbent upon the seniors to help nurture and channel this potential to the best interest of the kingdom of God in a way that is both meaningful to the church and to the individual. This demands patiently

listening to both sides without pre-judging the issue.

5) Integrating Spiritual Wisdom with Reality

Because of the lack of biblical worldview and understanding, many young people find difficulty in integrating their spiritual life with actual realities in their work and in the marketplace. Seniors have the responsibility of helping them to overcome this dilemma, to love the nation and to assure them of their place, contribution and role in the well-being of this nation. Their future depends on what and how they will be built upon. This requires giving young people the necessary space to carve out their identity and to live out that identity rather than to be conformed to what others want them to be.

6) Respecting and Accepting Each Other in Love

Methodologies of the younger generation sometimes blow the minds of the seniors, but they still get the job done, though very often not to our liking and even disagreement. There is a compelling need to learn to respect and accept each other in love though we may be different. Relationship is important and it is imperative that seniors do not cut the younger generation out because of differences. Also, it is this sort of relational skills that enable them to work through the obstacles and accomplish their goal.

The points raised may not be exhaustive and would differ within your local context and geographical areas. You can download the youth survey amongst both English and Tamil Youths at:- <http://necf.org.my/newsmaster.cfm?&menuid=43&action=view&retrieveid=1226>

In this time and age, NECF sees herself as a facilitator in providing the available resources that would enhance your “bridge-building” with the younger generation. Recent Barna Research in United States for 2006 specifically mentioned that youths from ages 20-29 are dropping out of church at the ratio of 2:3. About 90% get saved before they reach 18 years, and the number dwindles after that.

May we as leaders of different churches take a serious view of what we are faced with and be prepared to network and share our resources to build strong churches and raise the emerging leaders for the future.

Facing a new reality...

The reality is that the younger generation is spending more time online and parents either do not have a clue, or are unsure of, what is going on out there in the cyber world. This is a clear and present danger.

Hence, on 24 September 2010, NECF invited Generasi Gemilang's Cyber Wellness team to address such issues and to provide some guidance to both adults and youth in Malaysia. Around 50 people (consisting of pastors, leaders and NECF staff) attended this talk. The aim of Cyber Wellness is to bridge the digital divide between adults and the young people they care for so that they can mentor them better.

The talk was divided into three parts. The first part looked at how to develop a balance and holistic lifestyle (on and off Internet). A family is considered “healthy” if:

- The children are aware of the potential dangers on the Internet and take responsibility to protect themselves, their siblings & friends.
- The parents understand the Internet world and know how to guide their children/students to use it positively.

The second part of the talk covered primary dangers faced by both parents and the digital generation e.g. gaming-addiction, cyber-bullying, the dangers of pornography; and how to respect



and maintain one's privacy in everything from blogs and emails to Facebook and other forms of social media. The team also provided ways to equip young people to protect themselves and their friends online. The pervasiveness of Internet today in the advent of mobile phones were also covered.

The final part looked at the cyber world as an opportunity to touch and mentor the next generation. It is not just about viruses and privacy issues, it is actually more about the person, and their relationships with friends and family. Using the example of a person wanting to go to China to work would at least try to study Chinese language, a person who wants to impact the next generation must be familiar with the cyber world. Parents and youth are challenged to use the Internet positively for their personal life, family life, relationships with others and ultimately God's kingdom-building.

NECF considers the Cyber Wellness programme an important part of nation-building. Churches must seriously look at the cyber world as part of nation-building especially among the emerging digital generation.

Check out www.GenGemilang.org for more details about the Cyber Wellness programmes. If you would like to invite the team to conduct a Cyber Wellness session in your school, college, church or even town hall, please get in touch with info@GenGemilang.org or 03-7960 4982. The team typically conducts sessions for adults and youth separately. They have been doing these sessions since October 2008 and to date, more than 5000 people have attended their sessions.

Church And Corruption: Soliciting A Christian Response

🗨️ *A Dialogue with Pastors and Church Leaders*

On 29 October 2010, NECF Malaysia hosted a round-table dialogue with pastors, elders and leaders from various churches and denominations on the subject of the church and corruption. The dialogue was occasioned by the disturbing trend of corruption that is affecting all sectors of society—a scourge undermining the institutions that are in place so much so that society and people on the street find it difficult to function or live in an environment that is “totally free” of corruption.

The aim of this dialogue was to discuss and to grasp the biblical-theological understanding of corruption, how it is to be distinguished from bribery, and what ought the Christian response be. The fruit of the discussion will then be referred for planning in the upcoming Global Day of Prayer (GDOP) Conference on Corruption with the theme “Unashamedly Ethical”.

At the dialogue, panelist Dr Mark Lovatt, Director of Marketplace Ministry Studies at Malaysian Bible Seminary (MBS) gave us a biblical understanding and definition of corruption. Panelist Datuk Paul Low, Chairman of Transparency International (Malaysia) spoke on the manifestations and consequences of corruption in society from a Malaysian trajectory. The dialogue was moderated by Bro Eugene Yapp, Research Executive Secretary at NECF. The session culminated in a lively and interesting discussion on the quest for transparency and integrity both within the church and towards the wider society.

For keen observers and readers of *Berita*, the nagging question in all our minds is no doubt this: “Is this possible?” To cynics, this question is a mere rhetoric. To idealists, all things are indeed possible!

But to Christians and the Church, we are neither cynics nor idealists. We are the people of God. Our goal and therefore aspirations are grounded in the kingdom of God – the reign of God instituted on this earth by the “Christ-event” i.e. the defining moment in history where God intervened decisively upon human affairs.

That intervention alters the complexion of human affairs and of history, and it shapes the journey on which mankind is to go. It offers the hope of “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done”—that though it remains to be brought to completion, yet it will find its finest hour when God puts all things in subjection under Christ.

This then offers to Christians and the church the moral recourse and motivation to soldier on and to battle forth, albeit a very difficult one, against this social reality and phenomenon that is plaguing all of our society.

Although the government had announced various initiatives to address corruption, there have been problems with implementation and lack of confidence-building improvements. In short, there appears to be a lack of political will to rid of corruption in toto. This may be one cause for the decline in the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index from 4.5 to 4.4 for 2010, with the country ranking remaining at 56 out of 178. Governance and transparency are therefore mainstream issues for both the churches and the nation as a whole.

What then is the source of corruption? Lovatt gives an interesting account. Both the Old and the New Testaments testify that out of the human heart comes evil. The heart is the centre, the life force of our being and due to human sin, the heart is constantly in a state of anxiety and insecurity. This is not incidental as the Scripture makes clear that sin has distorted and perverted our being. Corruption is thus a perversion of power and authority which seeks to allay the insecurities and anxieties in the human heart and mind.

In practical terms, corruption is therefore an abuse of entrusted power for personal gains and benefits. It manifests itself in the various forms of manipulation to favour a particular person, group of persons or company at the expense of other people. It comes in different shapes and sizes and is generic, pervading all manner and spheres of society.

What can Christians and the Church do? If, as we have argued, that corruption stems from the heart, then the remedy must surely be the transforming power of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ in the hearts and minds of men and women. Corruption must not be regarded as merely a “phenomenon” – a sort of a secondary reality. It goes primarily to the very root and inner recesses of man. In effect, corruption presents itself as a crisis of morality which Christians as messengers of the gospel must desire to keep in check. Some practical suggestions coming forth from the dialogue are:

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Sowing Into Our Nation

While English will remain as the lingua franca of the globalized culture, more and more of the younger generations who are educated in our national language will find difficulty in understanding our present curriculum of Christian education materials. Nearly two-thirds of all the Christians in Malaysia are Bahasa Malaysia (BM) speaking but less than 1% of Christian resources are in BM.



Seeing this great need, some concerned Christian leaders from across the major denominations formed Wawasan Penabur (Sower's Vision) last year to develop and distribute the best BM resources to leaders, churches and individuals.

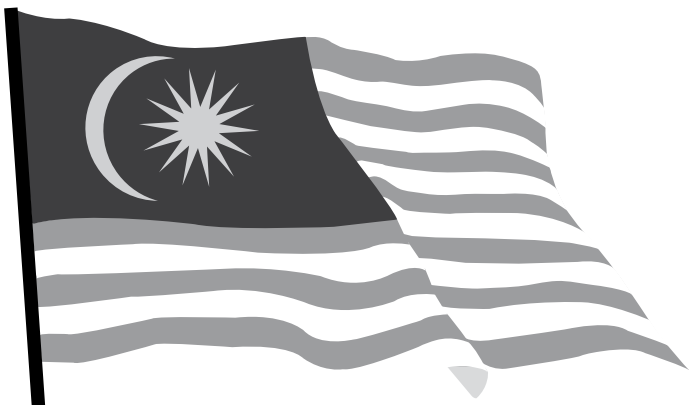
To date, they have published 20 youth discipleship materials called "OBOR Belia" (Youth Aflame). In the last one year, thousands of copies of OBOR Belia have reached our indigenous brethren in Sabah and Sarawak and also the Orang Asli churches in Peninsula.

Other than OBOR Belia, they have published "Lakukan Apa Yang Benar" (Do What is Right), a practical guide on legal matters for churches in Malaysia; and an apologetic book specifically to help our young people defend their faith.

They have also conducted a few awareness campaigns. The "Bahasa Malaysia Resources Awareness" was for Christian leaders, writers and publishers while the "East Malaysia Awareness: Seminar, Dialogue & Cultural Performances" was for church leaders. A cultural dance night cum awareness campaign drew attention to the many tribes that are currently going through some challenges in "systematic encroachment" in Sabah and Sarawak. About 13 local writers and leaders participated in a week long "Writing Workshop" which focussed on training aspiring Bahasa writers. Other projects in the pipeline include a book on tracing God's plans and promises for the Malaysian churches as seen through some major Old Testament characters.

Indeed, the BM speaking and indigenous churches need our urgent attention to help nurture and build their next generation of BM speaking believers to be strong and steadfast in the face of beguiling winds of change. Literature and training centers of the other faiths are making their inroads quickly into our villages. Christians who are not deeply rooted in biblical truths are easily swayed by other religious teachers.

Wawasan Penabur, being a ministry, requires funding and prayer support so that the materials can be retailed at affordable prices of RM 3– 6 a copy. You can partner with their efforts in praying for the indigenous churches and/or sponsoring some publication of books. More information can be obtained from their website at www.wawasanpenabur.org or contact them at wawasan.penabur@gmail.com.



1st Malaysia Day Prayer Rally

Report by Andy Chi, Prayer Executive Secretary

This year our 40-Day Fast and Prayer was held from the 8 August to 16 September. This change was made to coincide our fasting with Malaysia Day. Malaysia Day is a very significant day as it marks the birth and formation of our nation. It is a day when Malaysians from the East and the West celebrate our nationhood as one.

Over 12 different cities held Prayer Rallies to mark the conclusion to the fast and to celebrate this auspicious Day. Churches of various denominations came together in one accord and offered prayers for the Church and the nation. It was our first time conducting our Prayer Rally nationwide on Malaysia Day. Below are reports from four of the twelve locations.

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...continued from page 5: Church and Corruption.

- Get our “own house” in order—having guidelines on church governance, disclosure of personal interests to avoid conflict of interest, internal audit for accountability, peer accountability—no ‘yes man’ in leadership etc.
- To educate and look into a framework for effective governance – going back to Scriptures. In this respect, seminaries, Bible schools and churches ought to consider having such courses within their curriculum.
- Launch anti-corruption awareness within churches to instill a self-awareness to say “NO” to bribery and corruption; at the same time inculcating a culture of transparency.
- Guidelines for financial governance.
- Familiarising oneself with provisions of local laws.
- Willingness to be a whistleblower for all sorts of bribery and corruption.
- Working with NGOs within the civil society movement to counter practices of bribery and corruption. This also serves as a platform to develop

and instill a “check and balance” within the systems and institutions of society to ensure the practice of transparency.

Now that we are aware of what corruption is and some ways in which one can battle corruption, the challenge calls for the Church and Christians to act. This entails re-looking at our Christian identity and calling. It seeks a reflection of how serious we are in bringing the transformational message of Jesus Christ and the missionary encounter of the gospel to bear on this social ill that is tearing the very social fabric of our society apart.

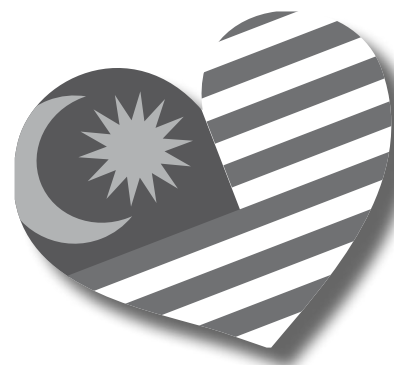
If we declare ourselves serious, the Church must willingly release her best for the witness and benefit of public life and wider society. How far is the church prepared to go along with this line of action?

In addition, efforts made must be multi-pronged, involving all facets of life and should cut across denominational lines and affiliations. A further perspective would be to work together with non-Christians who share the same values and goals, striving towards social justice and the common good together. Christians will need to learn to collaborate in this respect but keeping to our distinct identity as the holy people of God.

Shall we then start with this simple commitment undergirded with prayer towards godly action?



Orang Aslis bearing the Malaysia & State flags



1st Pra

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Klang Valley

In the Klang Valley, Malaysia Day Prayer Rally was held at Metro Tabernacle A/G on the evening of 15 September 2010. The estimated number of turnout was around 1400 people.

Among the highlights of the evening was the presence of the East Malaysians and the Orang Asli. There were around 200 East Malaysians and 100 Orang Asli that joined us for the meeting. The meeting began at 8.40pm. This was the first time the worship was conducted in Bahasa Malaysia led by the SIB Central worship team.

Following this, Rev. Eu Hong Seng shared his message from Malachi 4. He challenged the Church to put our trust in God, remembering the commandments of God, to place importance in relationships and to look for the return of Christ.

After the message, Bro Victor Chua led the congregation to pray for the East Malaysians, Orang Asli, the next generation, and for Malaysia. Pr Piri Agong, Pr Bakar Mogot, Rev. Ong Sek Leang and Elder Kong Yeng Phooi shared respective sections of prayer.

Finally, Bro Sam Ang concluded the meeting by appreciating and praying for Rev. Ong Sek Leang and Metro Tabernacle A/G for graciously hosting the event. The meeting ended around 11.00pm

Johor Bahru

Down in Johor Bahru, the JB Malaysia Day Prayer Rally began with breakfast at 8.30am served by our Crisis Relief (Helping Hands) team who came as early as 6.00 am to prepare the breakfast. This was a trial run of the soup kitchen that we are looking into setting up. A promotional video of our relief



East & West Malaysian Christian leaders in identification reconciliation prayers



Kuching pastors and leaders leading in prayers

Malaysia Day Prayer Rally

work was also shown at the same time.

This was followed by the prayer rally service from 10.00am to 12.20pm. It was attended by more than 600 people from different churches. We followed the theme “Uniting the Generations”, focusing on praying for the family based on “Reclaiming the 7 mountains for the Kingdom of God”. This year’s prayer items were led by the younger generation of pastors.

At the last prayer item, we called on all the young people to the altar and prayed for God’s blessings and anointing over them. There was such a powerful presence of God in the meeting. Following the prayer rally, all who came went on a prayer drive to the city, housing estates, and selected strategic places.

Kuching

Over the South China Sea, the Kuching Malaysia Day Rally was held at the Trinity Methodist Church. There were over 1000 people who participated in this rally involving English, Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese and Iban churches. A voter registration counter was also set up at the foyer of the church entrance to register eligible voters.

Kota Kinabalu

To the far-east, the Kota Kinabalu Malaysia Day Prayer Rally organized by KK Pastors Fellowship was held over three nights from the 14 to 16 September at Holy Seal 611. Well over 1000 persons attended this rally which was conducted in the three major languages.

On the last night, two significant events took place. Firstly, the confession from West Malaysia leadership to the Sabah brethren represented by Ps Philip Lyn followed by the reconciliation represented by Ps Jerry Dusing. Ps Philip Lyn in his exhortation shared from Joshua 5:9 that the reproach of Sabah has been rolled away. Sabah Church should no longer be ashamed of herself. She will be the head rather the tail.

Secondly, the celebration of all the generations of the Sabah Churches to signify the passing of the baton and the uniting of the generations. Finally, this rally was also celebrated in preparation for the Year of Jubilee beginning on 16 September 2012.

We would like to express our thanks to all who participated in our 40-Day Fast and Pray initiative. We also would like to express our thanks to all the churches that hosted our Prayer Rally in their cities. We believe as we continue to stand in the gap and intercede, our nation will be restored and changed.



Pastors/leaders in Johor Baru praying for the next generation

Report on Church Governance course

The pilot project was a collaboration between the Malaysia Bible Seminary and NECF with the intention of strengthening the governance procedures in churches. Among the topics that were discussed were the legal aspects on incorporation of a church under Article 11(1) of Federal Constitution versus registration under the Societies Act 1966 or Companies Act 1965. The lecturer, Dr Cheah Foo Seong, an experienced Company Secretary examined the pros and cons of the options so that the participants have an informed decision concerning their respective churches.

While Dr Cheah lectured on the legal requirements in terms of accounting records, minutes and registers for audit and tax purposes, the participants were also reminded of the equally important aspect of governance that is accountability, transparency, honesty, and openness. Effective structuring of the church board and establishing proper internal control systems will result in greater accountability, besides guarding against any conflict of interests.

On the final night of the course, the class was given time to conduct a mock church business meeting, which included the issuing of notice, writing of minutes and the voting process. As we intend to do a similar but intensive training outside the Klang Valley, those who are interested to host the training are requested to liaise with Patrick Cheng (patrick@necf.org.my) for details.

NECF MALAYSIA 2011 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

CALENDAR	11 – 12 March 2011	Eagles' Team Leadership Summit 4 Speaker/Facilitator – Eagles Leadership Team Venue: First AOG, Pudu
	15 – 16 March 2011	<i>Tamil Pastor's Conference</i> Speaker/Facilitator – Rev. Henry Pillai/Dr. R. Stanley Venue: Full Gospel Tabernacle, PJ
	1 – 2 May 2011	Unashamedly Ethical Conference Speaker/Facilitator – Graham Powers/Dr. Dion Foster Venue: SIB KL
	5 – 6 May 2011	<i>Unashamedly Ethical Conference</i> Speaker/Facilitator – Steven Johnson/Dr. Dion Foster Venue: Penang
	12 June 2011	Global Day Of Prayer
	3 – 5 July 2011	<i>Chinese Prayer Camp</i> Speaker/Facilitator – Bishop Dr. Hwa Yung/Dr. John Ong
	7 Aug – 15 Sept 2011	40-Day Fast & Prayer



From Helplessness to Fruitfulness

When a major flood hit the shores of Kedah in 2005, Pastor Kuilan saw the great need to reach out to the victims. As he felt helpless for lack of resources and trained personnel, he decided that he had to do something for the future. After the floods have receded, he contacted the Crisis Relief and Services agency (CREST) and arranged training for his church members and other like-minded believers in his town. The he asked NECF to collaborate with him to buy a boat. He sounded like Noah then trying to build the ark in the absence of rain!

Nevertheless, his obedience to the heavenly vision paid off. Their training were put to good use in the massive flood that hit their town recently. The flood waters rose very fast after a few days of rain which caught many people unprepared – some did not have time to save even their personal documents. But not the Trinity Baptist Church (TBC) disaster relief team who was thoroughly prepared and well-equipped! They swung into action almost immediately, distributing food packages, and water to victims whose cooking utensils were either destroyed or washed away by the flood. The boat which had been gathering dust, also burst into action, ferrying people from their flooded homes to relief centres. At the point of writing, the TBC team is preparing to enter the next phase in providing clothes, kitchenware, and blankets to badly affected families. In response to his worthy initiative, the Council of NECF had contributed RM10,000 to assist this showing of practical love to our neighbors.

Besides Alor Setar, CREST has been conducting disaster relief training in other parts of the country,

including Kota Kinabalu and Johor Baru. Nevertheless, in view of the increasing number of natural catastrophes like earthquakes and hydro meteorological disasters, there is a great need for more trained personnel. The writer still remembered the lament of a church member when her house in Selangor was flooded many years ago - “The Buddhists came, the Red Cross came, but where is my pastor?” TBC’s model has shown us that it is possible for the church to catch up. Will you do your part?

For more information on their next training, kindly contact them at:

Crisis Relief Services & Training Berhad

Tel: 03-77257299, 03-77256297

Email: crest@crestmalaysia.org

Website: www.crestmalaysia.org



Biblical Grace

Under Assault

God's grace does not give us the freedom to do what we like and get away with it. It releases the power of God's Word and Spirit to become individuals conformed to Christ.

Over the last few years a number of ministries have embraced a perception of grace that, Biblically speaking, is demonically distorted. True God given grace does not give us the freedom to do what we would like and get away with it. Rather, it releases to us the power of God's Word and Spirit to become individuals conformed to Christ Jesus. Two passages found in Romans- 8.29 & 12.2 both address the conformity God is after in our lives. Perhaps more directly to the point, however, is Peter's writing found in 1 Peter 1.14-16, which reads:

"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

1) *The assault of Old New Age Gnosticism*

There are three primary sources feeding the current perversion of grace. First is a resurgence of Gnosticism. This, in essence, as with much of ancient Gnosticism, is a false separation between what is spiritual and what is physical. In ancient Gnosticism there was the teaching that the two were completely unrelated. In effect the belief was that what one believed and nourished in the spiritual realm was unrelated and untouched by one's actions within the physical realm.

The emerging Gnosticism in the contemporary church is not so much due to a deliberate teaching as it is from a growing ignorance and ignoring of the Word of God. In some church circles where things like prophecy, healing, and impartations of the Holy Spirit are valued there is also, unfortunately, a devaluation of the written word of God. This vacuum of ignorance has sucked many into a spiritual climate with a lack of regard for the holiness of God. That holiness is what we were born again to experientially walk in. To reference Peter a second time, 2nd Peter 2.20-22 warns that those who have come to know Christ Jesus but return to practicing former sins are like 'dogs who return to their

own vomit'.

To some degree the current hunger for spirituality and spiritual experiences devoid of an appetite for the Person and ways of God is witchcraft. This witchcraft manifests in two essential ways: 1) a hunger for spiritual experiences aside from the Lordship of Christ, and 2) a prevailing of anti authority attitudes. Witches love to move in spiritual dimensions but also despise authority, which is in keeping with the demonic realm. As well, as was with Jezebel, there is usually a fascination with perverse sexuality. To sum up modern day Gnostic traits emerging in the church there is a hunger for spirituality while there is a de-emphasizing of the Lordship of Christ governing one's attitudes and actions. The false application of grace provides the loophole to continue in doing what one feels like doing and still praying the prayer "bless me, Lord"!

What has also, in a huge way, fed into current Gnosticism is a de-emphasizing of the Biblical mandate to make disciples. In many churches today the gospel is reduced to the two things: 1) free fire insurance, to escape the flames of hell, and 2) consistent teaching from the pulpits that God simply wants to give us formulas for success regardless of our lifestyles. Of course, God does want to bless people, but not apart from our embracing God's principal of dying to self and living for Christ by embracing Christ's ways. Galatians 6.7 reads: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap."

If we sow to carnality that is exactly what we will reap- bondage and death, on many differing levels. The growing mantra today is "it's okay to do what you like. God will forgive you." Forgiveness is the result of repentance. Repentance, essentially, means to see things from a higher perspective (God's vantage point) and to change one's behavior accordingly. The remedy is church leaders must return to preaching the gospel of 'the kingdom' that Jesus preached and seek 'its righteousness' not merely its blessings. Otherwise, when a so-called Christian is continually grieving the Holy Spirit it is the spirit of this age that rules them, not the Spirit of the living God!



2) *The Assault of the Fear*

As much as the church growth movement has been a help to many leaders for the last several decades, I believe, it has also proven to be a curse for some. It has mandated the wrong measuring stick. God measures the success of leadership by things like obedience, fruitfulness, and the making of disciples. Strictly using the 'nickels, noise, and numbers formula' to qualify/quantify one's ministry is like trying to assess heaven by earth's standards. By many church standards today Jesus would have to be labeled as a poor leader due to His message of 'eating His body, and drinking His blood'. Because of that message He went from the multitudes following Him to barely the twelve. It would be a contemporary pastor's worst nightmare. Jesus, however, measured success by

obedience to the Father, not the accolades of man or the size of the crowd!

Proverbs 25.29 states "the fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted." Due to success being primarily measured purely by numbers there has come about a great fear of offending church attendees by saying the wrong thing from the pulpit. That 'wrong thing' too often means anything that might cause that attendee to stop attending. Without necessarily intending to we can inadvertently become pleasers of men rather than of God. We must constantly remind ourselves that the gospel message itself (if Biblically preached) is offensive. It is offensive simply because God calls people to die to themselves

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SHARING RESOURCES

Turning Faces Towards Heaven

In conjunction with the 10th Anniversary of Ministries for Asia Pacific (MAP), a new book, authored by its Founder and President, Ooi Chin Aik, will be launched. Entitled: "Turning Faces Towards Heaven", the 209-page book is divided into 3 parts.

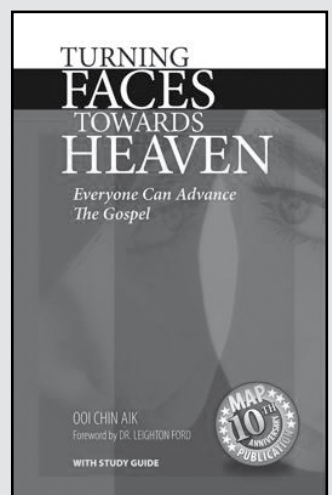
Part One: Ministries for Asia Pacific (MAP)—A Decade Of Gospel Advance, tells the story of MAP in the early years, the transition years, and the years of gospel advance. It records the sovereign work of God, from a mustard seed beginning of 2 evangelists in 1 nation to a gospel movement of over 200 evangelists in 10 countries of Asia Pacific.

Part Two: Themes For Gospel Advance, seeks to press onto the readers, the urgency of the tasks with an end-time perspective, and call God's people to reflect and act in the 'Study Guide' section.

Part Three: Gospel Advance In The 21st Century, seeks to present global and regional missiological trends and challenges for our time, in the hope that readers and churches can develop a global perspective for gospel advance in the 'worst and best of times'.

Those interested to purchase the book, or have a MAP evangelist minister and set up a book table in your church to promote readership and response towards a gospel movement can contact them via tel: 0362767510 or email: map@pd.jaring.my.

All proceeds from the sales of the book will go to a trust fund for gospel advancement.



and change their behavior. Less than a changed lifestyle is less than Biblical Christianity.

When the incomplete message of “it’s okay, God loves you just the way you are” prevails there will be very little room for the Spirit’s conviction for change. The other half of that message is begging to be preached: “He also loves you too much to leave you the way you are”! Yes, by all means let’s be as welcoming and as friendly as the good news itself to all. But a physician who won’t warn a patient about a growing cancer tumor out of fear of depressing or offending that patient is a lethal care giver! There is after all a sorrow the Spirit can release that leads one to repentance. (2nd Corinthians 7.10)

We need to learn to discern between religious condemnation and the Holy Spirit’s conviction. The former wraps people up in the legalism of religion, while the latter opens people up to the potential of healing and abundant life in Christ!

The current statistics of 50% percent of all Bible believing, church going Christian men and 20% of the same group of women being addicted to pornography tell us that something is seriously out of order in the church today. As if that is not enough of a problem there is almost the same percentage of divorce in the church as there is among non-church goers. If the ancient boundaries that God has established for healthy living are moved then we have managed to learn to graze in the camp of the enemy without fear of consequences! If the foundations are destroyed, or at least obscured, what can the righteous do?

We can begin by proclaiming and praying for a return to God’s standards of ‘grace based holiness’. If judgment starts first with the household of God, then it is probably a safe bet that judgment will start first with the gatekeepers of the church- leaders. We can either fear man, or fear God, but not both at the same time.

3) *The Assault of Unsanctified Compassion*

Due to past movements, which practiced a focus on the control of individual Christians, the word ‘accountability’ has almost been thrown out the window. Accountability, Biblically speaking, is not so much a thing of control, but rather of encouragement and strength. The truth is all healthy relationships demand some sort of accountability in order to function well. A relationship where there is a fear, or pride, based resistance to honesty is doomed to fail to reach it’s potential.

Out of fear of treading on people rights, or offending people in one’s church, accountability has become neglected. So when problems arise due to ongoing destructive behavior (sin) there is too often the tendency to issue blessings based on ‘unsanctified compassion’. Many church attendees and members want prayers of blessing and breakthrough despite the fact that the hurtful condition they are in may be due to reaping what they’ve sown. To continually bless some one who will not truly repent (change) from destructive behavior is comparable to giving throat lozenges to some one dying of throat cancer and thinking that because the pain is temporarily gone all is well.

In contrast to unsanctified compassion Paul and Jesus were seemingly harsh. Paul wrote, “if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat” regarding the distribution of charity to poorer church members. There was absolutely no sense of unearned entitlement with Paul! Obviously, he was not speaking of those who simply could not work. When it comes to those who refuse to stop coarse sinning Jesus said to treat them as sinners, not as redeemed members of a congregation. (Matthew 18.17) Jesus also, categorically, without any ambiguity what so ever, stated that a man who leaves his wife to marry another woman is to be treated as an adulterer- a flagrant practicing sinner. (Matthew 19.9) Of course, this is excepting when his wife first committed adultery. Today there is a veritable plague of men and women in church leadership abandoning the ‘wife (or spouse) of their youth’ for a younger version! Truths regarding marriage, such as oneness and covenant, which God emphasizes have been treated as obsolete by many current ministry leaders. God simply sees this as sin on a grand scale. Yet the church has learned to sweep adultery, financial impropriety, substance abuse, and many other sins under a heavy carpet incorrectly labeled ‘grace’.

The love of Christ does not negate accountability. Rather, it gives a context for which healthy accountability can function.

There are those who claim that it is incorrect to call Christians into account for sin due to a very lopsided view of the grace of the cross. Please note: I am not speaking of those in the process of coming to Christ, but those who claim to be Christians and desire good standing within a congregation, or a ministry.

The grace of the cross is simply not available aside from truth. The apostle John tells us that not merely mercy was realized through the cross but ‘grace AND truth were realized through Jesus’. (John 1.17) Psalm 85.10 tells us “loving kindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each

other.” This is a prophetic picture of the grace of Christ. To claim forgiveness, as in one’s sins being washed away without truth (repentance) renders transformation impossibility.

Should we have compassion for victims of sexual and substance addiction? Totally! But Biblical compassion is far more than feeling sympathy for the victim. It is to be moved by God in such a way that we lovingly call the victim into a sense of responsibility for their choices and assist them in reaching out to the power of God’s compassion. It must be stated, however, that God will not violate one’s free will. One must make the decision to reach out to God and trust in His power to change. That power through the Word and in the Holy Spirit cannot be experienced aside from repentance. We must take repentance out of the dusty church closet of shame and condemnation and view it as a great gift that God has given us to move towards wholeness & holiness.

Pseudo Restoration

Due to the onslaught of adultery taking place among church leaders today there has arisen a common scenario of what I call ‘pseudo restoration’. Pseudo restoration is a less than real healing process that in many ways is simply waiting until the dust settles and then reinstating the still fallen leader back into their ministry position. Pseudo restoration has more to do with spinning the message than it does true accountability of the messenger.

Just because an individual takes a short break from ministry does not necessarily mean the root issues have been dealt with! It takes real time to realize God’s convicting truth in one’s innermost being. Merely feeling sorry for being caught and the damage one may have caused by one’s sins is less than knowing truth on a deep, deep level.

Partially the syndrome of quick fix restoration is due to the church not always grasping the importance of Christ like character being the foundation for one’s ministry. But, mainly, it is due to unsanctified compassion. We say ‘look at the high calling’ and ‘well, they are under so much stress due to ministry’. Both are an affront to God. How can one claim to be a servant of Jesus and refuse to honor the ways of Jesus? Jesus after all stated that if we truly love Him we will obey His commandments- the Word of God!

True restoration takes time.

As stated it takes time to allow God’s truth to filter past layers of guilt, shame, and bring about deep down change at the root level. It takes time to rebuild equity and trust between a leader and his/

her followers and supporters. It takes time to close the doors to condemnation so that the enemy can no longer manipulate one through the memories of sin. It takes time simply to rebuild trust in one’s own self towards one’s own will. When we see patterns over several years of sexual sin, or financial impropriety, or substance abuse some of the blame lies at the church which places greater value on that stumbling leader’s ministry than on the leader as a person in need of true, not false, compassion.

“If the foundations are destroyed what can the righteous do?”

(Psalm 11.3) Edmond Burke is credited to have written “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” I believe that God is calling church leaders today to rise up and begin to champion grace based holiness. Grace based holiness is teaching the truth in love, without condemnation! While the foundation of Christianity can never be destroyed we can quench the Holy Spirit to the degree that we render the church impotent in moving in the fullness of the grace and power He has for us. He is after all ‘the Holy Spirit’. I believe that God is calling the contemporary church to essentially four responses in regards to the plague of misperceived grace, which is afflicting many ministries and congregations.

1) *Pray for a revelation of God’s heart and power to walk, model, and champion grace based holiness especially for leaders. Let’s cry out for a revelation that would cause us to echo the cry heard around God’s throne- ‘holy, holy, holy’. Isaiah 6.3 & Revelation 4.8*

2) *Begin to boldly, yet, with love & humility, educate and encourage the church in what the Bible has to say regarding healthy behavior to the point of hating sin! It is possible to hate sin, and yet love sinners- after all Jesus did it.*

3) *Become intentional about taking to heart Paul’s admonishment to “not grieve” (offend) the Holy Spirit- the very presence of God in our lives and midst! After all we no longer belong to ourselves. He is the one who is in us to do His will & good pleasure.*

4) *When serious sins do emerge in the life of a leader, let’s learn to value them as a person, more than their ministry. Let’s take the time to deal with the source of the issues rather than simply putting on the band-aid of ‘time out’.*

Marc A. Dupont
Mantle of Praise Ministries, Inc.
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North Korea Still the most difficult place in the world to be Christian. All religious activity is seen as a revolt against North Korea's socialist principles and the cult of Kim Jong-il and his father. As a result of strict searches, considerable numbers of secret Christians have been discovered, arrested, tortured, and sometimes killed. Despite this, and the lack of freedom to worship, many take the risk of sharing their faith and the church is growing; there is an estimated 400,000 believers.

PRAY Pray for boldness and protection for those seeking to share the good news. Ask God to strengthen the 50–70,000 Christians detained in labor camps. Pray that help will reach those who are desperately short of food. - Idop

Laos Although there are few restrictions on religion in law, the government's attitude towards Christians is very negative. All believers are under strict surveillance and church activities are limited. The local community reacts strongly against converts who renounce evil spirit worship. In 2009 two Christians were killed, two were imprisoned, and at least another 21 were arrested and held without trial. Christians faced physical harassment and some churches were destroyed or damaged. Praise God that despite severe persecution, the church continues to grow.

PRAY Pray for faithfulness for believers facing imprisonment and torture. Ask the Lord to provide for the needs of believers who are from the ethnic minorities living in rural areas where poverty is rife. - Idop

Afghanistan The Taliban grew in influence in 2009, and continued to threaten expatriate workers, Christian aid agency staff and local Christians. Believers face discrimination from the authorities and society. Afghans who are open about their faith may face violence and death threats. There were reports of believers being kidnapped or harmed. Most Christians do not publicly meet with other believers because of concern for safety. But despite the dangers, Christianity continues to grow.

PRAY Pray that secret believers will find ways to meet together for worship and encouragement. Pray also for protection for foreign Christian workers seeking to build God's kingdom in that land and that God would establish peace and stability in this troubled region. - Idop

Indonesia Our neighbor suffered a twin disaster recently. While a tsunami hit the Mentawai island, killing hundreds of people, the volcanic ashes from Merapi also caused severe damage to people and property.

PRAY Pray for God's strength and wisdom be upon the teams who are demonstrating God's love to the victims through the distribution of food, lamps, tents and other items. Pray especially for protection and comfort be upon the children who have suffered trauma and loss of loved ones.

Bhutan The 2008 constitution guarantees religious freedom, but also forbids conversion 'by means of coercion or inducement'. To many Bhutanese, this rules out sharing the gospel. Most persecution happens in

remote areas where Buddhist monks oppose Christianity. Believers are forced to meet secretly. Those who convert to Christianity face opposition from family and community. In July local youths stoned a house church, threatening to burn it down if services were not stopped. As the church lacks trained leaders, pray for those involved in training pastors. Parliament has passed a law giving village heads more influence.

PRAY Pray for believers under pressure from these local leaders. Pray also for Prime Minister Jigme Thinley, who has promised to champion religious liberty. - Idop

Iraq Christians in Iraq are living in a state of constant fear after a series of co-ordinated blasts targeting Christian neighbourhoods followed a bloody siege at a Baghdad church. The Islamic State of Iraq – an Al-Qaeda front group that claimed responsibility for the attack – threatened further violence, saying that Christians everywhere were "legitimate targets." Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Christians have already been driven from their homeland over the last 20 years because of attacks by Muslim extremists. The exodus is expected to accelerate in light of the latest outbreak of violence.

PRAY Pray for all who have lost loved ones in the attacks and that the Lord will grant peace to those who are anxious about further violence. Pray also for wisdom and guidance for Christian families in Iraq as they consider whether or not to stay in their homeland. Ask God that the new Iraqi government will be strong and stable and exercise its authority over this escalating security crisis. – Barnabas Fund