perspective

fellowship of evangelical students

march 2012

Blind Spots
AnnTIC 2011
Cross Bearing, Life Saving
Learn a Language, Make a Friend

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This year, FES' ministry emphasis is *Communicating the Good News of Jesus Christ.* However, having been involved in student ministry for more than half a century, we also recognise that we may have unintentionally and unknowingly developed some blind spots that hinder us from communicating the Good News effectively in the student world. The FES staff team has started this exercise of attempting to identify some possible blind spots in our ministry. In the following pages, we share with you some of our reflections on this area.

Blind Spot #1: Self-Righteousness

Self-righteousness is one of the most difficult sins to recognise within ourselves because it often disguises itself as obedience to Scripture and firm convictions about the truth. That is why Christians are prone to its deceptive lure; after all, we know right from wrong and have a genuine desire to obey the Lord. Besides, we often identify this as a trait of the Pharisees and enjoy Jesus' castigation of this group of religious folks who were showy with their piety but have no true spirituality. To think that we could fall into the same problem of self-righteousness, seem unthinkable and offensive. This "invisible sin" is overcome only through exposure and repentance.

The Pharisees were examples of self-righteous people. By examining their lives, we can understand the inner workings of this manifestation of pride that still traps many believers, even Christian ministry workers today. Let us strip off our blinders, humble our hearts, and allow God's Word to reveal any false righteousness in us (Heb. 4:12-13).

Characteristics

Self-righteousness involves a critical spirit, separatist attitude and loveless action.

1. ***Critical spirit***: A critical spirit prevails when we think of persons and organisations (including churches) which do not meet our par excellence standards. The self-righteous are quick to point out the sins of others but can't see their own (Lk. 6:39-42). (Pharisee Theology: "I thank God we're not like all those other people!" Luke 18:11). For example, in our Inductive Bible Study (IBS) training, our aim is to enthuse our students in studying the Bible for all it's worth and develop a passion for God's Word. The dangerous side effect could be raising a generation of Bible students who think that IBS is the only way to interpret the Bible correctly and unwittingly place themselves on the pedestal of being "connoisseurs" of the Bible, falling prey to spiritual pride. We can end up more concerned about the hermeneutical disposition of the preacher than an earnest openness to learn. Our faith is replaced with strict legalism (Mt. 23:23-24; Phil. 3:6).
2. ***Separatist attitude***: A separatist attitude is the tendency to dissociate from those who do not share the same theological persuasions and resort to argumentative but unedifying disputes. We see this in church history, even within Christendom in Singapore. This can lead to pettiness, majoring on the minor within the same spectrum of evangelicalism. On many occasions, we have seen how doctrinal differences on non-essentials take centre stage in a fall-out within church leadership and resulting in further polarisation of views. Certainly, separatist attitudes

are divisive. It is the cut-off, no further dialogue approach and it is always the other party that requires correction (Mt.12:14).

3. ***Loveless action***: Loveless action is the consequence when we are self-righteous. Like the church in Ephesus (Rev. 2:4), we have lost our first love (i.e. the way we first loved one another) in our fervour to rid false teachings. If the brother is in doctrinal error or sin, isn't he still a brother to be loved? Didn't Jesus command us to love even our enemies? Or whoever that has not sinned, cast the first stone? The focus of the self-righteous is no longer edification and exhortation but castigation and judgement. Such an approach does not have reconciliation as its agenda.

Dangers

There are several dangers that confront the self-righteous person who believes he is above reproach (his blind spots):

1. They may reject God's purpose for their lives by refusing to repent (Mt. 3:1-11), thinking they are right.
2. Their hearts may be far from the Lord (Mt. 15:1-9) despite their religious fervour.
3. They will be judged by their own standard (Lk. 6:38).

Remedies

To counteract the blind spots of self-righteousness, we need:

1. ***humility***; Ask the Lord to search our hearts and reveal any hidden self-righteousness (Ps. 139:23-24). Confess our arrogance (1 Cor. 8:1-3) and humble ourselves in repentance (James 4:6-10);
2. Christ's compelling **love** to exude from our hearts. The foundational requirement for that is we pursue an intimate relationship with Christ, not our own righteousness (Phil. 3:3-11; Acts 4:13) and
3. the courage and sensitivity in our **engagement** with the other party. Extend grace, not condemnation, to others (Rom. 8:1).

Extend grace, not condemnation, to others.

Reflection

Below are some questions for our reflection:

1. Does your knowledge of Scripture or desire in obeying God lead you to compare yourself with others who are less knowledgeable or who struggle with certain sins? If so, why do you think you do this?
2. Do you find yourself always correcting the sins of others? Why is this so? What is the difference between correction (as shown by Jesus, the Apostle Paul, etc.) versus condemnation (as shown by the Pharisees)?
3. What do you tend to do more: find fault with others, or extend mercy and grace? What does Christ mean when He says that you will be judged by the same measure that you use for others (Lk. 6:38)?
4. Are you hesitant to ask the Lord to examine your heart? What do you fear He may find? What are the benefits of bringing hidden areas of your life into the light?

Dr Tan Tee Khoon
Associate General Secretary

Blind Spot #2: Fallacies in Communication

In our attempts to communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ, we may at times, unknowingly employ inappropriate channels of communication or communicate contents that are not relevant to the situation.

A gentleman was walking down a residential street and noticed a man struggling with a washing machine at the doorway of his house. When he volunteered to help, the home owner was overjoyed, and the two men together began to work and struggle with the bulky appliance. After several minutes of fruitless effort, the two stopped and just looked at each other. They were on the verge of total exhaustion. Finally, when they caught their breath, the first man said to the home owner, "We will never get this washing machine in there!" To which the home owner replied, "In? I am trying to move it out!"[1]

Communication is 'getting through'

As we can see from this illustration, sometimes when we perceive that a piece of information is being communicated across, at the end of the day, we realise that the information is still with us and nothing has been communicated at all. The words 'information' and 'communication' are often used interchangeably, but they actually signify quite different things. Information is 'giving out'. Communication is 'getting through'. Having information does not ensure that we can communicate.

Contents of the Good News

When sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, more thought needs to be given to how the contents should be expressed in today's context. We need to communicate the essential points of the Gospel message but we also need to know how to bring it across such that it engages the hearers. Some examples we can think of, but which requires further study and thought are:

- Students today are concerned with freedom, but how do we use the freedom of the Gospel as an engaging point?
- We can make use of culture and festive seasons to discuss issues of interest that will bring to bear on the Good News. For example, the Chinese understanding of blessings, abundance and longevity can be translated into 'goodness from God' which all will tend to agree. The issues about life and death can also be seen as a way to generate discussion that leads to the Gospel.

Channels for Communicating the Good News

There are many channels that are available for us to use in communicating the Good News but we need to exercise wisdom in choosing the channel that is appropriate to each individual and the context we are in.

We should also be mindful that both content and channel are intertwined, as reflected in the famous phrase by Marshall McLuhan: "*The medium is the message*". Overemphasising or underplaying either of them can hinder the effective communication of the Good News.

Lai Sze Khiong
Head, FES Chinese Work

1 Finzel, Hans *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*, Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2007, page 131.

Blind Spot #3: Superficiality

The third blind spot that we can reflect on is *superficiality*. There is a high possibility that we only build superficial relationships with God, others and even ourselves as we rush to accomplish various tasks in our everyday life.

It may seem unthinkable for us to have a superficial relationship with God. However, if we seriously consider the way we pray, sing or read the Bible, we can examine whether we really do those acts out of our longing to communicate with God or we are merely going through the motions. Think also about the various activities and ministries in which we serve in. Do we really serve from our hearts?

On top of having a superficial relationship with God, there are also superficial relationships existing between Christians. Most of us would be able to recognise these superficialities as we relate to each other. Nevertheless, many of us seem 'content' with this situation in the Christian community. Each one of has put on masks. Theoretically, we know that Christians are sinners saved by grace through faith in Christ and we are continually being sanctified and perfected to maturity each day. Yet, it seems that it is hard for many of us to have a deep relationship with each other in such a way that we are able to feel the closeness as a family in the Christian community. Perhaps we are afraid of being rejected. Or maybe, we are simply too busy that we do not have time and energy to be bothered with these things.

Consequently then, maybe, we have to formally organise outreach events in order to invite others to learn about Christianity because it can neither be seen in the lives of individuals nor in the community. Worse still, outreach efforts are seen as merely achieving certain targets without showing genuine love for those being reached.

How then, can we be genuine in our interactions? How do we cultivate a genuine heart for God and people? Sometimes I think that it is also a matter of choosing to let go of some things so that we have the time and energy to focus our attention on God and others. As we learn to open up ourselves and be vulnerable, we will learn to love in a deeper way.

> How do we cultivate a genuine heart for God and people?

In Acts 2:41-47, we observe the example of the early church. The believers at that time shared their lives and possessions with those in need. They also gathered together for prayer, breaking of bread, fellowship and teaching. They had "… favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (v.47). How do people outside of our Christian community perceive us? Would they be attracted to our community because they can see our enthusiasm and genuine love for God and others?

Victor Wibowo
Senior Staffworker, FES
Indonesian Ministry

AnnTIC 2011

Every year, NUS' Varsity Christian Fellowship (VCF) organises the Annual Teach-In Conference (AnnTIC) where VCFers would travel to a campsite in Malaysia for Bible teaching, Inductive Bible Study training, mind-stretching workshops, fellowship and fun. AnnTIC 2011 was held from 26-31 December at El Sanctuary, Malacca, Malaysia with Dr Tan Lai Yong giving the theme talks on Hosea. Here are some snapshots taken by Jerry Err, a VCFer who graduated from the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences in 2011.

Inductive Bible Study 101 (Introductory Level) conducted on the first night

Starting off the day with worship

Great food makes people happy ...

Inductive Bible Study - Studying the Epistles

... however, it is the Bread of Life that we feast on at AnnTIC

Dr Tan Lai Yong giving one of the theme talks

A time for special performances that Dr Tan challenged the groups to put up, portraying God's restoration

An activity during EXCO time

Dr Tan mingling with the groups during meal times

VCFers at AnnTIC 2011

Cross Bearing, Life Saving!

The SIM Students' Christian Fellowship (SIM SCF) adopted this as its theme for the 2012 annual internal camp. About 30 participants attended this camp which was held at the SIM Global Education Campus at Ulu Pandan. Through sessions and workshops, the camp aimed to raise awareness about involvement in social action as part of our faith response to the Gospel. An experiential element was also incorporated by visiting different voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) around Singapore. The sessions facilitated by Mrs Kimhong Hazra focused on how:

- Jesus brings transforming good news;
- the early disciples were transformed by the good news;
- the transforming good news transforms us.

CFers with some of the HealthServe staff

On the second day of the camp, the participants were divided into groups that visited *HealthServe, Breakthrough Missions* and *All Saints Home Tampines* – all VWOs that minister to the marginalised. At the conclusion of the camp, Rev. Gideon Choi from Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church conducted a Communion Service.

Through the sessions, we learnt that Jesus challenged the Jewish paradigm, being that God's salvation was only for the Jews, by including everyone in His mission. Marginalisation was rife during the time of Jesus' ministry on earth. Widows and lepers were among the groups that lived on the fringes of society – caused, in part, by the discriminating system laid down by the synagogue. Jesus' explanation of Elijah's and Elisha's ministries incensed the Jews to the point that they wanted to hurl him over the cliff! As such, Jesus provoked a restructuring of the social order, based on God's partiality to the poor and Jesus' inclusive demonstration of love.

Doing arts and crafts with the residents of All Saints Home Tampines

All this was perhaps just head knowledge to many of us, as there was a certain sense of detachment from our 'real world'. It was during the visits to the VWOs that many shared of how the message from the sessions became alive to us. The group I was placed in visited *HealthServe*, and it was there that we learnt of the plights of some of the oppressed migrant workers. Another group shared with us how they were warmly welcomed by some of the beneficiaries of *Breakthrough Missions*, while the group that visited *All Saints Home* reflected upon the way they interact with their grandparents.

Many of the campers testified that they previously turned a blind eye to the segments of society that were disadvantaged, and through this camp their eyes were unveiled. Some have even declared that they want to do more with these ministries! All the glory to God!

Gerald Cheang
SIM-UOL Accounting and Finance, Year 3

One Day Out with International Students

On 14 January 2012, NTUCF organised a one day out event for international students with the aim of promoting integration of these students into our society through the strengthening and building of friendships with locals and a deeper understanding of Singaporean culture. Besides touring the National Museum of Singapore, we also held games at Fort Canning Park. The entire programme, involving about 200 participants, was conducted in English. The students were introduced to local delicacies, such as roti prata, and National Day Parade songs such as *Five Stars Arising*. Not only were they introduced to different aspects of Singapore, they also learnt about our history while touring the museum. We ended the event with a bonding session, which provided us the opportunity to have a better understanding of the students, as well as their needs.

We were thankful for the great weather, and were glad to receive positive feedback from the international students. Some even requested for more of such events!

The event has drawn me closer to many of the international students. As they shared about their feelings of studying abroad, I realised how lonely and fearful it can be for them to be alone and away from their family for the first time. I was compelled to shower them with more care and concern, and truly be a good friend of theirs. Getting to know them better helps me to understand things from their perspective, and therefore, to really love them as myself. Apart from that, I have been reminded not to take my family and friends for granted, and to always be thankful and contented with what the Lord has blessed me with.

Jan Teo
NTU, Mathematics and Economics Curriculum, Year 3

Learn a Language, Make a Friend

On 11 August 2011, a room at the East Asia School of Business (EASB) hostel in Kwong Avenue, Sennett Estate, was opened for the first time to welcome students, mainly from East Asian countries, to a beginning of wholesome friendships, English-language learning, counseling and recreation. It was the first of the thrice weekly meetings organised by FES in partnership with Mustard Seed Community Church (MSCC). The students easily became friends with our volunteers. Fifteen to twenty students eagerly wait for the arrival of FES staffworker Fuji and his team every Tuesday night for the "party". Thursday nights were for various activities like cooking, newspaper reading, basketball shooting, word games, X-Box games, tutorials, and counselling arising from discussions of various topics of interest to the youth. Saturday mornings were for English classes.

Visit to a fire station

There were also fun times outside the hostel grounds. We visited the Singapore Botanic Gardens for a strings concert and also made an educational trip to a fire station. We went to many sports complexes for swimming lessons and gym workouts. Of course, in the midst of these activities, we did not forget their basic "needs" – we ate out together and helped them know where to buy things and get a haircut. In addition, Lena, a housewife from MSCC, gave tuition in English at her house to three students. They appreciated the lessons, as well as the kindness of Teacher Lena.

About fifty students attended the MSCC Christmas dinner and programme at the end of that year. Then, on 13 January 2012, almost 30 hostel friends came for a Chinese New Year dinner at the home of an MSCC family. They appreciated the friendly atmosphere and found the program meaningful. Some of these students may not return to Singapore to continue their studies, while some others planned to look for another place to live in. A few of them asked for our email addresses to stay in touch. For those students who were going to another place to stay, some asked if they can still join us at our hostel meetings even if they no longer live there. No matter what their situation may be, we pray to God that He will continue to work in their lives.

At our volunteers' retreat on 14 January, we thanked God for calling us to serve Him in this ministry and for each student we befriended. We look to the Lord for wisdom and strength for another season of hostel ministry starting this February. Will you partner with us in prayer?

Jenny Tecson
Church worker with MSCC

Staff and volunteers

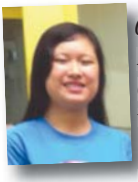
We would like to take this opportunity to introduce two friends we have made through this hostel fellowship:

Ben[1] is a student with a natural sense of humor, always bringing laughter and joy to every Tuesday fellowship. As with most students, he struggles with conversational English but perseveres with a teachable attitude. Presently, Ben attends church regularly and he encourages fellow students from EASB to accompany him. We believe that a seed of faith has been planted and that God will work mightily in Ben.

Joe[2] was not a believer when he first joined the fellowship. However, after several meetings, he became curious as to why the FES and MSCC staff and volunteers will take time off to serve in this fellowship. After talking with the staff and doing some Bible studies together, Joe accepted Christ before returning to his home country.

Generally, the students received us enthusiastically and are keen to have this hostel fellowship. We have also learnt a lot through our involvement in this ministry. Nonetheless, we also face some challenges like language barriers as some of the students do not have a firm grasp of English. There are also cliques formed according to their countries of origin and this makes it harder for us to get to know some of the students. Nevertheless, we still see many opportunities for us to befriend and share our lives with them.

Gloria Soh (volunteer), Gabriel Jiang and Fuji Yew (FES staff)



Gloria was involved in the Ngee Ann Polytechnic Christian Fellowship when she was a student until her graduation in 2011. She is currently studying in SIM.

Gabriel is a 2008 graduate of Nanyang Polytechnic and has just joined FES as a staffworker. Fuji is FES Senior Staffworker in-charge of Pioneering Ministry.

[1, 2] The names of the students have been changed to protect their privacy.

FES National Conference 2012

Thursday to Saturday
25-27 October

Salvation Army
Upper Bukit Timah Road

Note the date! Book your time!

Whispers of Yesteryears

"Whispers of Yesteryears" – that was the eloquently-expressed theme of this year's combined NTU-NUS Chinese Bible Study Camp. However, if the phrase had led you to think that this was a very prim and proper camp, you would be sorely mistaken, for in fact, from 3-6 January the sixth floor of Jubilee Church was home to the riotous laughter of 30 students.

This is not to say that the camp was all fun and laughter without serious moments; rather, the laughter was a reflection of the liveliness of the lessons conducted by our beloved FES staff workers. We may have been covering the Old Testament, but as the lessons demonstrated, these stories from the past are not irrelevant whispers that could be ignored. Although they are narratives of the past, their message still endures to the present, and certainly not just as "background" to the New Testament. Instead, they reiterate many lessons of faith, of love, and of God.

Led by our own curiosities, many interesting topics were brought up and explored during the allocated discussion time, as we were encouraged to ask questions, challenged to observe, shared our interpretations, and finally, reflected on the Word's application to our own lives. I am sure that as we shared what we have gleaned from the various sessions, all of us grew in some way through this camp.

Games time

Of course, besides lesson and discussion times, there were games and plenty of opportunities for further interaction with our peers from both universities. Especially precious were the late night conversations, where we shared openly about difficulties, and where much love, care and advice was offered in return, regardless of our backgrounds.

Indeed, for me, the most important thing about the annual Bible camp has always been the lessons. But, this year, as I accepted the invitation to be a group leader, I was struck too by the amazing joy of being able to come together with fellow brothers and sisters to learn and grow in the Word together. All in all, it was a wonderful camp, and boy, am I looking forward to the next one!

Rebecca Yong Jia Hui
NUS, Sociology, Year 2

Plant Buddies, Grow Together

The Anniversary cake made by the students

On 3 February 2012, the NUS Indonesian Students' Christian Fellowship (ISCF) had their 12th Anniversary Fellowship. About 65 students and alumni of ISCF attended this event, which was themed, *Plant Buddies, Grow Together*.

We started with dinner and after eating our fill, we played group games, which were designed to strengthen the bond among us. Then Adrian Nugroho, the FES staffworker in charge of NUS ISCF, gave a short sharing centered on the theme. He illustrated the theme with a discussion on four main points:

I – Intimacy
S – Study God's word with heart and mind
C – Conduct of love/Carrying out God's Word; and
F – Fellowship

These four points reminded us of the importance of having a good and healthy fellowship in our own small groups, of being accountable to our friends, and of the need to build intimate friendships with as well as show love and care to our fellow group mates. Adrian also shared on how developing small conversations and understanding one another's struggles are important elements of a small group. Of paramount importance is for the group to meet regularly to learn more about God's Word.

Overall, it was an encouraging and refreshing night, and we ended all the more strengthened and encouraged to know that we have a community of brothers and sisters who support and look out for us.

Angel Astaman
NUS, Industrial & Systems Engineeering, Year 3

Reuben Ang *graduated from NUS in 2011 and currently works as a staffworker with the NUS VCF Hall Ministry and NTU CF.*

Reuben (centre) with VCFers at the Annual Teach-In Camp held in December2011.

Your first job upon graduation promises to change many things down the road. Your world-view gets shaped further as you take up responsibilities in the 'real world', while working with new people and dealing with personal finances push you to make decisions you never had to. That is all well and good and you will probably face those realities regardless of the career God calls you to, but there is something peculiar about the past year in FES that caused some dissonance within me, but don't get me wrong; discomfort is not all bad.

Working with students at FES shook the part of me that was very much a product of the 'Singaporean System' – encouraging student initiative meant giving up controllability and predictability; pushing students to think strategically and contextually meant confronting a reluctance for robust and critical thinking and re-embracing the ability to imagine. Needless to say, my time in the ministry has coaxed much growth in my life's journey with my Lord; not too long ago I was a student myself. It is in this transition that the juxtaposition of two major chapters in my life – work life and student life – becomes the inspiriting ethos of my work among students, sharing my journey and enabling them in their mission as God's people on campus and in society.

. . . in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving

Prayer Items:

- Pray that I will learn to cope with the new lifestyle, especially when I work among the Halls and Residences in NUS VCF. Working at night takes some getting used to.
- Pray for much wisdom as I learn what it means to be a staffworker: talking less, thinking more, and knowing what to say and when to say it. It really is a skill.
- Pray for God to raise up leaders for the following academic year as students begin to think about taking responsibilities and serving in the fellowship.
- Pray that students will be comfortable with discomfort as they are pushed to grow and entertain ideas outside of their comfort zones.

let your requests be made known to God.

***Kevin Chia** is with the Polytechnic staff team. He works with students at Singapore Polytechnic Christian Fellowship (PCF) and Ngee Ann Polytechnic Christian Fellowship (NPCF).*

Kevin (centre) with the PCF Exco

These two years in FES has gone by swiftly but they were positively years of unspeakable joy. Without a doubt, it has been an overwhelming yet humbling journey for me thus far. The 'ministry life' is not a 100-metre sprint but a long marathon race. It is not how well we have started but how well we will finish that counts. My cup was brimming with the countless new and yet familiar 'old' stuff. Even as I unloaded and began to learn, I recalled a wise man once told me: "Take care of the depth of your character and the Lord will take care of the breadth of your ministry."

Have you ever considered that David was 30 years old when he was installed as king? What was he doing till then? He was building his character in obscurity. For many years he faithfully served his father by watching sheep – not exactly a glamorous calling. Then, he spent a long time in the back side of a desert fleeing from Saul, cultivating qualities like trusting God, patience, and faithfulness.

I think often my focus is wrong. It is not about what I can do but what God can do through me. Thus, I need to work on the depth of my character and let God lead me with the rest, especially with the upcoming year ahead in ministry.

Kevin (back row, third from right) at the combined Polytechnic camp held last October.

Prayer Items:

- Pray for me to be faithful in the little things in life and work .
- Sherry and myself led two teams of students from the PIE (Polytechnic Intercultural Exposure) programme to Thailand and Cambodia from 14-29 March. Pray that all the observations made and lessons learnt will give the students and the CFs a better perspective of missions today.
- Pray for the PCF and NPCF leaders, that they will have perseverance and wisdom in handling increasing pressures from their studies and work in the CF.
- Pray for the Polytechnic Staff Team that we will be effective in our work as we embark on another new academic year. Please also pray that we will have the joy, tenacity and hope of our Lord Christ Jesus.

Adrian Nugroho *is with the FES Indonesian ministry and works primarily with NUS ISCF.*

I thank God for leading me in the past nine months as a full-time staffworker with NUS ISCF (Indonesian ministry). Before I joined the staff, one thing which I was quite worried about was how I would face the ministry if it turns out that there is not much for me to do as a full-timer, that I will have much spare time, and therefore, the stress of being idle will come about. The reality, however, seems to be the other way around. I never quite expected that a full-time ministry can be very exhaustive – mentally and physically – if carried out wholeheartedly and properly, but indeed that is the fact. Once, I even questioned whether I could actually do this for at least one term at FES. Coming back home after midnight is normal, starting the day early is somewhat frequent, and struggling to closely follow the classes which I am taking part-time at Biblical Graduate School of Theology, is a norm for me. On the other side of the coin, however, the joy and happiness in serving Him – be it when there is not much visible fruits or when the workings of the Spirit are visible through the transformed lives of the students – are deep and real. I often go to Psalm 84: 5–7 as a source of encouragement:

Adrian (seated second from left) with the NUS ISCF

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,

> 'Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. As they go through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.' (NIV)

Prayer Items:

- Pray that I will watch over myself carefully as I minister to others.
- Pray for wisdom and good time management to complete my course assignments on time.
- Pray for the NUS ISCF Camp that will be held from 7–12 May 2012; that the committee may prepare it well and that it blesses the students.
- Pray for the first-year students who just joined the NUS-ISCF committee that they may grow toward Christlikeness through it.

***Thomas Ng Cheng How**, who has been with the FES Chinese Work since June 1998, was Head of FES Chinese Work from 2004 to May 2011. Currently he serves in the Singapore Polytechnic and Nanyang Polytechnic student and graduate ministries.*

Thomas (standing, first from left) at a birthday celebration with some Singapore Polytechnic Chinese CF students

I thank God, as well as FES, for having granted me with three months of sabbatical leave from October to December 2011. This was my second sabbatical leave since the first nine-month sabbatical I took in August 2004. Other than studying two modules at Alliance Biblical Seminary (Hong Kong) and doing some research, I had some time for personal reflection during the eight days of stay in cool weather at Changzhou island, Hong Kong. As I recall those days of 'ups and downs', with moments of joy and struggle, God constantly reminded me of His providence and His Word; to be faithful to His calling, as well as to be humble; to continue to have a disciple's heart to follow Jesus Christ; and to depend on His grace as I carry on in the ministry.

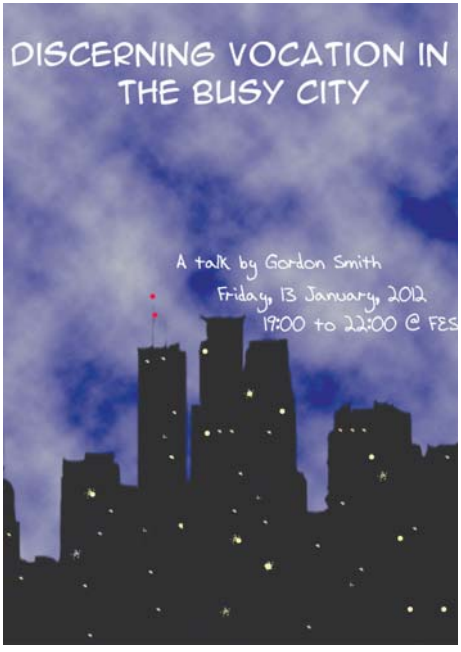
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus

Philippians 4:6,7

Prayer Items:

- FES is a unique ministry where the staffworker has to cope with the inevitable changes that come when we minister to different batches of students. Tertiary education is always a reflection of what it is like in the real world. Pray for God's wisdom that He will give me fresh ideas, supported by biblical principles, for the ministry.
- Pray for the leadership transition in March, that the new leadership can set practical goals and have a passionate heart for God's kingdom.
- Thank God for the strong support from some polytechnic graduates to the student ministry at their alma mater. Some students see their alumnus as role models and have been encouraged by them.
- Thank God for this year's combined polytechnic freshmen orientation camp held from 28–30 March. Pray for the follow-up after this camp, and for a good turnout of freshmen at our Welcome Tea to be held in late April.

Thomas (standing, second from left) with students and graduates at a Nanyang Polytechnic Chinese CF meeting.



On the evening of 13 January, about 127 students and graduates crowded into the Conference Room at the FES office to listen to a talk by Dr Gordon T. Smith[1] on a topic close to his heart: vocation in the busy Christian's life.

The author of *Courage and Calling (IVP 1999, 2011)* who lectures part time at Regent College, coined a new phrase that night; "Shalomization". It basically refers to the idea that as Christians, we are called to live in the world, to settle down and to put out roots, not huddle in our "holy enclaves". By doing so, we are able to bring God's peace, *shalom*, to the cities in which we live.

God's Peace in the City

Dr Smith challenged the deeply held belief that somehow, we are best serving God when we are engaged in religious activities. While admitting their importance, Dr Smith suggested that these activities are only half of the picture. The Church is a gathering of God's people, but it is only fulfilling half its potential if it can only help the world when they come to it. The other half involves equipping its members to go back out into the world and make a difference through their jobs for the other five (or six) days of the week.

Godly Vocation

To give a better idea of how this would work, Dr Smith then touched on three vocations: the artisans, the teachers, and those involved in business.

For both artists and teachers who shape the way we view the world, and challenge us to a higher level of civility, the importance of Christians in these areas is more obvious. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that their work is not limited to religious subjects, but rather that their Christian worldview so infuses them that it shows even in their daily work.

Dr Gordon T, Smith

For me, the most impactful part was Dr Smith's "redemption" of business. Here are four signs by which one might recognise a godly business.

Firstly, they are marked by a *commitment to excellence.* With business culture revolving around making a quick buck, the Christian businessman should be concerned about whether his goods represent the highest quality he is able to provide, not the lowest quality people are willing to pay for.

Secondly, business should be a means by which *the justice of God is fulfilled.*

Rather than offering the best deal, price determination should be based on fairness.

Thirdly, business must be done with a *respect, not love, for money*.

Finally, business represents an opportunity to *invest in a godly fashion.* When one accrues riches, they can be channeled into the purchase of luxuries, or into changing the city we live in for the better.

Being Citizens of Heaven

To be so squarely in the world that we change it every day, yet not become coloured by its values and norms is no easy thing. Dr Smith recommended three essential practices by which our hearts and minds are formed: prayer, praise, and the Sabbath.

Prayer and praise are familiar to all of us but the idea of a Sabbath threw the audience for a loop.

"My boss calls me even when I'm on holiday, never mind the weekend. How can I observe the Sabbath then?"

"What exactly *can* one *do* on the Sabbath?"

Dr Smith suggests that the Sabbath is a day where we place our cares aside for a while, and do the things we want to do. There is a playfulness to the day, which is in a sense made possibly only by trust in the knowledge that God will take care of tomorrow and its waiting work.

Lim Shi Mei
NUS, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences Year 4

[1]Gordon T. Smith is the president of reSource Leadership International (formerly Overseas Council Canada), an agency that fosters excellence in theological education in the developing world. He also teaches part time at Regent College in Vancouver.

Welcome

Chan Sook Ching was serving with FES Chinese Work as a staffworker from 1991 to 1994 and then as Head of Ministry from 2000 to 2004. After having spent the past six years as pastor in-charge of working adults at the Evangelical Free Church of China and also at Yanfook Church, Hong Kong, she returned to Singapore late last year. In January 2012 Sook Ching re-joined FES on a part-time basis. She will be responsible for the overall Chinese Work Alumni ministry as well as the student group at Temasek Polytechnic. She worships at Orchard Road Presbyterian Church and serves in the Mandarin service.

Gabriel Jiang Qing Quan joined FES on 1 March under the one-year Graduate Assistant Programme. Gabriel graduated from Nanyang Polytechnic in 2008 with a Diploma in Molecular Biotechnology. After completing his National Service, he worked in a social enterprise for a year and was also serving in iCare. Gabriel will be working alongside Fuji in the FES pioneering ministry. He worships and serves at Holy Trinity Church.

Farewell

Dr Tan Tee Khoon (TK), who has been serving in FES for the past seven years (of which six years were as General Secretary (GS)), will be leaving the organisation at the end of March. Perspective (P) had a short interview with him to gain some insights with the man who was one of FES' driving forces.

Tee Khoon with his wife Li Peng

P: What were the major challenges you faced in your initial years as GS? What changes have you seen with regards to these challenges over the years?

TK: There were two major challenges when I first assumed office as GS in 2005: (a) lack of sustainable funding, and (b) lack of suitable ministry staff. These continue to be perennial concerns, although in lesser degree when compared to 2005–2006. I could still vividly recall when there was only a third of our salary expense in the coffers ten days before the usual staff salaries payment are made. The FES Development Committee Chairman, Treasurer and I agonised in prayer and subsequently rallied the assistance of former CFers, who responded expeditiously. While the funds that came in were adequate for six months, we had a plan for a sustainable funding and giving which we committed to the Almighty. He blessed it and till this day, we have not faced the same situation I faced in 2005. Thanks be to God!

My next challenge was the lack of human capital. In particular, we were short of staffworkers. There were applicants who either did not have experience in student ministry, or were unlikely to fit into our ethos, or both, whom we had to respectfully turn away. So we redistributed ministry work amongst existing staffworkers and helped carry one another's burdens. We were stretched but we were joyous in the work of the Lord. God brought His workers gradually and some who had left FES to pursue their studies or other ministries rejoined us. Though we are still not at our optimal number for the increasing ministry load at hand, we now have more hands at the plough to attempt pioneering work in private institutions and International Friendship Ministry.

P: Describe one or two memorable incidents that encouraged you in your term as GS.

TK: One was when we raised $60,000 in less than ten days. It was not the amount of money raised in so short a period of time per se, but more the showering of love and generosity of ex-CFers that encouraged me. Another memorable incident was when we held our first conference on International Friendship Ministry. Close to 100 participants representing different local churches attended, showing

their unanimous support for FES to take leadership in this area of ministry. We were humbled by the grace of God and His favour upon us in His strategic ministry on the campuses, and our affiliated CFs officially recognised.

P: What are your observations on student ministry today compared to seven years ago? What advice do you have for the staff team as they continue to serve in this ministry?

TK: First, the student profile is different. The youths today have ready access to information and live in the context of a postmodern society. Second, the student's study load and curriculum are also different. With that comes the challenge of having available time and the prioritisation of needs. Third, students are more open to sharing frankly about their experiences, both online and offline. Keeping in mind these characteristics of student ministry now, compared to seven years or even a decade ago, this means that staffworkers ought to be familiar with the mass media, particularly the influence of the Internet and how to harness its advantages for campus ministry. The staff team should consider undergoing training in this area, especially those who are not as well acquainted with the Internet and other forms of media. They should learn to critique it biblically and share heartily with the students they minister to, so that they can provide the necessary counter-culture inputs to what are normative experiences for the students.

We thank Tee Khoon for sharing his reflections on ministry with us. After leaving FES, Tee Khoon will be returning to real estate agency and consultancy work. Pray with him and his wife, Li Peng, as they make the necessary adjustments and continue to live out their faith where God has placed them.

Dewi with Lemuel and Victor

Dewi Kartika Gunawan (aka Mrs Victor Wibowo) resigned in December 2011 after serving nearly five years with the FES Indonesian ministry, initially on a full-time and then later on a part-time basis. Dewi will be devoting her time to homemaking and completing her studies at Biblical Graduate School of Theology. We thank Dewi for her faithful service at FES and pray for God's strength and grace to be with her in all that she does.

Congratulations

Michael Senjaya Kang, Head of FES Indonesian Ministry, and his wife, Cindy, welcomed their first child, Anaiah Gladden Kang on 26 November 2011.

FES staffworker **Jeremiah Goh** and Chai Shu Hui were united in marriage on 14 January 2012.

FES Staff Retreat

From 5-9 March 2012, the FES staff team had our retreat in Sabah, Malaysia. We truly praise God for blessing us through two FES graduates who sponsored the air tickets and made this trip possible. Our retreat director was Mr Koichi Ohtawa, a former Regional Secretary of IFES East Asia and Associate General Secretary of IFES, together with his wife, Shioko-san.

In the many years that I have been a Christian, this is the first retreat that was really a R-E-T-R-E-A-T for me. Some lessons I took home with me are:

… to genuinely greet one another a "Good Morning" in our mother tongue. In many languages, this greeting has the meaning of wishing someone a good day or peace in the day ahead. So when we greet someone a "Good Morning", do we really carry the tone "I really hope you have a good day ahead"? If not, are we not being hypocritical?

… learning to listen and gain deeper insight to what the other person is saying by only responding with "Oh I see" or "Is that so?"

… intentionally create space for God in our daily life as such discipline will help us acknowledge and respond to God's presence

… learning to pause and ponder at the different stages of our life journey as reflection is essential for growing in the knowledge about myself and God's dealings with me

… practising holistic self-care, i.e. learning to identify the areas (physical, emotional, mental and spiritual) in our life which needs attention and care

I have never felt more rested in body, mind and heart. I believe it was the same for many of the staff as well. I really give thanks to God for the providence of this trip and also for this rest. Finally, I leave you with an analogy on boats from Ohtawa-san, which I find useful in helping me reflect on my own life situation:

We are out on a boat and for some reason, the boat rocked vigorously and the person at the oars lost control of the boat. In that situation, most of us would have the tendency to stay and help even though we don't know much about boats. But the right thing for us to do is to swim to the dry land nearby. By getting out of that situation temporarily and standing on firm ground, we will more likely be able to think clearer and give help to the situation. If the boat capsizes, we might even be able to throw a rope to help the person onto dry land.

Hilda Ng
FES Staffworker

Continued from page 24

our life. Only then, will we see clearly and be able to help others remove their "speck".

In Miroslav Volf's new book, *A Public Faith – How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Brazos Press, 2011), he wrote:

> *Properly understood, the Christian faith is neither coercive nor idle. As a prophetic religion, Christian faith will be an active faith, engaged in the world in a non-coercive way - offering blessing to our endeavours, effective comfort in our failures, moral guidance in a complex world, and a framework of meaning for our lives and our activities.*

What Volf mentions above highlights at least one blind spot: the Good News has more than often been made, in Volf's words, mystical and private. The Good News we share with others, often only stresses on restoring our personal and private relationship with God. To overcome this blind spot, one feasible option is to create spaces and platforms that will facilitate our students working with students of other beliefs to serve the common good. These spaces would thus serve as natural venues where creative and transformative Christian engagement with the world is publicly demonstrated.

Nevertheless, it is also understandable that a strong focus on such initiatives could create an unhealthy imbalance if we fail to pay attention to other critical aspects of the Christian life. Equipping students with strong biblical foundational truths, strengthening existing campus fellowships, and teaching students how to do rigorous Bible studies are still very much required.

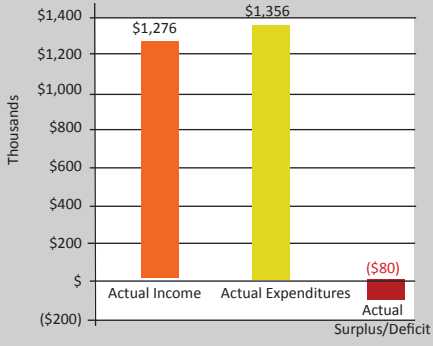
Hence, we must continue reforming but at the same time, uphold our original calling in an uncompromising manner. We must remain focused on studying the Word deeply but also provide a Christian counter-cultural voice accompanied by deeds that would transform the world. We must proclaim God's Word with our lips but also demonstrate it in our lives.

Lisman Komaladi
FES General Secretary

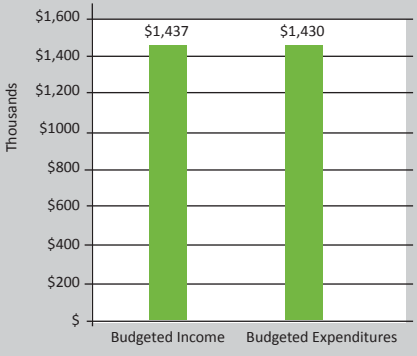
$ & Sense

FES Financial Update

FES Actual Income and Expenditures for 2011



FES Budget 2012



Comments:

- FES suffered a S$80K consolidated deficit in 2011 (excluding the one-time payment from Bible Society of Singapore for the termination of lease of our former unit at Bible House).
- In 2012 we expect a balanced budget. Expenses control will be tightened and Income from contributions/donations must be geared up (target: 30% increase).

What Is A Blind Spot?

A blind spot can be physiologically understood as an obscuration of the visual field. Try this out.

Close your left eye and stare at the cross mark above with your right eye. Off to the right you should be able to see the dot. Now slowly move toward the diagram. Keep looking at the cross mark while you move. At a particular distance, the dot will disappear (it will reappear again if you move even closer). The dot disappears when it falls on the optic nerve head, the hole in the photoreceptor sheet. Do you see your blind spot?

In automobile terms, a blind spot is an area to the side and slightly behind a driver's field of vision that is not reflected in the vehicle's rear view mirror. A third definition of blind spot that could be more relevant to us is: an area or subject about which we are ignorant, prejudiced, or unappreciative of.

Many of us who have been Christians or involved in Christian ministry for a long time, may have, unwittingly, developed such a blind spot. We are usually surrounded by colleagues and friends who are Christians, have a similar worldview to ours or agree with us most of the time. Evangelism and discipleship are carried out the same way year in and year out. We organise our events and programmes, unaware of other perspectives or new developments in the area. We may even be prejudiced towards those who do things differently from us. To make it worse, we may not even be aware that we have a blind spot.

One expression of the blind spot phenomena is having a judgmental attitude towards others. In Matthew 7:1-5, when Jesus exhorts us not to judge others, He is actually saying that we should not act as the final judge upon others. We do not have the final say. God is the ultimate Judge. Therefore, instead of judging, Jesus suggests to us to "take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye". Jesus knows that the blind spots in our eyes can block our sight and mislead us to be petty towards others. Hence, He first asks us to remove "the plank" – the so-called blind spots - from

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Editorial Team Chong Yun Mei, Lisman Komaladi
Esther Yap Yixuan
Design Chong Yun Mei
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FES 420 North Bridge Rd #05-05 North Bridge Centre
Singapore 188727 Tel: 6338 3665 Fax: 6338 2054
Email fes@fessingapore.org Website: http://fessingapore.org

FES Affiliates
• Nanyang Technological University Christian Fellowship (including National Institute of Education Christian Fellowship) • Singapore Institute of Management Students' Christian Fellowship • Varsity Christian Fellowship (National University of Singapore) • Ngee Ann Polytechnic Christian Fellowship • Polytechnic Christian Fellowship (Singapore Polytechnic) • Temasek Polytechnic Students' Christian Fellowship • Informatics Christian Fellowship
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