fellowship of evangelical students

perspective

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The Challenge of Scripture Engagement

PIE Programme

Unified

FES National Student Council

FES

In the last issue of Perspective (March/April) we featured an article on the importance of studying God's Word. The article discussed briefly the *Why?, When?, Where? and How?* of studying the Bible and pointed to the need to come to Bible study with our minds and with our hearts. We study the Bible not just for information, but for transformation. As we interact or engage with Scripture, our aim is to listen for God's voice and allow our minds to be shaped by Scripture. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, our heart's response would be to obey what we have read and translate it into our lives. However, this is often easier said than done.

In the following pages, we present to you a short paper on *The Challenge of Scripture Engagement* by Ms Sabine Kalthoff, the IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students) Secretary for Scripture Engagement, and also some ideas for engaging Scripture. We hope that this would spark off further ideas and thoughts on how we can do scripture engagement in our own context.

The Challenge of Scripture Engagement

Scripture engagement is one of the core commitments of IFES. Yet, this does not automatically mean that students are spending lots of fruitful time reading God's Word and applying it to their context. While there are many encouraging examples of Scripture engagement around the IFES world, numerous challenges exist.

Regional reports from student movements around the world suggest that major challenges lie in the areas of conviction and motivation. Some Christian students:

- do not see the relevance of Scripture for their lives
- do not trust Scripture to have transforming power
- see no real reason to give priority to Scripture when facing time constraints
- feel challenged by society regarding the trustworthiness and authority of the Bible.

How do we help Christian students deal with their questions and develop strong convictions of their own?

For many Christian students, reading the Bible is more like a burdensome duty than a rich and valuable experience. One result is that the theoretical importance given to Scripture engagement and its practise do not always correspond. This seems to be particularly true in the area of personal Bible reading. While movements strongly support the idea of every person spending time alone in God's Word, IFES regional reports suggest that the number of students who read the Bible on their own is decreasing rapidly. My great hope is that in IFES we will be able to strengthen joy and wonder at the gift of Scripture - so that students look forward to engaging with Scripture as much as they look forward to going out with friends.

What are some central issues that we need to focus on?

- **Engaging all of Scripture**
  Many of our national movements have a tendency to read and study parts of Scripture while neglecting other parts such as wisdom literature, the prophets, and the law. Yet, studies on these books could help address contemporary issues and some could be a good starting point for non-Christians. We need to incorporate these texts more strongly in our IFES training events as well as develop material on them.

- **Engaging with the World's Needs and Issues**
  Frequently, Scripture is only read with regard to one's own personal life and perceived needs. Students often struggle to see the relevance of Scripture for their studies or socio-political context. We want students to interpret as well as live everything according to a biblical worldview. How can we help them see the incredibly broad relevance of Scripture?

Will students look forward to engaging with Scripture as much as they look forward to going out with friends?

How would you describe the attitude of Christian students to the Bible in your context? What is your own attitude?

What helps you nurture joy and wonder at the gift of Scripture?

- **Evangelistic Bible Study**
  This is not something new to IFES, yet it is one of the weaker areas of Scripture engagement. It is more comfortable and feels safer to meet only with Christians in order to read the Bible. Too easily we forget that God's Word has a saving purpose. Many stories around the IFES world testify to students meeting Christ in the gospel stories. We need to continue motivating and training Christian students to read the Bible with their non-Christian friends.

- **Creative approaches**
  This generation learns through more means than text on paper. It is important to find ways of capturing their heart and imagination. This can happen through creative approaches such as oral story-telling, experiential learning, music, performing arts, visual arts, composing poetry or songs. Many students around the world are at home in the digital world and spend much time using new media. We need to take this into account in Scripture engagement as well.

Some Approaches to Small Group Bible Study

Creative Interaction with the Text

1 Character Identification

This approach is especially suitable when studying narratives. The Bible study group divides into as many subgroups as there are major characters or groups in the story being studied. (A subgroup can consist of only one person.) For example, in Luke 7:36-50, the characters would be Simon, the sinful woman, Jesus, and the other guests.

Character Interview Each subgroup/individual studies their character and imagines how this character experienced the event. After a time of reflection/discussion in the subgroups, a representative of each character gives a very brief report about his/her experience of the story speaking as if he/she were this character. This means that they speak using "I…" or "We…"-language. After each report, other group members can address questions to this character. It is important to emphasise that the questions must be related to the passage.

Footsteps Each person cuts out a pair of footprints using their own feet to make them. On these footprints, they write the name of one character/group in the story. All main characters of the story should be represented by at least one person. The leader explains where the different geographical locations of the story are located in the room. The biblical narrative is read out loud. After each section/verse, the group members place their footprints where they think they now belong. A newspaper reporter goes around and asks (some of) the group members why they are in that location and what they are just experiencing. The reading of the narrative continues. Afterwards, the group can talk about what they observed and what they think is central to this story.

Journal Writing Each group member writes a paragraph in their journal as if they were one of the characters in the narrative. It is good to make sure that all main characters of the story are represented by someone. These short journal entries are shared with the whole group. (Instead of a journal entry, the group members could write a blog post or an email to a friend about their experience, based on the biblical passage.)

Character identification (and the use of imagination which goes with it) helps group members to observe carefully and to enter into Scripture narratives to get drawn into the story. Group members start to see what the Biblical characters saw and to feel what they felt. Identification can also help group members grasp that the stories in the Bible really happened and involved real people.

When using this approach, the small group Bible study leader might need to add two to three good questions which help the group deepen and summarise their understanding of and response to the Scripture narrative.

2 Acting Out a Passage

Integrity when no one is looking

Divide your group into two subgroups (if the group is not big enough for two subgroups, you can work on one passage all together). One subgroup studies Genesis 39:1-23 (on Joseph), the other group studies 2 Samuel 9:1-13 (on David). Come together and act out the stories. In closing, lead a brief discussion on the question: *What have we learnt from these two stories about integrity in leadership when no one is looking?*

While listening, the group members ask themselves: What did I not hear? What did I hear differently than it is in the passage? Why is that so? The group shares their answers.

The Mark Drama

For the Mark Drama, you don't need props, costumes or professionals. But you can present every incident of Mark's Gospel vividly and powerfully to a group of invited guests. It is an amazing experience for Christians, reminding them of the work of Jesus, and it's also great for anyone investigating the Christian faith.

The Mark Drama involves a team of 15 people from your fellowship group who learn the order of the events in Mark's Gospel over six weeks. The performances of the Mark drama are great opportunities to invite friends who are not yet Christians. There are many people who are not ready yet to come to an evangelistic talk, but who will come to a drama event. After the performance, free copies of Mark are available, and perhaps invitations to an investigative Bible study discussion.

For more information on the Mark Drama, go to http://themarkdrama.com/

Detailed/Analytical Study of the Text

Remember, Write, Compare

This method is a lot of fun. The leader mentions a well-known text to the group, for example the parable of the lost coin (Lk. 15:8-10). The group then divides into smaller groups (e.g. three subgroups) and each of these tries to reconstruct the main elements of that text. These groups are not required to arrive at exactly the same words of the Biblical text, but they are expected to include all the major elements without any omissions or additions. Usually each person works by himself, shares the result of his work with his small group, and then the group comes to a common agreement of their reconstructed text.

Each group writes its text on a large piece of paper and these are posted on the wall. The original Biblical text is also written on a large piece of paper and put alongside the "reconstructions" to see what the various groups have omitted or added. This often results in lively interaction as people find themselves quite surprised at what they forgot and what they added! The leader then leads the group in a discussion as to the possible reasons for having omitted or added certain ideas to the text.

This method works best with well-known passages which people do not usually memorise. It will not work when people are unfamiliar with the Bible or have memorised the passage.

Variation: The Scripture passage is read out loud once, clearly and slowly. Everyone is asked to listen carefully. After that, each person makes notes to the following questions: *What do I remember? What stood out for me? Which images came to my mind as I listened?*

The group members share what they wrote down. Then the passage is read again. While listening, the group members ask themselves: *What did I not hear? What did I hear differently than it is in the passage? Why is that so?* The group shares their answers. This method helps group members to listen well. It can also help well-known texts come alive again.

Building Bridges Between Scripture and Life

God's Word interprets and transforms the reality we live in today. Yet, many students struggle to see how Scripture relates to life – as a result, their motivation to engage with Scripture is not strong. How can we help them see the relevance of God's Word for all of life? What follows are some methods which can specifically help to build such bridges.

Real Encounters and Practical Activities

Linking Bible studies to real encounters and practical activities can help us connect God's Word deeply to our reality today.

Some examples:

Genesis 1-3 As a group, go and visit a home for severely disabled people and spend time talking with them about their life (or invite disabled people you know into your group). Alternatively, go and visit a refugee camp or slum. Then, in your Bible study, talk about the dignity and value of every human being because they are made in the image of God. Talk about what sin does to human beings and their relationships.

1 Timothy 2:1-15 After studying the passage, encourage group members to go to people who hold responsible positions (at their university, in their housing units, in their city) and ask them what their concerns are – and tell them that they are asking this so that they can pray for them. Take time to pray for these concerns in the following group Bible studies.

Deuteronomy 10:12-22 Before studying this passage, ask the group members to talk with at least one international student at their university and hear their story, their struggles. During the Bible study, think about how you as a group can extend hospitality and love to the international students living in your midst.

Isaiah 45:1-13 (or another passage on the sovereignty of God) Before studying the passage, ask group members to go and talk with students (or teachers) of another religious belief about how they understand the sovereignty of God. In the subsequent Bible study, talk about how their understanding of God's sovereignty is different from a Biblical perspective on God's sovereignty.

Reflective Approaches and Elements

These reflective approaches and elements can help group members internalize what they are hearing – to take it in at a deeper level, to treasure it up in their hearts – so that their beliefs become heart convictions. We want students to remember God's Word and be shaped by it long after the Bible study is over.

These reflective approaches and elements can also help us to interact not primarily with words on paper, but with the living God. In every Bible study, we want to be responding to God's Word.

If this is what God is saying to us, what do we say back to Him? What is our appropriate response?

Writing a Response to Scripture

Writing a response to Scripture is another way of helping group members internalise and respond to what they are hearing from God's Word. Writing helps to sort one's thoughts, be concrete, and remember.

A few examples:

- write a prayer or song in response to Scripture. This can be done individually and then shared in the small group by those who want to. It can be done collectively, for example, by taking a key statement from the Bible passage and asking everyone to write a line of prayer in response. These can then be prayed out loud with the key Bible statement being prayed or read in between together as a refrain. For example, *Jesus, you are the bread of life* (Jn. 6:35).

- write a SMS to someone who is not at the Bible study, sharing one central thought with them.

- write out a key verse from the passage. Encourage group members to memorise the key verse they have written out. Depending on the content, group members might want to re-write a key verse and insert their own name.

- help group members summarise how this Bible study was meaningful to them. This could be done by asking questions like: *How did God meet you? What verse/phrase was most important for you? How might this shape the rest of your week?* Give group members time to reflect and write down their thoughts.

The passage being studied must be allowed to set the agenda. Some passages speak very personally to believers, others address societal issues. Some passages call us to wonder at who God is and respond with worship while other passages call us to take action in our lives.

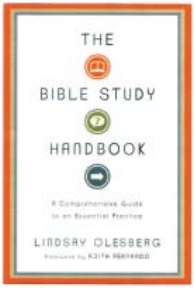
When preparing a Bible study, we need to be asking: *What kind of a response does this passage call for - thanksgiving, praise, confession, reconciliation, trust, an action of some kind, etc.? And: How can we help group members respond to God's Word?*

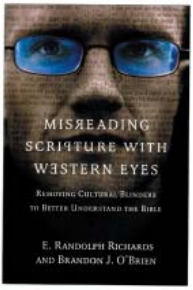
As we ask these questions, it is good to be aware of the fact that one Bible passage can lead to a number of different responses. We need to leave room for the Holy Spirit to speak to group members as He chooses to. As we pray and think about how we can help group members respond to God's Word, let us expect the Holy Spirit to be at work in our small group Bible studies!

Let us come to Scripture in the awareness that it is not so much we who read and interpret God's Word, but God's Word which reads and interprets us.

The above articles are from:

- *The Challenge of Scripture Engagement*, Sabine Kalthoff, 2010
- *Some Methods/Elements of Small Group Bible Study* (compiled by Sabine Kalthoff)





For Further Reading

The Bible Study Handbook
A Comprehensive Guide to an Essential Practice
By Lindsay Olesberg
(IVP 2012)

Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes
Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible
By E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien
(IVP 2012)

Go to http://www.ivpress.com/ for more information on these titles.

PIE Programme

As part of our emphasis on missions, FES offers a PIE (Polytechnic Inter-cultural Exposure) programme to expose students from our polytechnic CFs to missions and inter-cultural issues related to missions. Before going on the cultural exposure trip, the students are given training that includes an overview of the Bible, experiential learning in contextualisation and reaching another culture including the marginalised. During the March to April vacation period, two teams of students went to Cambodia and Thailand as part of the programme. Below are some reflections on their experiences there.

Cambodia Reflections

Our team consisting of Shermine Lim, from Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Joshua Wong, Janelle Chan and Glenn Gn, all from Singapore Polytechnic and our staffworker Kevin Chia went to Cambodia for our exposure trip, which was planned in partnership with OMF Cambodia.

The team [from left: Glenn, Joshua, Janelle, Shermine and Kevin (standing behind)] with the villagers at the place where we built a pavement around the well

In Cambodia, we had the opportunity to take part in new and eye-opening cultural experiences, which greatly broadened our mindset of that country. The first part of our exposure programme was spent at a Khmer Homestay in the Baray district. Throughout our time there, we observed how the locals live and even had interactive sharing and teaching sessions with the local students there.

The mural that we painted: Noah's Ark

During the Homestay, we visited the churches there, built a well pavement for a family in the village, painted the exterior of three classrooms and a mural for a kindergarten, and also organised games for the children. We taught some of the youths English through songs and had a mobile library reading session too!

Staying with the locals also gave us an opportunity to spontaneously come up with ideas. One day, we made an impromptu decision to bless 30 different families with a bag of food items each. (One bag contained five kilograms of rice, a packet of salt, a bottle of fish sauce and soy sauce). After handing out a bag to a representative of each family, we visited some of the households. Conversations that took place in the houses were mind blowing. I was also impacted by the locals and their way of living.

We headed back to Siem Reap after the Homestay and along the way, held a Sunday School for the children in another village. We played games with them and shared a short Bible story session of Daniel in the lions' den. It was Easter Sunday then, and it was really meaningful to me to be able to just share God's love with the children and to bless them with little snacks (bread and milk) for their "snack" time. I will never forget the satisfied and contented looks on the children's faces as they munched on the bread and milk. At Siem Reap we helped out in an English Camp, jointly organised by FES Cambodia and the iTeams (International Teams – a missions organisation). As we interacted with the students and listened to their sharing about their families and how they have to both work and study at the same time, it left a deep impression on me.

In Singapore, we are able to receive education as a given right for everyone. On the other hand, the people of Cambodia have to fight for the right to be educated. Back home, some of us choose to work part-time while studying so that we can earn extra pocket money for ourselves to spend. The Cambodian students do not have a choice; they work (often in more than one job) to earn money to provide for their family and to finance their studies. The Christians

Conducting Sunday School with the village children

The team with some of the missionaries and local staff

Shermine with some of the children at the kindergarten where they painted a mural

With the villagers after giving them the bags of food items

in Cambodia are really one of the most respectable Christians I have ever come across. Their ability to just trust God wholeheartedly and know that God is still good in spite of what they are going through is a testament that God is sovereign and faithful to His people. The Cambodian Christians demonstrate how God's love for them is so overwhelming, I could feel how much He cares for them. What I took back from this trip was that no matter where we come from and how our lives are, we are all serving the one true God and that He is real. I am reminded of His goodness and faithfulness through the trip and how deeply He loves each and every one of His children. Indeed, I can say that I am blessed beyond what I deserve.
All the way for Jesus!

Shermine Lim / Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Information Technology, Year 3

The PIE trip to Cambodia was the closest thing to a mission trip that I have ever been on. Needless to say, it was an exceptional experience. My team and I did numerous activities and met many people during the trip, but what that had the greatest impact on me wasn't painting schools, or even teaching the locals. It was talking to the missionaries: learning about their hardships, about their life, about what they had to leave behind. Experiencing a little part of their lives during those few days I was there was a real eye-opener to me. I learned that being a missionary is not only a tough job, but it also takes a great deal of faith and courage to do the work. Going there is just the beginning. It is reaching out to the person that is hard, especially since responses are never guaranteed. Their example was a great encouragement to me and challenges me to have courage to do my part in sharing the Word to people here in Singapore.

Joshua Wong / Singapore Polytechnic, Hotel and Leisure Facilities Management, Year 2

Thailand Reflections

A team consisting of six students, Lydia Lim and Leonard Ong from Singapore Polytechnic; Rachel Leong and Lisbeth Lee from Ngee Ann Polytechnic; and Soh Hui Min and Wong Jian Ann from Temasek Polytechnic together with our staffworker Sherry Hua went to Khon Kaen, North Eastern of Thailand from 12 to 29 March 2013 for an intercultural exposure trip. A Thai Christian Students' (FES equivalent in Thailand) team joined us at Khon Kaen for a Social Awareness Camp. After that we worked together with them to reach out to the children in a village through English lessons and Bible stories. We also helped to construct a new building for a HIV home. After that, we made a cultural exposure trip to Vientiane, Laos for a few days and rounded up our trip with a visit to the student group at Khon Kaen University.

Painting the new building at the HIV home
Rachel, Hui Min, Lydia Lisbeth and Leonard

Village Exposure

We went to a village to stay for three days to teach English to the local children, working together with some of the local staffworkers and students as they shared the gospel with the children after each lesson

In Thailand, if you stay in a residential area, it is customary to contribute to the household chores. We were assigned to do different household duties, which included sweeping and mopping the area, assisting in the cooking, chopping coconut and washing the dogs.

What caught my attention was that the hall of the school we went to help was just an open area with a huge roof above their heads, a stage and some ceiling fans. The students were eager learners, despite the simple 'no frills' physical exterior.

My struggle, and my only one, was lizards. It made me fear using the toilet to shower, to sleep, and almost every other activity I had to do in the main house. But after much encouragement from my team, I mustered the courage, suppressed my fear, and did what I needed to do in the house. I thank God for giving me the courage to step out of my comfort zone.

Lydia and Jian Ann
– Washing plates after a meal

Hui Min's turn to cook ...

Jian Ann at the blackboard

HIV Home Exposure

Initially I was very apprehensive about going to the HIV home to help with the construction work. As I observed the children, and got to know more about their condition and what they have been through, I thank God for showing me, through these children, how to embrace life. They made the best out of what they have. The children were also very caring - they served us drinks and refreshments while we worked on the new building.

Doing the construction work also helped me to appreciate the construction workers in our country. After doing some simple construction tasks and painting for about two days, I was drained out. I used to think that the workers were lazy as they seemed to do their tasks at such a slow pace. I did not imagine that they are actually trying to maintain their stamina so that they can continue working for the rest of the day and the week.

Concluding thoughts

I think my biggest take-away from this trip was seeing how God works in the lives of the people in Thailand and Laos - from the students we taught English to in the village, to the TCS Team (the staffworkers and students). I thank God that I came for this trip and was able to experience many different things which I would not be able to do so in Singapore.

Lastly, I thank God and my team for always being my pillar of support in times of need, in times of joy and laughter and in times of distress.

Wong Jian Ann / Temasek Polytechnic
Law & Management Year 2

The Village Stay was probably my favourite part of the entire PIE trip. There were many new things that I tried - the 'fun' things include washing the dog, cooking and cutting a coconut. I really enjoyed the times when the team worked together to cook and keep the place clean - it really felt like a family.

Chopping Coconut

Lydia. Sherry. Leonard

Amidst all the fun, there were, of course, many struggles as it was a totally new environment for me. I am really afraid of flying bugs, and there were many in the pavilion where we had our daily sharing sessions. I was so impressed with the rest who dared to just catch them using their hands and throw them somewhere else. I couldn't. There were many times I was distracted by these bugs during sharing, hoping that they will not come near me. There were also the lizards and frogs in the toilet that really scared me.

Stepping out of my comfort zone included trying very hard to ignore all the flying bugs in the pavilion while doing our sharing, and also being daring to try out all the new activities, such as finishing cutting a coconut, and bathing a dog which I sort of detested at the beginning, but it turned out really fun.

Teaching the children English was really tiring and difficult. Without the Thai team's help it would have been impossible for me to conduct the lessons. I chose to work with the pre-schoolers but did not imagine that it would be that hard. They were a cute bunch of children of course, but due to their short attention span at their age, it was very challenging to actually teach them. They were able to sing out the alphabets really well, and they recited one to ten fluently, but when it came to identifying the numbers and alphabets, they were not able to do it. On the first day, I prepared the lesson plans but the children did not seem to absorb much. On the second day, we chose to use activities to teach them instead. It was really a much better method as the children could learn and play at the same time, and did not get bored easily. I am really thankful for the team's help in giving me ideas and doing the translation.

Teaching the children

Lydia Lim / Singapore Polytechnic
Integrated Events & Project Management, 2013 graduate

My Five Loaves and Two Fishes 我的五饼二鱼

Combined Chinese Work Polytechnic CF FOC

Praise to the Lord that I had the opportunity to serve Him in the Combined Chinese Work Polytechnic Christian Fellowship (CF) Freshmen Orientation Camp from 3 to 5 April 2013. By God's grace, we had more than 30 sisters- and brothers-in-Christ from different polytechnics joining this camp. The theme of the camp is我的五饼二鱼 (My Five Loaves and Two Fishes) and the five points we covered in the camp are照顾 (To care for one another), 相爱 (To love one another), 督促 (To be accountable to one another), 担当 (To bear one another's burden) and 服事 (To serve one another). We learnt to put these five points into practice and lived them out through games and actions

such as giving out lunch packets to the other campers during meal time.

I was one of the programme coordinators of the camp and I worked together with my partner, Lee Ying, who is from Nanyang Polytechnic. Amazingly, we became good friends after serving together on the camp programme. Coordinating the camp programme was not an easy task as we had to plan the camp activities meticulously and at the same time, take into consideration the campers' needs amongst many other factors. On the second day, our original plan for the main game was hindered due to the weather. Initially we felt lost as to how to carry on but thankfully, the campers were very patient and did not give us any pressure. Without the love and tolerance from them, this camp would not have been as wonderful.

5 Loaves and 2 Fishes.

One thing that made me pleasantly surprised was that at night, although it was lights off, the campers continued to gather around to enjoy a time of fellowship with each other. I was glad that the campers were willing to step out of their comfort zone to have fun together even though the amount of time they had to know each other was rather brief.

As I recount how God led me from entering CF to serving Him, my heart is filled with gratitude. God has worked in amazing ways to bring me, an introvert, into CF and helped me feel at home. I am filled with joy and thanksgiving for what God has blessed me with. God's grace is certainly bountiful and it is more than sufficient for us.

May peace be with you.

Fong Qi Hua / Ngee Ann Polytechnic
Product Design and Innovation Year 3

VCF FOC 2013

Unified

"It seemed as if God took all our plans, overturned it, then turned it right back up again," shared one of the committee members during the post-camp meeting.

That probably adequately describes the whole process: from planning the camp four months prior, to the massive overhaul of plans just four days before the camp because of the haze, to the miraculous clear skies and healthy PSI levels throughout the camp. It was only by God's goodness (through the kindness of many individuals, no less), and by a huge test of faith, that NUS VCF Freshmen Orientation Camp (FOC) 2013 could even have materialised.

The camp took place from 25 – 28 June at St Andrews Village, with close to 150 campers made up of nearly an equal number of freshmen and seniors. The turnout was a prayer answered, and came much to the surprise of the committee; there were only 30 seniors and 4 freshmen who signed up just a month before the camp. The location, too, was a blessing, with weather-proof alternatives readily sponsored, and the management's kind concessions in allowing us to use the air-conditioned halls as bunks to allay fears of unhealthy PSI levels.

Rev. Anthony Lee from Ang Mo Kio Methodist Church spoke on the theme Unified which was based on Ephesians 4:13 "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." The camp programme included various workshops on topics relevant to university students such as *God-like Grades, The Secular Gospel, Protestantism and Catholicism, Law by Law* and *Biblical Romance*.

The theme *Unified* was also embodied in the icebreakers, where campers were asked to share their favourite worship song. While this activity highlighted the differences in worship practices, it emphasised the beauty of it all – that we still worship and serve the same majestic God. Who would have guessed that a plain activity of believers from different denominations joining their voices in praise would have allowed one freshman to share that it gave her a "glimpse of heaven"? Her story is a testimony of how God spoke to her and refreshed her perspective on what a Christian community should be like, renewing and rejuvenating her passion for Christ.

Anna (sixth from left) with fellow FOC planning committee members

The final cross at the end of the Cross hatching game

One of the workshops

A station at VCF Voyage

Worship Time

God also revealed His sovereignty in how He saw us through the many other activities, in particular the *VCF Voyage*. It was clear that God was the one who smoothed the road, cooled the weather and led the various station masters. It was a relaxed yet thought-provoking trail that showcased the different aspects of VCF – from standing committees such as *International Friendship Group* to the foundations of VCF like *Contact Group*, seniors shared about issues that Christians on campus face, and challenged both freshmen and seniors alike to be a unified Christian presence on campus.

Likewise, the final mass game, *Cross-hatching*, was adequately engaging and enriching, in spite of early fears of the haze as well as dry-runs that proved the game unsuccessful. It was a heartening sight at the end of the mass game, when the teams congregated to use the recycled materials they 'purchased' to build the largest cross, a lesson in unity.

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Indeed, He has proven that in spite of human inadequacies and wrestles to regain control, nothing is too hard for Him; He can make the best out of fallible human plans, and ultimately, His ways are higher than ours and His thoughts higher than ours.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade.

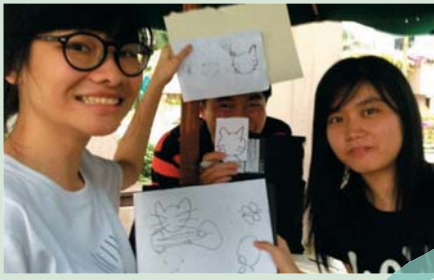
To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

Anna Dorcas Lee / NUS, Law Year 2

For further reading: www.facebook.com/vcffocfreshperspectives was an anonymous online platform set up for campers to share their thoughts and testimonies throughout the camp.The page is still active with new testimonies updated periodically.

SKETCH BBQ

After all the hectic days and stressful weeks of exams and assignments, the semester finally came to an end for NAFA (Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts) and LASALLE College of the Arts. SKETCH (the Indonesian Students' CF comprising students from NAFA and LASALLE) held our first BBQ gathering on 10 May to celebrate our freedom from deadlines!



We gathered at the BBQ pit at the residence of one of our students and prepared the food. We also had a few rounds of ice breaking games. However it started to rain but we did not mind getting wet as long as we could keep playing! The highlight of the event was the pass-the-drawing game that required us to draw the flashed word, pass our drawing to the next person, draw within the count of seconds, and have the last person to guess the word. The game was really fun and hyped us up while we waited for the coals to burn.

We thank God that the rain stopped at the right time when the BBQ pit was heated up and ready for us to cook the food! We are also grateful to Inigo and our staffworker Victor for helping us to get the fire started; and Joanna and Amel for preparing the awesome food for us. Last but not least, we are grateful to everyone who came and shared in the superb evening of fellowship. An added bonus was meeting some new faces as well! We are glad to be able to share God's blessing with them and we hope to continue to be a blessing to other students through SKETCH.

Feliana Sutanto / NAFA, Illustration Design, Year 3

1

FES NATIONAL STUDENT COUNCIL

FES National Student Council

The FES National Student Council (NSC), comprising the Chairpersons of all the FES affiliated student fellowships, inclusive of the English, Chinese and Indonesian sections, was formed in May 2013. The purpose of the NSC is to facilitate sharing of information and resources, and to encourage greater ownership amongst our student groups for student ministry both on their respective campuses and across campuses in Singapore. Zeng Hanyi, the newly elected Chairman of the NSC shares some thoughts on the two NSC meetings held so far.

Photographs
1 The Inaugural FES NSC
2 Hanyi, in white polo shirt, with fellow CF Chairpersons at the second NSC meeting

It was noon time and I left a morning meeting early to attend the NSC. Naturally, I was looking forward to a sumptuous lunch spread to be provided for by FES. But General Secretary Lisman was not in a generous mood. We students needed to take action, and fast.

At our first meeting on 18 May 2013, all the Chairpersons of the 21 fellowships affiliated to FES came together to form the inaugural NSC. At the second meeting, we were to further conceptualise the vision, role and function of the NSC.

Food or not, students on a mission can be a sight to behold. We had a fruitful discussion on how NSC can be a place of mutual support and spurring on to greater witness for Christ. I was also soon appointed as Chairperson of NSC by a rather scary mass pointing of fingers. We also selected an executive committee of the NSC.

But more than the plans and deliberations made, my hope is that NSC will inspire us all to hunger to know God more, and to make God known on campus and in society. NSC is ground-breaking within FES. With students leading students at this level, in partnership with the staffworkers, there is a reinvigorating sense of responsibility and possibility.

I came hungry for food, but left with a much different sort of hunger. I pray Christ will continue to lead this ministry, in love and humility, vision and truth.

2

Zeng Hanyi / VCF Chair, FES NSC Chair 2013-2014 / NUS Law, Year 4

Photograph
The panel (from left to right): Rev. Joshua Sudharman, Ms Noelle Selvadurai, Mrs Lucy Toh, Mr Ng Tiong Nam and Dr Ng Pak Tee

Who Do We Worship?

The annual **Teachers Dedication Service**, co-organised by the Teachers Christian Fellowship (TCF), NIE Christian Fellowship (NIE CF) and Fellowship of Evangelical Students (FES) was held on 1 June 2013 at St Andrew's Secondary School. The theme of this year's event *Who Do We Worship?* was intended to examine the issue of idolatry in the teaching profession. The call to teach is often regarded as a noble one and therefore, good. This, however, may not always be so.

The panel, chaired by Mrs Lucy Toh (Principal, St Andrew's Secondary School), comprised speakers from the educational sector who spoke about the different idols that manifest themselves in the teaching profession. Some of the main points from their sharing have been summarised in the following sections.

Education does not eradicate sin, God does

Dr Ng Pak Tee (Head, Policy and Leadership Studies Academic Group, Associate Dean, National Institute of Education) touched on the importance of education and the great extent to which good education can be used to serve God and society. He, however, also cautioned us against thinking that education alone can remedy all societal ills and bring about utopia on this earth. History has shown that better educated nations and individuals are equally capable of causing massive destruction to our world. Our own experiences in the Christian community should similarly remind us that sin continues to manifests itself in the lives of even those who are part of the elect. Education, while good, must not be mistaken to be the cure for sin. Only God can provide that.

Education, while good, must not be mistaken to be the cure for sin. Only God can provide that.

Key Performance Index or Kingdom Praise Index?

Mr Ng Tiong Nam (Principal, Hougang Secondary School) shared his thoughts on the idolatrous hold that the Key Performance Index (KPI) has on teachers and his own struggle, in his younger days, when he was encouraged to pursue innovation awards. It often left him wondering if what he did was aligned with his beliefs as a Christian. Ultimately, we must seek the praise of Him who is the rightful owner of all in the universe and who is the eventual Judge of all

that we have been entrusted to do. This ought to lead to a re-evaluation of what KPI could possibly mean. For Mr Ng, he chose to rename it, *Kingdom Praise Index*. This reminds him that all targets that have been set for the school must in some way, be oriented towards kingdom-centred goals, motivated by genuine love and concern for students' welfare and not merely pursuing targets for its own sake.

Not Superman, but only human

Addressing the tendency for teachers to adopt a superhuman complex, Ms Noelle Selvadurai (Head of Department of Character and Citizenship Development, ACS [Junior School]) reminded us that God's grace is indeed made perfect in our weaknesses (2 Cor. 12:9). We need not and should not imagine that as teachers, we can meet every need, reach every student, rectify every problem,teach every kind of student, adapt to every learning style or be present in every situation. We are to only faithfully give our best (Col. 3:23) and be a wise steward over all that we have been entrusted with (Lk. 10:11–27), remembering that the battle is ultimately the Lord's, not ours. Failing to recognise and humbly accept the sovereign workings of God and our finitude as humans only causes teaching to become idolatrous and painfully burdensome, attempting to accomplish things we were never meant to accomplish. Only God is and can be 'Superman' and we would be better off realising that.

Remembering your most important love

Rev. Joshua Sudharman (Vicar, St. John's – St. Margaret's Church) referred us to Revelation 2:1-7 where the Church of Ephesus was praised for a whole list of virtues – good deeds, hard work, hated evil, tested and exposed false apostles, persevered, endured hardship and not grown weary – but which had in fact forgotten its first love (in terms of priority, rather than chronology) and was therefore in danger of having its lamp stand removed. The Christians in Ephesus were said to have fallen from great heights and badly needed to repent and do the things they originally did (Rev. 2:4). The same could be said of Christian teachers, who while doing many good things that are praise-worthy, are themselves in danger of forgetting the very reason for their work – God and the genuine, self-emptying love that comes only from Him.

We are to only faithfully give our best and be a wise steward over all that we have been entrusted with remembering that the battle is ultimately the Lord's, not ours.

At the end of the session, Kenan Kok, a new teacher at St Margaret's Secondary School, led us in the Teacher's Pledge. The closing hymn, *One Pure and Holy Passion,* exhorts us to know and follow hard after our Lord Jesus (c.f. Ps. 63:8), even in the noble work of teaching that can also easily turn one's eyes away from Him.

Dennis Lin / a former VCFer and NIE CFer, is a secondary school teacher at ACS Barker Road

How does the Mission of God shape the way we navigate in "secular space" amidst deep resistance & antagonism?

The Mission of God & the Task of the Church

What is the "Mission of God"

Wednesday **25** & **26** Thursday

Sept 2013

with *Dr Chris Wright*

What does Jubilee really mean & signify sociologically?

Evening Talks

God who Reaches Out: Transforming Our Way of Living

Talk 1: Wednesday **25 Sept 2013**

Is the Story of God really for everyone?

Throughout Scripture our God reaches out and He has called His people to do likewise. Is this call also for all of us now? How is it reflected in our everyday life? How should the understanding of our Missional God transform the task of the whole Church today?

Talk 2: Thursday **26 Sept 2013**

What does living a holy life have anything to do with our God who reaches out?

How does a missional reading of Scripture show us the above connection? What are some particular concerns of our Missional God for ethical and holy living ? How do we bring the Biblical narrative of our God who reaches out to the foreground even as we seek to live ethically?

7.00 - 9.30PM • The New Sanctuary, St Andrew's Cathedral

Theological Consultation

The Theology of Jubilee: Theological & Sociological Perspective

Wednesday **25 Sept 2013**

In the Old Testament the Jubilee year had a significant role and impact on the Israelites as well as the foreigners residing among them. What does Jubilee really mean and signify sociologically and theologically? How does the principle of Jubilee in the Old Testament bring relevance to our current context?

2.30 - 5.00PM • Prayer Halls A-C, St Andrew's Cathedral

Missions Consultation

Salvation Belongs to Our God

Thursday **26 Sept 2013**

In a pluralistic society it could be a challenge to claim that "salvation belongs to our God". What is the Bible's teaching on 'salvation'? What is 'salvation' from the perspective of "mission to all nation/creation"?

2.30 - 5.00PM • Prayer Halls A-C, St Andrew's Cathedral

Rev. Dr Christopher J.H. Wright is International Director of the Langham Partnership International. He also chairs the Lausanne Committee's Theology Working Group and the Theological Resource Panel of TEAR Fund. He has written several books including *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, *The Mission of God* and *The Mission of God's People*.

Respondents:

Theological Consultation

Dr Philip E. Satterthwaite
Principal and Lecturer in Old Testament, Biblical Hebrew & Hermeneutics
Biblical Graduate School of Theology

Dr Tan Loe Joo
Lecturer in Systematic Theology
Trinity Theological College

Missions Consultation

Rev. Christopher Chia
Senior Pastor
Adam Road Presbyterian Church

Mr Daniel Wong
National Director
OMF Singapore

* Registration link:
www.fessingapore.org/chriswrightevent

Enquiries: event@fessingapore.org

This event is jointly organised by **FES and OMF Singapore.**

http://fessingapore.org/
http://www.omf.org/singapore

FES OMF SINGAPORE

IFES

To all students, graduates and friends of FES
who have a passion for **STUDENT MINISTRY**

FES Singapore will be celebrating **WORLD STUDENT DAY** on

DATE	**15 October** (Tuesday / Public Holiday)
TIME	**10.30 am**
VENUE	to be confirmed

Let us come together to witness and pray for God's work on our campuses and around the world.

More information will be available through your CF and the FES website at a later date.

This event is organised by the FES National Student Council

WHAT IS WORLD STUDENT DAY?

World Student Day is an annual celebration of all that God is doing, through IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students) amongst students around the world. On World Student Day we pray for one another and for specific situations facing students around the world.

pioneering ministry

JCUS CF

James Cook University (Singapore) Christian Fellowship (JCUS-CF) started off with just a couple of Christian students wanting to come together to fellowship. Initially, when I entered JCUS and found out that it did not have a CF, I felt burdened to do something about it. Before I knew it, with the help of the FES staffworkers and a few others, JCUS-CF came into being.

In all honesty, being the chairperson was not something that I was very fond of, as some CF chairpersons can attest to the burden it weighs upon your shoulders. This is particularly so for a pioneering ministry, where the probability of the CF not surviving upon the graduation of the founding members is highly plausible.

Christ be glorified on campus

JCUS-CF has now about 20 regular attendees, and we conduct small group Bible Studies during our weekly fellowship. I thank God for friends who form the core committee of JCUS-CF, whose dedication to the CF and heart for this ministry cannot be put into words. We are particularly encouraged by how, despite the impossibilities and constraints that are placed before us because of the school system, we find ourselves growing in faith and are blessed when members share their joy in attending CF. In this manner, the focus of JCUS-CF at the moment is to build a stable body of Christians in JCU and that Christ be glorified on campus.

Challenges faced

I guess the most pervasive issues faced by student ministries are the need to attract new students to join the CF, as well as to encourage them to eventually step up and serve within the CF. There is a need to show these students the beauty of an interdenominational student ministry on campus. JCUS-CF is no different in that aspect. Unique to JCU is the jam-packed lessons that could possibly start at 9 a.m. and end at 10 p.m., and thus it is hard to find a common slot for most students to gather. In fact, most seniors plan their timetables around CF events!

An outing to Legoland in February 2013

James Cook University (Singapore) Christian Fellowship

Prayer Points

JCUS-CF has seen two staffworkers go, first Stephen and then May Lan (who will be on sabbatical leave), which was hard for a pioneering ministry. Pray ts wisdom to Kevin Chia as he takes over as the staffworker for JCUS-CF.

Pray for God's will as JCUS-CF plans for events in JCU. Pray that God will grant the leaders wisdom and grace to be able to show the love of Christ in all that they do.

Pray for new people to join the CF every trimester. New members are infrequent and most students do not want to waste their time in Clubs and Societies because of their already packed schedule. Pray that new students will see it as a calling to step into a school ministry, as well as to serve in one.

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, ..
– Colossians 4:2,3

Samuel Ng Yong Ern / JCUS-CF Chair / Psychology Year 3

Some of the CFers at last year's FES National Conference. Samuel is seated second from right. To his right is May Lan, their staffworker.

At one of our CF meetings

Polytechnic Ministry (English Section)

The **Polytechnic Christian Fellowship (PCF**) at Singapore Polytechnic, **Ngee Ann Polytechnic Christian Fellowship (NPCF)** and **Students' Christian Fellowship Temasek Polytechnic (SCF-TP)** hold weekly CF meetings at their respective campuses. As each group is relatively small, efforts are made to share resources like using common Bible study materials, holding combined events like camps and training sessions.

A CF meeting can take the form of a Bible study, a talk on a particular topic, sports or games, praise and worship or special projects to benefit the campus community.

All the CFs face the problem of having members who can be committed to meet regularly. This could partly be due to study workload or clashes with other activities the students may have. As a result it is hard to build a good foundation and a sense of belonging to the CF.

Prayer Points

Brothers and sisters, pray for us. – 1 Thess. 5:25

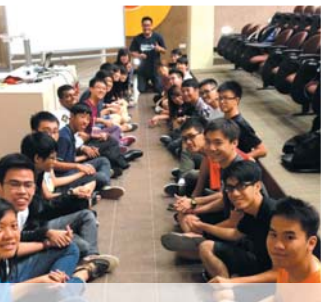
PCF

Praise God that our CF booth was located in the main area during the CCA (Co-Curricular Activity) recruitment last term. This gave us more opportunities to share about the CF to the first year students. We thank God for the first years who have joined the CF.

PCF Subcommittee: back row, left to right: Sherry (staffworker), Isaac, Kevin (staffworker); front row, left to right: Cavin, Samuel, Tricia, Nicole and Claire

About 30 students meet every Tuesday for our CF meeting. Pray that we will have a constant number of CFers to come regularly and that bonds can be built amongst the CFers.

Pray for the CF leaders to be able to manage their CF commitments, studies and other school responsibilities.



Pray that the subcommittees will be able to work efficiently together with our staffworkers to provide a good programme for the CF.

Claire Tan / PCF Chair / Business Administration, Year 3

NPCF 2013

Polytechnic Christian Fellowship

Photo Below: NPCF Subcommittee, from left to right: Kevin (staffworker), Abel, Sherry (staffworker), Jermayne, Sarah and Rachel

NPCF

We thank God for the 50 people who have been coming to our CF meetings. Pray for the first year students to have a sense of belonging to the CF.

Our theme for this academic year is to be a community of Christians as described in Acts 2 - a community that edifies and encourages one another; is outward looking and has a burden to share our faith with people on campus and in society. Pray for us as we work towards fulfilling this theme.

Most of the CF leaders will be graduating at the end of this academic year. Pray for God to raise passionate and dedicated leaders who can serve in the CF next year.

Pray that God remains the central motivation for all the CF activities.

Abel Wong / NPCF Chair / Banking & Finance, Year 3

Photo Below: SCF-TP subcommittee: from left to right: Pamela, Eunice, Alcina, Jian Ann and Sherry (staffworker)

SCF-TP

The emphasis of our CF for this semester is to strengthen the bonds within the CF. Pray for God to guide us as we work on this area.

share resources

Pray for the survival of the CF. About 12 of us are meeting regularly now. Pray for more students, especially the first years, to be committed to attend.

Pray for the spiritual growth of the CFers, that they may be encouraged and strengthened by God's Word.

Wong Jian Ann / SCF-TP Chair / Law & Management, Year 2

NTU CCF

The Nanyang Technological University Christian Fellowship (NTU CF) has an English, Chinese and Indonesian section to minister to the different needs of each group of students. The Chinese section is known as **NTU Chinese CF (NTU CCF)**. NTU CCF has about 30 members who meet regularly for their large group Fellowship Meeting and small/cell group Bible Study.

Thanksgiving

Let us give thanks to the Lord. Thank Him for His guidance through another academic year. Thank Him for delivering us through trials, and thank Him that we can serve our Lord in the NTU campus.

We met several challenges in school; one of them is the dwindling number of members who are willing to serve in the committee. In fact, we only managed to fill six positions out of seven in our recent elections. Yet, God guided us through our deliberations and showed us how the six of us can share the load together.

We were reminded from James chapters 3 and 4 that sinful desires, worldly passions and attacks from the devil often cause our Christian life to fall apart. To resist these pressures, we need to submit to God, have a strong foundation in His Word and strive to live out the truth every moment.

A Truth Driven Life

In the upcoming academic year, our theme will be "A Truth Driven Life". The first step is to encourage the building of a relationship with God through prayer and the Bible study. Then we will strive to support each other to live out the truth by building a family of love through care ministries, passing on the passion through discipleship and humbling ourselves before God through worship.

What an ambitious attempt! Indeed, this goal might sound too broad and too high. However, let's remember that God is the one who really changes us. With His guidance and moulding, we can change.

God is the one who really changes us

Celebrating Mid-Autumn Festival with CFers and friends. Lai Sze Khiong, their staffworker, is at the back row third from left.

NTU Chinese Christian Fellowship

Prayer Points

Pray that we can find a balance as we consider the different areas of our life - campus ministry, service in church, studies, family, friends and other commitments. In all that we do, may we glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Pray for a united CF to build on the foundation of Truth and Love.

Pray for the Chinese-speaking community in NTU that God will lead them into salvation. Pray that God will give us wisdom, courage and love to reach out to them.

Pray that we will stay focused on God, no matter what may come our way.

Ezekiel Lim Yang Jun / NTU CCF Chair / Chemistry and Biological Chemistry, Year 3

You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

– 2 Corinthians 1:11

Photo Below: At our first 2013-2014 Exco meeting (from left to right): Hai Wan, Yang Jun, Benjamin, Ye Wei, Dong Li and Kok Hui

Fellowship over food after an Awareness Talk

NUS ISCF Annual Camp 2013

salt and light in the world

NUS ISCF

NUS ISCF (Indonesian Students' Christian Fellowship) is part of the Varsity Christian Fellowship (VCF) at NUS. Our CF consists of Indonesian students at NUS and has a current membership of 54, excluding the graduating seniors.

Our regular activities include a weekly big group fellowship meeting on Friday evening, cell group meetings, and an annual camp. As we do not have faculty and hall-based cell groups, each cell group, of about three to four members, would usually have people coming from different backgrounds.The general direction of NUS ISCF for the coming academic year is to know God deeper and to empower the members to have greater care for one another. This was also emphasised at our annual camp, held from 13 to 16 May 2013, which had the theme *Knowing God Day by Day*. We want to see the members living the Word in their daily life, and in doing so growing to be more like Christ.

know God deeper

We are grateful for the people that God has provided to be in the Exco. However, we are met with new challenges for the coming year: we are short of manpower and consequently we do not have a mission division coordinator. This was quite discouraging for us because we desire to empower our members to be salt and light in the world. In the end, we decided to have the Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer to oversee this division. However, we put our faith in God and believe that He will guide us through this situation.

Prayer Points

In conclusion, please pray for us about the following:
Thank God for:

- His guidance through the previous years
- our recent annual general meeting and the formation of the new Exco; and
- for all the smiles and the cries that have made us grow through the years.

Pray that God will provide the strength for us to go through the coming year and to be salt and light on campus even though we do not have a specific person in charge of the mission division this year.

Pray to God to grant us wisdom to embrace and engage the incoming freshmen and for our *Welcome Tea* event, so that we can share the joy of knowing Christ through our fellowship with them.

Pray that we will all embrace the new academic year with a renewed spirit.

Stephen Haniel Yuwono / NUS ISCF Chair / NUS, Chemistry, Year 3

Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His presence continually!
– 1 Chronicles 16:11

NUS ISCF Exco 2012-2013. Stephen is seated in the middle and wearing a black 'Oakley' T-shirt. Their staffworker Adrian Nugroho, is at the back row, far left.

Crossroads & Crucibles

About 27 staff from various East Asia movements gathered for the **IFES East Asia Intermediate Staff Training (IST)** in Hong Kong from 20 to 25 May. The theme for this training was *Crossroads & Crucibles* the idea being that intermediate staff are now at a crossroads in life and service, and they face crucibles (tests and trials) that shape and groom them as they decide which path they may take. FES Singapore staffworkers Jeremiah Goh and Lim Chee Tat, who attended the IST, provide a snapshot of their experience at IST.

Photographs
1 Staff from various East Asia movements in a session during the IST
2 Jeremiah (left) & Chee Tat

What strikes me most from the training is how we experience God. In the Life Unfolding session (a time of guided reflection), the trainer encouraged us to dwell in God's presence. As someone who believes that having theologically correct views is essential, feeling the presence of God through a more emotional approach is rather unfamiliar to me. The trainer challenged us to examine ourselves as to how much we know and experience God. How much time do we spend in meeting with God? Are we keen in doing so? How much do we love God? Are we paying heed to the voice of God? Do we long for life transformation from God? This session reminded me to set my priorities right, especially in the midst of a busy schedule, and, 'to live out an authentic self, a self that God designed us to be'.

Another thing that I learnt from this session is to rely entirely on God. The daily ministries I have are not my ministries; strictly speaking, there are not even FES ministries. Everything should be placed in His hand. Although we should play our part, eventually it is God who completes the job. I need to learn to be submissive, humble and listen to what God has to say in our ministries.

Lim Chee Tat / Chee Tat joined FES in September 2009. He works with the Chinese-speaking post-graduate students at NUS and NTU.

The last two Scripture Engagement sessions by Dr Leo Li stuck with me the most up till now. His interpretation of Isaiah 55 and Isaiah 62 as scenes that can take place in the marketplace and marriage certainly sheds light on the Hebrew and Jewish way of thinking and writing. Indeed much prophetic imagery and metaphors are derived from what happens in the marketplace and marriage, and understanding that will help in our interpretation of the Bible.

During one session where we were grouped into our movements, we were asked to reflect and determine if our movement was stagnant, growing, or undergoing renewal and renovation. Most of the movements followed the same path from revival to stagnation and then to renewal and renovation. However, not all the movements are of the same age. It would have been interesting to go deeper into the causes of this growth pattern, considering the social and political climate of each movement, and see if there is a common pattern.

Jeremiah Goh / Jeremiah has been with FES since April 2009. Currently, he is assigned to NTU CF and NIE CF. He is also in charge of developing the FES website.

Visit to KIVF

From 16 May to 4 June, Joyce Sune, FES Staffworker assigned to the Chinese Work ministry, went to Korea for a staff attachment with Korea Inter Varsity Fellowship (KIVF). During her three weeks there, she attended an Evangelistic Bible Study Camp for international students and two summer training camps for student leaders; prepared the weekly prayer newsletter with the KIVF staff; transcribed a video and added Chinese subtitles to the English script; and, had various opportunities to fellowship with the Korean students and staff through Bible study, prayer and outings.

What was the most significant impression that Joyce brought back with her?

"When I stayed together with the staff in their hostel, I was thoroughly impressed by their work attitude and discipline in spite of their heavy workload. They are diligent and passionate in their service. They wake up very early every morning to pray with the students on campus. After a whole day of joining the students in their meetings, they continue to prepare materials or read books before they go to bed. Although they were busy, they still took good care of me and did not even show a trace of impatience. Their warm hospitality really touched me and made me feel at home. After staying with them, their enthusiasm rubbed off on me and I now have greater motivation to continue serving with students in FES Singapore. Their lifestyle also challenged me to be more open to the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of the Spirit in my life, especially the attributes of love, gentleness and self-control."

Joyce (first from left) with KIVF students and staff from the Incheon region

FES Staff Retreat

22 - 26 April

This year's FES staff retreat was held from 22 to 26 April 2013 in Bali, Indonesia. The trip was made possible through the kind donation of a graduate who sponsored the air fares. Former FES General Secretary, Dr Tan Tee Khoon and his wife Lee Peng, led the staff team in a few sessions on conflict management and team building.

welcome new staff

Lin Wei joined FES on 10 June on a part-time basis to support the Communications and Resource ministry. She will be responsible for the creative and design aspects of FES' communications and resource materials, such as the newsletters and promotional materials. A graduate in Fine Arts in Visual Communication from Nanyang Technological University (NTU),

Lin Wei was a member of NTU CF and served as a cell group leader during her student days. Before joining FES, she worked as a designer with a packaging company. Lin Wei worships at Emmanuel Evangelical Free Church and serves as a Sunday School teacher as well as a worship leader.

Photographs
1 On the evening of 16 July, FES together with Prinsep St Presbyterian Church, organised a talk where Prof. Wilkinson spoke on *Hawking, Extra-Terrestrials, and Accelerating Universe – Challenges to the Christian Faith in 21st Century.*
2 Prof. Wilkinson at the meeting with FES staff on 17 July.

1

What has Physics got to do with your Christian Faith?

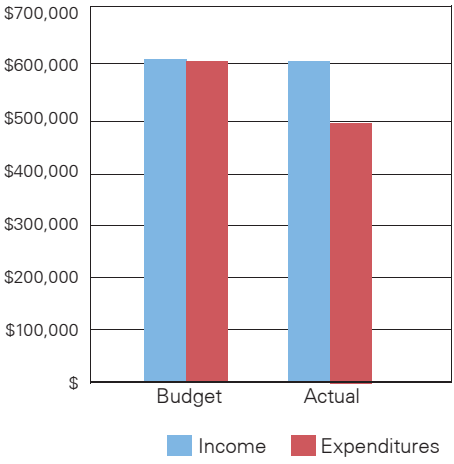
This was the question that was constantly posed to Prof. David Wilkinson by the Christian Union travelling secretary (staffworker) at Durham University during his undergraduate days. Prof. Wilkinson recognises that not all of us have to be experts in our fields of study but we each need to develop our passions and interests under the Lordship of Christ and learn to build bridges of relevance so that people can see the Gospel in their own language.

Prof. David Wilkinson was sharing on the topic *Apologetics in the 21st century* at the FES weekly staff meeting on 17 July. Prof. Wilkinson is an astrophysicist and theologian. He is currently Principal of St John's College, Durham University as well as a Professor in the Department of Theology and Religion.

2

Besides dealing with the connection between our studies and our faith, Prof. Wilkinson also shared on the need for us to have a global perspective as we live in a multi-cultural world. This involves moving out of our cultural perspective to learn and interact with others from a different culture, as well as listening to the questions that they are asking. In our efforts to share our faith, we should consider creative means that stimulate the imagination, like using drama, images, poetry, music and art. However, in all that we do, we need to be mindful not to overload people with theology and lose our humanity in the process.

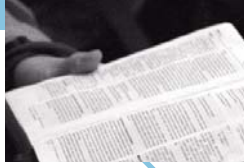
FES Income and Expenditures 2013 (Jan-Jun)



	Budget	Actual
Income	$ 619,768.00	$ 613,067.93
Expenditures	$ 614,007.00	$ 496,835.23
Surplus/(Deficit)	$ 5,761.00	$ 116,232.70

Notes:

- FES, including MCF, experienced a consolidated surplus of $116K
- The first half of this year has been pretty heartening. While the income was as per target, ministry expenditures were well controlled in most of the three sections of FES.



Have You Read Your Bible Today?

Putting the Scripture Back to the Centre of Our Life

Last year, a Christian student (one of the CF regulars in fact) asked one of our staffworkers, "Did the Israelites manage to enter the land of Canaan in the end?" The staffworker was left dumbfounded, though later she found out that the student was not trying to make a joke with that question. *It was a genuine question!*

The fact that the student did not know whether the Israelites entered the Promised Land is the tip of the iceberg of *a worrying trend of Bible illiteracy* among Christians today. As a comparison, in the context of the United States of America, the Barna Group conducted a survey on Bible literacy and reported the following amusing findings:

- Fewer than half of all adults can name the four gospels.
- 60 percent of Americans cannot name even five of the Ten Commandments.
- 82 percent of Americans believe "God helps those who help themselves" is a Bible verse.
- 12 percent of adults believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife.
- A survey of graduating high school seniors revealed that over 50 percent thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife.
- A considerable number of respondents to one poll indicated that Billy Graham preached the Sermon on the Mount.

We can laugh at the above unbelievable results, but in Singapore, we do not fare much better. In his book, *The Enduring Word: The Authority and Reliability of the Bible,* Bishop Emeritus Robert Solomon writes in the introductory section that in a survey done among Singapore Protestant Christians, "only 50 percent said they read the Scripture daily – the quality of which is not known."

What makes it even more worrying is that Bible illiteracy will lead to eventual misconstrued perspectives on the stories, meanings, and significance of God's Word in their lives. True to my concern, from the same survey, Barna also reports that:

- Six out of ten Americans reject the existence of Satan
- Four out of ten Americans believe that when Jesus Christ was on earth He committed sins.
- Five out of ten believe that anyone who is generally good or does enough good things for others during their life will earn a place in Heaven.
- Seven out of ten born-again Christians said they do not believe in moral absolutes.
- Only one out of ten Christians base their moral decision-making on the principles taught in the Bible.

The above phenomena are indeed very disturbing and dreadfully disheartening!

Therefore, in our efforts to improve the state of Bible literacy in our student groups, this year FES has been putting a greater emphasis on engaging the Scripture through all aspects of a student's life. Several strategies have been devised.

First, we will be doing a *survey on Scripture Engagement* among our students to see how much they know about the Bible and how they acquire that knowledge. We hope that through this survey, we can explore better and more relevant strategies to help our students engage deeply in the Scripture. Second, through our staff, we will strongly encourage our CFs to *give priority to Bible study or expounding the Scripture in their meetings*. Third, which could be the toughest to achieve, we want to *inculcate daily Bible reading as a lifestyle* into our students' life. We believe that through a regular and personal interaction with Scripture, such illiteracy among our students will eventually be left to history. There is no shortcut, nor instant recipe.

In *The Screwtape Letters*, written by C.S. Lewis, there was a piece of advice given by a senior demon named Screwtape to his nephew, Wormwood, a younger and less experienced demon. Screwtape said, "It is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds: in reality our best work is done by *keeping things out*." Similarly, keeping the Bible out of our lives is indeed Satan's best work among Christians now.

Hence, by all means we *must put the Bible back to the centre of our lives*.

By the way, have you read your Bible today?

Lisman Komaladi
General Secretary

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FES is an interdenominational Christian organisation that seeks to reach, nurture and equip tertiary students in Singapore to be a faithful evangelical witness on campus and in society, making and building disciples of Jesus Christ who will be effective salt and light of the world.

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