



# WINDOW TO BGST NEWSLETTER

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MAR 2020



BY DR HO BOON TIONG

# WHAT ON EARTH IS DISCIPLESHIP?

*“If I think of Discipleship only as...”*

The main title of a sermon, *What on Earth is Discipleship?* caught my attention. The plethora of definitions only adds to the confusion while one tries to find a working formula to function as a discipleship group, aka cell group or small group. From the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the term 'disciple' means a learner, a pupil, a follower of Christ; someone who learns the doctrines of Scripture and the lifestyle of Christ; someone catechized with proper instruction from the Bible with its necessary follow-through in life-applications. Rev Edmund Chan (2013) says that “disciple-making is all about a certain kind of person who is radically committed to a certain kind of purpose and who through a certain kind of process reproduces a certain kind of product” (p. 36). He uses the term 'a certain kind' in two senses: a certain (sure or rooted) kind of person who shows unshakeable confidence in God and His Word and a certain kind (type or perspective) to express the philosophy of disciple-making.

Therefore, discipleship involves Christians as followers of Christ growing in Word intake, prayerfulness, fellowship and reaching out to others (evangelism) so that they might reproduce other disciples. However, in practice, we often have an

incomplete and ill-perceived understanding of this process of disciple-making; for example, some groups may spend a disproportionate amount of their time on the aspect of fellowship. Even so, the meaning of 'fellowship' is unwittingly reduced to the sumptuous supper provided at the end of the session that becomes the highlight of every small group session.

*If I think of Discipleship only as **Bible study**...*

... then I will only be interested in digging deep into Scripture. This is right and good if the goal is to apply the Word in our lives but sadly this is not the case with groups that have made the 'study' or the curriculum their sole purpose. They are more interested in completing study materials, one after another, than in life transformations in the Word. This is the first of the two possible contentious realities that will arise. Of the six aspects of studying the Word (listen, read, study, meditate, memorise, apply), the last aspect is found wanting. Members become mere hearers rather than doers of the Word (see the admonition in James 1: 25).

The second contentious reality is this: in such small group sessions, there isn't enough time spent on praying together, interceding for one another or ministering to each other. The group is more concerned about the study than about the persons studying the Word together. Soon, members find the so-called bible 'study' irrelevant to their lives and a growing disconnect between the 'logos' and the 'pathos'.

*The role of Bible study in Discipleship* is to allow God to transform us to be more Christ-like. This process is rooted BOTH in the Word and in community. Then Word is the basis of all discussion, not what members think or say (Hebrews 4:12). The small group leader is not the teacher. The Holy Spirit is THE Teacher (John 14:26). And the Holy Spirit is free to speak through any member in the group, not necessarily always through the group leader. Hence, we can minister to one another in this community.

*If I think of Discipleship only as **praying**...*

... then a prayerful focus, though commendable but without the other aspects of spiritual disciplines such as Bible study, fellowship and outreach might lead to a very misguided attitude and approach to praying. Prayer is a two-way communication between God and us. As we read His Word, hear what He says to us, we then respond in prayer, walking through the steps of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. Without this balance and understanding, praying quickly degenerates into hurrying into the presence of God with our own wish list of mostly wants, not even needs. It is the selfish kind of "Lord, bless me, bless me..." prayers. At the same time, our attitude will tend to be demanding, insisting that God answer our prayers immediately and in our own ways. This is contrary to what Scripture says in Proverbs 3:5 & 6 and Isaiah 55: 8 & 9.

*The role of praying in Discipleship* is two-fold; we are to pray unceasingly (1 Thessalonians 5: 17) and in accordance with the will of God (1 John 5: 14 & 15). Prayer is not perfunctory; something that we utter only at the beginning and closing of the small group session. In seeking the Lord, praying should be our

first response and not our last resort. After all, if we do not abide in the Vine, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

*If I think of Discipleship only as **fellowship**...*

... then the group runs the risk of becoming just a social club. The Greek word is 'Koinonia' which means 'communion' or 'intimate fellowship', 'joint participation', the 'share which one has in fulfilling the apostolic office, given as a sign and pledge of fellowship'. When we think of a disciple as a follower of Christ, then certainly fellowship is more than just having a friendly conversation over a sumptuous supper at the end of the group session. According to 1 John 1: 5 – 7, fellowship is walking "in the Light as He Himself is in the Light". This command calls for each small group member to be fellowshiping / walking daily with Jesus so that when members meet together, the group 'shines brighter' in the Light.

*The role of fellowship in Discipleship* is really to encourage each other to "(fight) the good fight... (finish) the course...and (keep) the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). We are to carry our own load but when the load becomes too heavy, we bear each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2, 5). Sometimes this role carries the serious task of restoring a brother or sister in sin, done in a spirit of gentleness and not judgment, as we ourselves are sinners too.

*If I think of Discipleship only as **outreach**...*

... then the new converts might not grow into mature disciples without the equally important process of disciple-making. In his book, *The Tipping Point* (2000), Malcolm Gladwell contrasted the ministry of George Whitefield and John Wesley. Gladwell articulated that Whitefield was the better communicator, a more powerful preacher than Wesley. About Whitefield's legacy, commentators agree that he was probably the most famous religious figure of the eighteenth century having preached at least 18,000 times to perhaps 10 million hearers based on the sheer power of his oratory. Yet Wesley's impact was more far-reaching. The reason lies in the disciple-making strategy Wesley used in his

small groups known as 'Class meetings' and 'Bands'.

Whitefield showed up and preached. He did so well and faithfully. Wesley, though, was committed to more than just the event where he would proclaim the message. He worked hard on developing a process that moved people to "societies" where they would be shepherded in smaller groups. Gladwell commented that if you preach like Whitefield, then consider thinking like Wesley. The more you think like Wesley, the more likely the ministry can spread and endure.

*The role of outreach in Discipleship* is perhaps the other side of the same coin. Outreach ushers in new converts into His kingdom to be disciplined into disciple-makers who in turn reach out to the pre-believers. Both aspects are equally important and necessary.

***In a nut-shell, discipleship is not me-centred but God-centred.*** It is submitting ourselves to God to be radically transformed into a certain kind of person with a certain kind of purpose and who through a certain kind of process reproduces a certain kind of product.

#### References:

Chan, E. (2013). *A Certain Kind: Intentional disciple-making that redefines success in ministry*. Published by Covenant Evangelical Free Church.

Gladwell, M. (2000). *The Tipping Point: How little things can make a big difference*. Published by Little Brown.



Dr Ho Boon Tiong worships at Bedok Methodist Church with his wife Diana and their 3 children. He serves as the Local Church Executive Committee (LCEC) Chairperson and the Chairperson of the Discipleship Group Ministry. By profession, he is the Principal Consultant Educationist with ClassPoint Consulting, an educational and consulting firm that he founded some 14 years ago. Boon Tiong enjoys running, swimming and reading.

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Dr Ho Boon Tiong will be the lecturer for the upcoming course next semester CE227 : Building Small Discipleship Groups that Work (1.5 Credit)

Stay tuned for this course: <https://bgst.edu.sg/course/103>



# From the Family Album

In this issue, we would like to introduce Tan Wen Li, a recent graduate of BGST. She missed the convocation last year as she had to leave the country for work commitments. When she visited BGST in early February 2020, we conducted her very own convocation! Here are some photos of the occasion:



"I first discovered BGST and started studying there in early 2015. Since completing the Grad Dip CS and MCS, I've gone on to serve in a creative access nation in East Asia, teaching, helping to run an English language enrichment centre, and sharing the gospel through relationships built.

My time at BGST has established a solid foundation for me to reflect on the many challenges I've faced since moving, including issues such as culture (is there a 'better' or 'worse' culture in God's eyes? What does it mean for us to share the gospel without bringing our cultural baggage along?) and workplace theology (is teaching English separate from sharing the gospel? How can I bridge the gap between the two?).

BGST's focus on integrating work and faith has been a constant reminder to me that running a business well also glorifies God, by testifying to Christian values and ethics. Pray that as I continue on this journey, I will continue to find new and creative ways to integrate work and faith, and live all of life as a testimony to Christ!"

Tan Wen Li  
*MCS Graduate 2019*

# 2020

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### 1-DAY RETREAT (SAT)

25  
APR

"SPIRITUAL RETREAT: A SILENCE AND  
SOLITUDE WITH GOD FOR GOD'S SAKE"

Ms Seah Chiew Kwan

9:00am-5:00pm

@ Agape Village

**[bit.ly/silencesolitude](https://bit.ly/silencesolitude)**

### BGST ANNUAL DINNER

13  
NOV

More information to be rolled out in the  
coming months.

### BGST HISTORY TOUR

18-29  
NOV

"EXPLORING CHRISTIAN HISTORY, ART AND  
SPIRITUALITY IN ITALY"

Led by Dr Lai Pak Wah

Italy

email **[laipw@bgst.edu.sg](mailto:laipw@bgst.edu.sg)**

# IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

## CANCELLATION OF THE FOLLOWING CONFERENCES AND COURSES

It is with great regret that we have to announce the cancellation of the following:

1. "DISTORTIONS IN DOCTRINE" – Tony Lane & Robert Solomon (Conference: 28 March 2020)
2. "LEADING ACROSS GENERATIONS: ENGAGING MILLENNIALS IN CHURCH & MARKETPLACE" – Joanna Williamson (Conference: 7 March 2020; Course ID218 1.5 Credit)

due to the concerns about the Novel Coronavirus and its transmission. This was not an easy decision to make, but the health of the participants and our team members is of utmost importance. We are looking into the possibility of having them over in September/October.

## (RESCHEDULED) CE227 : BUILDING SMALL DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS THAT WORK

The course has been rescheduled for next semester. More details [here](#)

## (CHANGE OF VENUE) CS/ECF505 : INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUAL MENTORING

Please take note that the course venue has been changed to St James Church, 1 Leedon Road. Nearest MRT Station is Holland Village (CC21). Across Esso Station.

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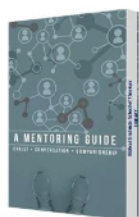
# LIBRARY NEW BOOKS



## NET FULL NOTES BIBLE

Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2019.

*Bible - The Holy Bible*



## A MENTORING GUIDE: CHRIST, CONVERSATION, COMPANIONSHIP

USA: VantagePoint3 Team, 2019

*Mentoring Guide - Christianity*

## FULL NEW BOOK LIST AT

[bgst.vlibonline.com/images/202002-bull.html](http://bgst.vlibonline.com/images/202002-bull.html)



THE DTL

Please select your institution and enter your student ID or barcode number.

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## RECENT CHANGES TO DTL

Please take note that DTL has modified their website login. To log in, select Biblical Graduate School of Theology under 'School'. Enter your student id under 'Barcode or Student ID'. Thank you.



## THE BOOK CORNER IS CLOSED

If you would like any of the books, you can, for a minimum of \$50 donation. We will provide a bag and you can fill it up with any of the items we have available.

All brand new!  
Hurry! While stocks last!



# Join BGST

## MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT EXECUTIVE

Reporting to: (1) the Principal; (2) Director, Administration & Operations.

Employment Type: Full Time

BGST is looking for a suitable candidate to fill the position of **Marketing Communications & Engagement Executive (MCE Executive)**. The MCE Executive should ideally share the vision and mission of the school. The incumbent will engage and work with various stakeholders, both internal and external, and these may include agencies, business executives, and existing and potential sponsors of BGST. His / her responsibility is to deliver strategic and operational support for the internal and external communication-related matters of the school, including providing innovative solutions in the areas of communication.

### Key Roles and Responsibilities

The work of the Marketing Communications & Engagement Executive entails:

#### **(A) Marketing & Communications** The executive is expected to

- Work with Senior Management to develop marketing strategies to develop BGST's brand in Singapore and the region, ensuring consistency of branding across all platforms and collaterals.
- Implement and oversee marketing campaigns on classical and digital platforms for BGST's programmes, courses, events, and other initiatives.
- Manage the contents for BGST's website and other social media platforms.
- Assist the Principal in his public and internal communications.
- Manage and publicise events in a timely manner by exploring the most effective means of communication and creative promotional materials to reach the target audience.
- Assist speakers / lecturers with event materials. This would include preparation of participant / student content packages for pre-event dissemination and archiving.
- Explore and review creative and digitized means of communication to enhance and improve the current standards.

#### **(B) Strategic Engagement** The executive should work with key personnel to

- Assist the Principal in his Business Development and Engagement initiatives with partners, churches and donors.
- Implement strategic initiatives and programmes to engage BGST's community partners and donors.
- Coordinate sustainable medium to long-term fund-raising programmes / projects for BGST

### Qualification and Experience

The candidate should be a degree holder, preferably in marketing communications. He/ she should have at least 3 – 5 years' experience in the relevant field. Should the candidate not have the required work experience but is willing to explore possibilities with the college, he / she may be invited to present his / her portfolio that indicates creativity and solutioning and / or be invited to make a presentation.

**The candidate should send in his / her resume (hard copy) to BGST, attention "HR Department" or via email to [laipw@bgst.edu.sg](mailto:laipw@bgst.edu.sg)**



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## FACULTY SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS (MAR-APR)



<b>DR LAI PAK WAH</b>	9 Apr	Servanthood: Heart of Christ's Love	Mt Carmel BP Church
	26 Apr	John 15:18-27	Singapore Life Church (English Service)



<b>MR QUEK TZE-MING</b>	15 Mar	Jesus the Vine and We are the Branches (John 15:1-8)	Bethesda Chapel Service
	12 Apr	Easter Sunday	Zion Bishan BP Church (Morning Services)



<b>DR KWA KIEM KIOK</b>	29 Mar	2 Timothy 4	Living Hope Methodist Church
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<b>MR LEOW WEN PIN</b>	8 Mar	Including People with Disabilities	Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church (Sunday Services)
	22 Mar	Transformed by Truth (John 14:1-14)	Singapore Life Church (English Service)
	2 Apr	Biblical Interpretation	Cathedral Podcast
	5 Apr	TBC	Chapel of Christ our Hope (Sunday Service)
	9 Apr	A Pastoral Theology of Disability	Trinity Theological College Pastoral Theology Class





## BIBLICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

[www.bgst.edu.sg](http://www.bgst.edu.sg)

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### Office Hours

Monday to Saturday: 9:00 am – 6:00 pm  
(Closed from 12-1 pm, Wed from 12-2 pm;  
Closed Saturdays in June and December)