



BGST
BIBLICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THEOLOGY

WINDOW TO BGST NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2020



MILESTONES AND MORTALITY —MUSINGS OF A MERE MAN

2001 was a significant year. In that same year, I lost my father and became a father. While I was thankful that Dad knew my firstborn was coming, they missed each other by 5 months. So, I named my daughter Fide or 'faith' in Latin, trusting that, on that glorious day when Christ returns, the grandfather will see his grandchild for the first time because of their common faith in Christ!

September 11 that same year was significant, of course. That's when we saw a Hollywood thriller scene worked out horribly in real life: two jetliners crashing into the World Trade Centre, triggering a chain of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq which still see no end now. Nineteen years later, September 11 2020, I hope things will not be so dramatic. Nonetheless, it is still a milestone in my life. Fide is a beautiful, cheerful lady now, and September 11 is when she flies off to Durham, UK for her law studies.

What does this mean? When my wife, left her hometown for her own undergraduate studies 3 decades ago, neither her parents nor she could imagine that that would be the last time she would be living in Malaysia. Life changed permanently after that. In due course, she would count Singapore as home instead. Things may not work out exactly like that for my daughter, of course. Many Singaporeans who studied overseas did return to stay for several more years with their parents. But you never know. September 11 may mean a permanent change for us all.

September is also my daughter's birthday month which meant time spent reviewing past photos, seeing how she has grown, and realising how I have aged. "Wow, all my hair was actually black when I was in Durham!" Well, that's no longer the case now, even as my daughter embraces on her own Durham journey. "At least you still have hair," a friend once retorted. That's true. But it's also true that I have, in all likelihood, more than

crossed the halfway mark of my life. I have now lived more years than I will have years to live in the future. Perhaps 5, 10 or 20 more? Only God knows. When I crossed 40, my eyes began to give way and I needed reading glasses. Friends have been telling me more deterioration awaits when we cross the Big 5-0. We shall see.

It seems that her going overseas has made me think more about mortality. It will not be long before my loved ones are gone. Or I may be the first to go. Prior to that, the health I take for granted will diminish, leaving me dependent on others, and unable to do what I desire. Dad passed away at 64. Mum at 71. Going by averages, I could be called home at 67. So, I have 20 years to go, or maybe less. Keeping this end in mind, how then should I think of my life? My work? My priorities? My loved ones?

Should we think in terms of achievement then? What 'great things' should we do? But just as dynasties rise and fall, all our achievements will come to an end or nothing. "No one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them." (Ecclesiastes 1:11). To put it plainly, in the end, we ask, "So, what?" - most achievements are empty, a chasing after the wind.

Some will then say, it's family, it's relationships that matter. This is true. When we are down and out, it's our families who will come behind and support us. That's assuming that we have healthy family relations (which, unfortunately, may not be

the case for many). For when we die, no one remembers us, except our loved ones. But what happens when all our loved ones die, and our descendants remember us no more? Like how I have no idea who my great-grandparents were? Do we cease to exist? Just disappear, as though we have never been here at all?

Some will say, what I do for my fellow men and women is what will persist. This is sort of combining the first and second options and writing them large. But there is a point here. Civilisation memory persists much longer than those of our families. But thinking in this way is also revealing. At the end of the day, what we desire, or aspire, is bound up with the eternal. There is value in something because it is long-lasting. Therein is our dilemma, even the whole of humanity is temporal. So, if all humanity perishes, what value is left? Steven Spielberg presents this well in his ending of the 2001 movie, A.I. Is there still value for the humanoid when everyone around him has died?

So, we are caught up forever in our pursuit of eternity, especially ideals and virtues which we deem are good and eternal. But we are distressed that all our human efforts will be futile.... in the end. In all honesty, I have revisited this problem almost every decade, since I was 15, and still end up with the same conclusion: human beings in our temporary pursuits for eternity, are but chasing after the air. It all leads to futility.

But not all is bleak. If we question whether the pursuit of meaning is meaningful at all, could not this very desire suggest that we

are built for something greater, something better, and indeed, a more satisfying long-lasting meaning (to appropriate Anselm's ontological argument)? This brings us back to good old Augustine's prayer - "the heart will find no rest, until it finds its rest in Him."

In the end, beyond our achievements and loved ones, our ultimate destiny is to love our Eternal Creator and be loved by Him; to encounter eternity and draw our eternity from Him. And in so doing, affirm the value of our pursuits - for good, for love and for truth. Practically speaking, this boils down to the reflective prayer on a daily basis: "What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ?" This is to surrender our desires for great achievements, and simply to follow Christ where He leads. If great things happen, they are but accidentals. True value remains being bound up with the Eternal God who loves us, and forms the basis of all meaningful endeavours.

Some may say, all this is well and good. But all this 'God-talk', can this be mere fantasy, a social construct to help us bear with the harsh reality that all things are ultimately meaningless? This could well be the case, if not for the resurrection. This is where philosophy comes to fruition in history. If Jesus Christ truly rose again from the dead, 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem, He affirms that (1) God is real, and (2) the Good news he proclaimed for us is true. Once these two are established, there are strong reasons or basis for our hopes for 'meaning' to be meaningful and our hearts can finally find rest in our restless pursuits for meaning. But more is at stake here that philosophical or existential resolution. Christ also promises that on that glorious day when He returns, every single one of us will live again. We will be reunited with our loved ones. All our tears will be wiped away. Our loved ones will still matter, and even more. What's better is this: when we are gathered again in Christ, all our misunderstandings with one another, our misgivings or imperfections will be resolved. There is, therefore, much to hope! Life can be meaningful after all...



DR LAI PAK WAH

This mere man is none other than the Principal of BGST. He is also lecturer of Church History and Historical Theology.

A graduate from BGST himself (Grad Dip CS) and Regent College, Vancouver (MCS, ThM), Dr Lai completed his PhD at Durham University, where he specialised in Christianity in Late Antiquity, that is, the history, theology and spirituality of the 2nd - 5th C church fathers (Patristic Studies) with particular research on John Chrysostom. He has also published *The Dao of Healing: Christian Perspectives on Chinese Medicine*. Previously, Dr Lai was a full-time lecturer at the School of Business, Singapore Polytechnic, and engaged in investment promotion work with the Singapore Economic Development Board.

2020

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

WEBINAR: FLOURISHING @WORK

9, 23
OCT

"WORK INTERRUPTED" 3 ENGAGING ONLINE WEBINARS

Speaker: Anthony Siow, Jeremy Gwee,
Michael Low, Tan Seng Kong

7:45pm-9:45pm

bit.ly/workinterruptedseries

SEPTET SERVICE (EVERY 4TH FRI)

23
OCT

12:30pm-1:00pm

Join Us on Zoom

Meeting ID: 823 1892 4126

Password: 782730

BGST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

31
OCT

3:00pm-4:00pm

For enquiries, please contact BGST
at **yap_foon_lyn@bgst.edu.sg**

BGST Annual General Meeting

Due to Covid-19, the 2020 AGM will be conducted by electronic means. The details are as follows:

Date: Saturday, 31 October 2020

Time: 3.00 pm - 4.00 pm

For enquiries, please contact BGST at yap_foon_lyn@bgst.edu.sg

Annual Dinner Postponed

Please be informed that BGST's Annual Dinner, originally scheduled for 13 November 2020, is postponed to 16 April 2021.

Do pencil this date into your calendars and watch out for more announcements regarding this event!



UPCOMING COURSE

MM101 VOCATION, WORK & MINISTRY: THEOLOGY OF WORK

DATES OCT 29, NOV 5, 12, 19, 26, DEC 3

Double delight! if taken with the Work, Interrupted series, the course will be at a discount at only \$210, with a reflection paper on the series to be counted as one of the assignments for the course.

—————→ BGST.EDU.SG/COURSE/45



UPCOMING COURSE

AT247/249 PREACHING IN THE CHURCH

LECTURER REV DR DESMOND SOH

DATES OCT 31, NOV 6, 7, JAN 30

—————→ BGST.EDU.SG/COURSE/121



JOURNEY THROUGH ECCLESIASTES WITH DR PHILIP SATTERTHWAITE

Dr Philip Satterthwaite is the Emeritus Principal, Lecturer in Old Testament, Biblical Hebrew and Hermeneutics at BGST - Biblical Graduate School of Theology.

As a regular contributor to Our Daily Bread Ministries, Dr Philip holds this subject especially close to his heart. In the book, he deals with how we should live as we question how far we can understand God's ways.

Embark on this journey as Dr Philip shares ancient wisdom from the book of Ecclesiastes for the issues we face today, from work-life balance to justice and politics.

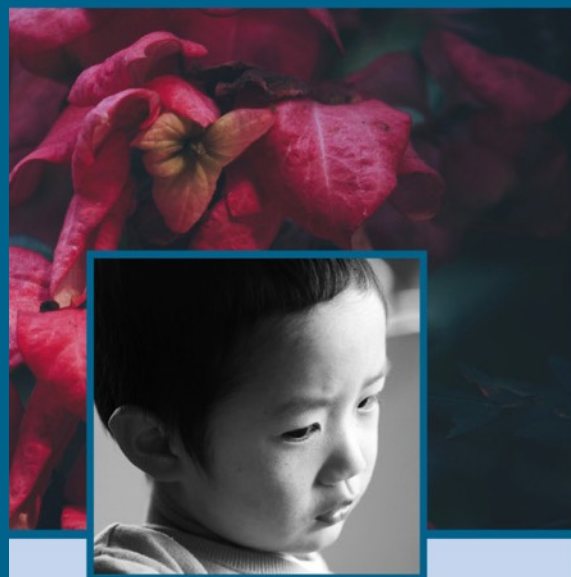


READ ONLINE:
journeythrough.org/courses/ecclesiastes/

GRIEF COUNSELLING USING NARRATIVE PRACTICES

2020

by Carolyn Markey



50%
DISCOUNT

**FOR BGST STUDENTS
& ALUMNI**

► COURSE BRIEF

Carolyn Markey addresses the difficult areas of grief and loss with practical helps based on Narrative Therapy concepts. Highlights include:

1. Discussing traditional ideas of grief and loss including the conventional assumptions of Grief Psychology contrasted with the ideas that shape Narrative Practices in addressing grief
2. Looking at how death is an end to a life but not necessarily a relationship - and re-membering a person with material from Barbara Myerhoff
3. Categories of Enquiry and group work will also be used in practice groups
4. Addressing cultural messages about loss and death will be discussed and how they interact with persons experiencing various forms and degrees of grief
5. Delving into the use of re-membering conversational maps, the absent but

implicit, definitional ceremonies with outsider-witness practices - all used and practiced within small groups

► DAY 1

- Ideas of Grief and Loss
- Conventional Assumptions of Grief Psychology
- Ideas that Shape Narrative Practice and Grief
- Death Ends a Life Not a Relationship
- Re-Membering (Barbara Myerhoff)
- Categories of Enquiry
- Group Work

► DAY 2

- Cultural Messages about Loss and Death
- Re-Membering Conversations Map
- The Absent But Implicit
- Definitional Ceremonies
- Outsider-Witness Practices
- Group Work

9-10 Nov. 2020 • 9 am to 5 pm - ZOOM FORMAT

INDIVIDUALS PERPETRATING VIOLENCE:

Narrative Approaches to Conversations with Men Who Use Violence in Families

30 Nov - 2 Dec, 2020

ZOOM FORMAT

9 AM - 5 PM

\$1200 PER PARTICIPANT

COURSE OUTLINE

Given the prevalence of family violence many practitioners who work with families across a broad range of concerns will invariably encounter issues of violence and abuse in families. This two-day workshop is designed for practitioners who are interested in exploring the contribution narrative therapy can make to their work with men who use violence and abuse in families. This workshop will equip participants with the following:

- An understanding of the ways narrative practices supports principles of safety, responsibility, accountability, respect and fairness when working with men who use violence and abuse in families;
- Knowledge of how the narrative metaphor and the intentions of rich story development can be applied to working with men who hurt people they care about;
- Considerations of the power relations of men's use of violence and abuse and the power relations of therapy;

• The opportunity to further develop therapeutic skills in conversations that invite men to explore:

1. What is important to him in his relationships with his partner and children
2. Naming and explanations for his use of violence that support the safety of his family
3. Increasingly detailed and accountable understandings of the effects of his violence
4. His personal agency in developing family relationships of safety and respect

Examples will be used to demonstrate these ideas and practices, and opportunities will be provided for participants to engage in skill development exercises as well as consider how these practices might complement their existing skills and know-how.

50%
DISCOUNT

**FOR BGST
STUDENTS &
ALUMNI**



FREE

RESOURCE



**UNDER THE WINGS OF GOD:
LESSONS FROM RUTH IN TROUBLED TIMES**
BGST'S FREE TEACHING SERIES ON THE BOOK OF RUTH.

[ACCESS HERE](#)

Contemplating Covid-19 Resources



[BROWSE OUR COLLECTION](#)



FACULTY SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS (OCT-NOV)



DR LAI PAK WAH	18 Oct	Mandarin Sermon	Mt Carmel BP Church
	25 Oct	Reformation Sermon	Hebron BP Church
	8 Nov	Reformation Sermon	Bethany Evangelical Free Church



MR QUEK TZE-MING	11 Oct	Joshua's Victories (Joshua 11:1–12:24)	Zion Bishan BP Church
	18 Oct	Parables of Resistance (Matthew 21:23-22:14)	Bethesda Katong
	25 Oct	Missions Month	Bethany EFC
	1 Nov	Conflict with tribes across the Jordan (Joshua 22)	Zion Bishan BP Church



MR LEOW WEN PIN	18 Oct	Disability in Missions	Bethany Evangelical Free Church
	7 Nov	Mental Health in the Church	Grace Assembly of God (NXTGENSVC)



DR KWA KIEM KIOK	15 Nov	Judges 4:1-7	Living Hope Methodist Church
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DR PHILIP SATTERTHWAITE	11 Oct	Rev. 2:12-17	PSPC
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its vision of training the
whole people of God!**

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www.bgst.edu.sg

50 Kallang Pudding Road, #07-01,

AMA Building, Singapore 349326

Tel: 065-6227-6815