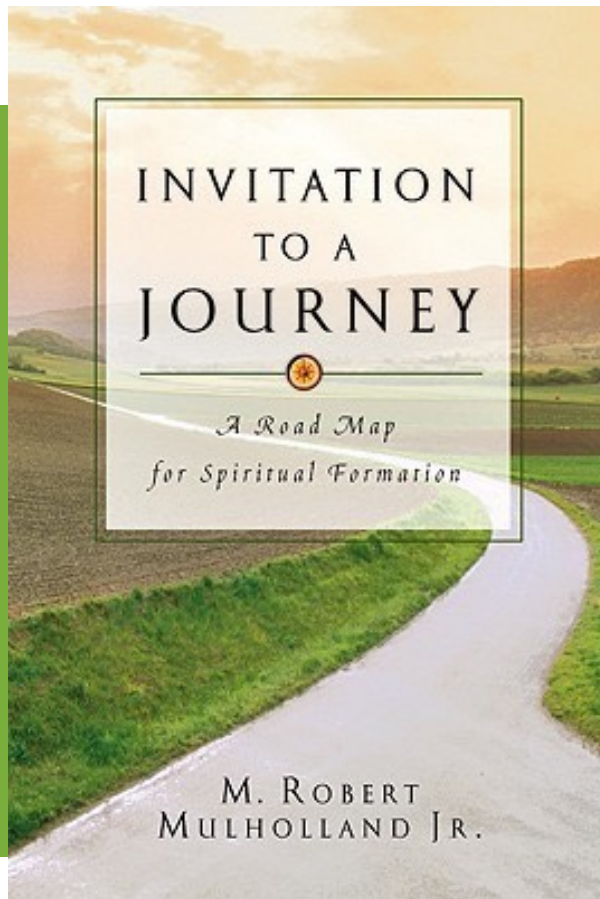


Your Monthly Newsletter

WINDOW TO BGST APRIL

2021





AN EXCERPT FROM INVITATION TO A JOURNEY: A ROAD MAP FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

BY M. ROBERT MULHOLLAND JR.

(Edited; Italics and Footnotes added)

OPTION OR NECESSITY?

Once we begin to realize that genuine spiritual growth is a continuous and sometimes difficult process, we may be tempted to think that it is an option we can take or leave. For many Christians, the quest for the deeper life in Christ is viewed as a discipline for the dedicated disciple, a pursuit for the particularly pious, a spiritual frill for those who have the time or inclination, a spiritual fad for trendy Christians.

We fail to realize that the process of spiritual shaping is a primal reality of human existence. **Everyone is in a process of spiritual formation!** Every thought we hold, every decision we make, every action we take, every emotion we allow to shape

our behaviour, every response we make to the world around us, every relationship we enter into, every reaction we have toward the things that surround us and impinge upon our lives—all of these things, little by little, are shaping us into some kind of being.

We are being shaped into either the wholeness of the image of Christ or a horribly destructive caricature of that image—destructive not only to ourselves but also to others, for we inflict our brokenness upon them. This wholeness or destructiveness radically conditions our relationship with God, ourselves, and others, as well as our involvement in the dehumanizing structures and dynamics of the broken world around us. We become either agents of God's healing and liberating grace or carriers of

sickness of the world. The direction of our spiritual growth infuses the all we do with intimations of either Life or Death.

The process of being conformed to the image of Christ takes place primarily at the points of our unlikeness to Christ's image. God is present to us in the most destructive aspects of our cultural captivity. God is involved with us in the most imprisoning bondage of our brokenness. *God meets us in those places of our lives that are most alienated from God. God is there, in grace, offering us the forgiveness, the cleansing, the liberation, the healing we need to begin the journey toward our wholeness and fulfilment in Christ.* But this can be uncomfortable. We would much rather have our spiritual formation focus on those places where we are pretty well along the way. How much of our devotional life and our worship are designed simply to affirm, for ourselves, others and perhaps even God, those areas of our lives that we think are already well along the way? In fact, may not such practices become a defence mechanism against the areas that are not yet conformed to the image of Christ?

If, indeed, the work of God's formation in us is the process of conforming us to the image of Christ, obviously it's going to take place at the points where we are not yet conformed to that image. This means that *one of the first dynamics of holistic spiritual formation will be **confrontation**.* Through some channel—the Scripture, worship, a

word of proclamation, the agency of a brother or sister in Christ, even the agency of an unbeliever—the Spirit of God may probe some area in which we are not conformed to the image of Christ. *That probing will probably always be confrontational, and it will always be a challenge and a call to us in our brokenness to come out of the brokenness into wholeness in Christ.* But it will also be a costly call because that brokenness is who we are.

Sometimes we suffer under the illusion that our incompleteness, our brokenness, our deadness is something like a sweater that we can easily unbutton and slip off. It is not that easy. Our brokenness, like Pogo, "we have met the enemy and he is us." This is what Jesus indicates when he speaks about losing yourself. That which has not yet been conformed to the image is simply a "thing" in you—it is an essential part of who you are, is what Jesus is pointing to when he calls us to take up our cross.

Our cross is not that cantankerous person we have to deal with day by day. Our cross is not the employer we just can't get along with. Our cross is not that neighbour or work colleague who cuts across the grain in every single time of relationship. Nor is our cross the difficulties and infirmities that the flow of life brings to us beyond our control. *Our cross is the point of our unlikeness to the image of Christ, where we must die to self in order to be raised by God into*

wholeness of life in the image of Christ right there at that point. So, the process of being conformed to the image of Christ takes place at the points of our unlikeness to Christ, and the first step is confrontation.

*The second dynamic in holistic spiritual formation is **consecration**.* We must come to the point of saying yes to God at each point of unlikeness. *We must give God permission to do the work God wants to do with us right there, because transformation will not be forced upon us.* God will stand at those closed doors of our lives by which we have shut God out and imprisoned ourselves within, and the love of God's grace will knock and knock and knock with the knock of confrontation upon those doors, but God will not force open the doors. As George MacDonald says, "He watches to see the door move from within." There must be a consecration, a release of ourselves to God at each point of our unlikeness to Christ. When there is, the process of being conformed to the image of Christ begins.

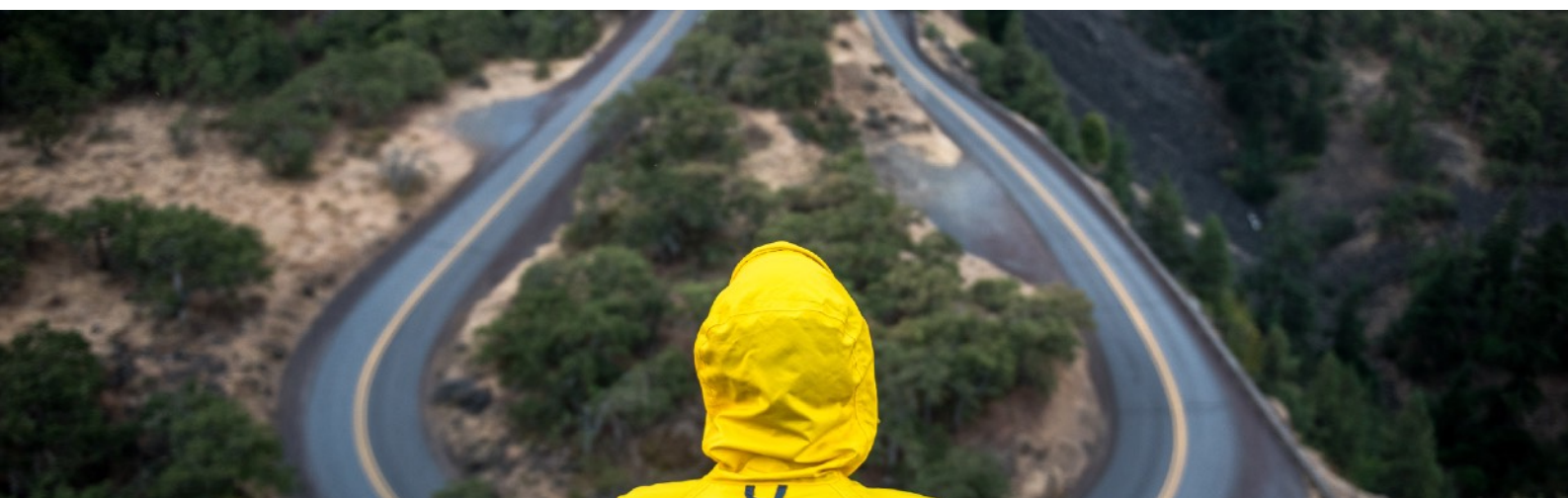
In part three, "The Journey," ... we will see how that release takes place. Spiritual disciplines are the act of releasing

ourselves in a consistent manner to God, opening those doors in a regular way to allow God's transforming work in our lives. When we respond to the confrontation of the Spirit at the point of our brokenness with a consecration that allows God to do the work God wants to do, we begin to experience the reality of being conformed to the image of Christ.

There are times, I grant you, when the nature of our response is such that God, you might think, would instantly touch us into wholeness. But I have discovered in my own life and in reading the saints of the church that those times are the exceptions. The rule is that *God begins to work with us there and to grow us up into wholeness over a period of time as we continue to offer the disciplines as a means of grace.*

¹ Pogo was a daily comic strip that was created by cartoonist Walt Kelly and syndicated to American newspapers from 1948 until 1975. ... The strip was written for both children and adults, with layers of social and political satire targeted to the latter.

² George MacDonald, Unspoken Sermons "The Cause of Spiritual Stupidity"



SPIRITUAL FORMATION PRACTICUM (CS102)



Both Scriptures and Christian tradition have emphasized the close relationship between theological reflections and personal spirituality. As the 4th century monastic theologian, Evagrius Ponticus, puts it, “theology is prayer and prayer is theology.” That is, proper theological reflection should give rise to a greater love for God which, in turn, informs our knowledge of God.

More than that, this transformative knowledge of God should also deepen our self-knowledge - the double knowledge underscored by Augustine and John Calvin. Unfortunately, the transition from theological learning to self-knowledge and personal is not always straight forward. Some students don’t do so and end up having a ‘head full of knowledge but nothing much in the heart.’

For this reason, CS102 is introduced at BGST as a Spiritual Formation Practicum (SFP) to help each student **renew and deepen his/her love for God, improve his/her own self-knowledge** (his/her strengths and weaknesses), and also help **discern his/her role in Christ's mission for the world.**

RECENT GRADUATES OF THE CS102 COURSE SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES



“It began as a required module but turned out to be a journey that drew me closer to God. I'm so thankful that I had the opportunity to go on this journey.

Even though the module has ended, I continued to practise imaginative prayer. This was a different way of praying than what I was previously familiar with, and it took a bit of nudging before I was ready to try it. I ended up enjoying it and am now practising it in my regular devotion time. I'm thankful to have grown in my prayer life as a result.

I find that there are many good things that we can learn and benefit from Ignatian spirituality (e.g., the Principle and Foundation, Lectio Divina, etc.). I was able to adapt it to my own beliefs and practices.

I'm deeply appreciative that BGST has made CS102 a required course, and that the Spiritual Director journeyed it with me. This course ... guides us to actually practise our spirituality, and not just learn about it. It really helps to begin the journey with an open mind and a humble spirit, ready not just to learn more about yourself, but to draw closer to God.

I highly recommend it.”

LDW, AGED 48
FULL-TIME CHURCH STAFF

“I went from being a skeptic to truly learning to find God in all things. It has drastically improved my prayer life and helped me break free from the mindset of seeing prayer as a fixed practice but real communion with Jesus.

My advice to students who have reservations about CS102 is this: Come with an open heart ... (I have formed) a closer, more authentic relationship with God.”

ELIJAH, AGED 31
TUTOR

“CS102 continues to be a blessed journey of continual discovery of God and self.

What I found most useful was that I was becoming more open to God's prompting at any part of the day, and encouraged to have a sustained period of daily reflection. It enabled a deeper and more intentional reflection of my inner self. It also helped me to see how easily I could be influenced by my old ways, culture, and media.

Even though the module has ended, I think it is important to keep the momentum going, and be reminded constantly that as I learn from the insights gained, I am becoming a newer self... I continued beyond the required ten weeks to push me to maintain the discipline of prayer and reflection. There were moments in the journey where **I felt drained by other things in life, but the exercises helped me to draw strength and love from God.** I feel thankful for these exercises that led me to renewal.”

PAUL YEO, AGED 46
ZION BISHAN BP CHURCH, MINISTRY
STAFF (HOKKIEN SERVICE)

“Choosing to embark on the (full 30-week) Spiritual Exercises has been one of the most fulfilling and life-changing experiences for me. **It was a journey of drawing closer to God and re-discovering who God is in my life.** The Ignatian Spiritual Exercises is not only a rich compilation of meditations, prayers, and contemplative practices, it is also a way of deepening one's relationship with the Divine in daily life and discernment of life choices.

...

As David Fleming, SJ puts it, "We can understand a great number of things, but this may not affect the way we live our lives. The goal is a response of the heart, which truly changes the whole person". In summary, the 30-week journey for me has been a journey from the head to the heart, as the heart response is not only a cornerstone of the Spiritual Exercises but it is the language that reveals God's intentions, inspiring me to a more generous response to Christ's invitation to follow Him.

LIN HO, AGED 58
LIFE COACH

“I started CS102 in partial fulfilment of my MCS course requirement, but some of the exercises have since become habitual and this is a blessing.

I found the combination of practising the Spiritual Exercises with the Spiritual Conversations most helpful. The experience of learning to hear the voice of God through meditation and contemplation, through the questions of my spiritual mentor and by hearing my own responses to his questions, was new and very enriching to me.

From the ten weeks of the Ignatian Adventure Practicum, I was reassured above all else that God loves me unconditionally. **All the prayer exercises covered during this practicum were founded on and aligned to this fundamental truth.**”

LEE KOK WAH, AGED 65
PASTOR, THE BIBLE CHURCH SINGAPORE

SOME HAVE EVEN GONE BEYOND CS102 TO CONTINUE THE JOURNEY OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES WITH ONGOING MENTORING.

THE FOLLOWING IS A PRAYER SUBMITTED AT THE END OF THE COURSE BY ONE OF THE STUDENTS:

“Father God, I thank you for the ways in which these meditations on Scripture have intersected with my ordinary daily life. Thank you for helping me to persevere with journaling: addressing my journal entries to you has helped me to focus and to process as I look to you. Thank you for my mentor's servant-hearted encouragement and for our conversations, which have provided an opportunity to reflect and to process further.

As I look forward, I discern that it would be helpful for me to continue with the upcoming weeks of the exercises, at least for the time being. Thank you for the opportunity to do so in this season.

Looking further ahead, please help me to find a rhythm in each season. May I continue the practice of praying through Scripture, using the tool of journaling where appropriate, mindful of intersections with my own daily life, trusting that you will guide my steps as your Holy Spirit transforms me towards Christlikeness. Amen.”

BENJAMIN G., AGED 35
HOMEMAKER / CLIMATE SCIENTIST
ON A CAREER BREAK

APRIL

COURSES

CS102 Christian Spirituality 2: Practicum

AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Info & Registration

Please send an email to registration@bgst.edu.sg

[BGST.EDU.SG/COURSES](https://bgst.edu.sg/courses)

BGST Gift Vouchers

Valid till 31 December 2021

Available in \$200, \$100, \$50, and \$20

To purchase, email yap_foon_lyn@bgst.edu.sg



2021 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

BGST.EDU.SG/EVENTS

7, 14,
21, 28
Apr

EWL
CERTIFICATE

(M1) EXECUTIVE CERTIFICATE IN WORKPLACE LEADERSHIP

Module 1: Leadership in the Workplace
Lecturers: Dr Jeremy Gwee & Mr Michael Low

Time: 7:30pm - 10:00pm

Information at bgst.edu.sg/engage
Registration by [email](#)

24 Apr

PUBLIC
LECTURE

WORKPLACE DISCIPLESHIP IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

Speaker Dr David W. Gill

Time: 9:30am - 11:30am

Register at bgst.edu.sg/events/details/223

22 May

CONVOCATION

BGST'S 30TH CONVOCATION

Zion Bishan Bible-Presbyterian Church

Time: 11:00am - 12:00pm



ANNOUNCEMENTS

BGST OPERATING HOURS

Please note that as of Monday 5 April 2021, BGST office will revert to the normal working hours from Monday to Friday: 9:00 am – 6:00 pm (Closed from 12-1 pm)

Saturdays and After Office hours - by appointment only

BGST WILL BE CLOSED

BGST will be observing a long Labour Day Weekend from Sat-Mon, 1 - 3 May 2021.

WE ARE HIRING!

BGST is looking for the following to join our team.

1. **Technical Assistant** with skills in recording and video editing.
2. **Head, Business Development**
3. **Project Executive**

More information at our [Careers Page](#)

april-may

FACULTY SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

DR KWA KIEM KIOK



11
APR

LIVING HOPE METHODIST CHURCH

Ephesians 3:1-3

DR LAI PAK WAH



24
APR

SINGAPORE LIFE CHURCH

Sermon on Exodus 19:3-6

30
APR

ALL SAINTS CHURCH

Is it OK for Christians to use TCM?

MR QUEK TZE-MING



2
APR

BETHESDA CHAPEL

Good Friday

11
APR

ZION BISHAN BP CHURCH

Saul the Pursuer Pursued (Acts 9:1-31)

4
APR

BETHESDA CHAPEL

Easter Sunday

16
MAY

ZION BISHAN BP CHURCH

At Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:13-52)

MR LEOW WEN PIN



20
APR

TRINITY THEOLOGICAL
COLLEGE

Guest Lecture (Pastoral Theology and
Praxis)

23
MAY

BETHANY EVANGELICAL
FREE CHURCH

Sermon on Phil: 2:12-18

24
APR

PAYA LEBAR METHODIST
CHURCH

Seminar on Special Needs

30
MAY

YIO CHU KANG CHAPEL

Sermon on Inclusion

1
MAY

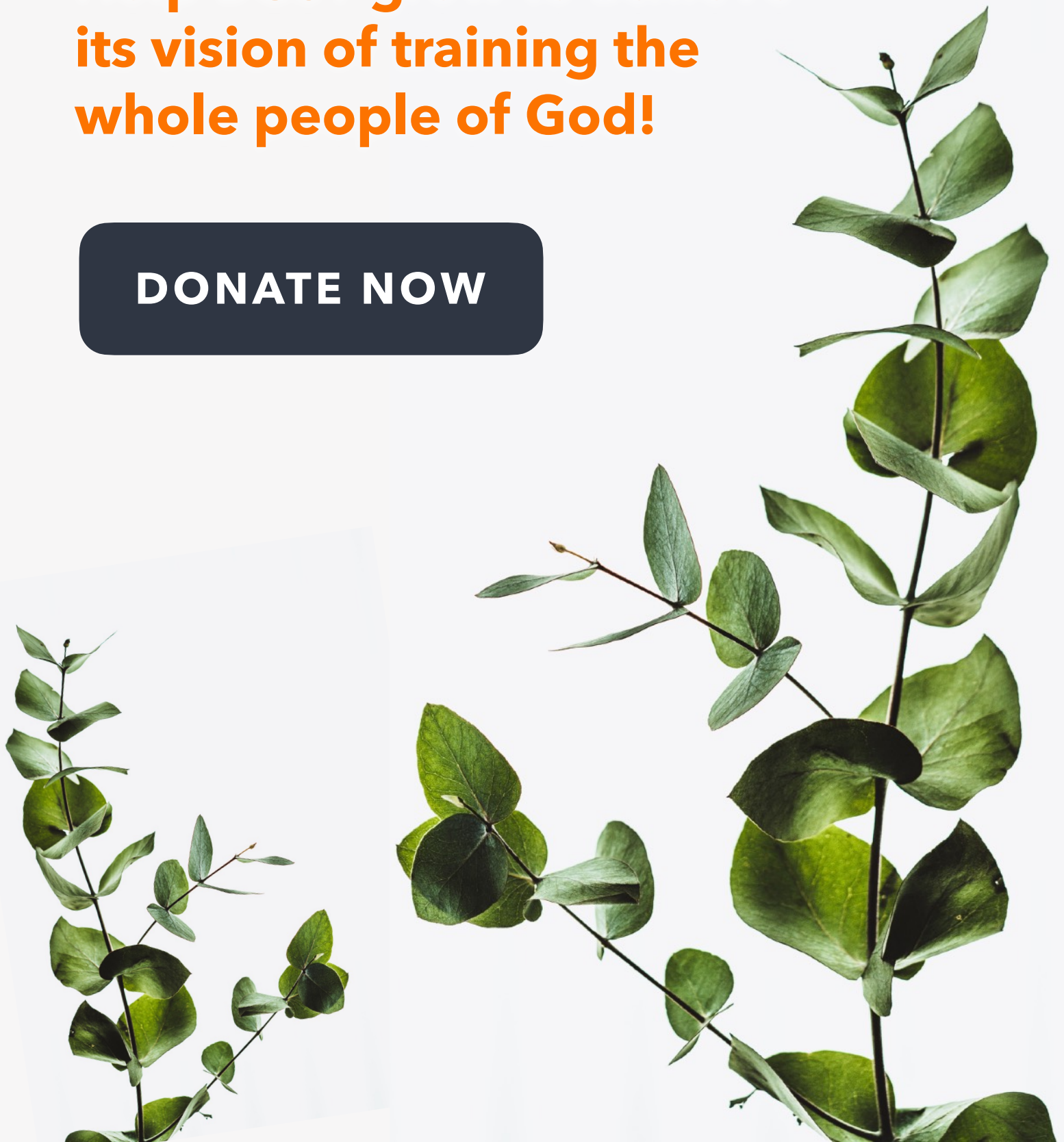
SINGAPORE LIFE CHURCH

Sermon on Deuteronomy 17

Consider donating today

**Help BGST grow to achieve
its vision of training the
whole people of God!**

DONATE NOW



2021

WINDOW TO BGST



Biblical Graduate School of Theology

www.bgst.edu.sg

50 Kallang Pudding Road, #07-01, AMA Building

Singapore 349326

Tel: 065-6227-6815

Follow us on Facebook

www.facebook.com/BGST1989

Follow us on Instagram

@BGST1989