
SELAH

FES Central Team Newsletter

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PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

It was only after I left university did I realize my biggest regret – the fact that I had only a few non-Christian friends. One fine afternoon not long after graduation, I thought about the friends (who weren't Christian) I could call on to 'yam-cha' or to go shopping together. To my surprise there was none! It dawned on me that day the big mistake I had made. 'What Christian influence was I talking about when I did not have good non-Christian friends?' Why on earth did I feel I did well during my campus days? Perhaps because I was busy 'serving' God in CF & CG, attending committee meetings, leading Bible studies and enjoying fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ? I was a good Christian, wasn't I? Or was I? Sigh.

What is your response as you read my questions? How is your Christian life speaking about God to the people you meet? Some of us may be asking, 'What does the Christian life really mean?' Are you one of them? You may be saying, 'I have worked on my Bible knowledge, learning what the Bible says about different things and built up my faith. I took up a CF committee role and served in church too. What else is there?' No doubt all these are very good and important yet we need to check if our lives echo our call to be salt and light, living out the greatest

commandment: 'Love the LORD with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might; and second which is like it, love your neighbour as yourself'. These words are pretty clear for us that our Christian faith shouldn't just remain in our heart or head. For those of us who are lagging behind regarding loving our neighbor it is really time for us to begin.

Beyond Head Knowledge

How can we be salt and light if we aren't spending time with those who need our 'saltiness' and 'light'? They can well be our course mates (yup, across language, culture and races. Eye rolling?!), block mates, the international students or strangers at our doorstep or you could give voice to those who can't speak for themselves. It could be the maid back home or the many different homes for the disadvantaged/unwell, NGOs, charity organizations etc.

I know of students who gave tuition freely to youths and brought them steps nearer to the gate of salvation, seeing their lives transformed. Does this not warm our hearts? I was happy whenever my Malay course-mates asked me to help them in their studies or be their group work member. The question of being used or not really doesn't matter, so long as I am being seen as one whom they could approach for help. These days more and more international students are present in our campuses. Many of them feel lost and helpless in this foreign land. How can we help?

Then They Will Know That I Am The LORD

We have to agree that many who champion the various causes aren't Christians. Indeed you do not need to be a Christian to be involved in social transformation, give time to charity or go all out to risk your life for the sake of others. However it is our Christian calling to be involved in these – as agents of healing, channels of love, symbols of hope etc. How have we been faithful is a question we need to constantly ask ourselves. And as we put our hands on the deck, do not start thinking we can take credit for what we do, or that God will love us more. But one thing I am sure, it can make others come to know Him, appreciate Him and love Him more.

'Selah' is an isolated word found in certain psalms (e.g. Ps 3, 4, 62 etc) and Hab 3 has uncertain meaning. Most likely though, it is a liturgical notation that calls for a brief musical interlude or for a brief liturgical response by congregation. Therefore 'selah' may mean "stop and listen".

'Selah' is chosen as the title of this newsletter based on this understanding. Here we would like to call for a time of pause and consider on what is said here regarding our spirituality, our life as Christian.

Source: NIV Study Bible: Psalms: Authorship & Title. Zondervan.
Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: Selah.

In the recent Szechuan earthquake, I heard of a testimony by an old lady (who does not know God personally) after being handed water and rice. She said 'I can see God is present in this place'. This is what we want to see. This is what God is asking of us - to be more like Jesus. This is the aim of spirituality. We need a spirituality that's true to the heart - one that can respond to God's desire for man. Micah 6:8 says 'He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.'

May we take courage and work this out powerfully in our life!

Let me share with you a poem:

'When Hitler Attacked'

When Hitler attacked the Jews I was not a Jew, therefore, I was not concerned.

And when Hitler attacked the Catholics, I was not a Catholic, and therefore, I was not concerned.

And when Hitler attacked the unions and the industrialists, I was not a member of the unions and I was not concerned.

Then, Hitler attacked me and the Protestant church—there was nobody left to be concerned."

[NB. Most widely circulated version 'First they came...' is attributed to Pastor Martin Niemöller (1892-1984)]

Peter Young and his wife Betty grew up in the United Kingdom. They came to Malaysia (single!) in 1954. Their lives were never the same again after a visit to India in 1978. It was during this trip that God opened their eyes to the deep poverty that the people in this country suffered. Everywhere they turned, they saw the poor begging for food and money. They realized then, that Jesus Christ did more than just share the Good News with the people verbally. He healed the sick, fed the hungry and met the physical needs of those who came to Him. And they felt challenged to do the same. They returned to Malaysia with a vision of the Malaysian Church doing more to help the desperate plight of many in the country. They met other young people at that time who shared the same vision and decided that action should be taken up to set up some social ministry work here. Malaysian Care was born in 1978, with Peter as its first executive director. Peter also became one of the first to speak of self-advocacy and co-founded Dignity & Services, an organization which believes that persons with learning disabilities have the same fundamental rights as their fellow citizens - the right to enjoy a decent life as normal and full as possible.

Now, even at the age of 82, Peter Young regularly writes for the Micah Mandate website (<http://themicahmandate.org>) urging people to constructively engage in matters of social conscience, public service and nation building. He lives his life practicing the gems he has discovered from God's Word.

Goh Keat Peng is a man known to many of this current generation. Growing up in a Buddhist family, and knowing Buddhism very well, his conversion took place when he heard a testimony of persecution for Christ's sake at home. A teacher by profession, he ventured into many areas, where others wouldn't go, for the sake of God's glory. A man who speaks up for truth, no matter the cost, he also constantly voices his concerns and makes stands that would affect him personally. A keen watcher of Malaysian politics, he entered party politics by becoming a founding member of the Parti Keadilan in 1999. Later on, his involvement with World Vision took him to East Timor to help rebuild the country. Currently he serves with an inter-religious society, whose mission is to safeguard the status of religious freedom in Malaysia. Despite being at the age of 'retirement', his constant involvement in many aspects of society, reveals his heart for the gospel, which keeps him going.

Questions for Reflection:

1. A spiritual person is first made of the 'contemplative example' of Mary followed by the 'active example' of Martha (Lk 10:38-42). Do I have both in me?

2. Ecclesiastes 3:7 '*A time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak*'.

Look within and around you. In responding to spirituality that's practical, spirituality that's true, what is the one area I can be involved in or further strengthen my involvement? How will I carry it out?

Books to Read:

1. Foster, Richard. *Celebration of Discipline*
2. Nouwen, Henry. *Adam: God's Beloved*
3. Young, Peter. *The Gift of Daily Bread - Some thoughts on Christian Social Responsibility in Malaysia.*