

A WORD FROM THE DEAN

DISCIPLESHIP: A Call to Obedience, Community & Missions

ALVIN TAN, Dean

On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, ² and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³ Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴ And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵ And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." ⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷ They signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." ⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." ¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him." Luke 5:1–11 (ESV)



When Jesus first called His disciples to follow Him, He brought them through the experience of a miracle that revealed Christ's divine powers and Lordship over creation. The disciples came to see for themselves that if they followed Christ as His disciples, He would require them to live by faith and absolute obedience to Him. His disciples would learn to serve and, when they failed, be humble to come before the Presence and Holiness of God and confess to each other in the community of faith. Discipleship and missions are two sides of the same coin. To follow our Master is also to follow His passion for the lost by leaving everything to "catch men" for the Lord.

Discipleship is a Call to Faith and Obedience to Our Master.

Jesus instructed Peter: "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon Peter answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!" (vv. 4–5) Peter and his fishermen friends were expert fishermen. They had worked hard all night and caught no fish but now Jesus the carpenter was asking Peter to move their boat out into the deep waters again and let down their nets to catch fish. Peter did not understand what Jesus was doing and why, but Simon responded to Jesus' call to move into the deep waters in obedience: "...But at your word I will let down the nets." (v. 5)

Jesus continues to call us to discipleship, to live our lives by faith and in obedience to Him. We may not understand why and what He is doing but our response is to obey and walk with Him by faith.

Is Jesus in your boat today? Is He asking you to move into the deep, and will you by faith obey Him?

Discipleship is Serving and Confessing in Community.

Discipleship is to be lived within the Body Life of Christ: "...And when they (disciples) had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They

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FROM OUR STUDENTS

Serving Displaced Communities in Malaysia

As part of their training, DTC students go on a yearly cross-cultural placement. A team went to Klang, Malaysia, from November 20 to 30, 2023. The team of 15 comprised 9 students, three children (student's family), and three faculty members, representing seven nationalities. They partnered with ElShaddai, a Christian-based humanitarian NGO reaching displaced and marginalised diaspora communities of various nationalities in Malaysia through compassion services and social work. Students share their reflections:

EGA MAGGANG (INDONESIA)

"The people in this picture (on the right) – the DTC team, kids, ElShaddai staff, refugees – are representative of my experience. It is a busy and messy picture, full of people going in different directions. It shows the intensity of ministry, where everyone does their own task to achieve the same goal."

For more of Ega's pictures with reflections, go to bit.ly/4bf3KXb or scan the QR code.



EFRAIN BALAWAG (THE PHILIPPINES)

We encountered different beautiful faces from the Middle East and Asia—Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Iran, Afghanistan. I gained insights into what the Bible says in a practical sense. Firstly, love your neighbour. The most effective way the world understands the love of God is by loving them through practical things such as dining with them and helping them have their basic needs, such as food, shelter, and clothing. It is not by massive church structures and nice music, but through extending what we have to people in need. Give them equal opportunities like what we have, like education and work. Secondly, we need the whole church, all parts of the body of Christ, to continue the work of God—to declare his glory. Different gifts helped us accomplish the task efficiently, with joy in our hearts.

ASAPH LEE ZONG GENG (SINGAPORE)

From a girls' shelter for displaced mothers and their babies to primary and secondary school education, skills training (e.g., air-con repairs), and tie-ups with a UK university, El Shaddai showed that they are serious about educating refugees and their children and enabling them to make a living. I saw the impact of the teachers' work. A Rohingya student looked at his teacher, Sophia, with so much respect and love. It was like Jesus giving life to the student and his family through Sophia.

HUỖNH THỊ QUỖNH GIAO (VIETNAM)

"How wonderful is God's love?" I repeated it to myself many times on this trip. Because of God's incredible love, the students I met were happy, confident, and radiant as sunflowers blooming toward the sun. I could not even see the sad past of fleeing their not-so-peaceful country. I knew that the smiling faces were because love was fulfilled in their life through the teachers and staff of ElShaddai who tried to bring God's love to them through education, taking care of them, and giving them a "home". I asked myself, "How would God use me as salt and light to help others smile as the sunflower blossoms wherever He put me?"

JIM LEONG (SINGAPORE)

It is inspiring to see the staff and volunteers' commitment to serving those in need. The organization never lost sight of its primary mission of bringing the good news of Jesus. They live out what the Apostle Paul says in 1 Cor. 9:22, to become all things to all men so that by all possible means he might save some. They actively invite missionaries from other countries to participate with them. Thank God for giving such a kingdom mindset and vision to the leaders and staff.

OYUN-ERDENE SUKHBAATAR (OYUKA) (MONGOLIA)

It was my first time on a mission trip abroad. Not only was it a fulfilling experience of service, but also an extraordinary time of learning from my teammates and the individuals I served alongside. It was inspiring to witness God's work in action.

DON TAN (SINGAPORE)

I entered the mission trip without anticipation. The situation got worse when I lost my voice. The program at a school was a turning point. The youths resonated with the values shared, highlighting how our lives differ with the power of the Lord. I realised I had overlooked God's presence on the trip. This was a valuable lesson about humility and acknowledging God's involvement in all aspects of our mission.

CHAND MASIH (PAKISTAN)

It was eye-opening to meet multinational people and hear their stories. They had one thing in common: the hand of God brought them there to hear the good news and experience his love through his people. We visited an Iranian family who struggled with finances and doubted their faith. God gave me the opportunity to share my testimony. They found encouragement and prayed with me.



A Lesson in Trusting God



BANN SAMBOR (CAMBODIA), a second-year student, went on a mission trip to Calapan (Oriental Mindoro), The Philippines, from November 23 to December 6. He was hosted by Southwestern Training Center For Global Leaders, a theological institution that also does church planting and outreaches.

I spent the first five days with a team from a church in Singapore, and then on my own for nine days with local ministry workers. I am grateful to God for all the opportunities He gave me to work with children, youth, church leaders, pastors, prisoners, church members, and students. I preached, led prayers and Bible studies, shared my testimony, gave encouragement, did activities with the children, and had fellowship with believers. I was filled with joy and blessings from God.

This was my first cross-cultural mission trip that I went on alone. When I was with a group, I relied more on the group or the leader, but when I was alone, I had to do everything by myself. I realised that serving God in the mission field is a challenging task. It can be exhausting, lonely, and disappointing, and I often find myself in need of motivation to keep going.

I learned a valuable lesson about "trusting God". Before leaving, I was preoccupied with concerns about my budget, language barriers, and health. When I landed, I was worried about my messages, testimony, and preparation. One day, the local pastor informed me that we would be visiting a jail the next day for ministry and that I needed to share. I wondered how I would be able to do it. I began to pray. I asked myself, "Why am I so anxious? Why do I not trust God?" The Word of God came to my mind: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding." (Proverbs 3:5-6) "My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:2) I returned to trusting and relying on God's guidance, and everything I did was meaningful and fruitful and went very smoothly. I experienced the presence of God and know that He will never abandon me. All I need to do is trust, pray, obey Him, and follow His will. I must admit that my strength and intellect are limited. God is the Creator of heaven and earth and has power over all things. I must rely on Him rather than myself.

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signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats." (vv. 6–7)

Jesus' call to discipleship is not meant to be lived alone but to be a part of the body of Christ, to support each other and share each other's joy and sorrow. To be a part of the church community is to be able to laugh together in joyful times, and shed tears with each other, and share the pain in times of sorrow.

An important part of community life is the practice of confession in community. "...But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon." (vv. 8–10)

When Simon Peter saw the large number of fish caught, he did not count them nor what he could have earned from selling them. Instead, Peter experienced a spiritual revelation. Through the miracle Peter realised that Jesus was no ordinary teacher and that Peter was in the presence of the God who is Holy. He responded immediately by falling on his knees before Jesus and confessing his sinfulness in the presence of his friends. As a community of Jesus' disciples, we are called to

confess our sins before God and be vulnerable to seek our brothers and sisters to pray for us in our weakness. "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed." (James 5:16)

Are you part of a community of faith where you can share your joy, sorrow, or pain? Can you openly confess your failures and weaknesses?

Discipleship is Reaching Out in Missions.

"And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.' And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him." (vv. 10–11). Jesus' call to Peter and us today is to refocus and set our ultimate purpose in life to reach out to others who do not know Jesus and help them to come to faith in Him through knowing, loving, worshipping, and serving Him. Jesus called Peter to a renewed purpose in life: "Stop chasing the fish but start catching men". If we "catch fish", the fish we catch will eventually be dead fish, but if we "catch men" for Christ, these men will continue to be "alive" and live their lives for Christ.

Are there things that you have not left behind to follow Jesus? How have you been "catching men" with Jesus?

May the Lord's rich blessings be with you all.



VISIT TO DTC: Former DTC dean David Harley and his wife Rosemary met alumni and members of the community for afternoon tea on December 13, 2023. The couple, now retired in Exeter, UK, were visiting Thailand and Singapore. The couple served as visiting lecturers of DTC in 1995, and David as Dean from 1996 to 1999. Previously, he had served as Principal of All Nations Christian College in the UK. After leaving DTC, he became General Director of OMF International. They presented to DTC their book, *Together in Mission: From All Nations to All Nations* (2022), which recounts their 50 years in mission.

ANNOUNCEMENT

We welcome applicants for the new academic year July 2024 to May 2025: Learn about DTC's programmes at dtc.org.sg or email us at disciple@dtc.org.sg or call 6256-3208.

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