



## A WORD FROM THE DEAN



# Discipleship Involves Right Belief and Commitment

Discipleship is a response in which one recognises that Jesus is the Son of God, that his words are

indeed “the words of eternal life” (John 6:68), and, as a result, decides to follow his lead and obey his commands. Accordingly, being a disciple of Jesus entails right belief (about Jesus and his word), and commitment. In the gospels, we find Jesus insisting upon the first when he taught, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciple” (John 8:31), and upon the second when he demanded, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23).

Having right belief has always mattered to Christians. The reason is we believe that God has not only revealed himself to humankind, but that he has also revealed truths about himself in scripture. Right belief about the divine and his purposes for the world is thus vital, if not essential, to developing a personal relationship with God. Recall how Jesus has insisted, “Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.” (John 7:17).

Most of us have learned that the pathway of discipleship requires of us more than mere acquiescence to right information or knowledge about the divine. We know instinctively that being a disciple of Jesus is not about being “right”; rather, it is to be transformed to become more like Jesus in our attitudes, direction, and conduct. Recall St. Paul’s heart-wrenching words to the

Galatian disciples that he was in travail “until Christ be formed” in them (Gal 4:19). Spiritual formation in Christ is no passive process; it calls for total commitment on our part to follow him with our whole self—with the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

An old-time illustration may help to show how commitment functions in discipleship vis-à-vis right belief. The latter may be compared to the inscription on a seal, whereas the former, the action by which one makes an impression with the seal on paper or wax. Ultimately, it is the resultant impression which enables one to see more satisfactorily the inscription on the seal since inscriptions of this type are usually cast in reverse, and therefore not distinct to the eye. In like manner, right belief is confirmed and elucidated by a life lived in total commitment.

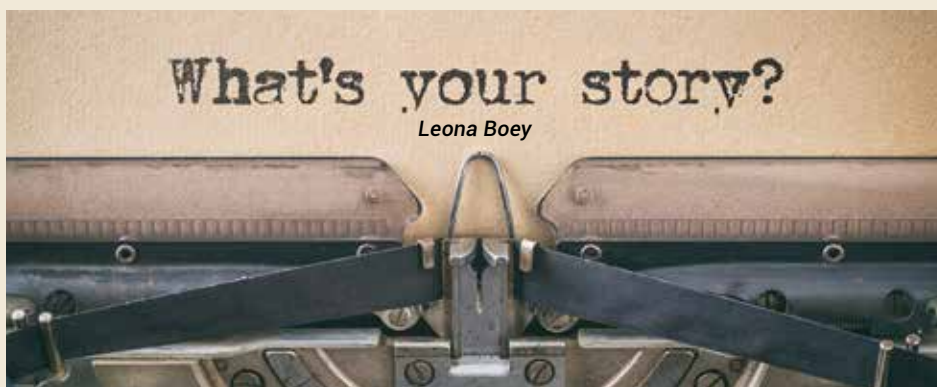
This understanding of commitment should direct us to attend to our interior life. As Dallas Willard tells us, it is from the depths of our being that “we see our world and interpret reality ... make our choices, break forth into action, [and] try to change our world.” (D. Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012, p.13).

To Jesus, profession of right belief and inward commitment to his person are not at odds with each other. Both are fully affirmed, bequeathing to us a desire to make the psalmist’s prayer truly ours:

... thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. (Ps 51:6 KJV).



Dr Lim K Tham  
Dean



"Once there were four children whose names were Peter, Susan, Edmond, and Lucy."

Thus begins the first of C.S. Lewis' classic Chronicles of Narnia series, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950). *Time* magazine included the novel in its list of the 100 Best Young-Adult Books of All Time<sup>1</sup>. In 2005, a movie based on the book was produced by Walt Disney. Lewis' allegorical Christian tale has succeeded in capturing the hearts of millions of children and adults throughout the years, including those with no or little background of Christianity.

To engage people in our modern world obsessed with technology and intellectualism, we need to rediscover the power of good storytelling. Storytelling is not just for children. Storytelling helps us to communicate deep, life-changing truths across ages, cultures and boundaries. I would like to suggest that learning to tell stories – and to listen to others' stories – is an essential skill for missionaries, pastors, teachers and leaders. Here are some reasons why:

### 1. Stories stir up our emotions and engage the whole person

Instead of dry, propositional truths that speak only to the intellect, stories engage listeners in both their hearts and minds, leading to self-awareness and life change. The prime example of this is when King David was confronted by Nathan the prophet not with direct accusation (which would most likely have ended with Nathan's punishment) but indirectly with a story, resulting in David's confession of sin (2 Sam 12:1–13).

### 2. The Bible is a storybook

By saying this, I do not mean that the Bible is a work of fiction, but that the Bible is primarily not a historical record, nor a theological treatise (although it contains both), but a storybook. All 66 books of the Bible speak to the story of God's creation and his dealings with a people he is pleased to call his own. Jewish traditions revolve around the reminder and re-telling of the story of their people from the Exodus to the Promised Land. Jesus taught impactfully and effectively through the vehicle of

parables and stories. How sad that we have systematised the exciting, sad, horrifying and challenging stories and parables of the Bible into dry doctrines!

### 3. Many cultures have a strong tradition of storytelling

Many cultures are more familiar with imparting wisdom in stories passed on from generation to generation rather than from western concepts of rational argument. If we tell the stories of the Bible and Christianity compellingly, we will engage people from different cultures much more quickly and effectively than by "teaching" them propositionally. Kosuke Koyama's struggles to communicate the gospel from his Japanese-western background to Thai villagers led him to propose "neighbourology" as a way of gospel presentation through stories shared in the kitchen instead of in a classroom<sup>2</sup>.

### 4. We are each of us part of God's story

Stories are not just for other people. We are each of us part of God's story, a miniscule but essential part of the story that God has written. Our listeners, too, are part of God's story. Can we tell a God-story that makes sense of our times, our places, our cultures and our experiences? Many people, young and old, are looking for such a meaningful story today.

Storytelling is a powerful way of engaging people and conveying gospel truth that cuts across cultures, ages and educational levels. H. Nichol (1896) wrote as much in his well-loved hymn, "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations". However, most of us have lost the skill of storytelling. We need to re-learn the art of telling and listening to stories. Fortunately, the Bible is full of stories! Why not take a story from the Bible and tell it from a new angle? Or write out your own life story as God's story of you, and share it with someone else. You may be surprised at the response!



*Leona is a teacher and pastor who enjoys a good story. She is the mother of two boys aged almost 19. She has taught Study Skills at DTC.*

1 "100 Best Young Adult Books". *Time*. Retrieved from <https://time.com/collection/100-best-ya-books/>

2 Koyama, Kosuke (1974). *Water Buffalo Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.



# LEARNING TO SLOW DOWN: What I learnt from a retreat at DTC

Leslie Koh

The moment I stepped into the peaceful compound tucked away in the corner of Chancery Lane, I could see that Discipleship Training Centre's offer to make its facilities available for personal (or group) retreats was a great one.

It couldn't have been a better place for a local retreat. For four days, the residential theological school became a welcome break from the routine of life, a refuge from the busyness of the world, and a sanctuary for the soul.

The room (one of two that have been prepared for guests) was welcoming and spotless. The surroundings were tranquil, almost idyllic. The people were warm and friendly.

For four wonderful days, I did nothing but spend unhurried time with God, chatted with staff and students, wandered around the compound and the neighbourhood, and simply savoured the opportunity to slow down and get away from the stress and routine of daily life.

Life became simple and unencumbered. Free of a schedule (save for lunch and dinner-time), I did what I felt like. I took my time to read God's Word and talk to him, read a book I had not got round to for months, napped when I felt drowsy, and took slow, leisurely strolls around DTC's beautifully-kept garden.

As I learnt to slow down, I began to see life a little differently.

No doubt, most of us have many duties and responsibilities that take up much of our days. Work, studies, family, caregiving can take up every bit of our waking time, so much so that they crowd out time for God, rest, and self.

Yet, over those four days, as I took my time to do what I wanted and took part in some of DTC's community activities, I discovered two insights into how I can learn to slow down and appreciate this life that God has given me.

## ACHIEVING VS DOING

One, I need to stop trying to "achieve".

Living in Singapore, it's so easy to get caught up in the constant striving for productivity and efficiency. Everything can become an item on the to-do list (including Quiet Time and prayer) – to be done quickly and efficiently, ticked off so that we can move on to the next item.

I've since realised that I need to take a second look at these tasks and reflect on their intrinsic value. Instead of

trying to get them out of the way as quickly as possible, I can ask myself: Why am I doing this? What is it worth? Can I spend more time and effort on it? How can I make it really count?

For me, this means taking my time to read the Bible and pray, knowing it is a privilege and joy as a child of God. To chat with others, seeing it as meaningful fellowship with God's loved ones. To rest, knowing that my body needs it as a necessary break (and not a time-waster). To read books, remembering that it is not a luxury but part of learning and exposing myself to wider knowledge and understanding.

Two, I need to learn to enjoy the "doing".

Ecclesiastes 3:1 describes "a time for everything, and a season for every activity". Everything, the Teacher reminds us, is a gift from God. That includes every duty and task—as well as the time to do it.

"There is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live," observes Ecclesiastes 3:12–13. "That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God."

I thus find myself challenged by this question: Can I learn to enjoy everything I do? Can I see each task as something of value in itself, and not just as a means to a greater end?

Instead of rushing to clear up after dinner, can I learn to focus on washing the plates and cleaning the table well? Instead of rushing to the supermarket or MRT, can I learn to enjoy the walk itself? Instead of rushing to finish a writing assignment, can I just soak myself in working on the words?

I'd highly recommend a retreat for anyone who's stressed, exhausted, worn out, or simply tired of the daily routine. The unhurried time of reflection and rest is refreshing, for it allows us to take stock and spend time with our Creator. And I'd highly recommend a stay at DTC.

But even more importantly, I believe many of us can learn to see our routines and lead our lives a little differently. Not just to slow down, but to appreciate and to enjoy the tasks and time that we have been given—and to find satisfaction in all our toil, for all this is the gift of God.

Leslie serves at Our Daily Bread Ministries as a writer and editor.



## RECENT NEWS

# SENDING OUT

DTC held its 53rd Thanksgiving and Valedictory Service on May 19, 2022, at Bartley Christian Church. We bid farewell to five students who completed their studies in the academic year. They were:

- Sabbatical Studies Programme: Phoebe Zhi Wenrou (in absentia), Melvin Lee and Dr Lee Chee San;
- Graduate Diploma in Intercultural Studies: Yau Gee Lam
- Master in Christian Studies: Jeannie Koh

Photo: Song Cheng Hock



Leaving students (from left) Melvin, Chee San, Gee and Jeannie.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

# DTC APPOINTS NEW FACULTY MEMBER



Dr. Vincent Ooi Kean Hong, 50, is due to join DTC in September this year as a full-time Faculty member after serving as lecturer at Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary, in Penang, Malaysia for more than 10 years.

He completed his first PhD in physics at the University of Southampton in 1999, and his second in biblical interpretation and Christian spirituality at Durham University in 2011. In between, he pastored a church in the UK for about eight years.

Vincent preaches regularly and is interested in how Christian traditions, theology, worship and spirituality could also inform and enrich the interpretation of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, for Christian discipleship.

Vincent is a member of St. George's Anglican Church, Penang.

# DTC COURSES OPEN TO AUDIT STUDENTS

If you would like to attend a course at **DTC in Term 2 from 20 Sept to 11 Nov 2022**, you may consider applying to be an audit student.

Audit students are expected to attend all lessons and complete the course (weekly, over eight weeks) but are not expected to do assignments. Although they do not live in, we expect them to appreciate DTC's ethos of training in the context of a small, cross-cultural community of students and teachers living together and sharing in study, worship and recreation. By participating in the community, they can be a blessing to others and be blessed as well.

Term 2 courses include Missions in Acts, the Psalms, Biblical Theology, and Christian Spirituality. Classes are held only in the morning.

For enquiries, please e-mail [disciple@singnet.com.sg](mailto:disciple@singnet.com.sg) or call **6256-3208**.

## Giving to DTC

Donors may issue a cheque made out to Discipleship Training Centre Ltd. and mail it to **33A Chancery Lane, Singapore 309554**; or transfer the funds to DTC's account number **024-901049-4** with DBS Singapore by ATM, Internet banking or telegraphic transfer. Donors may also scan the PayNow QR code. **UEN Number:** 197100578E

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