

DTC Newsletter November, 2007

A word from the Dean

How to Survive in the Field



Enjoying light moments help the Gopal family to survive in Nepal

(1) *Take care of ourselves that we may better take care of others.* When the head of the Nursing home heard that Dad, the carer, had passed away before Mum, the invalid, she commented, “so often the carer goes before the one cared for.” As part of flight safety information, cabin crews instruct parents to place oxygen masks on themselves first before attending to a child. This goes against parental instincts. But a parent who has blacked out is no help to anyone. In Acts 20.28 Paul exhorted the Ephesian Elders to “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. . .” Paul probably had in mind their life and doctrine (1 Timothy 4.16). Paul’s exhortation may be extended to cover our overall wellness. If we are unwell, we are less able to help others and more prone to not surviving.

(2) *A ‘NO’ is not necessarily a negative.* A no to a non-priority facilitates a yes to a priority. Being a Christian worker does not oblige us to respond to every call for help nor every invitation to ministry. We may burn out if we do. I remember being asked if I would speak to a youth group any Saturday in the following year. When I said no the person was naturally surprised and disappointed. Surely I had one Saturday free! I went on to explain I had certain God-given priorities. If I kept saying yes to non-priorities I would not have time for my priorities. He readily accepted my explanation. Mark 2.36-39 tells us Jesus retired to a solitary place to pray after healing and delivering many who had been brought to him. The next morning, Peter and the others found him and told him that everyone was looking for him, presumably others who were sick or demon-possessed. There was much need there but Jesus said, “Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” This was Jesus’ priority. Certainty of this enabled him to say no to a non-priority, albeit a needy non-priority, and yes to his priority. It is so important to discern our God-given

priorities so we will have peace before God when we say no and when we say yes.

(3) *I am not the Saviour, Jesus is! I am but an instrument, a servant.*

I once got caught up in a deep family conflict. It reached the stage where I felt a successful resolution rested on me so I spent much time and energy trying to resolve the conflict. Not surprisingly symptoms of over-stress appeared. I began to reflect on the situation. I wrote my reflections in a pastoral letter. “Once again I have been experiencing the familiar symptoms of stress despite having counselled others how to deal with stress! . . . What has brought this about? (Among other things) a saviour-complex where I think a satisfactory solution rests with me. But I am not a saviour, I am only an instrument of God for him to use as he wills. I must recognise my limitations and the boundaries of my responsibilities. I don’t have to take on board unnecessary guilt for not being able to accomplish something beyond my responsibility and ability. My responsibility is to be an instrument, not a Saviour.”



Abby knows adequate rest is important for surviving in the field

(4) *I am what I am by the grace of God.*

Tim Stafford in his book, Do you sometimes feel like a nobody? tells of the time an eighteen year old cerebral palsy person attended a Christian camp for young boys and girls. He asked for an opportunity to say a few words to the campers. Let me quote, “The next morning he got up in front of the group right after breakfast. He tried to hold his hands still but he was nervous. When he finally got his composure, his first words were: “I am what I am by the grace of God.” Everything suddenly became dead silent. There wasn’t a person in the room who wasn’t hit by that statement. There he stood with that twisted body saying, “I am what I am by the grace of God.” This really spoke to me because I used to suffer from a deep inferiority complex. If God loves and accepts me as I am (in Christ) who am I to reject myself.

My low self-esteem meant I was excessively affected by criticism or praise. Once when my daughter Michelle was about five she asked me if she sang alright. Now and then she would stray from the tune and her older brother and sister had no hesitation letting her know! I told her she sang alright – given she was trying her best and her

singing voice had yet to stabilise. Some time afterwards, she went a bit off key again and drew the usual unhelpful comments. Her response was, "Anyway Daddy says I sing alright so there!" What her father thought of her counted more than what others thought of her. What my heavenly Father thinks of me should matter more than what others think of me. The Lord's healing has given me great freedom in this area. I am no longer a 'slave' to the opinions and comments of others in terms of what I think I should or should not do and be.

(5) *Justification by faith through grace.*

A seminary principal said the main problem with missionaries in a country he visited was they did not understand justification by faith and its application to them in their ongoing Christian life and ministry. They failed to appropriate the truth that God accepted them simply on the basis of what Christ did on the Cross and never on the basis of what they did. As a recent song says, "Nothing that I do can make him love me more and nothing that I do can make him love me less." This does not mean God will never be disappointed or displeased with me. But it does mean his love and acceptance of me remains unchanged. Here are two implications of this truth.

Firstly, it should keep me from unnecessary discouragement, depression and guilt when I feel I have failed the Lord – again! This was driven home to me some years back in my contact with recovered Christian drug addicts who had lapsed back to drugs. Their deep sense of shame and failure hindered their coming back for help. Worse, they felt their failure and backsliding had disqualified them in the sight of God and forfeited any right to be accepted back by him. This is wrong thinking, of course. God's acceptance of us is never on the basis of our own righteousness which will fail. But on the basis of Christ's righteousness which never fails!

When we sin and fail, we may break our fellowship with God and lose our peace but we do not lose our justification. Our justification is like a two-handed grip. From time to time we may let go but God continues to hold on to us, on the basis of Christ's unfailing righteousness which has been credited to us. What a gloriously comforting assurance to know that God's acceptance of me is not tied to my frail, imperfect righteousness but is based on Christ's perfect righteousness.

Secondly, a proper understanding of justification by faith through grace should do away with apathy and nominalism. When people are told they are justified by faith and not by works they may not be motivated to do good works. Worse, they may exploit God's grace. However, the opposite was true in Martin Luther's day. Justification by faith through grace was a liberating and energising doctrine which freed and motivated men and women to do an abundance

of good works, in loving grateful response to God's wonderful grace! A proper understanding and grasp of justification by faith through grace ought to have a tremendously liberating effect on us. It ought to motivate us to want to grow in righteousness. And to persevere.

(The above is an abbreviated version of a talk I gave to Christian workers in a restricted Asian country. They had asked me to speak on "How to survive in the field." After prayer and thought I decided to share about principles I have learned which have helped me to survive.)

Sugayas-missionaries in residence



Sho and Yoko Sugaya reminisce at a pastoral group breakfast outing

(From time to time I have made it known that DTC alumni are very welcome to spend all or part of their Sabbatical at DTC for rest, refreshing, reflection and research. Sho Sugaya is the Japan OMF Home Director designate. He is scheduled to take up his position in April 2008. After eleven years of ministry with OMF in Cambodia, Sho, Yoko and their daughters Mei and Yui joined DTC at the end of June. I had invited them to stay at DTC as 'missionaries in residence.' They do not have teaching responsibilities however they participate fully in DTC activities and community life. Students and faculty have expressed to me what an encouragement the Sugaya family has been. John Ting)

JT: *Sho and Yoko, why were you keen to spend eight months at DTC instead of returning immediately to Japan after finishing your ministry in Cambodia?*

S: Frankly we were exhausted after eleven years of ministry in Cambodia. Before returning to Japan we really needed time for rest and reflection. Once back in Japan we will not have such an opportunity. I want to rest and to reflect missiologically.

Where was the best place for this? DTC was ideal. DTC was also close to OMF International Headquarters so I could be in contact with the OMF leadership. Singapore was also a good half-way point between Cambodia and Japan. Involvement with the Japanese Christian Fellowship in Singapore would facilitate our transition back to Japanese society. Another factor was the presence of Alvin and Daisy at DTC. We began and ended our ministries in Cambodia at about the same time. We had a lot of shared experiences. We feel very comfortable with them.

I remember when we arrived at DTC I saw the words, "To be with him and to be sent out." I

realised I had neglected to be with him because of busyness, especially toward the end of our missionary service. So God has brought me back to DTC to relearn this. Fifteen years ago I trained at DTC but as a single. I felt sad that I was not able then to participate as a family. In fact, a long time ago, when Yoko met Ellie Lau she had a dream to study at DTC in the future. Now God has granted her wish, before returning to Japan.

Y: I had a strong need for a break. Our eleven years in Cambodia were very eventful and I did not have sufficient awareness while I was in the situation. So I needed time to be able to stop, reflect and meditate. There were times I felt lost. I needed time to reflect on who and where I am in God's purposes. For Sho the place to do this was DTC, nowhere else.

S: OMF Japan home side has been very understanding and sympathetic. So much so, they extended our Sabbatical. It is very unusual in Japan to have such a relatively long Sabbatical. We are very thankful for their understanding.

JT: *Have you been satisfied with your experience thus far?*

S: Yes although I have been a bit surprised that my English reading ability has dropped so it now takes me longer to read. My conversational English is better because we conversed with our OMF colleagues and other missionaries. The initial period was quite stressful because of all the problems we had over visas. Because of our experience in Cambodia I find I have much more sympathy for students from countries where there is unrest, coups and war. Previously I heard about these things but they were not real to me. Having experienced the coup of 1997 and the students' unrest of 1998 in Cambodia, I can now sympathise.



Yui, Mei, Sho and Yoko

Y: I am very thankful for my time thus far at DTC. The structure of community life has been helpful. I have appreciated the discipline of washing duty, gardening and the morning chapels especially the sermons by the lecturers. Each lecturer has a different style but all have been a good model for me. Having a daily structured lifestyle for example, jobs, sports, duties etc., is helpful for a person on the verge of burn-out. Being able to pray more personally with others like Gul and Joan has been encouraging. Our flat has provided us with space and privacy so we are generally not involved in the things that take place upstairs in the students'

quarters but we have been able to observe some of the things taking place amongst the students. I am impressed at how aware the faculty are of issues in the community. When we first arrived we were encouraged that Mei and Yui quickly integrated. Community members reached out to our whole family so the girls fitted in well, and felt at home and belonged.

DTC is like being beside quiet still waters. It is a place of refuge where we can be ourselves and free from pressure.

Mission Trips

In their two years of training at DTC, students are required to complete a two to four week cross-cultural field experience each year. In alternate years this is carried out in small teams led by DTC teachers. Last September three teams travelled to an Asian country, Malaysia and Cambodia respectively.

One team visited a **Creative Access Nation**.



A DTC alumna talking about her counselling ministry

The team was greatly enriched and encouraged by the diverse, holistic ministries of our alumni and friends there. The team members gained valuable insights into the creativity, wisdom and sensitivity needed when ministering in a more restricted situation.

A second team led by Jeanette Hui, went to Batu Pahat, Malaysia to visit **Gereja Grace**.



Team with hosts

The purpose was to encourage the members and to observe the various ministries of the church. The church has an English speaking congregation of approximately 180 members comprising mainly retirees. In recent years the Lord has multiplied their ministries to Vietnamese and Nepalese migrant workers. The church's local outreach through their early intervention programme for people with disabilities has been a great blessing to the

community.

The team enjoyed warm and generous hospitality from church members. It spent most of the time interacting with Christians at their regular Home Groups, Ladies Fellowship, Nepalese Fellowship, Sunday School, Youth Fellowship and Sunday morning service. We were mutually encouraged when we shared our testimonies with church members. We were particularly struck by the love of God expressed through the commitment of staff and volunteers in serving the needy around them.

Cambodia was the destination of the third team led by Eileen Poh. The team spent time fellowshiping with our alumni and observing and sharing in their ministries in the capital Phnom Penh and in the rural town of Kratie. Given its relatively recent history the trip was a real eye-opener for the team. One team member actually experienced stress trauma while visiting the site of the killing fields and the Museum of Genocide. The team could better understand the trauma and dysfunction still experienced by many Cambodians. The ladies enjoyed the time spent in the markets as well as eating exotic food like fried spiders!



Fried spider! Yummy

First years share

I have invited two of our first year students to share with us why they chose to come to DTC last July and what have been their impressions and experience thus far. **Jeannie Koh**, from Singapore, was senior counsellor and manager at the National University of Singapore's Counselling Centre. She is an active member of the Orchard Road Presbyterian Church. **Yvette Romero** from the Philippines spent the last eight years ministering to students through the Philippine IVCF (FES).

Jeannie:



Jeannie Koh

As a counsellor for over fifteen years, I am privy to private and intimate details of people's personal struggles. I felt that behind each story, there was

always some greater and deeper spiritual and existential question. I then felt this need to engage deeply with the Word of God in order to be more equipped to help others and myself. I was also fairly burnt out, suffering from compassion fatigue and facing some personal family demands at home. In the light of all of these, I was looking for some place in Singapore where I could learn the Word in a rich and meaningful way that would be rigorous and set in the context of a small community so that the knowledge I was to learn could be "made flesh" in relationships. I needed some time to get away from the Singapore rat race, to refresh myself in God and his Word but I could not leave Singapore because of my obligations at home.

After discussing with my pastor various options on where to study, I decided on DTC because it met both criteria of good solid teaching in a community setting. DTC has met and surpassed many of my hopes and desires and even met needs I did not know I had. First of all, I have been impressed with the quality and rigour of the studies. Secondly, I have been even more struck by the depth of integrity of the faculty and students. Here are people who share their desire for God and at the same time their sense of their own fallen-ness and struggles. This is a place that gives hope to someone like me who equally struggles and yet wishes to follow Christ. While DTC is a busy place full of studying and regular chores, along with relating across cultures, it is also a place that reveals the life of simplicity of faith and trust that God calls every one of us to live. In addition, the very location and setting of DTC is a wonderful one, nestled among greenery which is like a little sanctuary in the heart of Singapore. DTC's premises have supported its primary function to be a place for disciples to be trained.

Being a Singaporean and admittedly very much into the competitiveness and need to justify all efforts in terms of economics, I have also been very impressed with DTC's commitment to dedicated and intensive discipling that does not always make "economic" sense but makes a whole lot of kingdom sense. For example, the faculty-student ratio is a wonderful and delightful average of three students to one faculty. This allows for such personal attention. The greatest blessing for me has been the ability to discuss a wide range of issues with any of the faculty members. This availability is a luxury, and I count myself very blessed to receive such close guidance, prayers, (at times the necessary but painful rebukes), mentoring and teaching.

I thank God for DTC for, because of all of the above, I have been able to recover from the Singapore rat race, and I have had the time and space to think about what life is about and what God has in store for me. It is my prayer that the investment made in my life shall not go to waste, but shall be made useful for the glory of our Father.

Yvette:



Yvette Romero

I knew there were many bible training schools in Singapore that I could choose from. But one thing that I have been reflecting on is why I decided to come to DTC? First, I only explored DTC's website). I realized that the rest didn't matter to me because I learned that DTC is not only a Theological School but its direction is moving toward being a cross-cultural ministry training centre. I felt there was something in DTC that I would like to pursue and that is living in its small multi-culture community. I wanted to experience what it means to live together in a community with a diverse culture and background and having Christ as the unifying factor. Second, were the suggestions of my friends' who were here at DTC ahead of me. Their encouragement for me to come to DTC had great weight and influence in my decision to come. Third, In God's mysterious ways and grace, he opened an opportunity so that my desire to study was possible this school year rather than the next.

However, life doesn't promise that all will be a bed of roses. Living in DTC is like I have been placed in a 'time machine'. As a newcomer in the community, it seemed to me they did not understand what I was saying. I was wrestling with God and asked a lot of questions e.g., "why were community members not consistent with what they said"; "why did people seem to be rude and insulting if they did not understand what I said"; "why did people always say this is wrong"; "do not do this and do not do that"; "we are like this because this is Singapore" ; "you have to dress up this way"; "you know uncle John wants the community to be...Blah, blah, blah"... and many others. The orientation had not started yet so I was wondering why all these don'ts and wrong's thrown at me. Where is God in DTC? Then, I realized that I was in culture shock! I was in total confusion.

After orientation week the first quarter began. God in his loving mercy and grace enabled me to see and understand my new surroundings, the DTC community I am in. He taught me to see the beauty that each possesses as He created us all in his image. That he is the only One I have to seek and be faithful to. I have to gaze on him in faith when people fail. I am a sinner too and I am broken and have failed him many times in so many ways.

Through the different subjects, the first quarter was meaningful to me because it was in these moments that the Lord showed me that He is God, YHWH. God needs to break me so that I will depend and put my trust on him more. He is doing it outside my comfort zone since I have nothing and no one to run to except him alone. I have nothing to boast of but him only. He is the giver of all good and perfect gifts. I considered my experiences here in DTC as his gifts to me, yes painful but enriching.

At the main entrance of DTC you get to read these words "That they may be sent out". This struck me the first time I stepped through the doors of DTC. The holistic discipleship in DTC, both the academic learning and our daily living as a community are God's preparation for me when he sends me to go and make disciples of all nations so that other people may know that he is Lord. To him be glory.

Events and happenings

Generous response to appeal

I thank the Lord for those who responded so quickly and generously to information in the April Newsletter concerning our depleted Student Support Fund which meant some students might have difficulty continuing their studies at DTC. Within two weeks of the newsletter going out we had received \$81,000 for the Fund. This should be enough to meet the requirements of needy students for the next two to three years or more. I want to express my deep appreciation to those who gave so readily and generously. Thank you.

Thanksgiving and Valedictory Service



Presenting an Indonesian song at DTC's Thanksgiving and Valedictory Service,

Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church (PSPC) was again the venue for our Thanksgiving and Valedictory Service. We are grateful to our alumnus, Dr David Andersen, who gave the message at relatively short notice. He also played the guitar and sang with our Indonesian brother and sisters at even shorter notice. We do not present certificates during the Service because our emphasis is on thanking the Lord for his work in the lives of the students and on sending them out to the ministry the Lord has called them to. The senior Pastor at PSPC, the Rev. Dr Ridge Orr, gave the benediction.

Alumni Visits



The Andersens

In addition to the Sugayas, other alumni also stayed at DTC. David and Suree Andersen with their daughters Lalita and Tiria stayed a week at DTC on their way to Thailand and then Australia before returning to Sulawesi to David's work of translating the bible into the Moronene language.



Liberty Belandres

Liberty Belandres had just completed twenty-six years working with OMF amongst Chinese Buddhists in South Thailand and was on her way back home to become OMF Home Director of the Philippines, stayed a fortnight at DTC.

M Jayapaul, the founder and leader of the Shalom Foundation based in Vellore, South India, also stayed a few days. Shalom Foundation ministers to poor children and youth, through its Boy's Home in Vellore, Retreat and Training Centre in the Yelegiri Hills, night schools which provide free tuition, scholarships for further education and vocational training and financing of micro-enterprise projects. The Rev. Lee Kyung Won brought a group from his church in South Korea for mission exposure. They visited DTC for lunch, a seminar with Dr Eileen Poh and, of course, a volleyball match. Sebastian Gopal shared at Chapel about his ministry in Nepal where, he said, "the only thing certain is uncertainty and the only thing constant is change!"

Stephen Looi Memorial Fund

Stephen Looi, a former DTC Board member, went to be with the Lord last September. A DTC supporter and good friend of Stephen has given SGD 10,000 to DTC to establish a Stephen Looi Memorial Fund. Money from this Fund is available for OMF candidates and missionaries who require financial help to study at DTC.

Social Outing with ACTI

We were looking forward to a games and barbecue outing with ACTI. However, rain poured cold water on that idea. We ended up at ACTI's 'campus'

where we relaxed, chatted and enjoyed a meal together. Having enjoyed ACTI's hospitality we agreed to 'go easy' on them at the next weekly volleyball match!



Looking at past ACTI graduation photos

Once a quarter we have outings as a whole community. We usually end up at one of the reservoirs or beach areas like the East Coast and Pasir Ris. Our pastoral groups also go on outings. These outings provide an opportunity to relax and unwind. They also allow us to see and appreciate other sides of each other to supplement (and even correct) the perceptions formed by relationships and behaviours within DTC.



Pastoral group breakfast outing

A Cambodian Cross-cultural activity evening



Enjoying a Cambodian dance

Having spent over twenty years between them in Cambodia with OMF, the Tans and the Sugayas were certainly not short of ideas in putting together a Cambodian family evening programme that was both informative and enjoyable. Through quiz, games, dance, video, 'sketch biographies' and song we were able to gain further insight and knowledge about Cambodia. Presently DTC has six alumni in Cambodia one of these a Cambodian national.