

The last words of a dying loved one are usually very important. 1960 was a very traumatic year for me. I experienced death in my family for the first time. I was 10 years old. My grandmother was dying in agony because of sicknesses. We were too poor to send her to hospital. She had four grandchildren and I was her favourite grandson. On her death bed she said to me: "Be a filial son." I remembered her words.

Now, more than 50 years later, as I look back to the past, I can sincerely say that I have honoured her words. My wife and I took care of my parents in our home for more than 20 years until they left us for a better place – in the bosom of their Creator. The greatest joy was to see my parents coming to a saving knowledge of Christ.

More than 2,000 ago, the Son of God came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ and died on the cross to save mankind from eternal damnation. He chose 12 disciples and spent three years with them, taught them the truth and trained them. After his resurrection, he spent another 40 days with them, and then just before He returned to His heavenly Father, He called them to Himself and said to them: "Go and make disciples of all nations." These were His last words to them.

In the next 30 to 50 years, the apostles, including Paul, travelled all over the Roman Empire, preaching the good news of Christ and planting churches in four major provinces of the Roman Empire. All except one died as martyrs for Christ. From the records of the New Testament we can certainly say that they have honoured the last words of their Saviour and Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, and did their part to fulfil His Great Commission.

Jesus' last words to His disciples today are still the same: "Go and make disciples of all nations." These are His last words to you and me.

Discipleship – the most critical issue

Discipleship is one of the most critical issues facing the church today. Why? Because the Church has largely neglected the thrust of the Great Commission: to make disciples.

There is no greater good news than the good news of Jesus Christ. Who else can answer the deepest cries of the human heart? The cry for meaning in the meaninglessness of our existence; the cry for love in a world that is rapidly falling apart; the cry for peace in a world torn apart by conflicts, wars and violence; the cry for freedom in the midst of human suffering, misery and oppression; the cry

THE GREAT OMISSION

in the Great Commission

for hope in a world that is heading towards self-destruction. The clear, resounding answer to every cry is Jesus Christ. Despite the relevance and the power of our gospel, the Church is ineffective in reaching the dying world for Christ.

Why is this so? It is because Christians have largely neglected what it means to be disciples of Christ. The vast majority of Christians today are church-members, pew-fillers, sermon-tasters – but not true disciples of Christ. If they seriously lived as true disciples of Christ, the Church today would be transformed and the resultant impact on our families, our society and our world would be astounding. This happened in the first century when a tiny handful of disciples began, in the power of the Spirit, the greatest spiritual revolution the world has ever known. It happened then. It can happen today.

The Great Omission

Why are there so few true disciples of Christ? It is because the Church of Jesus Christ has failed to fulfil two key aspects of the Great Commission – to "make disciples" and "to teach them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19, 20a).

Firstly, Jesus said we are to make disciples, but we make "decisions". Pastors are more interested in people making decisions for Christ and becoming members of their churches rather than becoming disciples of Christ. We have made discipleship an option, not a requirement. Pastors and church leaders assume that their members will be growing disciples of Christ by simply attending church faithfully. This is a false assumption. After studying thousands of churches across America, researcher George Barna concludes that "discipleship does not happen simply because a church exists". Churches must become intentional about disciple-making.

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Testimonies from students' cross-cultural exposure

During the term break in Nov-Dec, each DTC student spent two weeks in a Christian ministry in a cross-cultural setting as part of their field education. Here are their reflections:



Arm sharing his testimony with university students at a Sunday evening service

Eittikorn Denkitikhun (Arm) (Thailand)

in Taiwan

Thank God for the great experience of His mission in Chia Yi, Taiwan with OMF American missionaries from Nov 22 to Dec 6. I got a chance to see what missionary life is like in the village among the local people. The missionaries serve among university students in Chia Yi, in church planting and by running a coffee shop. They have Sunday evening service where I shared my testimony to students. Most of the students who join the activities are not Christian, so I pray that the Holy Spirit will work in their heart. This short-term trip made me think out of the box when I saw a shrine in a house. Actually, it is like a shrine in every house in Thailand. This experience made me feel that people in Chia Yi need Christ. So I had the same feeling when I went back to Thailand, that Thai people also need Christ. This helped me to think more about missions but my calling to the Christian is still the same. I think God wants me to challenge young Christians in my country to go out through my story.



With students and the missionary couple

M.A. (Indonesia)

in Myanmar

I went with The Singapore Baptist Church (TSBC) medical mission trip from Dec 6 to 18 to Yangon in Myanmar. There was an orphanage where we met every day. I did Bible storytelling in action to the children, and taught a few English Christian songs and crafts. Although we did not speak Burmese, I could see the children enjoying the activities. I am thankful for this opportunity to interact with many children. Some children lost their parents because of the political situation many years ago and others because their parents were not able to raise them. While staying in a hotel, I got distracted in my sleep because of a spiritual attack. I thank God for my roommate, a Burmese believer, whom I prayed with against the enemy. For the last few days, I joined my foreigner friends in a village. They have a workshop for deaf people doing crafts. I helped to cut materials and interacted with local people. I saw the beauty of God in these people. Although they cannot hear, they can speak in sign language with each other. It was the first time in my life to see a Bible story told in Burmese sign language, and also see them pray and sing in sign language. I look forward to the next mission trip, to see God's work in different places.



Mey with children at an orphanage

Amy Yam (Singapore)

in Malaysia



I went to Malaysia from Nov 25 to Dec 8 and was with an organisation working among the refugees there. They reach out to them primarily through conducting Kindergarten and English Classes (for ladies only). As it was a relatively new centre (the organisation has a few centres around the country), things looked rather disorganised to me. It certainly helped me to be grateful for the education

system which I grew up in, as I tried to contribute to their existing system during my time there. On the other hand, I really had an enjoyable and eye-opening time. God has truly brought the nations to our doorsteps. Most of them are from countries where they have never heard the gospel before, and here they are now, within reach. This has given me a deeper appreciation of God's sovereign hand.





In the city of Dehradun, after Candra (fifth from right) preached at the Sunday Service for students, with Ahlem Debbarma (extreme right), a DTC alumnus, as interpreter.



With students in New Delhi

Candra (Indonesia)

in India

My individual mission trip to India was from Nov 28 to Dec 14. I joined with the National Twipura Christian Fellowship in New Delhi which reached out to students and served them. My activity in New Delhi was to conduct visits and meetings both formally and informally with students. Together with the students, we had a Christmas service in Delhi Boro Christian Fellowship. I also travelled to the city of Dehradun, in the state of Uttarakhand in northern India. Over there, on Dec 2, I preached at the Sunday Service for students, and my friend Ahlem Debbarma (DTC alumnus) interpreted my sermon into the local language. Apart from my mission trip, I also visited important sites in India such as the Taj Mahal and Red Fort. I took the time to pray on these sites for Christians in India, specifically those who were still experiencing persecution. I also prayed for the people of India to experience the love of Christ. I learned from my individual trip that serving in missions must be from the totality of the heart.



Michael Salas (Philippines)

in Singapore

Praise God for my internship at the regional office of an established mission agency in Singapore. In the last week of November 2018, I spoke with key people in the office and had a glimpse of its organisation and operation, including some of its mobilisation, personnel, finance, media and projects processes and guidelines. Among these, I found some that could be helpful if adapted to the mission mobilisation organization I am involved with at home. These include organising prayer and cultural exposure trips, candidate application process, pastoral care initiatives, field worker budget policy and information security guidelines. In the first week of December 2018, I joined its morning devotion where we prayed together, as well as supporters' night. I have seen how the office regularly connects with its members, intercedes for them, and updates supporters of its progress in personal, meaningful and challenging ways. I also helped in identifying possible communication

Trinity Alex Kumar (India)

in Singapore

I had a cross-cultural missions exposure within Singapore from Nov 22 to Dec 7 at a non-profit ministry that facilitates reaching out to young people and mentoring them. I learnt how the facilitators journey with the youth, enabling them to build resilience and develop character as they transit from childhood to young adulthood. Through regular interaction with the youth, the facilitators also build bonds of friendship and become positive influences, offering advice, encouragement, as well as a listening ear. From Nov 26 to Nov 28, I was able to be part of their year-end camp. The entire experience enabled me to understand how the youth are able to think and perceive things. They were smart in planning and strategising. They were also courteous and excellent in sportsmanship. It was inspiring to know that they were able to think and act maturely at such a young age. I interacted with three youth who came regularly and befriended them. I was able to understand the culture, the upbringing and the life issues faced by the youth in a first-world country like Singapore.





DTC extends Sabbatical Studies Programme

Discipleship Training Centre (DTC) is extending its residential sabbatical studies programme to graduates wishing to review, reflect and refresh themselves in a small, cross-cultural Christian community.

Previously, DTC's Sabbatical Studies Programme was open to those with seminary training or who have served in the field, for example, as missionaries.

But now, people who have recently retired from the marketplace or those contemplating a career change or making a life transition, can come to DTC and benefit from this programme.

Participants of the programme can reflect and refresh themselves by attending courses at DTC or through writing, guided personal reflection, or self-study.

They may spend one or two semesters, or a period of six to nine months, during which they stay in DTC and immerse in the community life with faculty and students.

Possible areas for reflection, research and writing include:

- 1) **Personal Growth:** Those who want to reflect and research through guided reading and/or field interviews on any issue related to self-care, including spiritual disciplines.
- 2) **Ministry growth:** Those who wish to research and reflect on ministry development and leadership issues.
- 3) **Writing projects:** Those who want to concentrate on a writing project, with the support of a community for fellowship and interaction.
- 4) **Refreshment and renewal:** Those who need extended time for prayer, reflection and rest, and still be able to benefit from the fellowship of community life at DTC.

DTC may award a Certificate of Sabbatical Studies for the completion of a paper or a project.

If you wish to find out more, e-mail us at disciple@singnet.com.sg, call our phone number at 6256-3208 or write to us at Discipleship Training Centre, 33A Chancery Lane, Singapore 309554.

Secondly, Jesus said we are to teach disciples to obey everything that He commanded, but we teach truth, not obedience to the truth. Church leaders are more interested in completing their curriculum than in developing true disciples of Christ. That is why there are so many nominal Christians in the church today. Their lives are not changed because they do not apply God's Word to their daily lives. The ultimate aim of teaching is to change lives, not simply to impart knowledge. Jesus our Master Teacher ended His Sermon on the Mount by challenging His hearers to put His teaching into practice. He said: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (Matthew 7:24). It is not enough to hear. We must also obey. As James exhorts us: "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." (James 1:22)

These are the two great omissions committed by the Church of Jesus Christ. These great omissions are having very serious consequences in the church today.

Be Disciples and Make Disciples

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." (Mark 1:17)

This call of Jesus has two parts:

"Come, follow me." This is DISCIPLESHIP. We are called to follow Jesus.

"I will make you fishers of men." This is DISCIPLE-MAKING. We are called to make disciples.

These two aspects are linked together by the conjunction "and". Jesus is saying that if we follow him, He will make us disciple-makers. Only a disciple can make a disciple, just as only a swimmer can train another person how to swim. So, we must be disciples first before we can make disciples. If you are not a disciple, you cannot make a disciple.



DTC exists to help the Church fulfil the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our mission is to train our students to be disciples of Christ so that they will become disciple-makers.

Wan Chee Wan
Dean

Going paperless

We are sending out the DTC newsletter by e-mail to our alumni and partners in order to reduce printing costs. If you wish to continue to receive a hard copy, please let us know. You may write to us at

Discipleship Training Centre, 33A Chancery Lane, Singapore 309554, e-mail us at disciple@singnet.com.sg or call our phone number at **6256-3208**. Thank you!

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.

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