



GOOD BOOKS

My choice for this week will be a quotation followed by an appraisal of the book next week. Altogether 10 letters were produced and I quote the first letter in Calvin Miller's *The Empowered Leader. 10 Keys to Servant Leadership*. Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 1995. (QSH)

Dear Leader:

Nobody's perfect! I understand that, OK? Still, I will only follow you if you convince me that you are more interested in being my leader than my boss. Bosses have a way of being too interested in their own career or in the corporate agenda. Believe me, I ought to know. I've had lots of bosses. They were all concerned only about my performance or my output. But to be honest, none of them seemed all that interested in me.

No, don't tell me that I have nothing to worry about because this is a Christian organization. I've been a part of several churches that talked about leadership but practiced boss-hood. They formed programs and built structures that prized people's worth on how much those people produced. Nursery duty, ushering, teaching Sunday School, driving the church van, giving or counting money - all these items became the measurement of worth. Tell me this: How is it that pastors who started out as leaders at last became only bosses, tending their religious machines, ordering them to produce growth?

I'm looking for a pastor who really believes that he who is greatest among you must be your servant (see Matt. 20:26). For me, Jesus abandoned His need for CEO status the night He knelt with a basin and towel and started washing feet. This is a modern age and all that, but I'm not looking for a pastor with an eelskin briefcase and matching Day-timer. I am far more eager to follow that leader who is unashamed to carry a basin and towel. That's the person who can lead as Jesus led, because that's the person who lives as Jesus lived. So, Pastor, get yourself a basin and towel and start serving. Then lead. I promise I'll be right behind you.

Your follower

(To be continued next week)



*In the beginning was the song of love.
Alone in empty nothingness and space
It sang itself through vaulted halls above
Reached gently out to touch the Father's face
- Calvin Miller (The Singer, IVP 1975)*

Letter from Marva Dawn

My husband Myron and I have just returned from being with you in Singapore, and we are extremely grateful for all our wonderful experiences with you. Thank you!

I have been reflecting on conversations at BGST and the issues these raised for U.S. churches. In many ways, Christians in Singapore correspond to those in the U.S. - we live in a highly technological society, are tempted by countless opportunities for consumerism, have trouble connecting with our neighbors because of the busy tempo of our lives, and often want the experience of Sunday "church" not to demand too much of us.

Yet in three arresting ways you are very different from us - 1) in that conversions of young adults is the largest source of church growth; 2) in that your churches are much more multicultural; 3) in that Christians in Singapore seem much more committed to Bible study, cell groups and advanced theological training. You have much to teach U.S. Christians about discipleship and prayer.

I'm not over-romanticizing your churches in Singapore, for you have many of the same problems that we have in the U.S. Our churches struggle with an enormous lack of committed, mature Christians to mentor new converts. And it is often difficult to encourage avid participation by members in social outreach, in genuine concern for the city's poor, in the time-consuming responsibility of loving neighbors. (I know that the latter is complicated by your living situations in such large apartment complexes.)

Churches in both Singapore and the U.S. are called by the prophet Jeremiah to "seek the welfare of the city where [the LORD has] sent [us] into exile" and to "pray to the LORD on its behalf" (Jer.29:7). Do we recognize that living in this society of overconsumption and frenzied busy-ness is to be in exile and that one of our churches' tasks is to seek the welfare of those who dwell where we're exiled? Are our churches equipping the ministry in daily life (Eph. 4:12), for reaching out lovingly to our neighbors and co-workers? How much do we personally and corporately pray for our cities and their residents? Are we each personally and all of us together in our churches actively engaged and missionally serving in our neighborhoods? Are we genuinely hospitable to our society's diversity of people?

These are some of the questions I'm asking people here in the U.S. since my return. I hope the questions might be useful to you, too, as you ponder how Singaporean Christians and churches should serve the world.



Thinking Points

by Mickey Chiang

What was Job's job?

We know Job was "blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil", for that is what Job 1:1 tells us. It is when we come to Job 1:3, which talks about the large numbers of animals that Job had, that our eyes jump to the next verse. For, the moment we saw that Job owned 7,000 sheep had we not caught the point, that Job was a man rich with animals? Actually, we have missed a whole lot more!

Shall we rewind the video and make our eyes jump back to Job 1:3? The verse says "and he owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen and 500 donkeys." Now look at the 7,000 sheep. What do 7,000 sheep tell us, besides "Baa"? Don't they tell us that Job had a lot of land for the sheep to graze on?

When we think of the 7,000 sheep, don't we think about why Job had no cattle? Was there not enough grass for cattle? Too dry, huh? This is confirmed by the next figure of 3,000 camels that Job owned. Aren't camels common only in desert or semi-desert areas? Now we know what kind of place Job lived in.

But why did he need 3,000 camels? Weren't camels used for carrying goods across deserts? What huge amounts of goods did Job have that he needed 3,000 camels? Was he a trader? Or a camel breeder? Or were the camels used on patrols over Job's huge farm and grazing lands? Or were all three true? Wouldn't Job have had a lot of wool to sell? And a lot of woolen cloth, and carpets perhaps? If you had surplus camels, would you not sell them? And if camels were available, would you not ride them to patrol your farm? Or would you prefer to walk?

Next, let's focus on the 500 yoke of oxen. We know that the oxen were used for ploughing (Job 1:14). How many acres can a yoke of two oxen plough in a day? Two acres? Four? At two acres a day, 500 pairs of oxen could plough 1,000 acres a day, or 7,000 acres a week. So Job had 7,000 acres, probably more, under crops? Recently, I stayed on an Australian farm. Half of its 5,000 acres was under crops. Man, Job's farm dwarfed Greg's farm. Greg had a fleet of farm machines. Think about how many people Job needed, to sow, water and harvest 7,000 acres of crops.

Now, Job also had 500 donkeys. Donkeys were used for ploughing, for carrying goods and for riding. If all the donkeys were used for ploughing, then we have to add another 3,500 acres to the land under crops, for a total of 10,500 acres. Wow! Now we see

the extent of Job's wealth.

But in the end God gave Job twice as many animals as he had before! Then wouldn't Job have needed twice the amount of land? Have you ever seen 21,000 acres of crops on one farm in a Middle Eastern country? Plus another 20,000 to 60,000 acres for grazing. And all of it given by God.

Doesn't it make you want to be "blameless and upright" too, and to fear the Lord and shun evil? Isn't that the better way to try to get rich, compared to what the rest of the world is doing?

Chapel

We were due to have an "Israel Update" last Wednesday but the expected speaker had to be elsewhere in Singapore so our Dean, Dr. Quek, stood in for him.

He read to us from Isaiah 35, and then took us through a number of slides of Israel, which showed many different aspects of that land. The slides, which included pictures of the Judean desert and of the famous Rose of Sharon blooming in arid conditions, certainly brought the biblical text to life. Dr. Quek then described some recent political developments in Israel, and also some of the ways in which Christians in Israel are bearing witness to the Gospel under difficult circumstances. Chapel closed with a time of prayer for Israel.

This week at Chapel, we will hear from **Rev Daniel Chua**, Sr Pastor of Mt Carmel Bible-Presbyterian Church.

A TRIVIAL PURSUIT ...

For those of us who can't seem to put pen to paper any longer, a beautiful website like *dayspring.com* is a boon when it comes to sending electronic cards. I received one from my son just last week and thought it'd be nice to share it with you since it's a Christian website. There are many online greetings sites on the web but finding the right one takes some time. You may want to check this particular one out for its delightfully artistic cards with bible verses, fun music and plenty of room for your personalised message. Now you can do the obligatory and have fun at the same time. (PK)

We wish these who celebrate their birthdays this week God's richest blessings

Prof. Daniel Chan 22/5
Mr Justin Lee Tian Leng 24/5
Mrs Tan Chua Chiew Peng 24/5
Mr James Goon Hoong Seng 26/5
Mr Peter Lim Hong Sing 26/5

**"We all live off His generous bounty,
gift after gift after gift"**

John 1: 16 (The Message - Eugene Peterson)