



Chen, Ai Yen and Maanen, John Van (Eds). (1999). *The Reflective Spin: Case Studies of Teachers in Higher Education Transforming Action*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing. 356 pp.

Lay teaching is one key ingredient that enables the educational ministry of the church to equip learners of all age groups to know God and to serve Him. The task of equipping demands that lay teachers go beyond the transmitting of knowledge for content deposition or to touch feelings per se. Equipping is teaching that leads learners to “do,” to “act,” to “respond” for responsible Christian living and ministry in the home and out in the marketplace between Sundays. But on Sundays and weekdays, learners gather in classes or groups for instruction and training to be equipped for that purpose. The church needs lay teachers who are effective equippers. The church to a large extent is diligent in conducting in-house courses for teachers or sending them out for training but there remains a need to construct workable models of lay teacher training.

The book, “Reflective Spin” is not written for Christian Education but offers a model worthy for church educators to consider. It contains a collection of qualitative research studies by practitioners of teacher education on the nature and ways the model of reflection-action has made marked differences in their lives and mission as teacher educators. The model is a cyclic process. The process of “reflection” engages the individual to consciously think through about his/her beliefs and values about teaching or style of teaching, and completing the process with “action” to decisively act upon the new awareness as one educator agrees, “The key to success will be ‘reflection,’ consciously thinking over each activity and evaluating how and why I performed the way I did and consider whether it could have been performed better or not performed at all” (p.231). In the case of Louis Schmeir, the application of reflection-action has transformed him from a self-centred teaching style of “a talking addict” to someone who engages students in a lively, interactive teaching-learning paradigm (pp. 69-80). In another case, a learning community is forged between Ora Kwo and her trainee teachers when they collaborate in reflecting and acting together. She uses “critical incidents” to equip her students to “how to learn how to

teach” (p.68) as one student testified her transformation from a teacher-centred to a student-centred teaching strategy, “I realized the futility of preparing too many tasks if they do not help learners to understand what is supposed to be learned. Instead, I saw how important it is to be equipped with a direct but well-structured lesson plan to meet the cognitive styles and needs of the learners” (p.171). The construction of a learning community amongst them creates a desirable environment for teaching and learning support, “Indeed there is an intimate connection between teaching and learning. Learning to teach and teaching to learn are simultaneous activities to both student teachers as well as reflective practitioners who seek to improve themselves” (p.183).

The two research studies may prompt the church to reflect, “Are we providing the conditions for reflective teaching?” “Is a learning community present for mutual encouragement and stimulation to sharpen each other’s commitment to exercise the gift of teaching?” Jesus, our Master Teacher did. When His disciples (community of learners) encountered problems in their practical assignment of healing a demon possessed boy, Jesus helped them to reflect on their mistake and gave them further instruction, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer” (Mark 9:29). The preparation of teachers with knowledge and skills (theory) and their practice in exercising their gift of teaching must be integrated through reflections. We must provide the context and conditions to teach our teachers to reflect and the case studies in the book provide a repertoire of methods for reflecting.

Churches who are aware of the need to reconstruct their curriculum for teacher education may find Dr Chen’s 5-R Reflective Thinking Framework useful. Besides her many credentials, she is an active lay leader and teacher in the church. The first stage is “Reflection.” It is to review the present situation or existing system. This is followed by a “Recognition” of the problems and the factors related, a “Realization” of what could be done, a “Response” of translating the new strategy into action and finally, a “Resolution” which calls for reflection and evaluation of the change implemented. To keep our focus, our reflection must be biblically informed to lead to actions which are pleasing and glorifying to Him.

(Review by Dr. Ng Peh Cheng)



Chapel Notes

Dr. Oh Boon Leong was the chapel speaker on 20th March. He spoke on “The Marks of a Great Man” and the text was taken from Matthew 3:1-6.

Our Lord Jesus says in Matthew 11:11, “among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist.” Yet when we think of John, we realize that his origins, his manner, his life exhibited little, if any, of the qualities that we could normally associate with greatness. But what was it about John the Baptist that made him great in the eyes of Jesus? There are three:

1. He is filled with the Holy Spirit. John was filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit from birth (Luke 1:15), and he grew up fulfilling God’s will for him as the forerunner of Jesus Christ. Like John the Baptist, we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to live consciously in the presence of God. We are to know His Word and to obey the Spirit’s leading.
2. He is humble before God. John has a humble view of himself but an exalted view of Jesus. His humility was the result of a self-awareness of who he was in relationship to God. That is, he was not the King but he was to announce the arrival of the King. Likewise, we need to have a humble view of ourselves before God.
3. He is faithful in proclaiming God’s Word. John was faithful to the task given to him to proclaim the Gospel and calling sinners to repent. His faithfulness gave him the courage to endure suffering and hardship. We are to be faithful in proclaiming the Gospel because the world needs it. Following the example of John, we are to proclaim with our speech and conduct.

Indeed, John the Baptist stands as a model for those who aspire to genuine greatness.

Chapel speaker for this week (27 Mar) was the Dean Dr Quek. Our sincere apologies for not sending this out earlier.

NEWS BITS

1. **Annual General Meeting, March 23.** We thank God for the members who took time off their busy schedules to attend the AGM. Their attendance made it possible for us to achieve a quorum and thus we were able to proceed with the AGM. BGST Council would like to thank the following members who completed their term and are not continuing as Council Members: Mrs Ng Soh May, Pastor David Yap, and Assoc. Prof. Quek Ser Aik. We welcomed Dr Toh See Kiat who returned to BGST Council as a Member.

2. **Public Lecture by Rev. Dr. Tan Siang Yang** We are thankful for the enthusiastic response of about 200 persons who heard the message on “Faith in Action” delivered by Rev. Dr. Tan. Thanks also to the Board of Elders of Bethesda Katong Church for hosting this event. The audiotape for the public lecture is available for sale at the Library @ \$4 each. Please contact Library staff if you would like to place your order.

3. **Bioethics Course** has ended. Students are reminded to turn in their assignments. Recent interest in bioethical decisions has produced a mixed reaction: on the one hand we are glad that tremendous strides have been made towards better management of patient. At the same time man displays a tendency to “play God” and enter the forbidden area of human cloning. Those who missed this course and would like to sign up for it by private study or video class may call our office.

4. **Library Notice.** Just a reminder ... we will be closed this Friday since it is Good Friday.

5. **Qualitative Research and the Christian Ministry.** Class will not meet on Mar 28, 2002.

Wishing you God’s blessings on your Birthday!



Mrs Tan Lee Lee 26/03
Mr Charles Ho Yan Kitt 26/03
Mr Gunar Sahari 27/03
Ms Irene Teo Kiah Woon 31/03