



Bedok Methodist Church
40 Days of Community, Week 2, 26 April 2009

Reaching Out Together

P.A.R.T.N.E.R Together

Scriptural Text:

Colossians 4:5-6 (NCV)

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders (or unbelievers); make the most of every opportunity.” Let your conversation be always full of grace seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

There are two things we want to keep in mind on what we want to achieve throughout this 40 Days of Community season: listening to what the Lord wants us to do.

- a. **Deepening the sense of community** within our church family. We want to build a strong sense of community in developing deeper relationships based on agape love between us as brothers and sisters in Christ.
- b. **Reaching out to the community** beyond our church walls by extending that agape love. We want to make it our life-long mission to show Christ's love to friends, colleagues, even strangers who cross our paths.

The 40 Days of Community calls us to be intentional and serious with what we want to do to reach out and share our lives with others. Whether we like it or not, our lives will leave an impression on others.

So often, we hear remarks like, “Why do Christians behave like that?!” In the newspapers, we are featured in the headlines. There may even be comments on how we park our cars in the neighbourhood: “Stupid Christians, how do they expect me to get out of my house when they park like that?” We are God's children and we are expected to behave better. On the other hand, how we love to hear such words: “I notice Christians are sincere and faithful people; they are the most gracious and considerate people!”



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We cannot force people to listen to us. People are moved by what they see in the way we live our lives and the things we do. We do not impose our views on others, nor overwhelm them in greater numbers. Remember, Jesus wins the hearts of the people at the cross of suffering, never, never with the cross of military might.

The cross of military might has brought much shame and dishonour during the Crusades, the darkest period in the history of Christianity. We need to break the cross of military might and carry the cross of suffering for God's sake. We may win a war by our might but truly, we have lost the opportunity to save souls for Christ. The Jews and Muslims suffered terribly under the swords of the Crusaders in the name of the cross. Ever since, they remember such atrocity in their sufferings. Hatred has been carried over from generation to generation. The sign of the cross has become a huge barrier in reaching out to them.

Be careful my dear friends, what we do now will have a multiplying effect on generations later. May God forgive us. As Matthew 10:16 says: "Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Sometimes we may be led to be slaughtered; and other times, we need to overturn the tables on the ungodly side. Whatever we do, let us always leave a window of opportunity to share Christ by our love, not by our might or human wisdom.

As a small group, what can we do to bear the cross of love and suffering? We engage one another in "Reaching Out Together" using the acronym: PARTNER.

Pray Together (pray for one another)

Appeal to Common Interest (to share time together)

Reach Out in Love

Tell Your Story

Nurture Friendships

Expect God to Act

Represent Christ with Your Life

Pray Together

Get serious. Determine with confidence that we want to have a positive impact on those whom we meet daily. Each morning, pray to God for an opportunity to share the gospel. God loves to listen to such prayers – especially when we pray together in agreement with His desire.

The world shakes when we pray because God begins to reveal many things to us. People can reject us and our belief system, but prayer can melt their hardened hearts. That is the power of prayer. God opens windows of opportunity where we can share His love. As married couples, try praying together after a quarrel. A difficult experience it may be, but let us experience reconciliation through prayer.

Let us pray in godly tongues, groaning in the spirit. God understands what is deep in our hearts where words could not be expressed fully. Jesus groaned in His spirit when He saw His two friends, Mary and Martha, weeping over the death of His dear friend, Lazarus. (John 11) “He is dead. Only if you had come earlier, Lazarus would not have died.” Jesus prayed for God to raise Lazarus to life again. He knew God was using this occasion to show the power of resurrection through Jesus.

Learn to groan in our spirit. The Holy Spirit will help us to release our anger and frustration in a godly way. Jasmine and I have experienced many times that the love of God simply embraces us when we pray after a disagreement. The next morning, we are talking again. Build up a strong relationship with our spouses that will stand firm in all weathers - learn to pray together.

Let's now talk about reaching out to others through praying together. I was once a Sunday School teacher teaching a class of Secondary I students. These kids have been attending Sunday School since birth. They knew the bible stories inside out. Therefore I challenged them to ask God for someone to share the gospel with. Being in the same school, I challenged them to begin praying for the naughtiest one in the class. Good strategy, I thought.

The next week I asked them how their experience was. They replied, “Uncle Fred, the naughtiest boy, he is a Christian! What shall we do?” “Pray for him,” I said. I was



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so glad they continued to pray with one another for the salvation of their classmates. When we start to pray, God will reveal and open doors because our hearts are pure and sincere. We want the world to come to know our Lord Jesus. Start to make a prayer list of the people whom we want to reach out to. Begin with the toughest case.

Appeal to Common Interest

As we put names on the prayer list, start to develop friendships. Share time together based on common interests. When we see our neighbours at the lift area, give them our godly rainbow smiles and wish them “Good Morning.” We may have quarrelled with them before, but start to gather our courage to greet them every time we meet them.

What about extending our smiles to the people at our favourite *mee-pok* stall, rice stall or wet market stalls? I love the surprised looks on hawkers’ faces when my wife, Jasmine and I clear our plates and cups after a meal at the food centre. The hawkers remember us and it gives us the opportunity to chat with them and invite them to church. I am sure we can think of different ways of outreach. Just put in a little effort and God will multiply it for His glory. Hallelujah!

Reach Out in Love

Whenever I am travelling, I will ask God to send someone who needs to know Jesus to sit next to me on the plane. Do you know it pleases God when we make such a request? Many a time, God answers. The long journey of travelling becomes a pleasant time where I can talk about Jesus.

I love to tell the story of Mother Teresa in the back streets of Calcutta. One story was told about her love for the dying and the poorest of the poor. She went to a nearby bakery asking for some bread for the dying staying at her home. The baker chased her away from the shop front, saying, “Don’t disturb my business!” But she persisted. Finally, the baker spat at her. She wiped his spit from her face and said, “This is for me. What about some bread for my people?” The love Mother Teresa had for her people was tremendous. There was no pretense. She was indeed simply filled with Christ’s pure love and compassion.

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Mother Teresa found the grace of God over her life when she knelt in front of the altar table each morning. The celebration of the Eucharist reminded her of God's love and grace. She constantly asked God to show her how she could pass it on to others in her daily work. We can experience the same love of Mother Teresa because it comes from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit empowers us to have the same kind of love.

Tell Your Story

The most effective way to reach out is to tell our own story based on our personal experience with God and what He has done in our lives. God will use our story to touch someone who may be in the same circumstance as us. It will certainly encourage our listeners to trust God.

Prove our story is true by the way we live our lives. We can say God is good and loving and yet, we may not be considerate when parking our cars. Let us show appreciation to Larry, our church caretaker. Address him by name, "Larry, we love you and thank you." I am sure he will appreciate our Christian love. That love can only come as a result of God in us bearing the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5) Then people will be convinced by our stories. We may have the gifts of the Spirit but it is the fruit of the Spirit that confirms such gifts to be godly. It is not our story to keep or to show how great we are by our gifts; but it is a story to show how great God is to us.

Nurture Friendships

Nurture genuine and lasting friendships. A genuine friendship is the union of two good forgivers. It always begins with us making the first move to make peace. We can learn from our Chinese friends working in Singapore. We often hear them saying, "Sorry, it is my fault." Be humble. Be ready to apologise whether we are right or wrong - It does not matter. How do you feel? Imagine you knocked someone accidentally in a crowded place, and that someone you knocked turned around and apologised to you, saying: "Sorry, I am at fault. I have blocked your way." It is a humbling experience when God can use a non-Christian to teach us how to be gracious. What more for us believers to behave better with the Holy Spirit as our Helper.

Expect God to Act

Earlier on, I encouraged you to start making a prayer list of the people whom you want to reach out to, and to begin with the toughest case. Next, let us expect God to act according to His sovereign wisdom and power. Thank God for all that He is going to do. When Jesus thanked God for the two fishes and five loaves of bread, a miracle happened. When Jesus thanked God for listening to His prayer; lo and behold, Lazarus was raised from the dead. Thank God and expect God to act, so that the world may believe we are children of the living God.

Represent Christ with Your Life

Paul says, "Make the most of every opportunity" to re-present Christ to the world. Paul is reminding the church not to wait for opportunities to come, but to create them. Paul is saying: Look out for people. Look out for opportunities. Be alert. Look at our lives, the way we talk. Does our conversation reflect the true image of Christ?

God has specifically placed us with friends, loved ones and neighbours. What is His purpose? We are His representatives; we are to share and to reveal who He is. How will the people know the real God unless we tell them? As Christians, we ought to be the people that walk the walk. What we say we will do; where God sends, we will go.

In conclusion, let us respond to the Lord in prayer:

Here I am, Lord God, use me. Help me to stop mis-representing You. Give me an opportunity once again to present Jesus to the world in what I say and in what I do. Change my heart and make me a channel of blessing to someone today that he or she may be brought a step closer to Jesus during these 40 Days of Community that none should perish; that all may be saved. Help us to PARTNER You and be your faithful co-workers. For Jesus' sake and for Your Glory. Amen.

- By Rev Fred Tan