

PARTNERSHIP

The Roller Coaster Ride

2024 May Issue



Equipping Lay Ministers,
Cultivating Missional Pastors to
Strategically Engage Asia's Harvest

Published by
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Seng Aung	Graduate Diploma in Christian Studies
Fu Guosheng 傅国生	Bachelor of Theology 神学学士
Liew Yu Ming Peter	Master of Arts in Christian Studies
Tang Hong Chye Joseph	Master of Arts in Christian Studies
Wong Guan See	Master of Arts in Christian Studies
Naw Khin Kyi	Master of Arts in Intercultural Ministry
Liu Caixia 刘彩霞	Master of Arts 文学硕士
Daniel Teng Charng Ther	Master of Divinity
Ly Gia Thanh	Master of Divinity
Yanadi Tan Ivory	Master of Divinity
Wang Chengyang 王称扬	Master of Divinity 道学硕士
Wang Guan 王管	Master of Divinity 道学硕士

Dear Friends of BTS

During the pandemic years, many in seminary leadership reported depression-like symptoms. Some even found it a struggle to get out of bed while being locked down in their homes. The intense period of the circuit breaker only served to emphasise the burden they were carrying of feeling responsible for an empty campus. BTS faced the same trying conditions. Today's lower number of graduands reflects the anaemic intake of that period.

According to God's perfect plan, after seeing us through those trying times, He has resurrected our numbers to a new level. In the past, mid-year January intakes have always been low, and during the pandemic years even mere enquiries were non-existent. But in January of this year, He gave us one of our highest historical intakes of 12 students plus 4 special students. We are truly grateful to God for His affirmation of our mission.

I am describing the roller coaster ride of the last two years not only to inform our friends that BTS's future outlook is positive, but also to point out to our new graduands the true nature of ministry. In ministry, the times of joyful harvest will certainly come, but so too will times of painful trial.



In my four years here at BTS, I have witnessed both joyful affirmations of alumni in ministry (commonly seen in their ordinations/installations) and a few painful departures. Many times, our joy comes not because we are strong but because God has given us favourable circumstances to ride the crest of others' efforts. Many times, our trials come not because we are weak but because God has provided us with trying circumstances to prune us into faithful servants who exhibit humility as a trademark.

The apostle Paul said in Romans 8:37: "In all these things we are more than conquerors...". AJ Gordon (credited with the establishment of Gordon College and Gordon Cornwell Theological Seminary) responded rhetorically by asking: "How?" He answered his own question: "The man who is victorious through victory is a conqueror, but he who is victorious through DEFEAT is MORE than a conqueror."

Graduands, there will certainly be times when you will feel defeated and depressed, but it is in those times that you have the potential to become "more than conquerors". Paul answers AJ Gordon's "How?" question in Rom 8:38-39 (selective): "For I am convinced that neither death nor ... demons ... future [uncertainty] ... powers ... depth ... anything, will be able to separate you from the love of God that is in Jesus our Lord." It is in these trials that the reality of the love of Christ will make you conquerors. Paul is convinced of that. More importantly, you must be convinced of that. In that love, and through those trials, soldier on and be true to your calling.

Emmanuel,

Rev Peter Lin

President

Words of Thanksgiving

Yanadi Tan Ivory

Master of Divinity



thanks!

The years I was with the seminary were not particularly easy years for me: I had to cope with starting a young family, moving to and adapting to a different local church, and handling transitions in the seminary. As I look back, completing my seminary studies was indeed all by God's grace, through the ordinary means He provided of the people around me. I am thankful for generous and compassionate lecturers who were slow to speak and quick to listen, modelling for us that one pastoral quality we cognitively know we need but often struggle to live out. I am thankful for the classmates who read God's word with me and prayed and cared for me and my family, as well as those who were willing to receive the same from me. Occasional interpretative and theological banter in between classes was precious, and I hope we can continue to still engage that way with a brotherly spirit. I am especially thankful for the one lecturer who without fail faithfully pointed us not to reputable scholars, nor to a diversity of viewpoints – whether his own or the consensus of the majority – but to God's authoritative and sufficient word. This lecturer gave us the confidence that God's word is not vague, but understandable and reliable, and reminded us that we can and must always turn to it, without which our ministry shall be in vain.

Biblical interpretations, theological thinking and pastoral training are the bread and butter of any typical seminary training. It is our conversations outside of class, our being gracious and generous towards one another, and our pointing one another to God's word to satisfy our mutual need for Jesus Christ – in other words our gospel interactions with one another, which are God's ordinary means of grace – these are what make a seminary experience meaningful. By the same token, we can be assured that even when seminary is difficult, it will never be anything less than sanctifying.

Words of Thanksgiving

Ly Gia Thanh

Master of Divinity



thanks!

When I first came to the Baptist Theological Seminary (BTS) and was new to everything – from academic matters to student life – the school orientation helped me settle in. I was very shy and felt out of place at times, especially as I was in a totally new environment, but the lecturers and fellow students initiated conversations with me and joyfully welcomed me. They genuinely showed interest in me, which broke the ice and allowed me to open myself up to others. Furthermore, the orientation itself was very helpful. Although I was overloaded with information, I was clear about my role and responsibilities as a student. Moreover, I knew that help was available from the faculty and staff. Lastly, the psychological assessment and informal interview session that were part of the orientation helped me to be more aware of my strengths and weaknesses. Overall, the orientation showed BTS's genuine concern for each student in their holistic growth as a total person.

At BTS, the multicultural environment has been the aspect I have valued the most. In the English Department, I made friends with students who came from the Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand, India, Korea, Vietnam and Singapore. We offered different cultural and ministerial perspectives to deepen the class discussions on various topics. I might not always have agreed with all the things my friends shared, but I learned to validate their input and experiences despite our different viewpoints. In fact, all these interactions contributed a lot to my maturity. Outside the classroom, we forged many great memories together. I enjoyed all the conversations we had on different topics from light-hearted ones such as our favourite foods to some deep personal issues and struggles. Furthermore, some local students invited me over to their homes, introducing their family members to me and welcoming me warmly. Occasionally, we even went for short trips together during the mid-term or semester breaks. As for Chinese Department students, though language was a barrier to effective communication between us, we made an effort to initiate some short conversations with one another and used different means and tools to bring our ideas across. The school retreat, the annual intercollege games, and some other communal activities, were always good times for both English and Chinese students to bond and learn to work together. To sum up, I had a wonderful and meaningful time at BTS and particularly benefitted from the opportunity to engage in multicultural experiences and to make many deep cross-cultural friendships.

Words of Thanksgiving

Daniel Teng Charng Ther

Master of Divinity



thanks!

As I come to the end of a significant era of my life, calling my time in BTS a formative experience would be an understatement to say the least.

Having been blessed by the invaluable tutelage of myriad lecturers across the better part of a decade, I have been profoundly impacted by the wealth of their theological knowledge as well as authentic insights from their own ministry experience. My lecturers have touched my life in ways they may not even know: in their own unique ways all of them have been spiritual markers in my journey of faith. For that, they have my eternal thanks.

In the fond fellowship with my many classmates across the years, I found not only refuge from work and ministry demands but also a fraternity of God-loving, kindred spirits who, despite often hailing from different countries and cultures, were united in devotion and service of our great God. To all my friends, you have my love.

Through the many different challenges that I've had to face in juggling my family, work commitments and church ministries, as well as my studies in BTS, God has never failed to grace my life with His providential presence. Throughout the years, be it in the loving support of my wife and children or the kind understanding of my church and employers, I saw God's mighty hand work out situations that were often beyond my human abilities. Truly, nothing is impossible with God.

Looking into the future, I pray that BTS will continue to be a faithful community of teachers and students who will continue to give their best in service to Singapore, while also being a beacon of God's love and light to the rest of Asia.

Words of Thanksgiving

Naw Khin Kyi

Master of Arts in
Intercultural Ministry



Praise the Lord!

Glory be to God for giving me an opportunity to attend the Baptist Theological Seminary (BTS).

I attended BTS from 2014 to 2017 after the passing of my husband, while serving at Judson Baptist Church Singapore (JBCS). Although there was a language barrier, I managed to progress year after year in studying the word of God. After completing my B.Th., I continued serving at JBCS, and God opened the door for me to study the Master of Arts in Intercultural Ministry part time from 2021 to 2024.

Luke 18:1 “And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint.” (ASV)

Psalms 2:8 “Ask of me, and I will give [thee] the nations for thine inheritance, And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” (ASV)

As promised in these verses, I was able to serve year after year in Judson Baptist Church Singapore, Covenant Baptist Church, Hosanna Baptist Church and Evangel Baptist Church, as well as in Children's Ministry movements in Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru, Malaysia. I had many new, interesting and memorable experiences going on mission trips to my home country of Myanmar with JBCS, as well as to Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia and the Philippines with teachers and students from BTS. One of those experiences in particular was in Chiang Mai with Youth for Christ, where we went to a local government school and took part in various activities and performances. We also served at the local church and shared the gospel with households that were facing difficulties and health issues.

I am proud to be a part of BTS. We were able to preach the gospel along the riverbank in Chiang Mai.. In collaboration with the Bangkok Prison Ministry, we were also able to praise and worship God together with inmates, share testimonies and give encouragement. Each and every single subject I took at BTS was a blessing to me. I feel joyous, not only because I gained biblical knowledge to apply theologically and spiritually in my life, but also because I had prayer and fellowship with a small mentoring group. By attending chapel every week and through the Ministry Enrichment Hour, I also learned how Christian Ministry groups in Singapore work. I had the opportunity to take part in internal college games, international thanksgiving events, and retreats. I particularly remember during Chinese New Year that we had lunch together and also had fellowship with lovely grandmothers from the Baptist Golden Age Home. I am proud of BTS, whose board members, professors, staff and students serve God wholeheartedly. I pray that BTS will grow to greater heights and that I will continue to serve to the best of my ability.

Equipping Leaders and Cultivating Missional Pastors to Strategically Engage Asia's Harvest

Words of Thanksgiving

Wong Guan See

Master of Arts in
Christian Studies



thanks!

Pre-Graduation Reflections

These seven half-year semesters I have spent as a part-time student at the Baptist Theological Seminary (BTS) have marked an important point of transition in my life. In the forty-odd years since I first confessed my faith in Jesus at the age of 15, my time at BTS represents a significant period of personal spiritual growth. When I first started attending seminary courses in January 2021, I had come out of four years of adjustment to the unexpected stroke, emergency surgery, and survival of my spouse in Nov 2016, as well as almost a year since the start of the worldwide lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. I was blessed by a deep realisation that my past years of effort at work, my family relationships, as well as my faith journey, had yielded little, and that God was prompting me to develop a more intimate relationship with Him. Today, I can affirm with conviction and thanksgiving that it was the right decision to start this three-and-a-half-year journey with BTS, and it is one that has come with much blessing and guidance from God.

Most certainly, theological thinking, spiritual formation, methodologies in learning and teaching Scripture, and the foundational knowledge necessary for cross-cultural missions, amongst other topics, are counted amongst the gains I have made in terms of knowledge and understanding by means of the persistent and patient teaching I received from the lecturers and faculty of BTS. However, I would count as of even greater value the friendship and love I received from fellow seminary students, the guidance and prayers of BTS teachers and staff, and most of all the genuineness and Christlikeness shown by BTS students and staff in our many interactions. In particular, the acceptance of a lay individual who had only recently recovered from fallenness, and the flexibility to allow into on-site classes his wife, who exhibited a behaviour pattern typical of a 5-6-year-old child – these exhibited true love and compassion much more convincingly than any exhibition of deep theological understanding or the amazing capacity to recall and interpret Scriptural passages.

In my humble opinion, a theological seminary's ability to confer the relevant degrees and qualifications is not based on its ability to impart knowledge, but based more importantly on its intentional training and preparation of God's disciples for His mission to draw His people to Himself. Through BTS I have learnt that ministry and doing must first come out of being, and being must come from having an intimate personal relationship with God. I have learnt that the discipline of learning needs to be accompanied by the spiritual disciplines of self-reflection, humility and dependence upon the Holy Spirit's leading and empowerment. I have learnt that it is never too late to start or to restart these disciplines in order to gain intimacy with God, although it would be even better if we maintained and persisted with them throughout our time on this side of heaven. In sum, I have learnt much about why I previously repeatedly missed the mark and why I need to first learn to be still and know God.

If there is one suggestion that I could humbly offer to those who will join BTS in the coming semesters or those who still have some way to go, the familiar words of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesian church come to mind: "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10, NIV). It is easier to think of what we can do and want to do, but it is more pleasing to God if we wait, consider what His will might be, and only after that start to do the tasks that He has uniquely prepared and purposed for us.

Grace and peace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

Words of Thanksgiving

Tang Hong Chye Joseph

Master of Arts in
Christian Studies



thanks!

I had always wanted to know more about God, and in 2016 my wife enrolled at seminary and encouraged me to do so too. Since BTS was close to my office, I made the decision without much deliberation. I used to leave for work in the afternoon after my morning classes. I found immense joy in studying at BTS and had the privilege of connecting with many remarkable individuals and dedicated lecturers.

I was particularly inspired by two lecturers who pushed me to think critically and break out of my usual thought patterns. Their strictness and expectations had a significant impact on my learning process and led to a deeper breakthrough in my understanding of God's word.

I used to like hanging out in the students' lounge on campus where I could relax and chat with other students. What I enjoyed most was talking to students from different countries because they shared wonderful experiences and stories. Sometimes they even brought delicious traditional snacks from their various countries.

During my last semester at the end of 2022 I was invited to intern at Thomson Road Baptist Church (TRBC), with a particular placement to help me think about a future in full-time ministry. It happened that a few years previously I had thought about retiring and had been praying for my next life mission.

Through God's mercy and guidance, I came to realise that answering the call to ministry was indeed His plan for me. After much prayer and discernment, I accepted this calling wholeheartedly. Presently, I am humbled to serve as the pastor of TRBC Sunset Service.

Words of Thanksgiving

Liew Yu Ming Peter

Master of Arts in Christian Studies



thanks!

In July 2021, I started studying for the Graduate Diploma in Christian Studies (GDCS) at BTS and completed it in May 2022. Subsequently, I chose to continue studying for the Master of Arts in Christian Studies (MACS) at BTS from July 2022 and completed it in November 2023.

One of the reasons why I chose to study full-time at BTS is that I have been a member of a Baptist church since I became a Christian more than 40 years ago, so I felt that I should pursue my first theological degree at a Baptist seminary. In addition, one of the advantages of enrolling in the English programme is that I could enjoy the flexibility of studying some of the Chinese modules conducted by BTS's Chinese faculty and adjunct lecturers.

Studying at BTS was challenging but rewarding for me. Challenging due to returning to my studies at a semi-retirement age while juggling family matters, church ministries and assignment deadlines; but rewarding due to the chance to gain a practical field education with mentored spiritual formation and sound biblical theology, enabling me to serve better as a worker approved by God (2 Timothy 2:15). Amongst the many modules, “Spiritual Formation” helped me to embark on an unprecedented 2D1N personal spiritual retreat at the Montfort Centre (All for God Alone) in Singapore, whereas “Understanding Guilt, Fear and Shame Culture”, “A History of Christian Missions Movement” and “Old Testament Theology and World Mission” thoroughly changed my perspectives of evangelism and missions in my Christian life.

Truly, I am convinced that a theological education is imperative for all Christian leaders and believers who are serving or want to serve the Lord actively and passionately in whatever capacity and location. Studying at BTS is just the beginning of my theological education, which has not completely ended upon graduation. By God’s grace and mercy, I will continue to pursue further theological studies as part of my lifelong learning and spiritual growth. I praise and thank the Lord that I have benefitted greatly from the theological education I have received at BTS – a fruitful, meaningful and eternal investment that I will never regret.

Words of Thanksgiving

Seng Aung

Graduate Diploma in Christian Studies

thanks!



As a child in a tiny village in northern Myanmar, I never imagined that I would one day embark on an incredible journey. Coming from a poor family, studying abroad seemed like a distant dream. But my mother's words, "With God, nothing is impossible" gave me hope. At the time, I did not fully understand the meaning of those words, but today I feel compelled to look at my experience at Baptist Theological Seminary with that perspective in mind.

In 2021, I had a Zoom interview with BTS while I was still living in Myanmar. Despite many challenges, such as power outages and the limited Internet service, I got the interview with the help of God's guidance. I was serving as a youth pastor in my church at the time, and I studied hard for the admissions interview and relied on God's help. By God's grace, I passed the interview and got the chance to study at the seminary.

After completing two semesters remotely, I received my student visa and was able to enter Singapore in December 2022. The transition from studying in my home country to studying in Singapore was very challenging. Studying in my hometown was like floating peacefully down a river in a small boat, with occasional efforts to navigate around obstacles. Studying in Singapore presented me with a variety of new challenges, much like steering a small boat in the vastness of the sea. The unfamiliar surroundings, cultural differences and rigorous academic requirements felt overwhelming at times, mirroring the frightening vastness and unpredictability of the open sea.

However, in the midst of these challenges, I found comfort and support in the form of my teachers and friends. My teachers became indispensable guides and companions on this journey. Much like the wind and the rain, they propelled me forward with their unwavering encouragement and support. Their advice was a constant source of motivation that helped me overcome the academic and personal challenges I encountered. Thankfully, my friends were like protective clouds that shielded me from the harsh sun. In moments of uncertainty and adversity, they offered me comfort, understanding and companionship, and helped me withstand the intense pressure and stress. God's blessing was evident throughout this journey.

Today, as I receive my Graduate Diploma in Christian Studies, I am reflecting on the many blessings that accompanied me along the way. My journey from a small village in Myanmar to the bustling streets of Singapore shows how faith and perseverance can overcome any challenge. By God's grace, I overcame every obstacle and proved that with Him by my side His purposes for me will prevail. My Graduate Diploma in Christian Studies shows that my mother was right: with God, nothing is impossible. It proves that God has guided me through my studies and supported me every step of the way. This achievement is not because of me and my work but because of God, who has always been there, helping me to overcome challenges and giving me success. It strengthens my faith in the infinite power of God.

Words of Thanksgiving

Saw Peter

Graduate Diploma in Christian Studies



thanks!

I came to Singapore in 1999. Singapore at that time was a fast-growing economy with a pace of life to match. Coming from Myanmar, my certificates were not recognised, so in order for me to adapt I had to upgrade myself. Within five years, I managed to get more than 10 certificates, including a diploma from Ngee Ann Poly. Those certificates sustained me and kept me ahead of other migrant workers in my company. I was quickly conforming to the pace of this fast-growing and efficient country without realising it.

But God had a different and better plan for me. In 2016, the Lay Leadership Development Programme (LLDP) in BTS was mentioned during my church's worship service. I registered for the Book of Job and attended five Saturday morning sessions. There, I met local believers from other Baptist churches for the first time. I felt blessed by Dr Gary's clear and accurate teaching that had many applications to real life, and I was ministered to by the sharing from other participants. Subsequently, I continued attending the LLDP for every programme that BTS offered. Grace upon grace, I was able to encourage some of my churchmates to attend most of the LLDP too, which allowed me to have deeper fellowship with them as we also served together in church.

By 2018 I had completed eight LLDPs with BTS and was invited to join their night classes. I was initially reluctant because of my weakness in English, but eventually I decided to take the plunge. Despite my language difficulties and the physical challenges associated with getting older, God's grace strengthened, comforted and encouraged me by providing me with many helpful lecturers and classmates. By God's unceasing grace, I finally completed my night classes last year, and it is a great blessing to receive my Graduate Diploma this year.

In my journey with BTS I was taught to be diligent and humble and to learn faithfully from different lecturers and classmates. Learning God's word together with His people totally changed my way of thinking. BTS equipped me with the knowledge and confidence to be able to stand before believers to talk about His word and before non-believers to share the Good News. Ultimately, BTS provided me with heavenly wisdom to seek, trust and rely on God in every circumstance.

As I reflect on my nine years' journey with BTS, I am really thankful to God for allowing me to walk with great and wonderful lecturers, very helpful local believers, and brethren from other Asian countries who are also humbly seeking His wisdom and knowledge in order to minister more effectively in their own countries. My greatest hope now is for more local believers who are proficient in English to attend BTS so they can seek heavenly wisdom to serve their own churches, as well as to be a blessing to foreign BTS students who are disadvantaged in English.

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