

PAR+NERSHIP

Saved to Serve

2025 May Issue



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

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Dear Friends of BTS

“We must walk with the Lord before we can have people walk with us.”

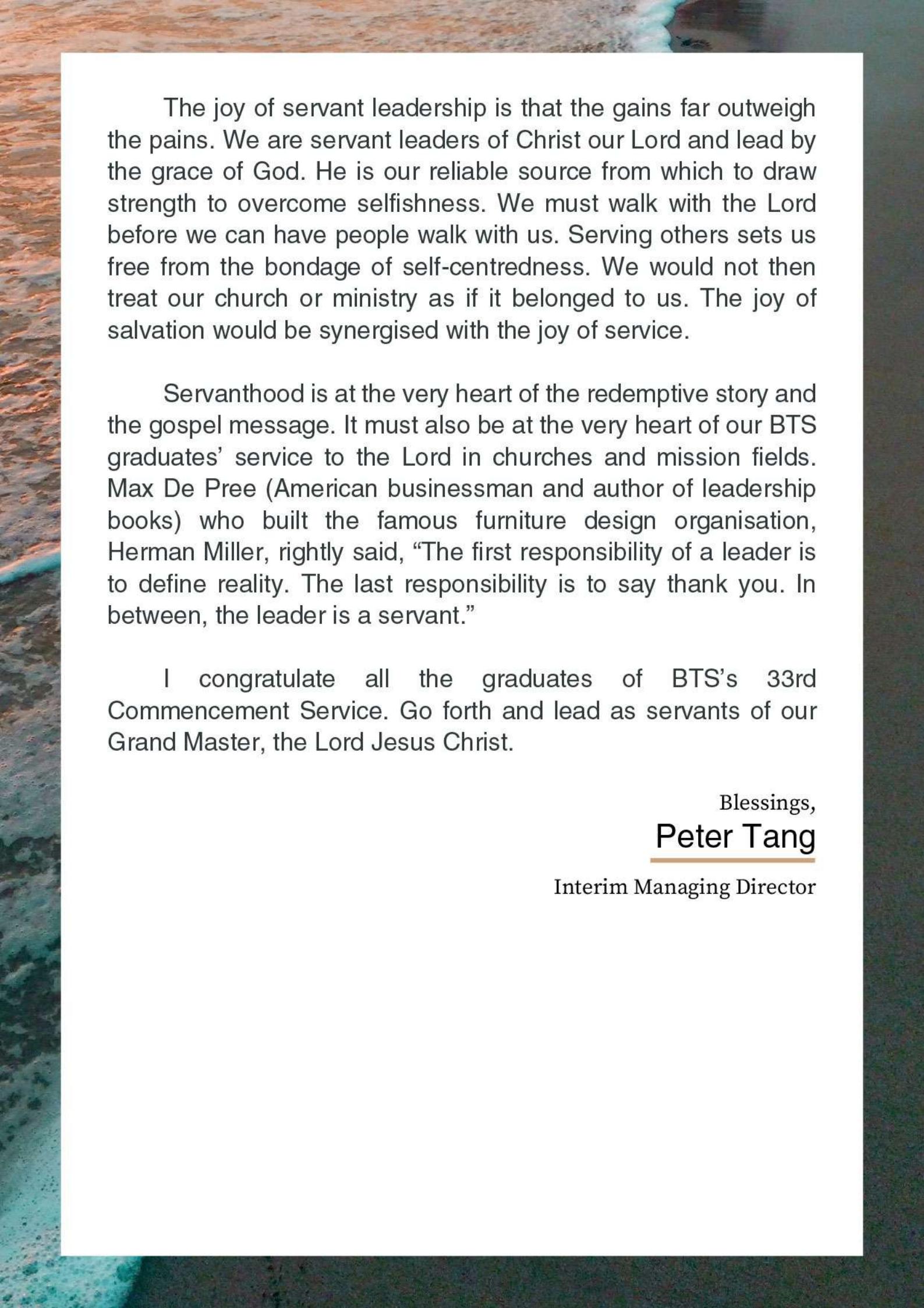
Servanthood is not born out of human ingenuity or created by any leadership guru. Rather, it is the biblical model for genuine spiritual leadership. A servant faithfully delivers service at the command of the master. However, in spite of its indispensable place in Christian service it remains radically counterintuitive, meaning that we know it is the right thing to do but often we do not do it.

A major stumbling block to servant-leadership is placing self over service. The preoccupation with self is often about power, popularity, position and possessiveness – all symptoms of a life centred on the self. Christian service is about serving others, and it does not come to us naturally. The first disciples of Christ struggled with understanding and acting as servants. In Mark 9:30-36, we read about the incident when Jesus and His disciples were on their way to Capernaum. During that journey, Jesus spoke of His impending arrest, death and resurrection. We would expect the disciples to be shocked and saddened, and at least try to console Jesus. Instead, they were arguing about who among them was the greatest. It was shockingly insensitive and self-focused, but we should not be surprised because such insensitivity and ignorance are also tragically present in leadership within the church today. Jesus's response was telling: we have been called to be great, but the pathway to greatness is not power, nor popularity, nor position – the pathway to greatness is servanthood. This simply means that leaders who do not serve do not deserve to be leaders.

Some time after the incident in Capernaum, a similar power struggle happened again, recorded in Mark 10:35-45, when James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus requesting, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” Paul Tripp in his book “LEAD” suggests that the request made by James and John revealed deep-seated problems that undermined servanthood. The request was seen as an escape from servanthood. They seem to have thought that the position of leadership offered them power and prestige, setting them free from serving others and allowing them to be served instead. For our part, once we start to think that sacrifice and suffering are burdensome, it is not long before we decide that we should not work so hard because we feel ministry should be free from pain. Planning and policy-making are so much easier than serving people. It is more comfortable to be ‘invisible’ in a background role not serving than to be ‘invincible’ and try to serve everyone.

Jesus left behind a lasting legacy when He said to His disciples, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:42-45)

Jesus makes it crystal clear that the church must not blindly follow the normal human models of leadership. Secular leaders lord it over people; servant leaders love people. Jesus used Himself as an example. He had every right to power and position, but chose instead to serve, even unto death. Servant leaders understand and accept that the church is not without chaos. God draws broken people to the church to have their brokenness mended by servant leaders who help them find hope in Christ.



The joy of servant leadership is that the gains far outweigh the pains. We are servant leaders of Christ our Lord and lead by the grace of God. He is our reliable source from which to draw strength to overcome selfishness. We must walk with the Lord before we can have people walk with us. Serving others sets us free from the bondage of self-centredness. We would not then treat our church or ministry as if it belonged to us. The joy of salvation would be synergised with the joy of service.

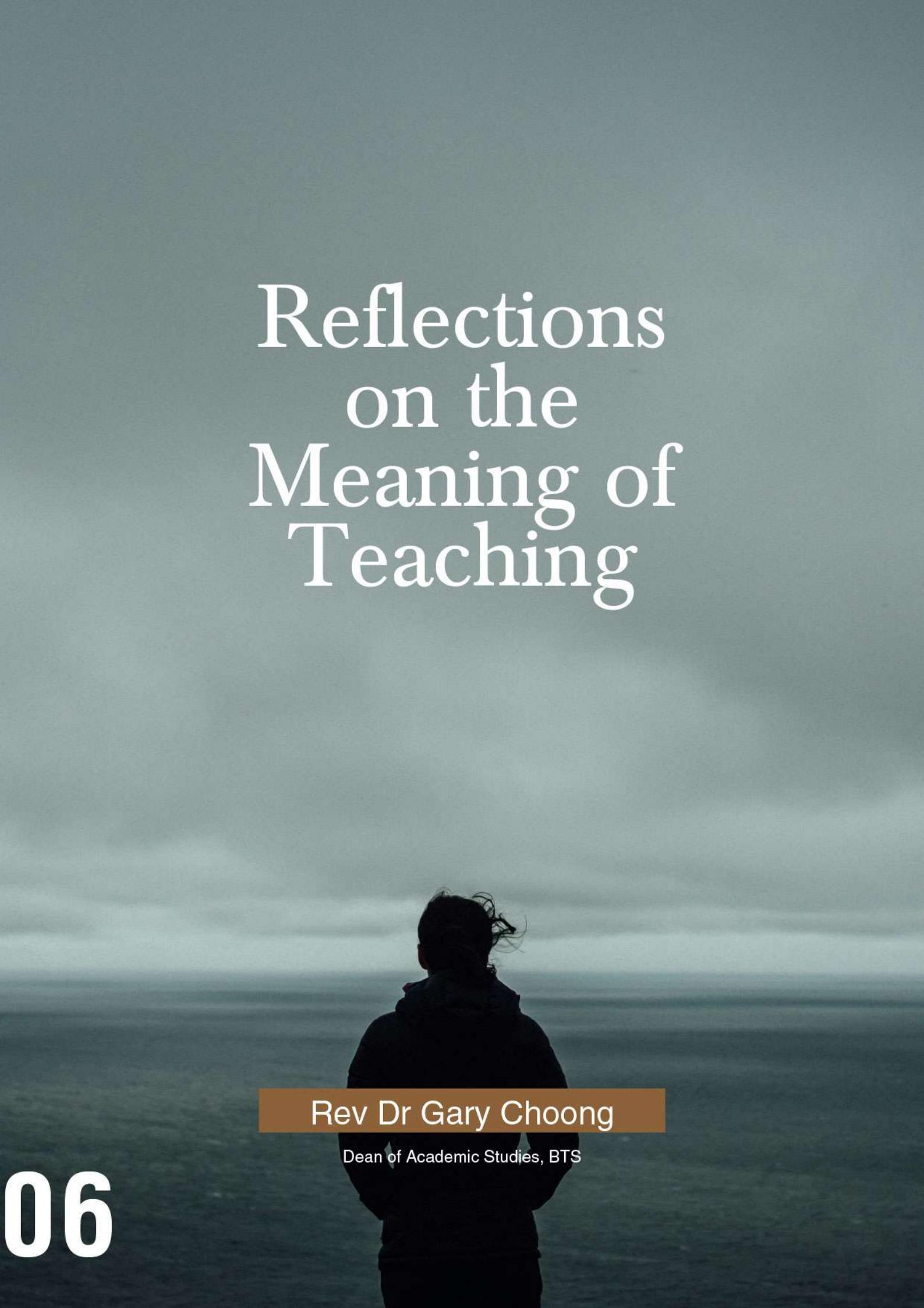
Servanthood is at the very heart of the redemptive story and the gospel message. It must also be at the very heart of our BTS graduates' service to the Lord in churches and mission fields. Max De Pree (American businessman and author of leadership books) who built the famous furniture design organisation, Herman Miller, rightly said, "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last responsibility is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant."

I congratulate all the graduates of BTS's 33rd Commencement Service. Go forth and lead as servants of our Grand Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessings,
Peter Tang

Interim Managing Director

Reflections on the Meaning of Teaching

A dark, moody photograph showing the silhouette of a person from behind, looking out over a vast, dark sea under a heavy, cloudy sky. The person appears to be wearing a hooded jacket.

Rev Dr Gary Choong

Dean of Academic Studies, BTS

I have been teaching at BTS for the past 18 years and cherish the many precious memories I have accumulated along the way. I admit I have been humbled numerous times by my incorrect assumptions about the teaching-learning process. Teaching brings both tears and joy: it is hard work that often reaps unexpectedly rewarding outcomes, which is a motivation to press on when the going gets tough.

The students at BTS comprise both local and international individuals, each contributing different understandings and practices of learning and teaching. I am cognisant of the cultural, educational and contextual backgrounds of each student, and strive to honour and integrate these differences into my teaching.

Every semester challenges old paradigms and introduces new perspectives for me as a learner-teacher. It requires discipline and commitment to pray, process, plan, prepare and deliver well-crafted syllabi and courses that facilitate student learning and growth towards Christlikeness in heart, mind and will.

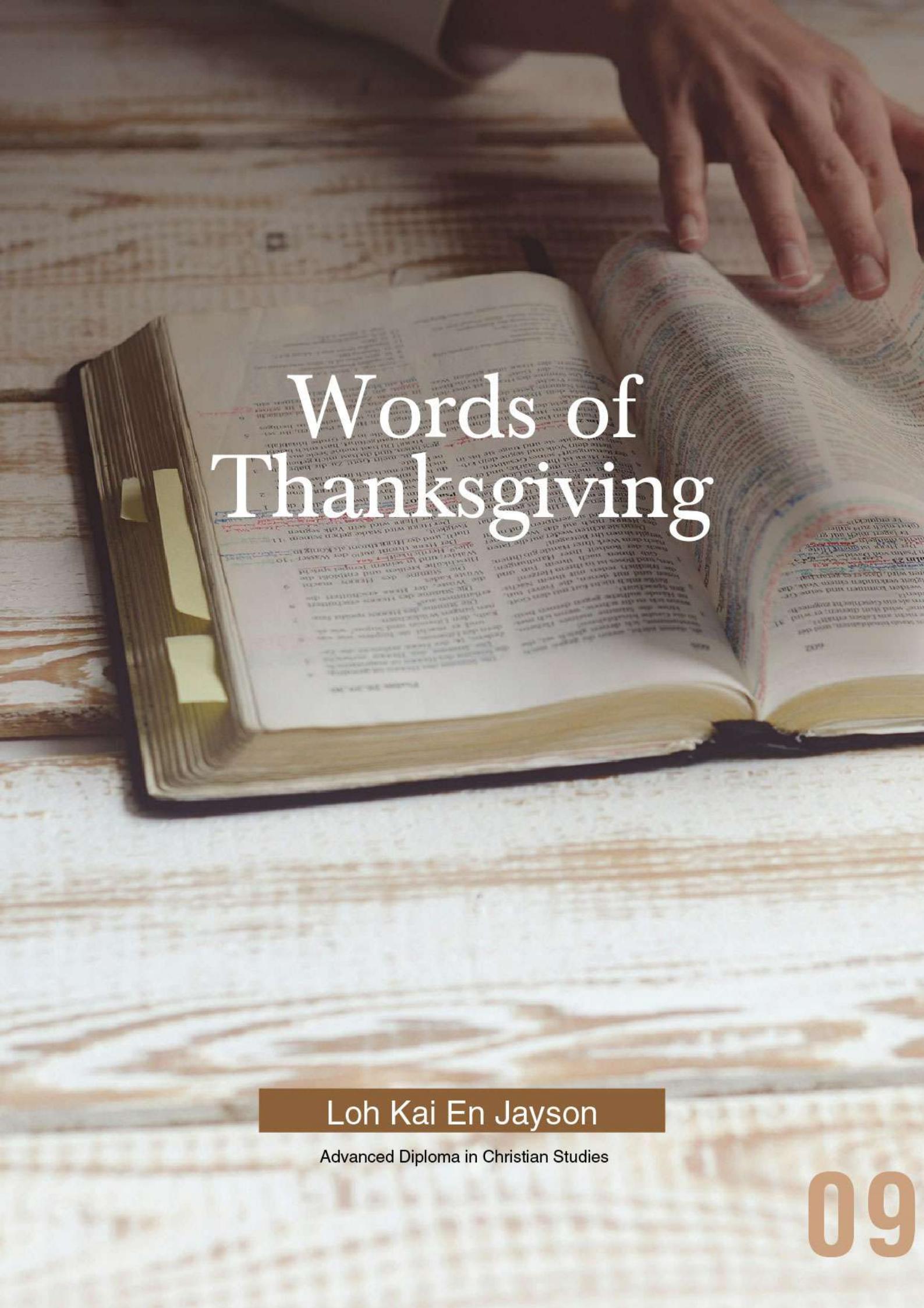
Teaching becomes truly fulfilling when students respond positively – whether through formal classroom learning, informal interactions outside the classroom, or deeply personal moments of life-to-life, open-heart communication. These interactions often extend into continued fraternal relationships with students even after their graduation. Often we can pick up conversations without missing a beat, as if no time has passed since we last met!

I hold dear those deeply personal, sometimes inconvenient, heart-to-heart conversations where respect is given and received, leading to life transformation under the guidance of the Scriptures and the indwelling Holy Spirit.

My aim is holistic transformation – of mind, heart and will – encompassing not just knowledge and skills, but also the spiritual formation of each student in their walk with God and in their interactions with others in life and ministry. The transformation of the heart is ultimately the work of God, requiring the student's willingness to surrender to His grace and truth. Yet, as a seminary teacher, it is my responsibility to model this transformation and act as God's conduit, opening my heart to students and drawing them closer to His grace and truth.

I am deeply thankful to God and to BTS for helping me exercise His call to teach by equipping me and providing students from whom I can learn and grow to be a responsible, reflective pastor-teacher in His vineyard.

Please pray for me and my team to be faithful teachers of His word and trustworthy spiritual mentors to the students God sends our way. Through your recommendations, may we see more students coming to BTS.



Words of Thanksgiving

Loh Kai En Jayson

Advanced Diploma in Christian Studies

09

Completing my Advanced Diploma with Baptist Theological Seminary (Singapore) in 350% of the time that most people in a full-time capacity take to complete it really took its toll on me. It was definitely not without its ups and downs, bringing both joy and tears along the way.

Learning together was a big part of my three-and-a-half-year journey. As I am not the most academically inclined person, I learned a lot, not just from the professors but also from my classmates, most of whom were significantly younger than me as well as being vastly more experienced in ministry and the mission field. Learning spilled over from the classroom and assignments into the mission field and conversations over lunch. The BTS building and its surrounding coffeeshops became havens for learning and the absorption of knowledge. Even the professors sometimes joined in our unofficial outdoor learning sessions, making our conversations more intriguing and fun!

Living out God's word together was the other big aspect of my school life. This has always been challenging to me. How do we live out what we have learned in Pneumatology, or Old Testament History, or even Baptist Distinctives? Having a group of friends and classmates to constantly remind me of God's truths and spur me on was a great blessing. I realised that my classmates are not just fellow students who help each other with assignments, but rather friends involved in each other's lives. I recall an impromptu conversation I had with a beloved sister in Christ in the midst of rushing to complete and print out our assignments in the school library. Having not had the chance to catch up with each other for some time, we naturally stopped and chatted, and both of us ended up crying and praying for each other. That's what I call living out the word together!

Spurring others on in the faith is an area where I have benefited from those before me, and where I feel I can have a small positive impact in turn. I admit that completing my studies (for now) and leaving BTS was bittersweet, but I do realise that the friendships built are real. What I have learned has certainly helped me to lead others closer to Christ in my church and personal ministry. The numerous catch-ups my classmates and I have had after graduation have also been very encouraging in showing that we continue to learn, live and lead others!

BTS has definitely changed me and opened my eyes to wider aspects of theology, ministry and discipling. It has given me more opportunities to serve in church and in my personal capacity, and more areas for God to mould me and shape me into the person He has called me to be. It has definitely been seven semesters well spent – and equally well remembered!

“And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”
(2 Timothy 2:2)



Words of Thanksgiving

Shaiza Worchanphi

Bachelor of Theology

Despite my passion to serve God, never in a million years did I dream that one day I would find myself pursuing a theological education. I always thought that it would be too much to ask for, but it is amazing how God calls us in His own time.

So here I am today writing my graduation testimony. I am reminded that when I was first introduced to Baptist Theological Seminary (BTS) I was excited to contemplate the journey ahead, but at the same time anxious about what the future would hold. Looking back on the journey from the very beginning to this day, as I prepare to graduate, it feels surreal. My heart is full of gratitude to God for placing me in BTS, knowing that I needed a place like this to grow in my faith and deepen my knowledge of Him. I arrived as one among many students, but I now leave as a member of the BTS family. BTS has been a home away from home to me, a place where I have experienced God's love and grace in profound ways, even as I stepped out of my comfort zone and journeyed to a new country. It is a place where, beyond theological training, I have experienced spiritual, emotional and physical healing. As I prepare to close this phase of my life, I am reminded of Philippians 1:6: "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." My journey in BTS has been a testament to God's unwavering faithfulness, His guidance, and His sovereign plan at work in my life. BTS is truly God's answer to my prayers.

I have been blessed to meet faculty, staff, mentors and fellow students who have become family to me here in Singapore. They helped me see my strengths and weaknesses, encouraging me to grow in my understanding of Scripture and ministry. I have also learned through my family in the Field Education (FE) church that ministry is not about having all the answers but about being faithful to God's call, relying on His wisdom, and walking in obedience.

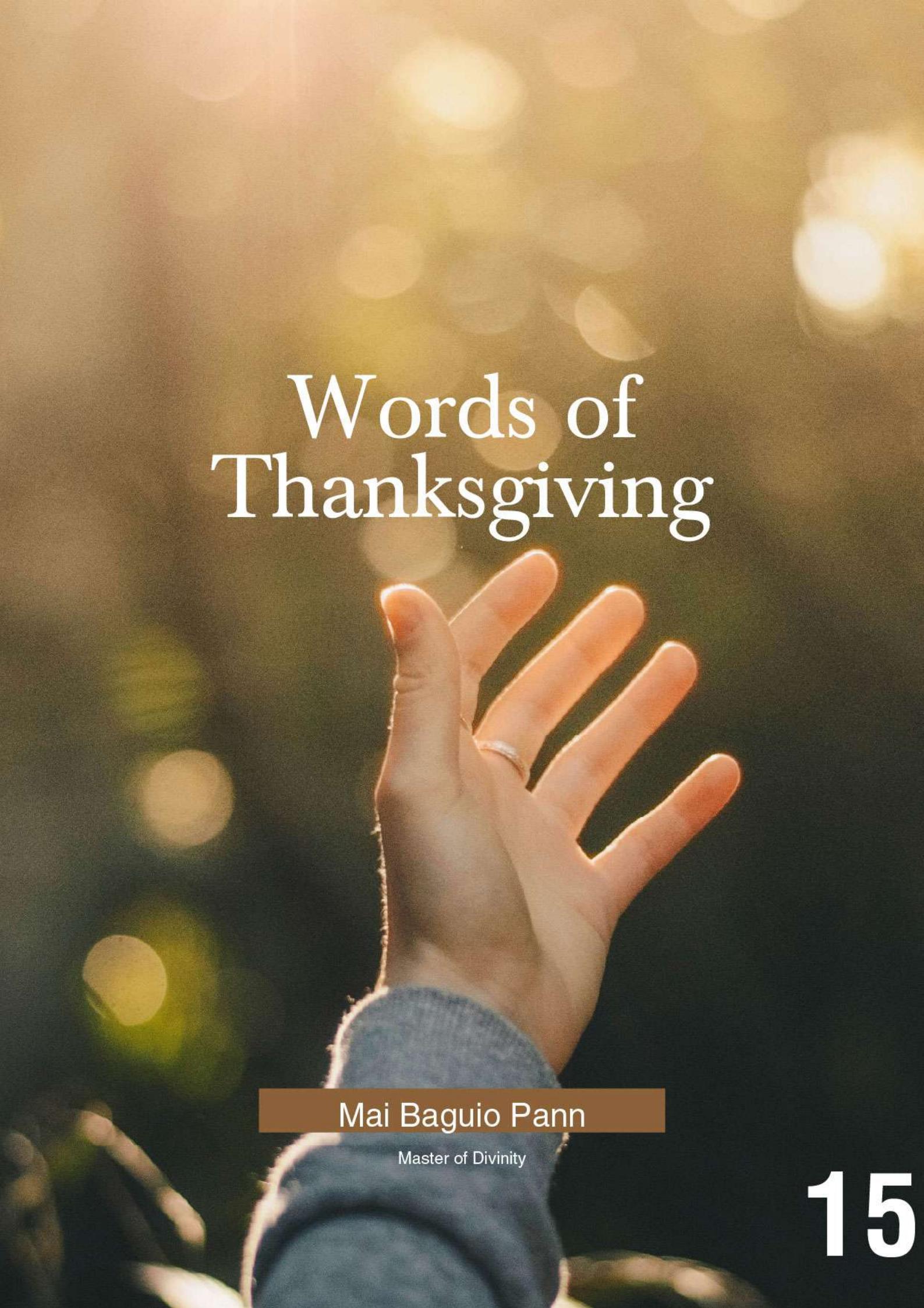
My time here has been so much more than just gaining knowledge, emotional healing and spiritual growth – it has also been a journey of physical healing. When I was admitted to hospital (and later had to go back to India for surgery) each faculty and staff member became like a parent to me in this foreign land. They took turns caring for me, praying for me and encouraging me. My classmates were like siblings, supporting me in many ways during my suffering. Eventually I recovered from the physical ailment. I thank God and BTS for the support and love that I received during those difficult times. I believe it was God's unique and humorous way of making BTS memorable for me.

We read in Ecclesiastes that there is a time for everything, and now the time has come for me to graduate and leave. As I step out from BTS, I do not see my graduation as the end of my journey, but rather as the beginning of a new season that God has prepared for me. As I step into the next chapter of my life, I will do so with faith, hope and excitement, looking forward to what God has in store for me.

Before I end, I would like to thank my family, church and friends back home for their constant prayer support and encouragement throughout this journey. Thank you!

It is my humble prayer that God will continue to use BTS for His mission and for His Glory.

Words of Thanksgiving



Mai Baguio Pann

Master of Divinity

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I really thank God for giving me the opportunity to study at BTS. I was born in Baguio in the Philippines, where my parents studied, hence my name: Mai Baguio Pann. Both of my parents are Baptist ministers from Myanmar and I grew up in Myanmar. I received God's calling to be in full-time ministry in 2017, and I started to pray for the school where God would send me for equipping. In 2021, I was admitted to study at BTS, joining the online classes over Zoom. This was because of the COVID-19 outbreak and the political situation in my country, which meant that I was not able to come to Singapore to join the in-person classes. Those days were hard for me personally, as well as for most churches and for my fellow citizens. However, God showed me His faithfulness through the ups and downs of life. One of my biggest obstacles was being diagnosed with cancer in 2022. It was a very difficult time when I felt hopeless and lost the motivation to continue my theological journey. However, God's calling had not changed despite this setback. I am here to testify that God never gave up on me and that by His grace and mercy I was able to come to Singapore to join in-person classes in January 2023.

While I was studying at BTS, God equipped me and shaped me in many ways. The most important lesson that I learned was that God is sovereign over my life. God's character never changes, and He never fails to carry out what He has promised. Previously, I had my own plans and timeline for my future ministry, but God reminded me that He is my master and I am His bondservant: I do not own myself, but I belong to the master who knows what's best for me. He is the potter who has the authority to shape and mould each clay vessel in His way, in His timing, and for His purpose. I studied at BTS for four and a half years, and all I know is that God carried me all the way. God never let me go and His faithfulness gave me confidence to rely on Him more and more because His power is made perfect in my weakness.

Studying at BTS broadened my horizons to see God's amazing work through many different people from different countries. I was able to see God use His people to bring life by sharing the gospel across the world. With the help of my teachers and friends, I found joy and comfort in the faith community through their encouragement and prayers. These experiences not only helped me to rely on God, but also opened my eyes to see that God put His angels around me to help me, ensuring that I was never journeying alone.

After my graduation, I will be going back to Myanmar to serve as a lecturer at a local seminary called Asho Chin Theological Seminary. The Asho Chins are a small minority ethnic group in Myanmar who really need the gospel. I pray that God will use me in a small way to enable His people to know Him more and more. It is my ultimate desire to be a useful instrument for His kingdom, if the Lord pleases, and to bring Him glory.

My journey here at BTS has been the foundation for my future ministry, and I am confident that BTS will journey along with me after my studies as well. I am really grateful and thank God for equipping me here at BTS, where I gained much inspiration, a plethora of profound experiences, and numerous spiritual blessings. I am confident that God will continue to use BTS abundantly to equip men and women of God to serve Him in His kingdom in all the corners of the world.

All glory be to God!



Words of Thanksgiving

Wahengbam Peace

Master of Divinity

When I embarked on my journey at Baptist Theological Seminary (BTS), I initially harboured two primary objectives: first, to deepen my understanding of God's word, and second, to attain a seminary degree that would enhance my credibility among ministry workers in Manipur, India, where formal qualifications are highly valued for effective ministry. However, as I reflect on my time at BTS, I realise that God's plans for me far extended these initial goals, leading to profound personal and spiritual transformations.

Through BTS's Spiritual Formation lessons, I was compelled to confront personal strongholds such as pride, insecurity, workaholism, restlessness, and hidden sins. This environment encouraged me to acknowledge my weaknesses and approach God in repentance, fostering a deeper Christlikeness. Away from the hustle and bustle of my ministry, BTS provided a space to experience rest and emphasised the importance of allocating time for family and friends, countering my inherent workaholic tendencies.

I learned to assess my life and ministry holistically, recognising an imbalance between 'being' and 'doing'. This realisation prompted a journey towards balance, emphasising the need to 'be' for God, not just 'do' for Him. BTS highlighted the significance of nurturing spiritual, emotional and mental health:

- **Spiritual Level:** Engaging in intentional reflection to deepen my relationship with God.
- **Emotional Level:** Understanding and articulating my feelings, and improving communication and relationships with others.
- **Mental Level:** Recognising the importance of mental health, identifying triggers, and addressing past traumas.

The seminary experience broadened my perspective through exposure to diverse ideas and cultures, teaching me to embrace differences and view fellow believers as brothers and sisters in Christ. BTS equipped me with the tools to handle God's word accurately. Emphasising critical thinking and active reflection, I learned to engage proactively with Scripture and in ministry contexts.

Reflecting on my time at BTS, I recognise profound transformations:

- From Pride to Humility: I arrived as a student eager for knowledge but leave humbled, acknowledging that the more I study God, the more I have yet to learn.
- From Restlessness to Rest: Transitioning from a workaholic minister, I've come to value rest and the importance of spending quality time with God and loved ones.

BTS has been instrumental in broadening my vision, intertwining the development of my inner self with how I relate to others. I am now equipped not only with theological knowledge but also with self-awareness, understanding that both the heart and the mind are vital in my spiritual journey.

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