



# in FOCUS

Equipping God's Workers With God's Word For God's Work



## A Special Tension Needing Special Understanding

By David C. Go

**S**pecialization. Is it good or bad? Is it a boon or a bane? Should we love it or avoid it?

With the increase in knowledge and technology, specialization is an acceptable way of life now and a foregone conclusion for the future. Years before, people would raise their fist if their family doctor said he could not help them with their eye infection because he wasn't an ophthalmologist. These days we do not raise our voice over such assertion. Instead, we admire such humility. Years ago, people would raise their eyebrows if they saw stores selling nothing but keys and padlocks, now we don't even lift an eyebrow over this anymore. Instead, we raise our hands to concur with the establishment of such stores.

But is specialization acceptable in the church? Should ministers called to serve the Body of Christ tread this path and become specialized ministers—ministers who specialize in counseling, in preaching, in administration, in youth ministry, etc.

A study of the Scriptures reveals that God is not against specialization. As far as I can see, there is no biblical injunction against becoming an expert in one's field of ministry. On the contrary, the Bible teaches that we must strive for excellence in everything that we do. We are also taught that the Holy Spirit gives to each of us different and special gifts as He calls us to serve. Paul, the great apostle, also told us explicitly that, in the gospel ministry, some of us would do the planting, while others would do the watering and harvesting. In other words, each of us has specialized tasks to do.

But if this so, why is there now a tension

between many young pastors and church members they minister to? Why do I often hear church leaders complain that the pastors they invited are very selective of their tasks? Why are many young ministers throwing in the towel even before their first term expires because the church requires them to do everything?

Personally, I see two causes for this tension but none of them is due to specialization.

The first cause has to do with the church leaders' wrong view of the pastors and the church members' wrong understanding of church ministry. The second has to do with the attitudes of the pastors. It has to do with the way they view themselves as ministers of the church.

Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 3-4 address these two erroneous mindsets.

To the church leaders and members who think of pastors as all-around workers who should do everything the church demands of them, Paul has these to say:

1. The ministers among you are God's servants, don't treat them like gods but do not treat them as if they are your servants (3:5). Yes, they are servants—God's servants. But so are you.

2. God assigns to the ministers certain tasks that each of them must do, and they are accountable to Him (3:5-8). Help them discover their tasks and help them do the tasks well. Find your tasks too and do them to the best you can.

*(Continued on page 4)*

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**A Missionary Doctor**

By Jeanne Caramoan

After becoming a Christian at the age of six, I remember my mom asking me one day what I wanted to be when I grew up. Without any hesitation, I quickly told her that I wanted to do great things for the Lord—to be a missionary doctor. In those times, even though my mother couldn't afford to send us to study in a good school, her faith in God helped me to finish my medical degree.

When I was in high school, I attended a youth summer conference and there I made a decision to follow God's calling. Since then, I have taken my relationship with God seriously. After I became a full-pledged medical doctor, I made a covenant with God that I would enter the seminary to equip myself with His word. Years passed and I came to realize that I was breaking up my relationship with Him because I let myself be committed to the world. Still, He was very patient with me and didn't want to give me up, so He called me once again.

When I entered BSOP, I planned to study part-time only because I didn't want to lose my medical skills. But after a heartfelt prayer and seeking God's will, I decided to obey Him by studying full-time for three years. Since my burden is to be a missionary doctor to China, God prepared everything for me. First, He got me involved in short-term mission this year. Secondly, He gave me opportunities in BSOP to learn Mandarin as well as communicate with my fellow Chinese students. After two quarters, I have gained more friends and knowledge of God's word.

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**He Has a Plan**

By Eduardo To

I am now 44 years old and a father of four kids. Knowing Jesus Christ for 7 years was a great experience for my family and I. Since then our lifestyle has changed. For example, how we spend our time, how and where we should worship God, how to deal with our problems and specially how to know God's will through reading and understanding the Bible. These changes did not occur instantly but they happened in God's perfect time.

God is truly all knowing. Looking back, I asked myself what made me decide to become a fulltime student at BSOP. This is my story.

From the day I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior, God already had a plan for me. He used people like the pastor who introduced me to BSOP whom I only met at a funeral service and the woman who always prayed for me and sent me text messages to encourage and remind me of the goodness of the Lord. I realized that there is a clear link to where I was before I came to know Jesus and to where I am today.

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**God's Intervention**

By Carmencita Uy

Years after professing my faith in Christ as my Savior, Lord and Master in that order, I felt like the Lord was leading me into fulltime ministry. Instead of being obedient to His command, I made excuses for not undergoing training, hoping that God would understand my three predicaments: taking care of my seventy-five-year-old mother; my responsibility as cashier, assistant manager, floor manager and overseer at my brother's store; and suffering from defective urethra.

I believe God took care these hindrances for me one by one. One of my siblings volunteered to take care of my mom; at the store, my sister-in-law came to assist and is now learning to run her own store. Last year, a urologist advised me to have surgery, and the operation was a success. Praise God for His goodness and His providence.

Early in 2004, God's Spirit convicted me in committing to serve Him. Last April, I joined the retreat seminar held at Cagayan Gospel Church. Through thorough examination of my life and God's gracious intervention in all my predicaments I came to acknowledge that I had made Him wait for twenty years and now it's time to serve Him fulltime.

I was encouraged to enrol at BSOP. Now, I believe God will facilitate all the requirements for my studies to be equipped as a full-pledge servant. I know God will always be my provider, my strength, my wisdom, protector and healer.

At BSOP, I have discovered my weaknesses as well as my strengths. One of my weaknesses is not interpreting the Bible in its context. My strength is being able to share to Chinese students like teaching them how to read or how to pronounce English words correctly.

My family is with me in BSOP. Here we experience the warmth and friendly smiles of godly people. Being a seminary student, we have our quiet time and personal devotion in the morning. The chapel time is at noon; this is the time where we are spiritually fed with God's word by our beloved teachers and guest speakers. We are being molded to be an example, being trained and equipped to be used and sent by God.

But God's plan does not stop here, I know He is always up there watching me grow, He is always at my side guiding me with His words, and He is in front of me leading the way.

**Teachers' Day** (September 30, 2004) was a big day of celebration in honor of all faculty and staff members. Students gave a short skit, solo renditions, cultural performances and special gifts as tokens of their appreciation for the labor of the teachers and staff. This was followed by a sumptuous lunch.

**FACULTY ON THE MOVE**

- ☞ Dr. Joseph Shao went to Cebu City to conduct BSOP Sundays at Bethany Church and The Living Christian Church on November 7 & 21, 2004 respectively.
- ☞ Prof. Jean Uayan spent a month in September, 2004 at the Divinity School Library of the Yale University doing research for her dissertation.

**CHED APPROVES PhD PROGRAM**

The Ph.D. program of the Asia Graduate School of Theology has been granted a permit by the Commission on Higher Education of the Department of Education. BSOP is now authorized to grant Ph.D. degrees to students in this program

**ALUMNI AT REST**

Rev. Ho Hui Kim rested from his labor and was called to be with our Lord last September 11, 2004. He had served faithful for 38 years; his fields of work included Surigao Gospel Church, Cagayan Gospel Church, and the United Evangelical Church of Baguio. The Seminary conducted a memorial service last September 12, 2004. May the Lord grant comfort to the family members in their time of bereavement.

**ALUMNI ORDAINED**

Alumnus Peter Sy/Tan Tian Beng (batch '96) was ordained last October 17, 2004 at the New Millennium Evangelical Church. Pres. Dr. Joseph Shao was the speaker during the ceremony as well as member of the ordination council. Congratulations!

**A BABY GIRL**



Congratulations to Dr. and Mrs. Michael Malessa for a newborn baby girl!

**VISITORS**

BSOP welcomed with open arms Rev. Dorothy Wong (batch '67) and her traveling companion Ms. Alexandra Ma for a short visit last October 20-29, 2004. She shared God's word and her rich ministry experiences during chapel and other times with the students. Rev. Wong served for nine years as Dean of Students, faculty and Dean of Practical Work. A special luncheon was also arranged where she met with many alumni at the Quezon City Sports Club on October 25, 2004.

**BSOP SUNDAYS**

During the first half of the year, BSOP was invited to conduct BSOP Sundays at the following churches: Jubilee Evangelical Church (6/27), Grace Gospel Church (7/25), Christ Universal Mission (8/8), St. Stephen's Parish (8/22), Davao Evangelical Church (8/29), UEC General Santos (9/5), United Evangelical Church of the Philippines (9/19), Diamond Jubilee Evangelical Church (9/26), Gerizim Evangelical Church (10/24), Bethany Church (11/7), The Living Christian Church (11/21), UEC Greenhills (12/5).

**Lessons on Leadership from the Church in Antioch**

*(A continuation from September issue.)*

By Linda Tue

**The Characters of the Church in Antioch**

Based on the Acts, in addition to prayerfulness and good teaching, we can observe a few more characters of the Antioch church:

First of all, the Antioch church was a church that was open to God's heart. It was not restricted by tradition. It reached out to the Greeks when the Jews in Jerusalem were still debating about Gentiles' salvation. No wonder the Holy Spirit spoke to the Antioch church to start the mission to reach the wider world. The church was open to God's vision and obedient to his call. It was willing to send out the best human resources of the church for the work God had in mind.

Secondly, the Antioch church was a generous church. When Agabus prophesied that there would be a famine in the land, the Antioch church collected money according to what they had and sent it to the brothers and sisters in Judea (11:28-30). They did not have to, but they were willing to share their resources, just as the disciples in Jerusalem used to sell what they had and shared with those who had needs. They were the model of a cheerful giver as Paul wrote in 2 Co 9:6-8 (cf. 8:13-14). The generosity of a church is the reflection of the grace that the church has received from God. A grateful church is often generous.

Thirdly, the Antioch church was a discerning church. When some Jews came from Jerusalem to teach about circumcision, they caused a great disturbance and a huge debate (15:1-2).

The church did not obey blindly because these people had come from the Jerusalem church. Yet the church did not deny or reject the issue blindly either. The church recognized how critical the question was. It was much more essential than whether a believer should receive circumcision or not, but it was dealing with the fundamental question of how a person would be saved. The church decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to discuss the issue and this resulted in the Jerusalem council, perhaps one of the most important church meetings in the New Testament time. The capability to discern was a reflection of how firm the church was founded in the truth as well as of the believers' humility to dialogue about the issue.

What may we learn from the church in Antioch?

*(Continued on page 4)*

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(SPECIAL, Continued from page 1)

3. The ministers are God's fellow workers among you; treat them with respect and honor (3:9).

4. Each minister needs to do his work with care and proficiency, as they depend on God's mercy and grace (3:10-15). Grant them space, time and resources. Support them. Encourage them. Be patient

with them.

To the pastors and ministers who believe they deserve better treatment from the church and who think that the church leaders are slave drivers out to destroy them and their specialized skills, Paul has these to say:

1. You are servants (literally, slaves) of Christ—slaves to do whatever the Lord asks of you

(4:1). You are not professionals out to do specialized ministries at the expense of other tasks. You are servant-slaves who should be obedient and submissive.

2. As servant-slaves, you are to be faithful in all that the Lord entrusts to you, knowing that one day you will give an accounting of your work before Him who assigned you the work (4:2-5). Do your tasks willingly and diligently, not grumblingly nor scrapily.

3. Your work, and the end result of it, is important but your testimony before men is more important (4:9). You are models that people look up to and emulate. Be careful how you live.

4. "I will live humbly and I will serve sacrificially" should be your motto in life. It should be your battle cry as you live and work for God each day (4:10-13).

It is inevitable that the world will become more compact and more specialized. It is also inevitable that specialization will somehow affect the church. We should not fear specialization nor should we do away with it. Instead, we should welcome it with the right attitude and motives, and with a right view and understanding of the church.

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(LESSONS, Continued from page 3)

In addition to prayerfulness and good teaching, which were important to the Antioch church, as they are important to any church of Christ, I believe that we may learn something extra from the characteristics of the Antioch church:

First of all, we can learn to have a God-oriented openness from the Antioch church. We all live with certain paradigm and tradition, with which we define our values and set our priority. When God shows us a different paradigm and a different priority, it takes much humility and courage to learn to see God's vision. It is always bigger and longer-term than our limited perception. It will always demand an ongoing transformation, i.e., renewal and change, in our life. It will always make us uncomfortable. However, a lively church, like the Antioch church, is open to God's vision and is willing to give its best to realize that vision. May God grant us humility to see that heavenly vision and courage to follow His call.

Secondly, we can learn generosity from the Antioch church. God likes a cheerful giver. How we give is a demonstration of our trust in God's provision as well as a reflection of our gratitude for God's gracious gifts in our life. It is easy to cut back on money that is going to mission that is not directly related to our local church, especially when there seems to be so many expenses in the church. However, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Lk. 12:34). Unless a church is open to share the gospel of

Jesus Christ with different people and is generous to share resources with them, it is difficult to send a missionary from this church. Are we willing to send out more money to missionaries whose work does not benefit our local church directly? Are we willing to send out our best human resources to help other people? May God help us to know His faithfulness and to give more generously.

Thirdly, we can learn discernment from the Antioch church, so that we may know how to think theologically with humility. There are many issues facing our churches nowadays. Some are critical while others are trivial. There is an old saying: "Unity in essentials, liberty in non-essentials, love in all things." What is essential? Where is the bottom line? On which topics do we spend the time of our church general meeting, not to mention the elders' board meetings? On prayer? On church vision? Or on something that has no lasting value? Both our weekly schedule and our bank account tell about who we are as individuals as well as a church. We will be more effective if we focus on the essential and choose our battles wisely. For the non-essentials, let there be liberty. For all things, let there be love among brothers and sisters. May God help us to discern His direction and to keep away from distractions.

May our Heavenly Father have mercy on us and help us to be more like the Antioch church so that we may bless others as the Antioch church has done.