



Marketplace Moments

Bibliophoria

It's Not About the Wall

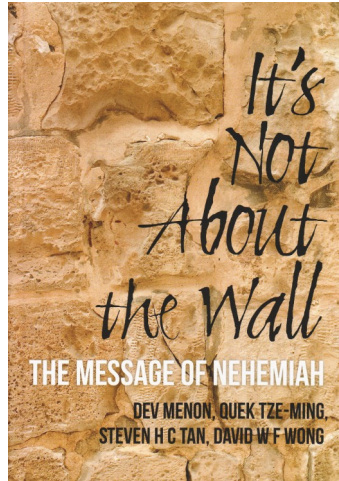
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Many a times, we assume that when God calls us to do something or when something happens to us, like in a crisis, we often focus on the task at hand. And yet, God often uses those life circumstances to bring about change in a person or a community.

The book is a series of sermons preached and put together in a volume on the message of Nehemiah. It is also put together by a group of Bible-Presbyterian pastors and scholars, known for expository preaching and teaching.

Nehemiah was a cup-bearer to a foreign king who has brought Israel in captivity. Nehemiah heard of news of his home city; Jerusalem laid in ruins and wanted to do something about it. Against many odds and opposition, he was able to re-build the wall. But, as the title say, "It's not about the wall."

Nehemiah is one of the many characters in the bible whom folks in the workplace ministry have lifted up as a role model. He can be said as a civil servant, put in charged of a multi-billion dollar public works project, facing political opponents who wants to detract the project, including military



confrontation, logistical and transport issues of raw materials required for the project and having to resolve many human resource problems arising throughout the progress of the project.

Although the context of the sermons was set within the building project of a local church, many of the principles and insights can be applicable to a wider context of the marketplace and public square where Christians are engaged in many facets of challenging work.

Tracing some of the chapters, questions such as, "How does one deal with something that burdens us?", "What are some preparations that is needed to start a new project?", "What to do when we face opposition from within and from the outside?"

Just remember, it's not about the wall.

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Of the Heart and Mind

Art of Work

It was a rare occasion on a recent business trip, taking me all the way to Manchester UK. Having the weekend off, I decided to take a tour of the Manchester Art Galley. It has been some time since I stepped into an art gallery and was looking forward to the experience.

Being new to the gallery, I decided to join the guided tour. The intent of having an art gallery by the early industrialists was, paraphrasing the words of the guide, "to elevate the working class so that they can appreciate beauty and be more cultured". How presumptuous and condescending I thought.

To add insult to injury, it was said that "many of the paintings were created to bring nature closer to the common folks, and pictures of family together educates them on what a family should be." I was appalled. Industrialists destroyed the natural environment contributing to pollution and exploit the common folks to long hours of work. Rather than preserving greeneries and nature for people to enjoy and time for families, they decide to create an artificial substitute for God's very own creation. And since when did aristo-



crats start assuming that they have the model family and the 'common folks' don't?

Assuring you that these did not deter my enjoyment of the afternoon, appreciating the arts, I was particularly captured by a painting by John Madox Brown. As an industrial town, the purpose of work is very much discussed and debated. In the caption of the painting writes, "The moral value of work was much discussed in the middle of the 19th century. This painting reflects that debate.

One day, as Brown walked to his Hampstead studio, he caught sight of a group of navvies digging a drain. He had been reading Thomas Carlyle's *Past and Present*, which discusses the nobility of la-

bour. It occurred to him that navvies were as worth painting as any group of picturesque Italian peasants who graced the walls of London art galleries.

He made these constructors of the modern world the central focus of his painting, surrounding them with those who do not need to work or are deprived of meaningful work.

In contrast, on the right, Thomas Carlyle watches as he converses with Rev. F D Maurice, founder of the first college for working men. These are brainworkers, the cause of purposeful work and happiness in others."

Perhaps it is high time that we are able to capture the value and meaning of purposeful work thought the arts as well.

Open Eyes in a Darkened Room

Ilo Ilo

A 2013 Singaporean family film. The debut feature of director Anthony Chen, the film features an international cast, including Singaporean actor Chen Tianwen, Malaysian actress Yeo Yann Yann and Filipino actress Angeli Bayani.

This will go down in history as one of the shining achievements from the Little Red Dot, a David vs Goliath story, of how the little guy wins big. It is not only the story in the movie but also the stories behind the movies that makes this an amazing journey for all involved.

Set in the late 1990s of the financial crisis, the storyline is simple enough. A family trying to cope with the stresses of life (a new baby on the way, jobs and retrenchments, loss of invest-

ments, family relationships) and the addition of having a stranger; a domestic helper into the family. The story focuses on the bonds and relationships fostered over time.

The movie, in its' simplicity, is as Singaporean as kopi, kaya and toast. I love the images of the Singapore life, from the trains running by, the view of HDB estates, the hanging of laundry to dry on the outside of flats, the standard white tiles in the kitchen, to even as simple as the leaky tap with a small piece of cloth covering it, the Toyota Crown taxis with bits of torn upholstery.

Sadly, it is also testament of a large part of a generation growing up with their maids, and the children of their maids growing up with



someone else. Families dislodged. I believe this is why the movie resonates with so many considering the contingents of Pilipino and other overseas workers are in major cities of Asia, including Hong Kong, Taipei etc.

(Spoiler Alert) The final scene pans across a new birth in the family, both father and son waiting outside the delivery room, listening to the walkman and a cassette of Pilipino pop songs that the maid used to listen to. What holds the future for all of them? What lessons have they learnt through the experience? Have they grown to be better persons?

As lives cross paths, we all rub off each other, for better or worse. How will God be glorified? How do believers welcome strangers amongst us? Lest we forget, we are all loved by God the Creator.



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Coming Events

For more information check our web-site.

11 Jan 2014 – GCF Dedication Service
Putting Flesh on Dry Bones

