



Marketplace Moments

Bibliophoria

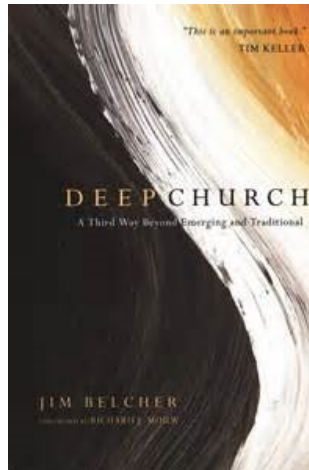
Deep Church

Jim Belcher

The under currents of cultural changes have inevitably also changed how we do church, how churches reach out to a new generation; believers and non-believers. This is beyond simply discussion of worship with hymns or contemporary songs.

In the transition from the modern to post-modern era, the emergent church leaders, seems fed up with a pragmatism of seeker sensitive churches, responded not only with an alternate form of worship, but also how they perceive and understand matters of truth, evangelism, the gospel, worship, preaching, ecclesiology and culture. These are all major points of contention between the modern era churches and the emergent church movement.

Belcher claims to be both an insider of the emergent church movement and at the same time an outsider. The book attempts to take the most pertinent or prominent representatives from both sides and share their perspectives. He then proposes a third way, trying to reconcile and bring readers to seek beyond the present to that which he hopes to bring the people of God to what is known as "Deep



Church"

This "Deep Church", is a term borrowed from C. S. Lewis 1952 letter to the Church Times. Belcher wrote the book for those who are caught in between the debate and for those on the outside who want to understand the debate.

Though churches in Singapore may not necessarily be deep into this debate, Belcher spurs us to reflect on the current situation here. Much of the dissatisfaction felt by the emergent church are echoed by many younger Christians I meet these days. Many congregations currently separate the main service from youth or young adult services, with different form or format. This may potentially lay the fault line in local congregations.

It bodes well for us to read and consider the Third Way before it is too late.

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Of the Heart and Mind

I believe

Another year has quickly passed, as our family attended the first Sunday Service at church. It was an exhausting year with many changes; my wife declaring that she has "graduated" from PSLE as our daughter entered secondary school, dealing with a whole set of issues with growing children, my transiting to a new job and other ministry work, speaking engagements and conferences.

The year ahead holds new challenges and possibilities as we are called as a family to new things to do and learn. My wife and I are both anticipative and apprehensive.

Pastor that first Sunday morning reminded us of an event in the bible (Mark 9:14-29) where a man brought his son possessed by a demon to Jesus' disciples to drive out the Spirit. The disciples couldn't and brought him to Jesus. "O unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything

take pity on us and help us."

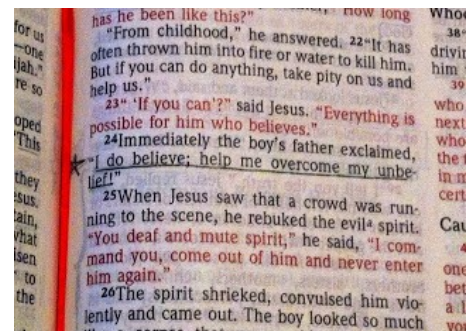
It probably has been going on well in the conversation up to this point. I am not sure if Jesus was upset, amused, saddened, dismayed or perhaps all rolled up at the same time. I tried to imagine the multiple tones and facial expressions as Jesus replied, "If you can?" "Everything is possible for him who believes."

I have often come to this point like the father, even after having experienced Him through many difficult circumstances, to begin by asking the same stupid question, "Lord, if you can..."

Looking at the challenges ahead, I often doubt if they can be achieved. There are still many projects and tasks that I feel very inadequate in being able to manage and complete. But then as I looked upwards wondering, I recalled the processes and choices that was made in those transitions, and why I am to do them; so that I may learn to trust God more, to grown in my faith and walk in Him.

I was brought again to a point to say, "I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief!"

It is so easy to go back to our own comfort zone, to try to do things in our own way.



This taking a step of faith is neither a one off event nor is it ceaseless growing. Rather, we need to be continually renewed, when we falter and grow faint, much like the experience when Peter was walking on water, and became afraid when the wind and waves grew strong.

What are our challenges as we step forth in the new year? Sometimes, when things do go well, we may wonder what ill or disastrous event may befall us. We when we are in the depth of our difficult situation, in a time described as "the dark night of the soul", we wonder when will it ever end.

I sometimes wonder if Jesus' questions, "How long shall I stay with you? How Long shall I put up with you?" is simply out of exasperation, and rhetorical in nature. For the rest of my human, fallen existence, I will continue to struggle in this journey of faith until he comes again.

Till, then, I continue to learn to say, "Lord I believe, help me overcome my unbelief!"

Open Eyes in a Darkened Room

Silver Lining Playbook

I didn't think much of this movie watching it the first time round. It had a bit too much neuroticism for me.

Bradley Cooper plays Patrick "Pat" Solitano, Jr., a man with bipolar disorder who is released from a psychiatric hospital and moves back in with his parents (Robert De Niro and Jacki Weaver). Determined to win back his estranged wife, Pat meets recently widowed Tiffany Maxwell (Jennifer Lawrence). She tells Pat that she will help him get his wife back if he enters a dance competition with her. The two become closer as they train and Pat, his father, and Tiffany examine their relationships with each other as they cope with their issues.

It was nominated for 8 Oscar and unfortunately only gotten away with Jennifer Lawrence for Best Actress.

What is hard to watch at first, is the fact that the characters all had issues. Pat Sr was superstitious and addicted to gambling. Tiffany was dealing with loss in life. Pat was trying to get his life back. There was quite a bit of shouting and yelling, and the mother, distraught having to look after two men in her house with serious problems.

I actually wanted to dismiss this movie as perhaps an-

other crass American movie. I can't imagine people being so dysfunctional and broken.

Reality strikes when I have a casual dinner with 4 counselors and psychologists. One counselor works with low income, chronically troubled families, describing how hard it is to help them. When one problem seems to be resolving, another major crisis pops up.

The school counselor speaks of working with troubled children in a neighborhood school, how difficult it is to work with the parents. Many times, it is not just the children but a lot of the kids' problems are attributable to the parents' attitudes and behaviours.

The psychologist in private practice tells of increasing youth to young adults exhibiting self hurting behaviours such as cutting oneself to relieve stress. They come from well to do families, some with religious upbringing and with many expats amongst her clients.

I suddenly come to realize perhaps the brilliance in this movie. In many previous movies, I expect a hero, a model that brings the greater good out of themselves or in people. For the characters in



this movie... none exists. All of them are flawed. And thus explains my discomfort in my initial response to the movie.

It is our dysfunctionalities that defines us as part of the fallen human race, as much as we want to think otherwise.

Perhaps, in our search for relationships in a life partner, it is not the perfect mate, but the mutual fitting of our brokenness that makes us whole? Perhaps, in our understanding of family or community, we do not demand normality? Perhaps abnormality is the new normal?

The silver lining then emerges from all these imperfections, redeemed only by the love of Christ and the grace of God. Together, despite our dysfunctionalities, are made perfect for each other.

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