



Marketplace Moments

Bibliophoria

The Suburban Christian

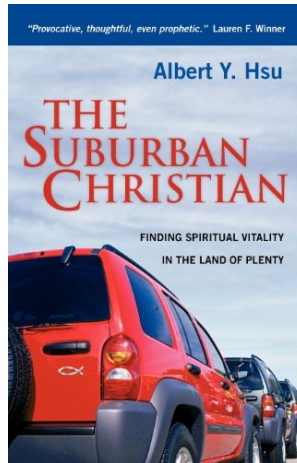
Albert Y. Hsu

Suburbia can sound far off in the land of America. However, the metropolitan Singapore shares much of the same characteristics. The tagline of the book says it all, "Finding spiritual vitality in the land of plenty". These same characteristics are shared, as I observed, by many other Asia megacities, where a substantial population lives in satellite towns around the city. Jakarta for example has around 13 million people during the day and 5 million at night.

Hsu, started by a simply asking if believers are called to Suburbia. Strange as that may sound, many believers today do not find our place of residence as a place of calling, whereas, the people of Israel were called to live in a land. With our constant drive for upgrading to larger HDB flats or condominiums, or even changes in churches we attend, gives us a very loose sense of rootedness?

The book also touches on many points of modern living such as a commuter culture. In the recent URA Masterplan, a group of believers spoke about how the Singapore island is zoned in 16 different colours and our people moving in and out of those zones constantly throughout the day and week, not only contributing to traffic congestion but also much time travelling in public or private transport, making time for family and community more difficult.

Also, "The very housing structures of suburbia itself contribute to consumer culture because of the primacy of the single-family home. Rather



than homestead being a place of production, the single-family home is a place of consumption, necessarily fueled by wages to support a consumption-centered lifestyle." Though it is no longer possible to change the paradigm today back to a homestead, ideas such as partially working from home is possible for some because of advancement in technology. There are ways believers can counter consumerists' ideology. Hsu suggested three; to reclaim Christian spiritual practices of creativity, simplicity and generosity.

Closely tied in to consumerism, is materialism. In a hyper-marketed society, "meaning is no longer found in the products but stories surrounding the products." Looking at all the malls now sprouting over Singapore in the newly carved out regional centers, where the global brands previously available along Orchard Road is now readily available in HDB townships.

There is an urgency to cultivate spirituality in everyday life for all of us urbanites and truly be salt and light by charting a new way of living under God.

Inside this issue:

Bibliophoria	1
Of the Heart and Mind	2
Open Eyes in a Darkened Room	3
What's Up?	4

Highlights

- The Suburban Christian
- Have and Have Not
- Silver Lining Playbook

Of the Heart and Mind

Have and Have Not

I recently heard this piece of wisdom that got me thinking hard. "Contentment is not just coming to terms with what you have, but more than that is coming to terms with what you don't have."

The conventional understanding of what contentment is about; to be happy with what we have. The refrain of the old hymn "Count Your Blessings" :

*Count your blessings, name
them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what
God hath done!
Count your blessings, name
them one by one,
Count your many blessings, see
what God hath done.
And it will surprise you what
the Lord hath done.*

The exaltation above tells us, be it trails, difficulties or seeing others succeed etc., is to shift our focus on what we don't have to what God has already given us. This however, may not be the best strategy to deal with the whole area of covetousness. If anything, it may only be a temporal relieve.

We all have been brought up with dreams. We have been challenged with building a better life or what is defined as the good life for ourselves. Even those who have ambitions, be it in careers as professionals or even in ministry, to lead or grow a business, department or ministry, we have some ideas of what we want or would like to achieve.

Those ambition are not necessarily wrong if they are part of God's providence and

plans. I believe deep inside, we all have our own list of what we would like. If we are honest, we know as believers that we should not demand but humanly speaking, we can't help but let some of those fleeting thoughts slip through; if only...

Some may have great careers or material well being but struggle with our relationship with spouse or our children, perhaps with learning challenges, not doing as well at school, behavioral and disciplinary difficulties through the growing phases or whatever may befall our family. Again if only...

Children are a great reflection of us adults. No matter how much toys they have, it always seem that there is something else that they see their friends have and would want. When they get to play a digital game, they would want to play just a little while more. Adults are better at only hiding our desires and far from being truly content.

The road to contentment is never an easy path of just remembering our blessings. The road to contentment is one of brokenness and surrender. They come in forms big and small.

Stupid as this may sound, but when I was a young adult, I struggled with God over the make of car that I would drive, understanding that following His call in my life may result in not being able to own this dream set of wheels. It represented the good life that I would like to have, the possibilities that an engineering career will bring me. I realized



that in reality, I can't desire to have both, because I cannot have something in competition with my God, even if it is a good thing. As a sinner, I continue to struggle, perhaps not intensely, but it is nonetheless very real.

For some, it may be painful to know that one may never find the one life partner one desires. For some, it may be the promotion one desire in a company that was never offered. For some, it may be the type of relationship you have desired to have with your spouse that might never be. For some, it may be relationships with son, daughter, siblings, parents or in-laws.

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. (1 Timothy 6:6-7).

If we are able to begin to learn to surrender what we don't have to God as well as counting our blessings, we complete the equation; to be content and to not covert. They are like the two sides of a coin, one cannot exist without the other. I don't think God is too impressed with what we can achieve for him but perhaps is more interested in what we surrender to him.

Timothy Liu

Open Eyes in a Darkened Room

Gravity

Newly minted with 7 Oscar award winner including Best Director Alfonso Cuaron and a miss for Best Actress nominee Sandra Bullock (too bad she did not win Cate Blanchett) this film is a science fiction and space drama.

The film is set during fictitious space shuttle mission STS-157. Dr. Ryan Stone (Sandra Bullock) is a medical engineer on her first space shuttle mission aboard the space shuttle *Explorer*. She is accompanied by veteran astronaut Matt Kowalski (George Clooney), who is commanding his final expedition. During a spacewalk to service the Hubble Space Telescope, Mission Control in Houston warns the team about a Russian missile strike on a defunct satellite, which has caused a chain reaction forming a cloud of debris in space. Mission Control orders that the mission be aborted and the shuttle begin re-entry immediately. Communication with Mission Control is lost shortly after. (Wikipedia)

As Matt and Ryan are

tethered to each other, with other crew dead, they have to find their way back to earth with only limited air supply. They started conversing and Matt found that Ryan is still grieving over her loss of her daughter, a part of her life she confided in to Matt.

As they approached the International Space Station, they realized that the crew there has evacuated. They barely caught onto the ISS as they flew by. To prevent both from drifting away, Matt sacrificed himself to save Ryan's life. Ryan eventually made it back to earth alone as the sole survivor.

A few themes were highlighted by commentators worth exploring. With all the advancement in technology, human kind continue to be helpless and as the director contrasts between the humanly created technology of space exploration and that of nature, "the beauty of the sun on the Ganges".

Father Robert Barron wrote, "The technology which



this film legitimately celebrates is marvellously useful and, in its own way, beautiful. But it can't save us, and it can't provide the means by which we establish real contact with each other. The Ganges in the sun, the St. Christopher icon, the statue of the Buddha, and above all, a visit from a denizen of heaven, signal that there is a dimension of reality that lies beyond what technology can master or access. The key that most effectively opens the door to the reality of God is nothing other than the kind of self-forgetting love that George Clooney's character displayed, for God, as the first letter of John tells us, is love. In and through that love, which permeates and animates the whole of the creation, we find connection to everything else and everyone else — even to those who have passed from this life to the next."



**Marketplace
Christian Network**

Teban Garden Post Office
PO Box 669
Singapore 916003



Phone: +65 6872 4732
Email:
info@marketplacechristian.net
Web-site:
www.marketplacechristian.net

**Kingdom Building
at the Workplace**

Coming Events

For more information check our web-site.

