

combined youth conference

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Thank God for the Combined Youth Conference 2005, for it was truly a fruitful one. The Conference saw youths from Calvary, Tengah, Pandan, True Life, Maranatha, Galilee and Calvary Batam in attendance. There were also two participants from Maepan (Thailand) and two from Colombo (Sri Lanka). The theme for this year's conference is "*My Lord and My God*," taken from John 20:28.

Upon entering the sanctuary, the youths initially clustered according to their respective churches, but it was not long before the ice was broken and everyone was getting along well. We started with a song, followed by a short run through of the conference programme. A time of Getting-to-Know-You followed allowing everyone to get to know each other better.



Speaking on the Conference theme, our Senior Pastor, Dr SH Tow, opened the Conference. This was followed by his message on "My Lord's Word." Both messages were taken from John 20. After the messages, we had a short time of Q-and-A and discussion, where our inquisitive youths asked Dr Tow questions about the text.

After lunch, the youths, hungering for more, were fed more spiritual food by Rev Edward Paauwe. The message, titled "Learning from One Another: How Youths can Make a Difference in the Local Church" was based on 1 Timothy 4. Rev Paauwe shared about the activities of the youths in his church in Perth. After the message, we were eager to ask him questions on how we in Singapore too can play a part in the church.



A question posed by Eileen Chee (Calvary YF) was, "Some YFers are shy and do not like to fellowship. How do you combat this?" Rev Paauwe replied that there is a need to have messages emphasizing on opportunities for service and areas of service where help is truly needed; and to encourage YFers to come and help and serve together. The young people can also encourage one another through fellowship meetings, picnics, barbeques, etc.

With fresh examples in our minds of how youths can make a difference in their church, we set off next for our different areas of ministry: Monday afternoon was "Ministry Afternoon." (Earlier in the morning, we have registered our names for one of three choices of ministry: Tracting, Lentor Residence, and the Helping Hand.)

Here's a short report on what happened at tracting by Sister Eileen Chee: "Thank God for a blessed and fruitful time of street evangelism on Monday afternoon. In total, we had seven contacts, but thank God; we spoke to more people than that! We will specially invite these 7 to come for our Youth Gospel Rally in July. Those of us who had gone for tracting can truly testify that the power of the Holy Spirit was with us, thus giving us attentive hearers to speak to. This should motivate us to keep coming for tracting!"

As for the Lentor Residence (an old folks' home with strong links to Calvary), Joanna Low comments: "A group of about twelve of us went to Lentor Residence during the Ministry Afternoon. Thank God for a blessed time spent fellowshiping with the old folks there. We had a short time of exhortation by Auntie Serena Lim, and we also sang to the Residents. All in all, we learnt about the ministry in Lentor Residence and indeed, we ought to treasure and honour our own grandparents and parents more."

The third option for Ministry Afternoon is The Helping Hand, a Christian drug rehabilitation centre. Not surprisingly, by God's grace and working, it has one of the highest success rates of helping addicts kick their drug habit, as compared to all the other drug rehabilitation centers in Singapore!



When I first heard about what the Helping Hand was about, it made me cringe thinking about visiting former drug addicts. I treated them as though they were lepers, but I had much to learn. When we arrived at the centre located along Upper Serangoon road, we were greeted with a rather run-down place. Nevertheless, they had a basketball court, a gym, a frame shop, and even a yard full of beautifully handcrafted teakwood furniture.

The premises also had an atrium with birds, a few chickens, koi fish, one tortoise and a flightless blue bird. We proceeded to a room where we got to see a video testimony of an ex-drug addict who, after serving his jail sentence, decided to volunteer at the Helping Hand. In the end, he became a successful man after God's own heart. It was really touching to see how God's mercy and grace work in their lives: no matter what you once were or what you once did, God can turn you inside out, changing you for the better and making you stewards of God. We could see God's love shining through their scarred faces and bulky tattooed arms. Some of them were playing checkers, while others stood and watched. Many were able to get a good workout by playing 2-on-2 basketball, or

bonding and fellowshiping with their dorm mates. What amazed me most was the furniture that they created - all of them took time to craft, sand, and varnish, turning ordinary wood into beautiful pieces of art. This is a poor analogy of how our God is able to change even the most wicked of men. The visit is an eye-opener for me.

On the second (and last) day of our Conference, we had four messages. The first message was "My Lord Over My Walk" by Rev Jack Sin of Maranatha B-P Church. He spoke about how we should always walk with the Lord and how God can bless us. Following that message was another short time of Q-&-A. Two of the questions asked were:



1. "What does it mean to walk in the fear of the Lord?" to which Rev Sin replied, "Malachi 3:16. To love worship, and to pray often. Those who fear God talk about His name and think about the Lord all the time."
2. "How do you maintain this fear of God?" to which Rev Sin answered, "Regular discipline. One of the fruits of the Spirit is temperance. To maintain spiritual fitness, one has to have regular discipline in His Word."



The second message on Tuesday was "My Lord Over My Watch" by Rev Das Koshy from Gethsemane B-P Church. One of the main points he taught us through his lively and interesting sermon was that "a carefree person cannot be a watchful person." He also taught us the three Greek words for the word "watch."

After the sermon, some people shared about their struggles in prayer. One of the youths who shared was Jason Liew (Calvary YF). He said, "When I became a Christian a few years back, I had many struggles such as falling asleep during prayer. Then I realized what prayer really is, which is talking to God. I also listened to church leaders' prayers and tried to follow suit. One leader once prayed 'O Lord, cleanse me from my sin', and I was puzzled as I thought that our sins were already forgiven. I then understood that when Christians pray, we feel guilty, not because our sins are not forgiven, but because we are still sinning daily."

Another sharing was given by Herbert (True Life YPF). He said, "When in prayer, we must know where we stand before God. I often ask myself: Am I good enough to do God's work? I then realize that I am zero, down below in the pits while God is high in the heavens. I really need His help in order to do His work.. Often we know that prayer helps, that prayer is good, but we do not know the extent of it. Then I realize that prayer is power. In the Bible, when the kings pray, they always win the battle. Prayer is also a haven of rest, if you pray in faith. You must totally believe; without wavering. Thanks be to God for helping me realize this."

After this spirited time of sharing, our tummies have to be taken care of again. Thank God for the fellowship round the dining table. Having eaten our fill, we then returned to the sanctuary to listen to the other half of Rev Paauwe's message on "Learning from One Another," focusing mainly on 1 Timothy 4:12.

At the end of Rev Paauwe's message was another Q-and-A session. The question "As a Christian teenager, how can I have a vibrant (non-routine, enjoyable) Christian life?" was posed to the youths.

Joycelyn Ho (Calvary YF) shared: "For me, I have experienced that kind of thing: coming to church can sometimes be quite boring. But it's not just come and go. I try to find areas of service and then serve God. It's really all about our *attitude* towards God."

Jocelyn Yong (Calvary YF) also shared: "I think I learnt a lot from Rev Koshy's message just now. Everything comes down to prayer, our prayer life. Watch and pray, and that every time we pray to God, it is really like a haven of rest, like what Herbert had shared earlier on. You can lay down all your problems and burdens at His feet, and when I pray, I really feel a sense of peace and rest. And when you pray and know your purpose, the joy of God will automatically come into your heart."

The closing message for the Conference was given by Rev James Chan on "My Lord Over My Work," in which he spoke on how we should always put God first and to yield our lives to God's Will (Matt 6:33), and that if we confess that Christ is our Lord and Saviour, we should live a life showing that fact. With that closing message, Combined Youth Conference 2005 comes to an end and it was time to say our goodbyes.



Through this Youth Conference, I have come to know my God better, to know how to serve Him, and how to please Him. Also, I am sure the youths have taken home valuable messages on what to do to make a difference in their own churches. Thank God for this opportunity to come and learn more about Him! May God bless each and every one as we get to know *My Lord and My God* better with each passing moment! And we look forward to another Combined Youth Event in 2006!

