



The MENORAH

The Official Publication of the Fullness of Christ International Ministries



Reflecting

JESUS

A SPECIAL CHRISTMAS ISSUE





Contents

| Christmas Issue 2018 |

01

EDITORIAL

02

GENERATION FOR
CHRIST YOUTH
MINISTRY PRESENTS:
“SEEK GUIDANCE” –
THE 3RD
INSTALLMENT OF THE
“BASE CAMP” YOUTH
SERIES

03

GENERATION FOR
CHRIST YOUTH
MINISTRY PRESENTS:
“ESTABLISH YOUR
DESTINATION” –
THE 4TH
INSTALLMENT OF THE
“BASE CAMP” YOUTH
SERIES

04

A CHURCH WITH HUMBLE
BEGINNINGS, NOW TWENTY
FIVE YEARS STRONG

06

FOCIM
CELEBRATES ITS 32ND
ANNIVERSARY

08

A TIME TO GIVE BACK:
FOCIM REVIVES
HARVEST SUNDAY

09

REMEMBERING YOLANDA:
PERSEVERANCE,
CHARACTER, AND HOPE

11

JOURNEY TO CHINA

15

A MOVIE REVIEW: AN
INTERVIEW WITH GOD

16

MY GROWN-UP CHRISTMAS
LIST: BOOK EDITION

17

THE MENORAH ASKS:
CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT JESUS
BECAUSE —?

EDITORIAL

By Daniel Alberto G. Guinigundo

WE HAVE all been as the receiving end of the typical message that “Jesus is the reason for the season.” We would sing songs about making room in our hearts for the Messiah, imitating Him, and allowing the “true meaning” of Christmas to remain even past the holidays. The question is whether we really follow the messages we see in our holiday cards and the carols we sing in Church? Is Christmas just about the two-month long celebration that makes us feel good about ourselves and others? Does Christmas truly extend beyond December?

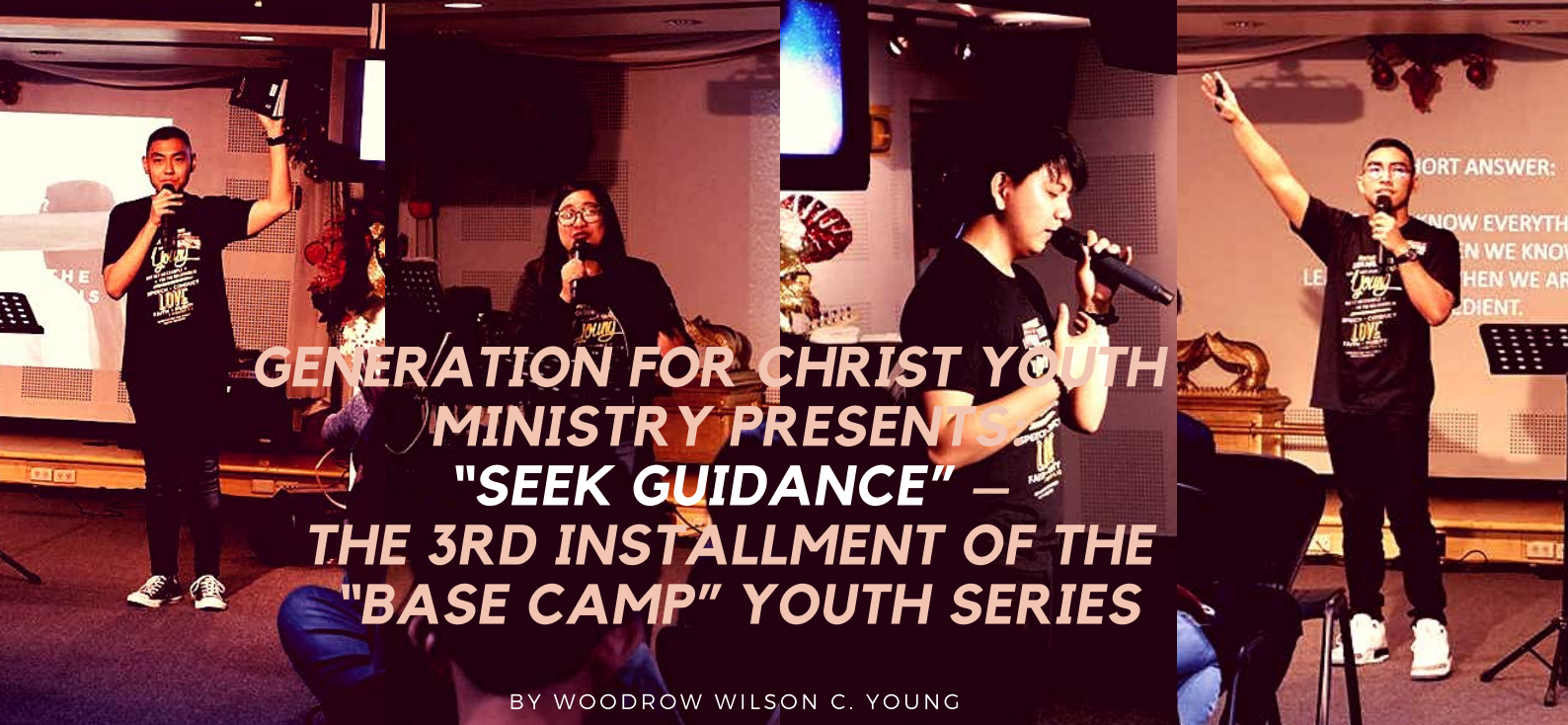
It was atypical to hear these words from two people who complained, “Nakakainis itong pasko. Bukod sa traffic, ang daming tao sa mall.”

For some, Christmas is just that—a rush: a rush to buy gifts, to attend to endless Christmas festivities, and to fit every and all church activities and events in one month’s time.

This is the thrust of The Menorah's special issue. The Menorah invites everyone to discover that Christmas goes beyond the celebration; it is in fact an invitation. Christmas invites us to rediscover Jesus, His sacrifice, and His love. It is an invitation to expect the extraordinary, to believe in the supernatural, and to reflect His love as He did by dying on the cross for the salvation of mankind. If at most, Christmas allows us to re-examine ourselves, our interaction with those around us, and our proximity to Jesus Himself. This is both the essence and challenge of the season.

This Christmas, may your celebrations be more than the gifts we give, the food we eat, the pictures we take, and the traffic we complain about. Rather, may the season be an opportunity for all of us to reflect Christ and reveal His person, this December and beyond!

Blessed Christmas and a victorious 2019!



GENERATION FOR CHRIST YOUTH MINISTRY PRESENTS "SEEK GUIDANCE" — THE 3RD INSTALLMENT OF THE "BASE CAMP" YOUTH SERIES

BY WOODROW WILSON C. YOUNG

The third installment of Vertical Youth Service entitled "Seek Guidance" took place last October 27. Bro. Matthew Unite, the Gen-C's Financial Growth counselor, started the event with an inspirational message about the importance of climbing the mountain top with the guidance of righteous and Christ-centered people.

This was followed by a powerful and unique testimony by Bro. DJ Bello, one of FOCIM's Praise and Worship vocalists.

Bro. Danilo Bello, Jr. testified through spoken poetry touching undoubtedly the hearts of the young people present during the event. Sis. Allyssa Paranas, one of FOCIM QC's Praise and Worship members, performed a wonderful special number as she sang the beautifully written song "Highs and Lows".

“SEEKING GUIDANCE

The main message of the Base Camp Youth Service introduced a new format called "Five for Five", wherein five Gen-C counselors delivered five varying perspectives centered on "Seeking Guidance" having the time allotment of five minutes each. Bro. Abe Guinigundo was the first speaker and he focused on the question of why we need to seek guidance. Bro. Abe addressed the said question by emphasizing that young people need to seek advice because they are not meant to go through life's trials alone. The second speaker, Sis. Mariela Reyes, touched on the question of "What to seek guidance for?". She shared the importance of seeking guidance in all aspects of our life, including all concerns and crossroads that all young people go through. The succeeding topic, "Who to seek guidance", emphasized the need for young people to seek guidance from people who are experienced, mature, and know them well. This was tackled by Sis. Pamela Young. As for "How do we seek guidance", Sis. Patricia Unite shared the importance of manifesting humility and dependence on God in seeking guidance. Lastly, Bro. Daniel Guinigundo challenged the youth to be ready to seek guidance and encouraged the mentors / disciplers to take on the challenge with God's guidance. Indeed, when guidance is sought the youth will never feel alone nor insignificant. The youth will overcome anxiousness if they seek God's guidance through godly people as evidently assured by Proverbs 3:5-6 - "Trust the Lord with all your heart, your mind and your soul. And surely He will direct your path."

After the message, the worship song "Jesus at the Center" was played encouraging all the 79 young people present to surrender all their strengths and weaknesses to the Lord, getting rid of all worries and negative thoughts. The Vertical Youth Service ended with a victory song followed by fellowship. With the powerful impact of the third installment, the fourth and last of the series, "Establish Your Destination", would undoubtedly hold much promise to close the year.

GENERATION FOR CHRIST YOUTH MINISTRY PRESENTS: "ESTABLISH YOUR DESTINATION" – THE 4TH INSTALLMENT OF THE "BASE CAMP" YOUTH SERIES

BY WOODROW WILSON C. YOUNG

During the first Saturday of December, the 4th installment of Generations for Christ Youth Ministry's Base Camp series was held at the Lampstand. Bro. Daniel Guinigundo, one of the ministry's counselors, opened the event with an Inspirational message. In his message, Bro. Daniel encouraged the young people to be the best in any field they wish to pursue. He emphasized that to be the best, we must prepare and put into practice the learnings from the past Vertical installments of the year – Be fit, Arm yourself, and Seek guidance. To be the best, we must also learn to Establish our Destination.

After Bro. Daniel's message, a special number by Bro. Henri Luching followed. Bro. Henri's special number was done through "spoken word poetry", highlighting the trials he has gone through and how God healed him and made his life whole again. Bro. Henri made it clear that his ultimate destination is to be with and serve God.

Similar to the previous youth service, the "Five for Five" format was followed, where five youth leaders would be speaking for five minutes concerning the theme of the service. The first speaker was Sis. Mariela Reyes, who touched on the importance of having goals in our lives. She explained the message found in 2 Corinthians 5:1 – that we should strive to experience forever with our God in heaven as we are made to last forever. Sis. Gellie Arada, also one of Gen-C's counselors, was the second speaker. She shared the three keys in setting our goals – namely to Discover (Ephesians 5:17), Accept and Enjoy, and Keep Developing (2 Timothy 2:15). This was followed by Sis. Pamela Young, who then delved into the importance of setting goals and planning. She shared that the lack of planning is not God's desire in our lives and we need to always set our goals with the thought of God. The fourth speaker, Bro. Matthew Unite, then talked about the need to set Godly goals. He cited Proverbs 16:9 to urge the young people to trust in God's will even when undergoing setbacks and to always focus on Jesus Christ as He will give what is best for us. The last speaker was Bro. Abe Guinigundo, who shared his personal story to convey that not all of our plans will push through. However, he explained that God's plans are always perfect (Deutoronomy 32:4) and that God fulfills His promises to us (Isaiah 46:9-11).

After the message, a breakout session was done to allow the young participants to share their personal experiences and respond to a few questions related to the topics discussed. Bro. John David Dionisio, the project head, gave the Closing Remarks and the Closing Prayer was led by Pastora Shirley So. The fourth and final installment of this year's Vertical Series entitled "Base Camp" was indeed significant and impactful on the lives of the young people who attended. The messages shared by the five speakers certainly encouraged them to plan and set their goals that are in line with what God has in store for them. With that, we all look forward to the next Vertical series in 2019.



A CHURCH WITH HUMBLE BEGINNINGS, NOW TWENTY FIVE YEARS STRONG!

By Hannah Cecilia S. Luching

A DEAFENING shout of joy erupted as the people of the Lord began raising their voice and lifting their hands to praise and glorify the name of Jesus during the 25th anniversary of FOCIM – QC last 25 November 2018 held at SB Park, Villa Beatriz, Matandang Balara, Quezon City. Attended by 220 members and guests, the celebration opened the gates of heaven wide through the praises of the people coming before Him with heartfelt thanksgiving.

Humble Beginnings

In 1993, under the leadership of the late Ptr. Urbano Don “Bong” L. Guerrero, FOCIM QC was established in the residence of the So Family in South Zuzuarregui, Quezon City. From humble beginnings, the church blossomed and the congregation outgrew the space where the service was being held. After 19 years, the church relocated in Katipunan under the business establishment of the Pacquiao family where they stayed for two fruitful years with a vision at hand which was to expand. In June 2015, a fire burned the whole block of South Zuzuarregui leaving behind not only ashes and damaged properties but loss, grief and broken lives. With the help of the Mother church and other brothers and sisters in Christ, they were able to rebuild the church in the lot of the So Family.

FOCIM QC Now

The people behind the success of the much anointed celebration were truly committed to the cause of God in the city. Ptr. Shirley C. So, resident pastor of FOCIM QC, shared that over the years the Church has undergone constant changes. According to her, the Lord transformed the lives of the people and restored everything that was lost. The members are now more proactive in church building - initiating the plans, executing the work, and consistently growing spiritually in faith. The rising number of home churches is also proof that members have a burden to lead more people to God. Before, FOCIM QC had limited finances but today more people are drawn to give what is due to the Lord. Leaders and members alike are more organized, flexible to multi-ministry and tasks, and willing to commit themselves to the Lord.

More than a Silver Milestone

Sis. April Eve G. Guinigundo, delivered the message taken from Matthew 28:19-20, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Sis. Apple delivered a powerful message on Discipleship – stressing the importance by appealing to all members to respond to Christ’s urgent call in proclaiming the good news to all men and women on earth. She then illustrated major changes happening worldwide in a daily basis (eg. rising suicide rates, increasing rate of failed marriages, rising population, etc.) which we must take action. The message was brief but it definitely cut through the hearts of everyone like a double-edged sword. When Jesus calls us to follow we should respond with urgency similar to His original disciples.

Afterwards, the Children’s Sunday school students rendered a song and dance number in the tune of “10,000 Reasons” by Matt Redman. Then, the Generation for Christ (Gen-C) youth members performed an emotional representation of true love, mercy, forgiveness, grace and sacrifices of our Lord Jesus Christ through an act to the tune of “Good Good Father” by Chris Tomlin.

Truly, 25 years is a great blessing from the Lord – a milestone. A milestone this significant deserved a recognition to those who gave time and effort for its success. Sis. Violy Siquete and Sis. May Rodriguez were recognized for their unwavering commitment and unquenchable passion to the Lord's ministry since the establishment of the church. Their recognition was actually a surprise but it is without a doubt well-deserved. According to Sis. Violy, ministry head member, such recognition was very humbling, "Masaya for the recognition na by the grace of God still naglilingkod pa din kasi yung ibang kasabayan ko nauna na sila sa piling ni Lord. Yung iba naman tumalikod na. Thank you FOCIM Family pagpalain tayo ng Panginoon". On the other hand, Sis. May Rodriguez, head of the Worship Team, was also astounded to receive such recognition. "Lahat ng service ko kay Lord since bata pa ko hindi talaga ko nag-expect ng award. Basta in my mind and in my heart hanggang nabubuhay ako, I will continue to worship God regardless of my circumstances. I will never stop until I touch his heart", she shared.

One of the biggest leadership challenges during the preparation was how to minimize the cost given the limited finances. Evidently, the Lord answered their prayers as the church was able to outsource a professional lights and sound provider for a fraction of the price in the market. Through the generosity of Brgy. Captain Allan Franza of Baranggay Old Balara, FOCIM QC was able to use the function hall and the newly-purchased LED Wall for free. Home churches also gave contributions for the food to be distributed after the program.

Undoubtedly, FOCIM QC's Silver Anniversary was a tremendous success. Let this event remind us that the Lord gives endless favor to those who remain faithful to His Word. From humble beginnings, FOCIM QC will be at par with its mother church in Mandaluyong as great things come from the Lord!



FOCIM CELEBRATES 32ND ANNIVERSARY

By Edward Matthew D. Unite

The Fullness of Christ International Ministries (FOCIM) reached another year full of God's favor and blessing when it celebrated its 32nd anniversary last August 25, 2018 at the GT Toyota Auditorium, Quezon City. This year's anniversary theme, "Building the Sanctuary", draws from the verse 2 Samuel 24:24 "I will not give to the Lord that which cost me nothing". The theme is characteristically aligned with the plans of FOCIM to start building its own sanctuary in year 2019. This was also a fulfillment of the prophetic word given to FOCIM years ago that was to relocate, build and expand.

Emceed by Bro. Daniel Guinigundo and Sis. Ma. Luisa Marcelo, the program started at 3pm with the singing of the national anthem followed by the welcome remarks and opening prayer by Ptr. Robert Lee L. Guererro. During the greetings, different home churches and guests were welcomed, while special personalities who were close to the church were also acknowledged.

These special guests were Bro. Dexter Low of Latter Rain Church in Malaysia, one of the spiritual fathers of FOCIM, Atty Magtanggol Gunigundo, one of FOCIM's former speakers, and Bishop Leo Alconga, the National Vice Chairperson of the Philippines For Jesus Movement (PJM).

Through the Worship Team, a mix of old majestic and powerful songs "Oh the Glory of Your Presence", "In Jesus Name" and "God is Here" and upbeat dancing songs "Alive Again" and "We Have Overcome" made the congregation pumped up for the whole celebration. Before the start of the praise and worship, a replica version of the Ark of the Covenant that was carried by the Israelites during the old testament was slowly being marched towards the stage as the worship team played their introduction AVP and dance choreography.

After the praise and worship, a brief audio visual presentation of FOCIM's History showing how it started from a small church in Manuguit, Tondo, Manila into a church that is continually building and expanding God's ministry in the city of Mandaluyong and the whole nation.





Year after year, special presentations never fail to surprise. The congregation enjoyed watching the Sunday School kids as they showcased their talents in singing and in dancing as well as by a perfectly choreographed performance “sabayan pagbigkas style” by the Generation for Christ Youth Ministry.

During the intermission, some members and friends of the Church shared their excitement and enthusiasm for another milestone reached by FOCIM. Afterwards, Sis. Jaira Custodio, Sis Joanna Bolaños and Sis. Marie Dimafelis shared their life changing experiences on how God used FOCIM as an instrument that filled their emptiness with God’s bountiful love and overwhelming joy through a testimony video.

During the Love Offering, Sis April Eve G. Guinigundo shared a short exhortation on what it means to give to the Lord.

The message was delivered by guest speaker, Bishop Eddie C. Villanueva, founder and spiritual head of Jesus is Lord Church who is also close to the heart of the people of FOCIM. He candidly shared in his message his life experiences on how he and his family completely followed and obeyed God with all their hearts without any doubt and fear of being challenged by this world. He related through his message his early life as businessman and how God called him to leave his way of living to become a full time minister. It was a **challenge to everyone that when God releases a word and calls to do his will.**

After the message, Bishop. Eddie was again called to the stage together with the Ministry Team. Bishop Eddie prayed and anointed the members of the ministry team. Afterwards, FOCIM gave a special plaque of appreciation to Bishop Eddie for his life-long dedication serving the Lord and blessing the nation.

A special plaque of appreciation was also given to FOCIM’s Senior Pastor for being awarded by Promise Christian University (PCU) an honorary Doctor of Divinity for creating a significant impact in serving both the Government and the Body of Christ.

Another year has passed with FOCIM continually addressing the fulfillment of God’s Word to relocate, build, and expand. Senior Pastor Diwa casted the vision of the church for the next year as it prepares to build its own sanctuary. As the church is consolidating its resources in building the physical sanctuary, new ministries like the LEAD discipleship program were established to strengthen our spiritual sanctuary. After the casting of vision, Senior Pastor Diwa closed in prayer followed by the Worship Team’s powerful victory song.

For the past 32 years, FOCIM has truly showed what it means to give it all back to the one true Almighty God. All it took was complete obedience for FOCIM to be where God wanted it to be right now. Building the sanctuary will be just as simple again as faithfully following the Lord our God. To God be the Glory!



A TIME TO GIVE BACK: FOCIM REVIVES HARVEST SUNDAY

By Daniel Alberto G. Guinigundoo

THE LIFE of pastors and those serving the ministry full-time revolves around service. Acting as the unseen movers and lending a helping hand to all the ministries in FOCIM, they are indeed an integral part to the victory of every event, activity, and service. As such, it was but right that the church also show them the love and affirmation that they so deserve.

Last October 28, 2018 after the Sunday morning service, a special program was held in honor of all the pastors, church workers, and leaders: Ptr. Diwa Guinigundo, Ptr. Apple Guinigundo, Ptr. Robert Lee Guerrero, Ptr. Sophie Guerrero, Ptr. Shirley So, Ptr. Hilda Lactao, Asst. Ptr. Rey Borile, Sis. Jade de Guzman, Sis. Divine Cerveza, and Bro Boy Ampol. Aptly called Harvest Sunday, as this was the time our workers would reap all their hard work, the activity has been a tradition of FOCIM in the past.

After a few words of thanksgiving from Sis. May Rodriguez, Sis. Marie Demafelis, Sis. Mariela Reyes, and Sis. Milet Loreto and a short trivia game, the pastors and church workers were prayed upon by Ptr. Apple. Shortly thereafter, the members were given an opportunity to go around the church and give a message of thanks to every leader who had touched their lives. While some members gave heartfelt messages, others chose to hand out simple tokens of thanksgiving.

Showing love and gratitude is indeed a practice that FOCIM should continue. With the revival and success of the Harvest Sunday, FOCIM will have the opportunity to exercise the scriptural encouragement to give honor where honor is due.



Sis Shirley C. So and
Sis Hilda C. Lactao



Bro Diwa C. Guinigundo and
Sis April Eve G. Guinigundo



Bro Robert Lee L. Guerrero and
Sis Sophia M. Guerrero



Bro Broderick C. Santos and
Sis Roanna Lynn G. Santos



Bro Arnel M. Arada and
Sis Ethel Jane G. Arada



Bro Angel V. Dionisio and
Sis Susan C. Dionisio



Bro Anastacio P. Marcelo and
Sis Hedy Leah G. Marcelo



Sis Lourdes D. Unite



Bro Rey S. Borile and
Sis Fely I. Borile

REMEMBERING YOLANDA: PERSEVERANCE, CHARACTER, AND HOPE

(APPEARING IN RAPPLER.COM, DATED NOVEMBER 8, 2018)

By: Ma. Lourdes N. Coinares



Image from Rappler.com

In memory of the thousands of victims of Super Typhoon Yolanda, of the men, women, and children who perished and those still missing, and of the countless people whose lives were changed forever.

Five years ago, Super Typhoon Yolanda ravaged my hometown, Tacloban City.

I remember the news the night of 08 November 2013—Tacloban was flattened to the ground by the storm surge. I remember asking, “What in the world is a storm surge?” I remember the gut-wrenching fear when I got the answer. You see, our house is located right by Cancabato Bay and knowing that, I had serious doubts as to whether my family would survive.

Four days later we had a list of survivors and casualties. We lost four loved ones—Lola Catalina “Lily” Buagas Colinares, Tita Aurea Nicolas Tan, Tita Novelita Reglo, and my cousin Mayo Colinares. The houses were damaged, the cars were gone, but what pained us the most was their loss. Lola Lily and Baby Mayo remain missing. We tried to look for their bodies but to no avail.

The aftermath was even worse than the storm itself. For a time, we lived under a

cloud of sadness where hope was gone and the future was dark. All we could talk about was Yolanda.

During that period of suffering, I remember wishing for a manual, a “Moving on for Dummies” book in yellow and black to outline the steps on getting over a typhoon devastation with sub-paragraphs on “Losing Properties” and “Losing Loved Ones.”

I remember asking a variety of questions, “Why, God? How do we move on? How do we heal that gash in our souls, pried open by that super typhoon?”

Little did I know that the last time the family was with Lola Lily on 02 November 2013, she already recited the Bible verse that would serve as our foundation towards healing:

Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”



Image from Rappler.com

HOPE.

There was hope as the debris cleared and the stench of death lifted. Of course, there were issues that haunted the whole devastation (ehem, politics) but let's not get into that.

I saw hope in the smile of a child despite her telling me that she lost both her parents. I saw hope in our neighbors who helped each other and were no longer strangers. I saw hope as schools resumed and businesses reopened.

People gave hope to others. People shared their resources and stormed the heavens with prayers. The compassion of everyone, foreign and local, contributed greatly to the restoration of our city.

I was a senior law student when Yolanda happened and I considered dropping out to work instead. Five years has passed and I am glad I didn't. Let's be real, there are still days when the pain gets debilitating, just like today as we commemorate its anniversary.

We may not ever know why it happened, why everything has been taken away from some, and why good people have to die. But with the risk of sounding preachy, we should not allow this ignorance to push us into darkness. Rather, let us get real,

endure through the waves of sadness, and be thankful for all that was left, all who survived, and all that was given afterwards.

At church, we are always reminded that we can find glory in suffering. The suffering we experience produces perseverance, and with perseverance we build character, and with character, we have hope.

Five years has passed and there is undoubtedly more than a glimmer of hope in the people in Tacloban. Buildings have been reinforced, businesses are booming. More importantly, the people are more aware of disaster preparedness. The new Tacloban has risen and is rising from the remnants of Yolanda and God-willing, it would be far better than what it used to be.



Image from Rappler.com

JOURNEY TO CHINA

By Rosalie C. Faune



Our country, the Philippines, is one of the countries that deploys a significant number of its people to work in different parts of the world. Working abroad has been a part of the Filipino mindset for career advancement. In fact, working outside your place of origin has become a phenomenon not unique to Filipinos.

I grew up with relatives and friends who are Overseas Filipino Workers and somehow it has influenced me to become one. Just like most OFWs, it started with the desire to give your family a better life, to earn and to save more with the hope that one day you will be able to buy your own house and lot, a brand new car, travel the world with your loved ones, and to have that financial freedom. I have been praying to God for an opportunity to achieve these things.

We know that God can change any situation or give us what we have been praying for in just a snap of a finger or in a blink of an eye. He created the universe in just 6 days. But why does He make us wait for years before He answers our prayers?

It took 10 challenging growing years before He finally gave me what I've been praying for. However, it was not in the way that I wanted it to be but it is exactly what I needed. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." So despite the excruciating wait, I believe that you should just trust the Lord because He will give you what you need which is far greater than what you want. Thus, I also believe that one of the best prayers that we could ever pray is "God, not my will, but Your will be done."

Looking back at the choices I made in the past, teaching wasn't really my first choice nor was majoring in Filipino. At the time, I was forced to study at the university where I graduated because of the affordable tuition fee due to our financial constraint since my two siblings were also studying in college. So thinking that I was helping my mother, I decided to pursue teaching not knowing if it's what I am truly passionate about. I wanted to take English as my major in teaching but I didn't get to finish the exam so I failed. But I still decided to become a language teacher; only this time I'll be teaching our very own language, Filipino. If I think about it, my choices were not really the best. But God moves in mysterious ways. When I look at where I am now, I see it as every piece of my life's puzzle are coming together, piece by piece trying to form a picture that will make sense, a picture that has meaning and a purpose. Suddenly everything that I've been through, all the ups and downs and bad, were important in building and creating a best picture of myself.

Truly with God nothing happens for no reason. Anything that happens to us, whether good or bad has its purpose. There are no accidents with Him. Isaiah 46:9-11 says "Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.' From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do."

Choosing to study in a Normal University that is considered as the National Center for Teacher Education and taking Filipino as my major were actually pieces of puzzle that God pieced together. Working on another specialization in Reading while studying my major has helped me improve my English speaking skills. It was more developed when I worked in a call center for 5 months and took a part time job as a barista in one of the famous coffee shops in the country where I got to socialize with people from different professions. These experiences have changed me greatly but the puzzles continued piecing together. I had the wonderful experience of finally teaching Filipino in two of the prestigious schools in the country, University of the Philippines Integrated School (UPIS) and Miriam College Grade School (MCGS). Teaching at UPIS strengthened my foundation both in teaching in general and in teaching Filipino. On the other hand, Miriam College has taught me to be more versatile with my teaching style and use of language. It helped me become more fluent in the language and it exposed me to students who are Filipinos but English is their first language. I was also able to handle students who do not know or are having difficulty in the Filipino language through the Special Filipino program.

All these experiences have somehow prepared me to a position that is so underserved. Being the editor-in-chief of Menorah was a position that I did not expect to be placed in. I still remember that day when my spiritual mentor, Sis. Apple Guinigundo approached and asked me to fill in the position for the newsletter. I remember saying yes because I was too embarrassed to say no but inside my head I kept asking, "why me?" I'm not a writer nor do I have an experience editing other people's written work especially in English. I had a lot of insecurities back then.



Looking back at all those experiences, all those puzzle pieces, I now understand why they were important and why it happened. Who would have thought that my dream of working abroad will someday become a reality? Only that, this time it's not mainly because I want to earn more to give myself and my family a better life, but it's to grow more as a person most especially as a follower of Christ. I remembered applying as a pre-school teacher in Singapore, a teacher in a Filipino school in Dubai and Kuwait, and even as an executive assistant and Human Resource Representative just to pursue that dream of working outside the comfort of your own country. Until I reached a point of willingness to settle down teaching in the public school system. It was then that I finally understood the pieces of the puzzle that God put together. And the more I prayed the more I began to have peace, but not the peace that made me feel confident that my prayers would be answered, rather peace with "any answer."

My heart's desires began to change and so did my prayers. I no longer just wanted to work abroad, I wanted to serve God in a higher and bigger capacity that will also stretch my faith. My heart began to conform to the heart of my Father, I started to want only what He wanted, all because I started to really tell Him deep down what I wanted. I had found the grace to be open to His grace and was ready to accept His plan for my life, whatever it might be.



I remember my college professor and mentor texted me in January telling me that a university in China is specifically looking for a Filipino teacher with a specialization in Filipino language. She said that the university needs the teacher to leave the Philippines by March of this year, but I turned down the opportunity because I was still employed. After a few months, I was at the Philippine Regulation Commission (PRC) applying for some documents for my application in the Public School when I received a call from a colleague of my college mentor telling me that the position that the university was offering was still open. The rigorous and tedious process I will go through if I grabbed the opportunity seems daunting, but despite it, I still said yes. I was asked to submit my curriculum vitae which was forwarded to the Human Resource Manager of the university. I was expecting an online or phone interview and a teaching demonstration after they received my CV. Instead, the following day, I got an email from the HR Manager saying that they are offering me a position as the first Filipino Instructor to teach Filipino as a major to Chinese Freshmen in their university.

Xian International Studies University (XISU) is one of the universities with well-known foreign language departments and is a member of G8 Universities (G8 refers to the Group of Eight Universities of Foreign Languages and International Studies in China who specializes in Foreign Language teaching and International Studies). I was surprised when I read the email. I had to re-read it many times and I asked a lot of questions to the HR manager just to make sure that I understood her email correctly. And this was the beginning of a new experience, a new chapter of my life.

I've learned that when my prayers aren't being answered or when things aren't happening as fast as I would have liked, it only means that it's not the right time or God has something better in store. And true enough, after 3 months of working on all the necessary documents, from authenticating my school documents, processing my visa, and acquiring the OFW permit from Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), and with the help of my own family and my family at FOCIM, I arrived in China during the Mid-Autumn Holiday.

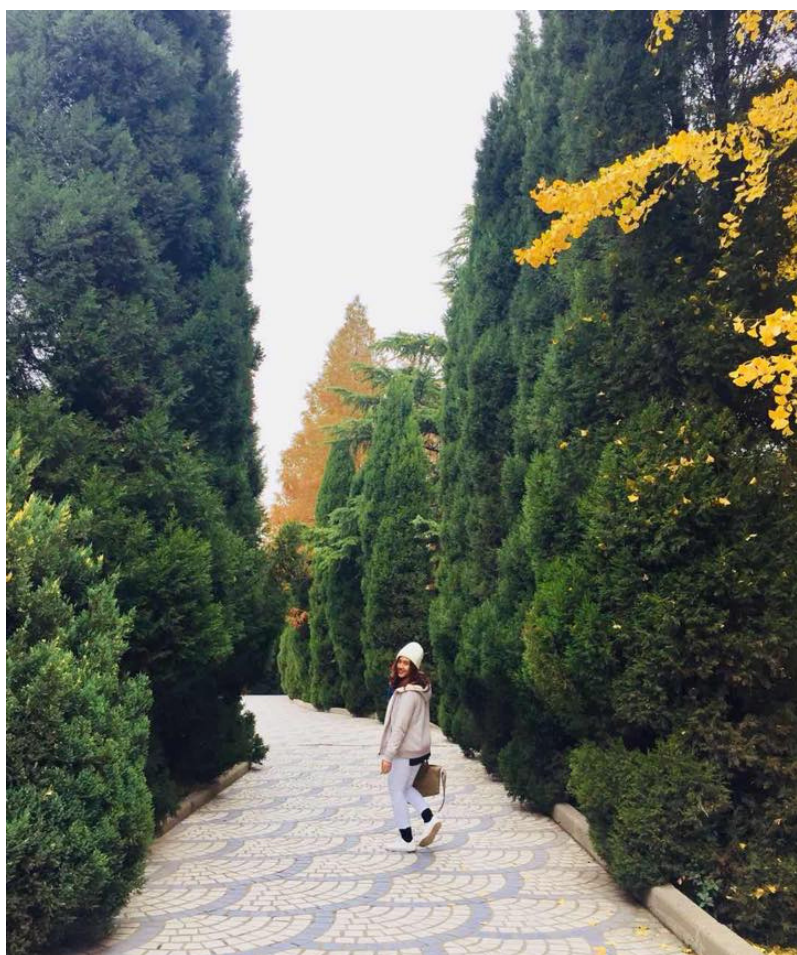
It was the perfect time because I had time to unpack and prepare myself for first day of work the following day. Then, I found out my teaching load is only 2 hours in 3 straight days and I have Thursdays and Fridays off. And then I found out that the following week was a week-long holiday because the entire country was celebrating their National Day. During this time, I got to travel around nearby provinces without spending too much because of some Filipino expats that I met and invited me to join their trips. I also didn't expect the accommodation that was given by the university since it was like a hotel, as my fellow Filipinos described when they visited me. I also got to experience the four different seasons that we don't experience in the Philippines and I get to earn twice of what I used to earn back in the Philippines.



I may be away from my family and what I've been used to for 31 years, but God has a purpose in allowing me to be where I am. He gave me a mission which I will engrave in my heart, and that is to go out of my comfort zone and share His words especially in a country where Christianity is not fully welcomed by its government. It has also widen my horizon and opened my eyes on how truly great and magnificent our God is.

Thank you God for You know what's best for us. Thank you God for Your mercy and grace. Thank you God for Your unending love despite our disobedience and impatience. Thank you God for allowing Your will be done and for not allowing us to be led astray from You. Too often, we're shortsighted but God can see the big picture. He knows when something is going to be a dead end. You may not be able to see it right now, but that's what faith is all about. We may be frustrated on many things in our life right now, however, 10 or 20 years from now, you will look back to these memories and thank God for not answering that prayer and the answer that you wanted or for not opening that door that you think would lead you to success.

Remember in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus said to his Father, "...your will be done." (Matthew 6:10). God never abandons those who trust Him. It's not about me, it's not about you. It's about God and His will. So trust God because when God says it's time to bless you, you are going to be blessed. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end."



That's why it's so important to surrender everything to God so you don't make a wrong choice or walk the wrong path. You have to be patient and when waiting for the answers to your prayers because God will always give you the absolute best that His children rightly deserves. And believe that by faith, He will make all things beautiful in His perfect time.





A MOVIE REVIEW

By
Dan Abraham G. Guinigundo

If you could interview God – what would you ask?

Date:

In “An Interview with God,” released worldwide by Giving Films (90 Minutes in Heaven, Paul – Apostle of Christ) in August 2018, some of the difficult questions about the Christian faith are tackled in dialogue format.

Strengths:

The movie stars Brenton Thwaites (Gods of Egypt, Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales), as Paul Asher, budding journalist who returns home to New York after being sent to Afghanistan to cover the on-going war.

Weaknesses:

The film shows Paul in the middle of a crisis in his faith: his marriage was falling apart and he was battling trauma from witnessing war first-hand. With this, Paul decides to take on a new assignment – an interview with a man who claims to be God. Paul, as expected, was reluctant to even show up at the interview. He arrives to see a mysterious gray-haired man in a suit (David Strathairn), who introduces himself as God. Understandably, Paul rejected the man’s claims and displayed hesitation to continue with the interview.

Analysis:

However, as the conversation progressed, the man would reveal personal details about Paul’s life that would eventually convince him that he was really face to face with his Creator.

From there, Paul was granted 30-minute interviews over the course of three days, where he would be able to ask any of his questions from God. His questions range from death, to the meaning of life, and even post-traumatic stress disorders. The film is packed with theology and is bound to leave its audiences encouraged and challenged. Every believer or pre-believer, no matter what stage they are in their spiritual journey, can benefit from the story of Paul.

Overall Rating:

MENORAH RATING: 5 OUT OF 5 STARS.

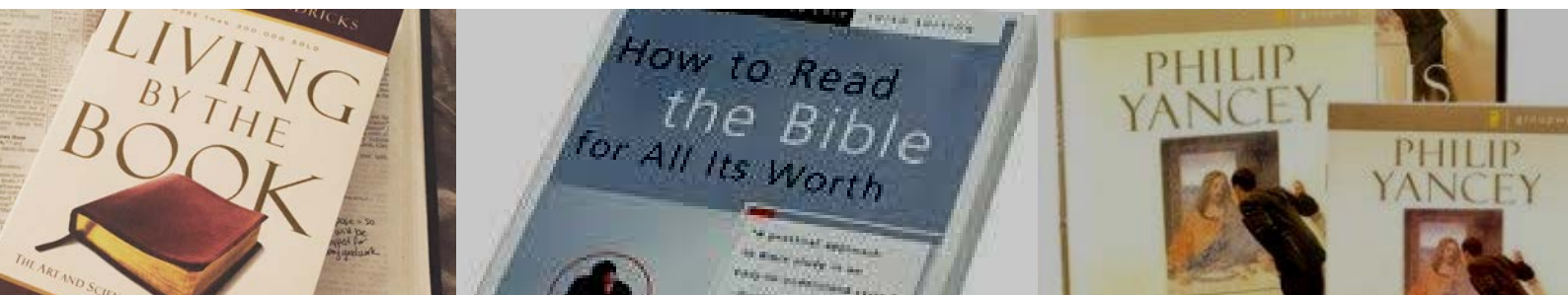


MY GROWN-UP CHRISTMAS LIST: BOOK EDITION

By:
Dan Abraham G. Guinigundo

The pressure to hand out gifts during the holidays often leads to the giving of rushed, or worse, hardly useful presents. With Christmas fast approaching, the search for the “perfect gift” has become increasingly more difficult. Thankfully, we at the Menorah have already determined the most useful present one can give, without, of course, breaking the bank: books!

Here is a compilation of books that tackle crucial and yet practical topics for the modern-day Christian.



1. **LIVING BY THE BOOK” BY HOWARD G. HENDRICKS AND WILLIAM D. HENDRICKS**

We chose this book because all spiritual journeys begin and end with the most important book of all: the Bible. “The art and science of reading the Bible” — these are the words printed on the cover of this 377-page book.

Everyone who has ever started their spiritual journey was, at one point or another, met with intimidation. The authors acknowledge the reality that some people have no idea where and how to begin reading the Scripture. “Living by the Book” attempts to bridge the gap between the seemingly intimidating nature of the written Word and one’s desire to know more about God. It proposes a three-step approach: observation, interpretation, and application. Observation looks at the terms used by the author, the structure and literary form of the work, and the atmosphere of the passage. Next, interpretation calls the reader to ask and answer the question: “what does it mean?” Finally, application, again asks the reader to address a question: “how does it work?”

2. **HOW TO READ THE BIBLE BOOK BY BOOK: A GUIDED TOUR BY GORDON D. FEE AND DOUGLAS STUART**

“How to Read the Bible Book by Book” may seem to intersect with “Living by the Book.” This is not a cause for concern. “How to Read” no longer deals with the general principles or methods of reading the biblical texts, but is structured in such a way as to discuss each of the 66 books found in the Bible.

Because of the way it is organized, “How to Read” may be for those who are looking for a quick reference when already dealing with a particular verse or portion of the Bible. It seeks to improve the reader’s knowledge not just on each book but how they all fit together as a whole to tell God’s story. This book can be useful tool for those who are involved in teaching Scripture or for those who are simply interested with a specific book in the Bible.

3. THE JESUS I NEVER KNEW BY PHILIP YANCEY

"The Jesus I Never Knew" deals with one of the most famous yet controversial figures in the brief history of man: Jesus Christ. This time, however, Philip Yancey seeks to "re-introduce" Jesus to those who may have heard or known of him differently.

Yancey's delves into a biblical and historical investigation of who Jesus really is. He aims to "correct", as it were, some misimpressions or false notions that people might have from hearing about Jesus during their Sunday School or from people who have personally encountered Him at one point in their lives. The book is divided into three parts: Who He Was, Why He Came, and What He Left Behind. This organization, which begins from Jesus' birth and ends with His ascension, is intended to provide the reader with a holistic view of the life of Christ, presented through his personal testimony.

Described as "groundbreaking, disturbing, and exhilarating" this book is guaranteed to bring one closer to Christ, in knowledge and in spirit.

Happy reading!

The Menorah Asks: Christmas is about Jesus because ---?

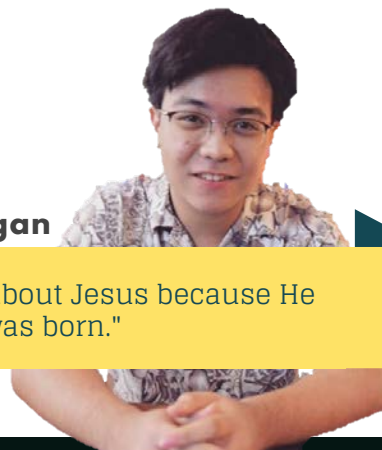
"Christmas is about Jesus because He lives forever in our heart."

Bro. Nehemiah Yangat



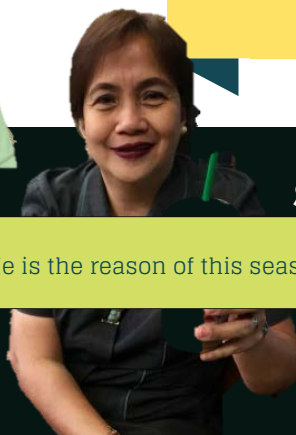
Bro. Nico Capalongan

"Christmas is about Jesus because He was born."



Sis. Ethel Arada

"He is the reason of this season."



Sis. Angelica Dionisio

Christmas is about Jesus because it is HIS story."



Sis. Shelly Cuello

"Christmas is about Jesus because He died for us to spend eternity with Him."



Sis. Lourdes Unite

"Christmas is about Jesus because His light is the one that shines the brightest. It is about Jesus because 'mas' means more; Christmas is more of Christ Jesus, the light of the world. John 8:12 says: 'Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"



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