

Edited by
Ho Peng Kee, Lim Kheng Hai, Siew Kim Siang, Yeo Siew Yam

MEN
for
CHRIST
LIVING OUT OUR FAITH



Wow! What a remarkable series of talks from a vibrant men's ministry from well-qualified, reflective practitioners! The pertinent topics raised in this book — from “Living Well” to “Finishing Well” — will certainly enable godly men to rise up and transform their world for Jesus, both in the marketplace and in the world around us.

Rev Edmund Chan

*Leadership Mentor, Covenant EFC;
Founder, Global Alliance of Intentional Disciplemaking Churches*

Living an authentic Christian life is often challenged by the complexities of our contemporary world. This collection recounts faithful men who seek to live out what their relationship with Christ means for each of them. They share their thoughts, struggles, convictions and moments in life that formed an integral sum of answering God's call through varied stations in society and faith communities. The prophet Joel declared that in the last days God shall pour out His Spirit to all flesh, enabling young men to see visions and old men dream dreams (Acts 2:17). May the sharing in these pages rejuvenate the visions and dreams of all men, both young and old, whom God calls in this age before Christ returns.

Dr Chew Wee

President, Graduate Christian Fellowship, Singapore

A book of rich tapestry — the insights and real-life accounts will widen your perspective, inspire you to follow after Jesus and stir both your faith and hunger to live well for God. *Men for Christ* is a timely call to all men, whatever our life stage or domain, to arise and fulfil our calling in these uncharted times.

Rt Rev Rennis Ponniah

*Bishop of Singapore, The Anglican Church;
President, National Council of Churches of Singapore*

Christians often ask for resources to help them live out their faith in down-to-earth, real world situations. They look for help in making connections between their Sunday faith and the rest of their lives. This book is a marvel of practical, godly wisdom to help people looking for support in living a deeper, more meaningful Christian life. Each chapter offers an honest, heartfelt exploration of how a Christ-centred faith makes a difference in everyday life. It is a valuable contribution to the cause of making disciples in Singapore and beyond.

Professor Jeffrey P. Greenman
President, Regent College, Canada

The struggles we face as Christians are real. Hence, there is immense value whenever a brother shares his life experiences and faith journey, through a men's fellowship like Carmel Men for Christ, to offer insightful and practical guidance on embracing right Christian thinking and to finish well for Christ. I have benefitted so much, learning from the personal sharing from the more senior band of brothers-in-Christ, which is now compiled in this book. This book would certainly help younger men like myself better relate to issues and strengthen our Christian worldview and walk, so that we will "not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). May the sharing of these leader-writers inspire all men for Christ, to step forward to serve our true and living God with greater clarity and conviction, wherever God has purposed us to be.

Benedict Leow
Participant, Carmel Men for Christ Ministry;
Co-founder, Soup Spoon

The writers bring much wisdom in addressing some of the most critical and contemporary issues concerning our lives and society today. The outcome is an accessible, trenchant and thoughtful reflection that will greatly clarify and challenge all readers.

Rev Dr Oh Boon Leong
Senior Pastor, Mount Carmel Bible-Presbyterian Church

Men for Christ: Living Out Our Faith is a seminal practitioner's contribution on Christian engagement that richly contributes to our nation building in the civic and political public square and the marketplace. This well-respected, erstwhile and responsible band of 21 brothers speak frankly and humbly of their challenges, experiences and journeys. Their sharings will be an inspiration for the next generation.

Listen to the spirit behind their stories and you will hear and see the living hand of the Lord. I am reminded of Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest*, where he reminds us: "The one mark of a saint is the moral originality which springs from abandonment to Jesus Christ ... The saint realizes that it is God Who engineers circumstances ... He is with you".

Here, 21 passionate saints moved by the Spirit of God tell us their stories. How can we not follow their examples?

Richard Magnus

*Former Senior District Judge;
Chancellor, Anglican Church of Singapore;
Vice Chair, UNESCO Bioethics Domain*

This collection of talks from the Carmel Men for Christ is a gift. These 21 essays, compiled as *Men for Christ: Living Out Our Faith*, provide a valuable, inspirational and provocative resource for men (and women). With honest assessments, men from politics, various professions, businesses and churches reflect on the successes and failures of their journeys through life, articulating from diverse perspectives how their faith have been, is now, and will be lived out. Throughout the book we are reminded that God's call is for life. One's calling does not end with retirement or any life transition. This volume ignites our thinking about who we are and who we intend to be in the places where God has us now. And in sharing their stories, the writers invite us to ponder our own.

Dr Walter C. Wright, Jr.

Senior Fellow, Max De Pree Center for Leadership, USA

I applaud this effort to put together the various nuggets from talks given at Carmel Men's Ministry. Every effort adds to the development of such a man as described in the Bible:

*For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.
(2 Chronicles 16:9a)*

[The LORD looks] for a man who would ... stand before [him] in the gap on behalf of the land ... (Ezekiel 22:30)

Such a man finds his significance in his relationship with God. He is secure with a band of brothers, defined as those he can call at 3 a.m. for help and vice versa. Such a band of brothers support each other on this journey to be godly men, godly husbands and godly fathers.

The good Lord multiply His wisdom and favour, peace and strength to all men reading this book, for such a time as this!

Rev Daniel Foo

Senior Pastor, Bethesda (Bedok Tampines) Church, Singapore

This is a helpful collection of essays by men who have made life-changing discoveries about themselves, their realities and God. Their self-realization encourages readers to reimagine themselves, discern God's purposes and make a difference in their world at every stage of life. The writers distill wisdom from their life journeys, with compelling yet compassionate, inspiring yet practical reflections. Written from the vantage point of experience, this collection will inspire readers who desire to live meaningfully and purposefully. It is a thought-provoking and action-inspiring collection for all who desire a focused life.

Peter Chao

Founding President, Eagles Communications, Singapore

By men, for men. This book is a compilation of 21 talks at the Mt Carmel's Men's Ministry over the past few years. These talks were delivered by men of great spiritual stature and high distinction in society.

Men for Christ is especially attractive and relevant because it is written from a Singaporean setting with a lot of local flavour in it. I found it to be very inspiring.

The insights and issues raised are extremely pertinent and relevant in an Asian context. There is so much to glean from the experiences of these men of God who have been tested in their various fields of ministry, especially in the marketplace.

All these men have not only emerged unscathed but came through with great honour and distinction. What a testimony to the goodness and glory of God! That's why this book is well worth your reading.

Dr Chew Weng Chee

Senior Pastor, SIBKL, Malaysia

It was my joy to read every one of the submissions. I found many of them gripping, enthralling, written from the heart, brutally frank and honest, insightful, provocative and deeply enriching. I could identify with many of the joys and struggles mentioned in the testimonies. It was helpful as the stories parallel the struggles that I faced and continue to grapple in my own life. I warmly commend this book. This book is important for Christian men to read and ponder over real-life situations that they face in their lives.

Rev Dr Quek Swee Hwa

*Founding Principal Emeritus, Biblical Graduate School of Theology;
Senior Pastor, Emmanuel Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore*



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GRACEWORKS

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*To the many men and women, especially Uncle Robert Ong,
a pioneer Man for Christ, whose faithful service over the
years have made it possible for Mt Carmel BP Church to joyfully
anticipate its Jubilee Year Celebration in 2017*

Uncle Robert Ong, a young deacon from Life Bible-Presbyterian Church, started a Sunday School for some neighbourhood kids living in the Redhill/Bukit Merah area in 1958. Initial attendance fluctuated between 6 and 12. Undeterred, he persevered. By 1963, the class had grown into a youth worship service as the kids grew older and brought their friends along. In May 1967, Mount Carmel Gospel Mission was officially inaugurated at Lengkok Bahru. Uncle Ong went home to be with the Lord in May 2012. Till the very end, he was a Man of Prayer.

He finished strong and well! Praise the Lord.

Their light must
“shine before
men, that they
may see your
good deeds
and praise your
Father in heaven.”

(MATTHEW 5:16)

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FOREWORD

Over the past 50 years, profound changes have taken place in Singapore. To begin with, the physical landscape of today would not have been recognized by our forefathers. A new city has emerged onto the world scene. The population has grown from two million in 1970 to our present 5.5 million. In the 1960s, most people lived in squalid shophouses in the central town area and in outlying squatter farmlands. Today, 85 per cent of people reside in neat, affordable government-built apartments. From the beginning, Singapore's economic well-being has always been dependent on trading activities. Today, the city has become a key financial, educational and communications hub.

What is striking is that the church scene has also changed. In the 1960s, those professing the Christian faith numbered about seven to eight per cent; today it is 18 per cent. These believers then worshipped in some 80 churches; today, there are over 600 churches. Furthermore, these churches manifest a vitality that would have been unthinkable. They are active in community service, marketplace ministries and overseas missions. Bear in mind too that much of that growth took place among young people. The 1957 census revealed that 42 per cent of the population were below 15 years old. It was these young lives that active Christian youth organizations were able to draw to the faith. Today, many church leaders can trace their conversion to the hard work put in by church schools, the Interschool Christian Fellowship, Youth for Christ, Navigators and others.

The contributors to this book have lived through this period of change. Some have been active in the academic world, others in marketplace ministry, and yet others in public life. They have also been part of the growing church. As first-generation Christians, many have had to grow their faith amidst a multicultural and multifaith society. This has not always been easy. A number have had their ups and downs in life but they have always learned to recognize the sovereign hand of God at work. It is out of their varied journeys in life that they now share the lessons they have learnt with others.

Shortly before Jesus went to the cross, He uttered a prayer to the Father, expressing two compelling truths. Firstly, Christians are to have a Scripture-based worldview: “I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world” (John 17:14). At times, this worldview compels us to take a position that is contrary to that of the secular world. Secondly, we have a God-given mission in the world: “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world” (John 17:18). Christians have lives that need to be lived out. Earlier, Jesus had told the disciples that they were to be the salt of the earth and light to the world (Matthew 5:13–15). Their light must “shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

The contributors in this book have sought to do just that. In their journeys through life, they have sought to understand what it means to be a Christian in the world, amidst its many complexities. It is their prayer that as a younger generation of believers journey through life, they too will discover for themselves what it means to be “sent ... into the world” (John 17:18).

Dr Bobby Sng

*Advisor and Past President (2002–2012), Bible Society of Singapore
General Secretary, Fellowship of Evangelical Students (1969–1993)*

P R E F A C E

Carmel Men for Christ (CMfC) was launched in June 2012, ten months after I had stepped down from political office. During this time, as I prayed and sought God’s guidance on how I could add value wherever He had put me, I felt a conviction that we should restart our men’s ministry in Mount Carmel Bible-Presbyterian Church. I then surveyed other churches’ men’s ministries.

For Carmel, I felt that we should help our brothers forge a solidly-grounded Christian worldview. Romans 12:2 exhorts us to “not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”. To do this, I felt that we should adopt a three-prong approach, that is, (1) study what God has to say in His Word on the various roles of men in society — as fathers, spouses, workers, co-labourers in God’s Kingdom, etc.; (2) be encouraged and inspired by men who have striven to live by His standards wherever He has put them, especially in the workplace and marketplace; and (3) examine, as guided by the Holy Spirit, how God is working in the world — in history, business, missions, world events, etc. This is how I put it when I launched the ministry in June 2012:

Dear brothers, let us be a band of brothers, an army for God! We are all here because we believe that as men, God has a purpose for us. There is potential in us, whatever stage of life we are in, whether we are at the beginning of our careers or already retired. The fact is, whatever our station or age, God has a purpose for us. And God, in His Word, has determined the various roles that men should play. As a band of brothers in Carmel, we prayerfully seek His will for us, individually and corporately. Please remember that we do this not for ourselves, but because we believe that God can use us. We are all instruments for Him to be used.

Indeed, God has put us in different settings. Many of us are fathers and husbands. We either are or have been in the workplace or marketplace. We are also members of the community where He has put us. This can be a neighbourhood, church or para-church organization, voluntary welfare organization or grassroots body. We are also citizens of Singapore and the world. That is the larger context. This Men's Fellowship will meet monthly to hear a brother-in-Christ share his walk with God, including his struggles. No man is perfect, so it is important that we do not put anyone on a pedestal. Our speaker will share from the perspective that God has given him the opportunity to walk his walk and run his race in a certain arena of life.

As men, it is good for us to share some of the problems we face in life. Any of us can fall anytime, as we are subject to many temptations — “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16, NKJV). As we face these temptations and struggles, we should be mindful of God's Word and have the encouragement of godly men to keep us afloat. And as we are at different stages of our life, the old can share with the young and vice versa. We learn from one another.”

Tapping my contacts from over 20 years in public life, I invited brothers from various sectors to come and share at our monthly men's ministry gathering. We thank God for the 35 brothers who have come over the past four years. Coming from diverse backgrounds, their talks have enriched our men, especially in helping us form a Christian worldview and encouraging us to finish well. This book captures 21 of these talks, up till December 2014. Some have been further refined. (Our thanks go to Soh Swee Peng and Joshua Yeo for patiently transcribing the bulk of the talks, and to Tien Li from Graceworks for painstakingly editing them.) If there is interest, God willing, we hope to publish another book setting out the later talks.

We have categorized these 21 talks under four headings, viz. (1) Living Well; (2) God in the Marketplace; (3) God in the World Around Us and (4) Finishing Well. God's Word exhorts us to “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31).

As men, how do we love ourselves? I believe that a key to doing this well is to be the best man that we can be, that God has made us. For this to happen, we have to know and understand ourselves. Part 1 seeks to achieve this purpose. Many of our readers will still be working. Some run their own businesses. Part 2 will be especially relevant to these brothers. How can they be his priests and ambassadors during the nine or ten hours every day that they are out there “in the world” (John 17:11)?

Matthew 28:18 states, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to (Jesus)”. Our sovereign God manifests His presence in every field of human endeavour. In a limited way, we try to show this in Part 3, illustrating how God is in history, science, our churches and politics. Finally, our clarion call is for all our brothers in our churches (and readers who are sisters too) to persevere and run the race marked out for them (Hebrews 12:1). We must press on and fight the good fight, finish the race and keep the faith (2 Timothy 4:7). Indeed, by God’s grace, we should try to finish the race of life strongly, with faith, determination and passion, always trusting in Him. This is what Part 4 seeks to move us to do.

Our intention in sharing the insights gleaned with a larger audience of men in Singapore churches island-wide is not to put the contributors on a pedestal. Rather, we hope that these testimonies and the issues raised will get men thinking and praying about their own walk with God, both individually and collectively. How can they be better men for Christ in the various settings God has put them? How can they live life fully and finish well? To stimulate thinking, each contributor has listed four to five questions for reflection. Indeed, the contributors form an informal faculty that our churches’ men’s ministries can tap. To facilitate this, their email addresses are listed at the end of their profiles in each chapter. Alternatively, you can email <enquiries@graceworks.com.sg>.

These talks are reproduced in the spirit in which they were given (as shared originally at CMfC) and not necessarily because they represent Mount Carmel’s stand on particular issues. May God use them to enrich the men’s ministries in our churches and inspire our men to live fully and finish well for Him. Amen.

Assoc Prof Ho Peng Kee
Elder, Mount Carmel Bible-Presbyterian Church
Chief Editor

“God saw all that he
had made, and it was
very good.”

(GENESIS 1:31)

LIVING WELL

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Hsieh Fu Hua



THE THREE CALLS OF LIFE: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE TRULY HUMAN

Tan Soo Inn

What is the purpose of life? I am 57 years old this year. Steve Jobs died when he was 56. What legacy did he leave behind? He founded Apple! Sometimes I ask myself, “What legacy will I leave behind?” I have not founded any multibillion-dollar company; does this mean I’m a failure? In three years I will qualify for senior citizen discounts. Life seems to flash by when you get older. It is good to ask periodically, “What is the purpose of life anyway?”

It’s always good to go back to the beginning, to Genesis, which presents the picture of Man’s condition as it was meant to be before sin entered the world. I believe that as humans we have three main callings.

Our First Call: To Co-labour with God and Care for Creation on His Behalf

The creation of mankind is recounted in Genesis 1:26. If we skip ahead a little, we read in verse 31 that God surveyed all He made and declared it was very good. When He created the fish and the animals, He considered all these “good”. It is only when humankind was created that He declared it “very good”. We are the pinnacle of God’s creation! We see this in Psalm 8 as well.

As the peak of God’s creation, we have been given the job of representing God to the rest of His creation and to each other. God is spirit so we cannot see Him, but if you want to catch a glimpse of what God is like, take a look at

humanity. We are made in His image, and we represent Him through the things we do and the characters we display. And we have been given the job of caring for creation on His behalf.

Of course, God is God. He does not need us; He can do it on His own and better. Yet, in His love, He created us to manage His world, to rule and subdue it. In Genesis 2, we see that this injunction to rule and subdue more closely resembles a call to be a loving gardener than a call to bully and exploit.

For God's world to be managed, you need all sorts of people to do all sorts of things! Doctors, lawyers, bus drivers, cleaners ... Perhaps we should write down a list of every conceivable occupation the world needs to keep functioning. I wish I could sit down and ask each of you what you do. Whatever it happens to be, you are doing God's work!

Christians tend to divide the world into sacred and secular portions. If you are a pastor and missionary, you are in the "sacred" portion and you are doing God's work. If you happen to be a politician or a lawyer or a businessman, you are doing "secular" work. But God has created us differently to manage different things to keep His world going. If everybody became a pastor, the world would grind to an end. Who will cook your favourite chicken rice? So there is no sacred-secular divide.

I knew I was serving God when I was a dentist. I never saw myself as a kind of mechanic for teeth. Rather, I always kept in mind the patients I was treating, and endeavoured to show them Christ's love. I wish I knew what each of you is doing! Some of you are in vocational Christian work, and that is good, for we need our best people there.

We are all called to flesh out Kingdom values wherever we are. I might not have been a full-time church worker as a dentist, but I certainly hope that there was something about the values and love that I tried to put into my dental practice that intrigued my patients and led them to ask what made the difference. The work we do gives us opportunities to flesh out Kingdom values and point people towards Christ.

As I grow older, I find there is no retirement either. Retirement is not a word we see in Scripture. Some of us reach an age where we may not be on a payroll anymore, and I hope by then we have enough savings! We may reach a certain age where we are not employed. But work is not tied to paid employment. Work is an

exercise of our gifts to bless people. In fact, society is asking us to work longer, so maybe we should stop thinking, “Well, when is my time to retire?”

There will always be groups that require volunteers — the church, for example. I am now caring for my mother back in Penang. She is 85 years old and in the early stages of dementia, while my father-in-law stays with us in Singapore and has Parkinson’s and some degree of dementia. I do not know how to delay the onset of dementia but I do know I want to be engaged all the days of my life. I see some of my seminary professors who are now in their 80s and 90s still fully engaged in their work. I want to be like them.

So there’s no retirement! We may retire from paid employment, but we will always want to be good stewards of our gifts and continue to bless people. We want to be engaged because we are called to do meaningful work. No matter our age, let us be involved in meaningful labour. What are our gifts? What are our passions? Let us find ways to express them. The context for our work may change as we move down the path of life, but there is no basis for the idea of retirement in Scripture.

Our Second Call: To Live in Communion with God

I see our second calling in Genesis 2:2 which says: “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.” Those of you who were at Mount Carmel’s Church Camp in 2013 heard me making this point then.

I am somebody who cannot wait to get started whenever I am given an important assignment. I will always remember this incident. When I was a child, my family lived in Penang. The last thing my dad would do every night was to go around the house and make sure all the doors and windows were locked, to make sure the house was secure while we slept. A day came when my dad came to me and said, “My boy, I think you’re old enough now, I can trust you with the job of locking the windows and doors at night.”

This was a big deal indeed! Dad trusted me to lock all the windows and doors at night. He told me this in the daytime. I couldn’t wait for night to come, because I could then go lock all the windows and doors! I really wanted to get going because it was such a big honour to lock all the windows and doors. When we are given an important job, we can’t wait to get started.

On the sixth day of creation, Adam and Eve were created and were given a most important job. God tells them, “I want you to take care of the rest of my creation on my behalf.” If I were Adam and Eve, I would definitely be very excited and want to get started. I can just imagine that on the seventh day, they woke up and asked God, “Where do we start! Which part of creation should we work on first? Give me my to-do list.”

But as you know, there is no working on the seventh day! No work. So God tells them to relax, pull up a chair and probably asks them if they would like some waffles and coffee. The seventh day is a day to cease from work, to enjoy God’s

There is this deep need in all of us for intimacy with God.

blessings, and to commune with God. God seems to be telling Adam and Eve, “Yes, I have created you for the most important work of all, but you are even more important to me than your work.” Men, especially, sometimes find it hard to understand this because we are so defined by our work. While our work is important, we need to keep in mind that God loves us for who we are.

If our first calling is to co-labour, our second calling then is for communion. Therefore, we need to carve out space in our lives to spend time with God. This is where we as men need to be extra careful. Relationships are not our strong point. Our weakness in connecting with others not only sabotages our relationship with one another, but it also often sabotages our relationship with God.

Indeed, even our time with God can be very functional — to prepare for next Sunday’s lesson, etc., and not really to be quiet and remember who God is and to enjoy communion with our Abba Father. If we are made for communion, we simply have to carve out space for God. Call it “Quiet Time”, call it whatever you want, but just make sure we have time to be quiet and hear God’s voice say, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (see Matthew 3:17).

We may be most successful at whatever we do, but there will always be a dimension of life that is missing if we do not carve out space for God. This is because, just as there is a part of us that is meant to co-labour with God, there is also a part of us that is meant for communion with our Abba Father.

Do not forget, “Abba” is a very powerful word. It is not a childish word. It is a term of affection that even an adult may use to call his or her father. Think of