

## OCF AUSTRALIA FOCUS 2009

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### **Theme: A community rooted deeply in Christ and reaching others with Christ's love**

*Ephesians 3: 14-21 (A Prayer for the Ephesians)*

*For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

#### **What prompted Paul's prayer?**

The thrilling truths he has been discussing in the preceding passages – the revelation given to him by God that He is reconciling people in Christ. Praying is always inspired by biblical truths, and this highlight the need to fill our minds with Scripture.

#### **What is Paul praying?**

He prays that the Ephesians might be given the strength of the Spirit, the abiding presence of Christ, the rooting of their lives in Christ's love, the knowledge of Christ's love in all its dimension and the fullness of God himself.

#### **Focus 1: A deep personal relationship with God**

- a) The Lordship of Christ in our lives
- b) Study of God's Word
- c) Prayer

Our ministry to international students can only flow out of a deep personal relationship with God, and these basic spiritual disciplines must be in place before any effective ministry can happen.

First and foremost, Christ must occupy first place in our lives, where He rules and reigns in our hearts (Christ must dwell in our hearts as Paul prayed). Are we in total submission to His will for our lives and ministries, and is Jesus the focus and centre of our life? Is Jesus lifted high in our lives and in OCF? If He is not, I believe we must come humbled and broken before Him once again, acknowledging His Lordship over our lives, and placing our lives into His hands, allowing Him to use us as He chooses.

We must also recognize the importance of the study of God's Word and prayer, in both our personal devotional life as well as in the life of our OCF centres. The Word of God is useful to teach, rebuke, correct, and train us in righteousness, so that we may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16-17) Are we growing in maturity, feeding on the Word of God and having a firm grasp of Scripture? Or are we still living on milk, even though some of us by this time ought to be teachers? (Heb 5:11-14) This requires us to be disciplined in studying the Word of God.

In prayer, let us be totally devoted, like the early believers in the Acts church because we know that this ministry is not sustained by our intelligence or strength, but only by the work of God through His Spirit. Therefore, let us in humility and faith come before Him in prayer, committing our lives and this ministry into His hands.

#### **Focus 2: A heart for students on campus**

- a) A community that expresses the love of Christ
- b) Campus prayer
- c) Campus evangelism

As per the theme for this year, when Christ reigns in our lives and rules unopposed in our hearts, we will be strengthened to be rooted and established in love – the love of Christ. (Eph 3:16-17) In the gospel of John, Jesus repeatedly commanded His disciples to love each other and to be in complete unity. (Jn 15:12-13, Jn 17:23) He said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (Jn 13:35) By our love for God and for others, people will be drawn to Christ. But the strength to love others doesn't come from ourselves – it comes as a result of Christ reigning in our hearts and His Spirit strengthening us with power to love.

The start of us developing a heart for our campuses comes when we capture God's heart for the campus. And the way to do that is through persistent prayer, in our personal quiet time as well as during corporate prayer on campus. Through prayer, our hearts are attuned to Him, our wills are aligned with Him, and our eyes are opened to the vast harvest field that is ripe on our campuses. Let us this year resolve to uphold our friends on campus in prayer before the Lord, to mobilize every OCFer to develop a heart for prayer through campus prayer meets, and if possible to unite with other Christian groups on campus in prayer.

And with this heart for our campuses and His Holy Spirit going before us, let us step out boldly to reach out in practical and loving ways. Be it through IDP pre-departure talks, orientation week, stall days, welcome nights,

freshies/newbies dinners, beach outings, sport activities, street evangelism, discovery groups, evangelistic nights, coffee ministries, camps etc etc....OCFers are creative and use their God-given gifts and talents in many diverse ways! And though the methods may differ, the principles stay the same – because of His love for us, we want to show them His love through us and to let them experience His love for themselves.

**Focus 3: A passion for the next generation**

- a) Leadership training
- b) Intentional discipleship
- c) Involves partnership with local churches

Why did Paul pray this prayer?

It was because of his heart for the Ephesian church and their future generations.

Due to the nature of OCF, leadership turnover happens at very rapid rate. Chairpersons, committee members, and Bible study leaders can change on a yearly basis as they graduate and return home. Therefore, this places a huge emphasis on raising up new leaders to take their place. Leaders need to be observant and constantly on the look out for potential leaders whom they can nurture and build up to take their place. Members also need to be willing to step up and serve – to be F.A.T (faithful, available and teachable).

Some form of formal leadership training throughout the year or at certain strategic periods of the year is desirable, where biblical leadership can be taught by centre advisors, older or ex-OCFers, pastors, and Bible college teachers. It would be good if this can happen in a state level, so that duplication of efforts between centres will be minimized. Healthy partnership with local churches is required.

Another area of utmost importance in the raising up of leaders is intentional discipleship. Through this, the practical side of ministry, the struggles in personal life and spiritual growth, and an example to follow can be imparted in a Paul-Timothy relationship. Rapid growth in maturity often happens in such intentional discipleship, and the OCF vision of sending OCFers back as disciple makers is achieved.

**Focus 4: A helping hand toward other centres**

- a) Prayer and verbal/written encouragement
- b) Resource sharing
- c) Strengthening smaller centres (through a) and b) above)
- d) Planting new centres

Take note of Paul's prayer that it is "... together with all the saints..." In other words there is a corporate dimension to the Christian life – it is not individualistic.

It really is our desire (and I believe God's desire) to see OCF Australia united – not just once a year during convention and AGM, but throughout the year. We belong to one body, and if one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. (1 Cor 12:26) Similarly, let us truly be one body, united in the Lord not just in constitution but in words and actions.

We believe that this starts with prayer and encouragement. We, as Exco serving you all, will try our best to keep everyone up to date with what God is doing amongst all the centres in OCF Australia through prayer bulletins, NPMM, personal correspondence etc. However, we also encourage you to be pro-active in sincerely caring for the other centres, fervently keeping each other in prayer and giving words of encouragement. Let us share each other's joys and struggles as we serve the Lord together in this ministry - we are in this together!

There are also many practical ways we can help each other. One of them is resource sharing, be it the sharing of experience in planning events, sharing of manpower, sharing of Bible study or discovery group materials, and even the sharing of campuses. In terms of electronic materials, we would like to encourage everyone to utilize the box.net account which was set up as a common pool of Bible study, discipleship, DG materials etc. And if there is something especially helpful which you have found, do share it with us so that everyone else might benefit from it!

And within the state level, another area very close to our hearts are the smaller and new centres. Our hope and desire is that more established and experienced centres will take the time and effort to help smaller and new centres in whatever ways they can. We understand that due to geographical location it is sometimes very difficult, but we hope that bigger centres will especially help encourage and strengthen the core leadership team of smaller centres.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the vision of a community of love where we are rooted and established in love (Eph 3:17) starts with our individual hearts and attitudes. Christ needs to dwell, rule and reign in our lives first, and then we will be strengthened to love others with the love of Christ. May Christ's love be the soil where growth takes place! Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Eph 3:20-21)