

From Distress to Progress



BSSF-4

**From
DISTRESS
to
PROGRESS**

**Biblical Motifs for
Pilgrims in The Way**

**By
Lee Bee Teik**

BYTE SIZE SOLID FOOD SERIES

For the Ordinary Believer



A Reconre Publication

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Email: reconcilor@reconre.com
website: www.reconre.com

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About the “Byte Size Solid Food Series”

Why Byte Size?

A byte is a unit of information storage in computer chips which is already an accepted means of messaging technology since the late 20th century in Malaysia. *Byte size* also has the same sound as *bite size*, which is to imply that the BSSF Series is to reach readers with small chewable and digestible amounts of the sharing of God’s word. The Reconre Team prays that you will have an enjoyable meal as you ponder on His word while reading through each title in the series.

Why Solid Food?

Living in a developing nation has its advantages and disadvantages, if hindsight assessment of more developed nations may be a guide. We are glad to discover more of God’s creativity through mankind. However, in our hectic rush to advance in technological research, we may forget the One who alone has endowed us with the means to use and enjoy the fruits of our research. Therefore, this series of small books are the result of an effort to feed not only the minds but also the hearts and souls of readers so that they may fulfill God’s vision of remaking them into His image. For this, we need the solid study and meditation of His word from the Bible, and not only the drinking of the milk of the first teaching when we first trusted Christ to be our Saviour and Lord.

The writer to the Hebrews reminds us in 5:11-14...

“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”

Reconre hopes that many other home grown writers and publishers will surface to contribute their solid food through the written word so that God’s people in Malaysia will not remain or become spiritually anaemic. That the pen is mightier than the sword still holds true in many ways, I believe.

Finally, let us proclaim with Jude in :24...now,

“To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only wise God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore. Amen.”

How to Use this Book

- Take your time to read through the book.
- Pause to ponder in between.
- You may use the main text and later reflections for Personal/Group Study or during your Quiet Times alone with God.
- If used in a group, meet weekly or at any regular interval to share, pray and apply what you have learnt together.
- Suggestion for Personal Reflection:

Spend 30 minutes or more daily [depending on your nutritional deficiency or appetite] meditating on what you have read and talk to Him about it. Better still, take a few days off work and ponder on the reflections with Him by Your side. If you need a venue for this purpose, contact Reconre staff at www.reconre.org in Malaysia.

Come,

Let us Read...

Let us Listen...

Let us Ponder...

Let us Pray...

Let us Love, Trust & Obey...

JESUS!

From Distress to Progress

Biblical Motifs for Pilgrims in the Way

John 15:13-15

“Greater love has no one than this, that He lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learnt from My Father I have made known to you.”

Malaysians are familiar with the concept of motifs as repeated patterns for a particular work of art. We are proud of our batik heritage. I vividly recall designing a motif on a block and then printing it on a piece of white teteron cotton in our school art class back in the 60’s. A motif takes time to design and it takes time to put into good use. Similarly, in pastoral counselling, in the hope of discovering a root cause for a specific problem, we pray and take time to look for motifs or repeated patterns in the counsellee’s relationships, attitudes and life generally. We want to see whether there is any habit that is consciously or subconsciously expressed so that we may pray for these undesirable habits to be reduced and, in God’s mercy, be eventually removed through the renewal of the mind and the Holy Spirit’s transformation process.

In the Old Testament, God constantly reminded the Israelites of their repeated rebellion against His laws and His repeated calls to repentance and renewal. In the New Testament, Jesus repeatedly used parables to speak to His listeners. Parables are motifs or they will not be useful. They are meant to portray a summary of man's common attitudes and actions before God. If we will to obey Him, we will understand the parables; if we will not to obey Him, then the parables will simply fly over our heads. That was why Jesus used parables to teach the crowds and His disciples. I have picked up a set of Bible characters as examples of motifs because their problems are shared by many people in deep need.

The movement in the lives of these biblical characters form what I call the therapeutic motifs for those seeking God's deep transformation of lives. They consists the man by the pool, Lot's wife and Abraham to show a pilgrim's life from distress to progress in this world. As we proceed, I will ask questions to enable you to come to your own conclusions about how God sees them and how He ministers His saving and healing grace to them. Where the ideas are careful speculations from human observations, I will let you know. Watch out for how the people responded to Him too.

For those helping others grow in Christ-likeness, they need to recognise the progressive stages of our counsellee's pilgrimage so that we will not stand in the way of their transformation. We need to wait for the right time to intervene on the one hand, and not be too slow and miss the opportune time to help them on the other hand.

Stage I. The “Responsibility of Choice” Motif

Read John 5:1-14

Question 1.

Who was the man described in the passage above?

The man, at the pool with the five arches, had been an invalid for 38 years. Jesus asked him a question about his will but he evaded the question by:

- * blaming others for not helping him...
e.g. *“It’s their fault-lah!”*
- * appealing to a of lack of time to get help...
e.g. *“Ayoh, cannot come to meetings on time because of traffic jam-loh!”*
- * self-pity...
e.g. *“Poor me!”*

Jesus wasted no time in alerting him to his masks; He commanded him to exercise his will. The man never dreamt that he could do it...but he obeyed Jesus and was healed, even though he did not clearly state he wanted Him to heal him! See how accommodating Jesus is if we really want to be healed but are evasive about it due to our fear of not being healed again...and again...and again.

Question 2.

What was the diagnosis for him?

He committed the sin of neglecting to take responsibility for his own life.

Question 3.

What are the implications of this motif?

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We are being *held accountable* for our abilities to do what we can do.

The man's sin was that he did not even ask for help and settled into life as an invalid.

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We are being *held responsible* for admitting that we are helpless in a situation where we cannot help ourselves, and for seeking help when necessary.

For example, in Mark 9:21-24, Jesus encouraged the father to ask Jesus to help him to believe in Him when he realised how little he actually trusted Him.

“If you are able...” became *“I believe, help my unbelief!”*

Add in your personal comments:

Dr. Lee Bee Teik is the founding director of Reconre Ministries. She earlier laid down the practice of medicine to be with her children. In 1992, the Lord called her to the writing ministry and then to minister to His fulltime workers through pastoral counselling and quiet retreats. Her other areas of service include the training of lay pastoral counsellors and the facilitating of personal or small group quiet retreats and seminars. Dr Lee is married to Bishop (Dr) Hwa Yung of the Methodist Church in Malaysia and they have three adult children.



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