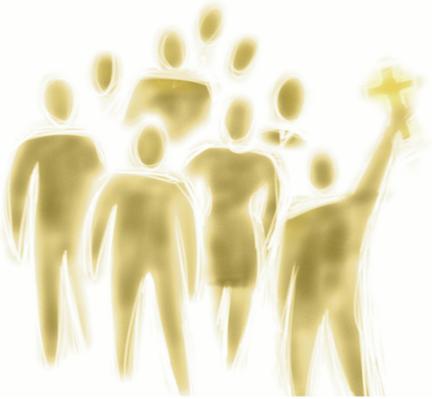


# ASIAN LUTHERAN DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES



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download, visit [asianlutherans.net](http://asianlutherans.net)

## **HIGH STUDENT TRACK**

By Rev. Yutaka Kishino and Rev. Daniel Penumaka

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## **PART I: THE LORD IS CALLING US**

### **INTRODUCTION**

“For surely I know the plans I have for you.”

Jeremiah 29:11

The theme “Making Disciples” took shape in October 2006, when the Rev. Dr. Pongsak Limthongviratn, Director for Asian and Pacific Islander Ministries, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), introduced it to the Executive Committee of the Association of Asians and Pacific Islanders (AAPI)-ELCA.

During their daylong brainstorming session at the Chinese Lutheran Church in San Francisco, Pastor Yutaka Kishino shared his experience of following Jesus through every stage of his youth, and emphasized the importance of discipleship to high school students. Pastor Daniel Penumaka then shared how he was attracted to the ministry even when he was in high school. And so the AAPI Executive Committee took up the idea of a “Student Track” as one of the five primary areas of discipleship. Both pastors agreed to develop it, even though they had moved away from that wonderful stage of young adulthood.

In 2007, they organized one-day high school student programs in New York and Minneapolis. “What does it cost to be a disciple of Christ?” was the theme of both events. Fifty junior and senior high school students with ten adult leaders attended the Asian Youth Gospel Camp 2007 in New York. Thirty high school and junior high students and their leaders attended the Minneapolis event. These programs played an important role in the formation of student discipleship in our Lutheran network.

As you begin this training, you may be wondering, “What role can students play in discipleship?” Commonly, people think that discipleship is only for adults 30 years old and up. But think again: our Christian life begins at the baptismal font itself where we are declared as disciples of Jesus Christ. Soon after the

baptism, we are welcomed as new members of the congregation. This means that we are disciples from the time of our baptism.

During the baptism, the pastor asks the parents or godparents to take a vow that they will bring the children to church; place the Bible in their hands as they grow; and teach them the Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer and Apostles' Creed. Later, parents are encouraged to bring their children to Sunday School, Children's Choir, Vacation Bible School, the Christmas Pageant and other children's activities.

As children reach eight years old, they are eligible for First Communion. As they reach 13, they are encouraged to enroll into confirmation classes, during which we affirm that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. In fact there is no other program in the traditional Church than confirmation classes to equip believers with knowledge of our Scripture and the history of Christianity.

Once, we are confirmed, we are full-fledged members of our congregation. We therefore live as witnesses to the Good News of Jesus Christ in our congregation, in our families, and in the world. Unfortunately, after confirmation, some congregations do not provide any activities to youth in the church. The congregation assumes that the confirmed should simply continue as full-fledged members while the confirmed believe that their role as disciples is complete. Unknowingly, this assumption on both sides pushes our youth and young adults into "inactive" or "absent" zones.

This discipleship resource aims to create the awareness that this assumption is neither right nor helpful to the church, nor to congregational members in the 16-30 age range. This manual will help readers to grasp the importance of discipleship for those who are between 12 to 18 years old.

The Bible reveals that young boys and girls played significant and vital roles in the Kingdom of God. The life experiences of Samuel, Miriam, David, Daniel, Isaiah, Amos, Jeremiah, Ruth, Esther, and the prophets in the Old Testament prove that young boys and girls were called by our Lord for God's work.

The most excellent example for student discipleship is our Lord Jesus himself. At the age of 12, Jesus engaged in full debate with leaders of the synagogue. When Mary returned after a three-day journey back to Jerusalem and complained that they were searching for Jesus, he said. "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49) Jesus did not wait until his adulthood to engage in the mission of God. We are called right after our baptism to the discipleship of Christ. It is not an option but a commission. This is the foundation for Discipleship for High School Students.

The aim of this high school student track is to help us rediscover our faith which was formed and nurtured in our Sunday School and confirmation studies, so that we will be a witness to Christ and play a vital role in the mission of God. This training manual is divided into three parts: The Lord Is Calling Us; In Search of Truth; and The Passion to Share.

Each part has three sessions. Therefore there are nine sessions plus a final session named "The Day of Dedication." We recommend the following format for your training. However, you can design your own format as well as questions for discussion based on your group's needs and preferences.

### **FORMAT FOR EACH SESSION**

- 1. GATHERING (Be seated in a circle)**
- 2. PRAYER**
- 3. BIBLE READING (Suggested in the booklet)**
- 4. NARRATION (From the booklet)**

**5. BIBLE READING (All read the same passage silently)**

**6. SHARING/DISCUSSION**

**7. CIRCLE PRAYER (Conclusion)**

**You may serve snacks and refreshments**

# SESSION 1: OUR GLOBAL SPACESHIP IS HEADING FOR A CRASH

## Read Genesis Chapter 1-3

We live in a world frequently referred to as the “Global Village.” This concept brings numerous opportunities to our doorstep.

According to the World Development Report 2010 published by the [World Bank](#) in 2011, the world’s economies are changing. Goldman Sachs, a financial institution, says there are many “emerging-economies” (New York Times, April 2, 2008). Countries such as China, India, Brazil and Mexico, which were poor nations 25 years ago, are now among the 15 largest economies in the world. The changing “Global Economy” can be seen in two ways: as a blessing as well as a curse.

### Ten Largest World Economies in 2010

World GDP (Gross Domestic Production)

\$ 63,044,068 (in millions of US\$)

Rank	Country	GDP (in millions of US \$)
1	United States	\$14,582,400
2	China, People’s Republic of	5,878,629
3	Japan	5,497,813
4	Germany	3,309,669
5	France	2,560,002

6	United Kingdom	2,246,079
7	Brazil	2,087,890
8	Italy	2,051,412
9	India	1,729,010
10	Canada	1,574,052

This is the miracle of a free market. We can witness how the rapid and massive growth of the cities is changing Asia. As we travel to visit our families and friends, the ongoing construction of super highways, enormous airports, growing skyscrapers and sophisticated technologies evidence the rapid change of Asian cities. The benefits of the global free market economies may offer more opportunities, openness, development and expansion of the World Wide Web, improved global communication, access to information technology, global travel and tourism, and rapid development of countries in the Southern Hemisphere. However, the moment we take a detour from these superhighways, we can easily witness the glaring poverty and pathetic living conditions of millions of people. The free market and ongoing globalization also brought much evil into this world. Some of the ill effects of this growth are: the rapidly growing gulf between the rich and poor, poverty, child trading for prostitution, drug trafficking, the continuing spread of HIV/AIDS and of course global warming and pollution. Our global spaceship is heading for a crash. There is no doubt about that when we consider the living conditions and standards of the poor in two-thirds of the world (formerly known as the Third World). And we face our own problems here in America. Our parents immigrated to the United States in search of freedom and a

better life. We became Asian-Americans and are very much “Americanized.” But our America is also rapidly changing. There is a growing gulf between rich and poor. Our infrastructure is aging, our bridges and electrical grids are overloaded and our schools are unable to achieve the excellent results of years ago. Adding to this are the well-educated, affluent kids from our parent’s homelands who come and compete with us in the job market. In this rapid changing global civilization, we are easily confused, frustrated and lost.

This is all happening because we humans misunderstand our role on the beautiful planet earth. The misinterpretation of the words “dominion over” and “subdue” in the Creation story (Genesis, Chapter 1) give us tremendous power. This causes the alienation of God and people, people to each other, and with creation (nature).

SIN alienates us from everything, including the image of God. People began developing a political economy, which is dominant and anthropocentric. We developed science and technology. And we began polarizing the world, as rich and poor, haves and have-nots. In this process, the beautiful creation God gave us began to deteriorate. The knowledge and wisdom God gave us to use for the well-being of our world, we have used to divide the world. The blue planet in the known cosmos, that Carl Sagan called our earth, the greenest planet in the entire Solar System and the known universe, is endangered.

God is calling you and me to re-examine our stewardship. Unless we are true disciples of Jesus Christ, we cannot be true stewards of his Father’s beautiful creation. God is calling us to create a new world. For that we need a deep

spirituality, the way, the truth and life that only Jesus shows and offers to us.

This reminds us a story from the book of Genesis: the story of the Tower of Babel and God's call to Abraham to come out to create a new world.

## **SESSION 2: GOD IS CALLING US**

**Read: Genesis 11:1-9, 12:1-9**

When we just browse through the Bible, we get the impression that the Bible is a story about “the Chosen People -- Israel and their journey to the promised land.

When their kings failed to rule with justice and righteousness, then Jesus came as Messiah to save them from sinfulness. Later, the disciples of Christ brought the salvation of Jesus to all parts of the world.

Let us try to rediscover the biblical story from a Christian perspective. We Christians consider the Holy Bible as “salvation history.” Let us re-examine the call of Abraham by our Lord.

First we read the beautiful description of creation, which almost follows the lines of evolution. We swim through the great flood story and reach a great city where the Babylonians are building a great tower. Somewhat like that, we are building towers today, each taller than the other. Abraham, the father of three religions -- Christianity, Islam and Judaism -- lived in an area called Ur and Haran. These were outposts of the Sumerian Empire in which the largest city was Babylon or Bav-el. This region was known as Mesopotamia meaning “Between Rivers,” specifically the Tigris and Euphrates. Bav-el in Babylonian language means “the gate of god.” But in Hebrew Bav-el means “Babble/Baffle.” In reality, the Babylonians were trying to globalize the then known world and create a great civilization. This civilization was creating a polarized world, and God did not like this idea. God called Abraham to COME OUT of the great civilization and start a new world.

It was a huge challenge for Abraham to leave all his possessions and his family and travel into the unknown. The only one he knew was God. Abraham took a big step in his life journey when he decided to trust his God and walk with the LORD. In this same way God is calling you and me to change the world.

### **I HAVE MY OWN PRIORITIES**

So we have taken the first step, of hearing God's call. But the question now is are we really ready to take on that challenge that will totally and utterly change our lives and the way people think about us? Are we ready to do God's will and put away our own visions and dreams? When we come face to face with God, will we give him excuses and ask for a pass? Most of the time, we make the excuse that we have our own priorities. We say that we're not ready, and we even question God. One question that you constantly hear in the Bible and from biblical patriarchs is WHY ME?

God chose each and every one of us. Not because of our status, but because of talents and gifts that God himself gave us. God has given you specific gifts and abilities to use for God's glory.

Consider the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30). In this story about the Kingdom of Heaven, a man lends his servants money to invest for him while he is away in another country. He gives each servant a different amount. Two of the servants increase the amount, while the third hides the money in the ground for safekeeping. When the master comes home, he is pleased that two have been faithful with what he gave them, and decides to give them even more. If we don't use our talents and gifts, they will be taken from us and given to those who will use them for the glory of

God's kingdom. Are you ready to take God's call? Or are you going to neglect the mission? God knows who, what, when, where, why and even how to get a person to do mission, and therefore calls us in different ways. When we open our souls to the call, we can see signs of the Lord. The call will be evident in the Scriptures, in our thoughts, interests, and our gifts. So if God calls you to do his work, the Lord certainly thinks you are ready! So put your faith in the Lord, who will not disappoint you!

Even the most famous leaders in the Bible faced these choices. They told God, "I have my own priorities and I don't think I'm ready to do your will. I'm not the right person so why did you choose me?"

Listen to some of the great leaders!

### **SESSION 3: BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT**

#### **DISCIPLESHIP**

**Read Exodus 3:1-12, Amos 7:14-15**

##### ***Moses the Lawgiver***

Moses' excuse to God was, "Me? I was the Prince of Egypt. I slaughtered my own people and enslaved them. When I was caught in a dispute, I ran from home. Now I have second life here. I'm sorry but you got the wrong person." Still, God made Moses the great liberator who brought God's people out from bondage.

##### ***David the Golden King***

David's excuse was, "I'm a mere shepherd boy. I haven't reached adulthood and you expect me to go and fight in your army?" The holy man Samuel approached Jesse, David's father, to anoint a king over Israel. Jesse hesitated to recommend his young son

David. But God made David the finest king who ever ruled in Israel.

### ***Amos the Champion of Justice***

Amos was a shepherd boy from Tekoa. A dresser of sycamore trees, he had his own excuse: he was too little to take up the mission as a prophet to Israel. But God called him to prophesy God's justice and righteousness. Amos became the champion of the poor and downtrodden people in Israel.

### **God wants you to be his mind, voice, hands, feet**

Friends, we have every excuse to reject God's invitation to change the world. But God wants us to be the Lord's mind, voice, hands and feet. We have been timid, and frightened by the force of evil. Christ is our mentor who fought the evil forces. The Holy Spirit is our shield. Come. Accept God's call. What is holding you back, and preventing you from doing God's will? Come.

## **PART II - IN SEARCH OF TRUTH**

### **SESSION 4: IN SEARCH OF THE RIGHT PATH**

#### **Read John 1:35-51**

As we hear the cries of the people in our polarized world, as we hear God calling us, as we choose to be disciples of Jesus Christ, we need to deepen our own spirituality. We are living in a global village with people of all faiths, from diverse cultural backgrounds and nationalities.

In a way, the United States is like the United Nations. Our large cities -- New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco -- are

cosmopolitan cities. In such complex and diverse communities, the concept of “I’m ok and you’re ok” is prevalent. We need to respect all people and their beliefs. If so, how can we really go out and share our faith with our peers, friends and neighbors? Many Americans believe that faith is a private matter and we should not parade it in public.

Before we proceed further, is there a way we can search our souls and see if this path called Christianity is the right path? The disciples of Jesus searched in the same way to find his message.

Let’s spend some time looking at the journeys the disciples took to find Christ.

### **The Guiding Star -- John the Baptist**

The Gospel of John, the youngest disciple of Jesus, talks of discipleship as a series of human actions. Notice that John did not tell the story of the heavens opening and a voice saying, “This is my beloved Son... listen to him.” He wrote of John the Baptist’s human search for the truth.

*Read John 1: 29-34. John the Baptist was the son of Elisabeth and Zechariah the priest. He was not a disciple of Jesus, but a relative. The Bible tells us that John the Baptist was born just six months before Jesus. They were kindred who knew each other very well. At the time Jesus began his ministry, they both were thirty years old. They were friends. However, they had very different ministries.*

The role of John the Baptist was to guide his followers to Jesus. Look at the way he referred to Jesus. John the Gospel writer piles up “image upon on image, title upon title, mystery upon mystery,”

about Jesus. How could this be possible from this older cousin of Jesus providing a great testimony of his relative?

In traditional societies, younger people talk about their older pals, not other way round. Here John was able to give testimony of Jesus to his followers. John must have followed Jesus very closely. As Jesus was growing older and preparing for his ministry, he must have shared some of his views with his friends and John, who believed and trusted Jesus. Now John was not only convinced of the message of Jesus; he even called his disciples to follow Jesus.

***Jesus asks a strange question: “What are you looking for?”***

Now read John 1: 35-42. As soon as Jesus notices that two young men were following him, he asks them a very strange question: “What are you looking for?” In our world we might say “What’s up, guys?” In a more formal way we might ask somebody “May I help you?” But we do not ask, “What are you seeking or what are you looking for?”

The reason the divine master asks that question is because he knows the seekers and their need. They are looking for a mentor. Yes, a mentor who can lead them in their journey to the truth. The truth about whether they are going to accept the message that will liberate them from their physical as well as spiritual suffering.

***Seekers - Followers – Disciples***

***Looking for Acceptance***

The followers of John the Baptist were looking for a teacher who could guide them in their life journey. This journey was their own, to find the meaning and purpose in their lives.

Notice that they were not looking for answers to the big question; they just wanted to stay with Jesus to find out that answer in the days to come. They wanted a place; and Jesus is that place, a person who was himself a home, a place to belong.

Jesus invited all to come, asking them: "Who are you? What are you? Where are you in your life's journey? Come and stay with me. I will give you answers and create a new place for you and for all those who seek the truth." The biblical followers accepted the invitation of Jesus. They stayed with Jesus. His story became their way of life and his journey became their journey. If we follow Jesus, he will make us true disciples as well.

Consider this conversation between Michelangelo and a bystander:

Michelangelo was a great artist who once said a remarkable thing. He was standing before a great block of stone while holding a chisel and a hammer. He began hammering and chiseling that large stone. A bystander asked him "What are you doing?" Michelangelo replied, "When I look at this rock, I see an angel. I see an angel trapped in that rock ... I'm letting him out."

When we fully submit ourselves to our master and follow him alone, he will change our lives.

## SESSION 5: JESUS: THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

**Read: John 10:7-10; 14:1-7**

As we follow Jesus, we need to make up our minds that “there is NO other.” It isn’t shocking. We still need to live harmoniously with our neighbors. We need to learn to be tolerant. We need to accept people of other faiths. But if there is no other, then what is the significance of our Christian faith? What is so wonderful about the Christian path? Is it a different way or the same way?

Pastor Daniel Penumaka’s Hindu friends often insist “We are all worshipping the same God.” If so, Pr. Penumaka then asks, why there is racism among American Christians? Why are there “untouchables” among Indian Hindus? Why do Sunnis and Shiites kill each other? Why do we segregate others on the basis of class, caste, creed or color? Let us examine the message of Christ.

**YAHWEH** (“YHWH” called the tetragrammaton) said “I heard the cries of my people.” In Exodus 3: “When God heard the cries of the people, the same God came and sojourned with Israelites leading them from bondage to the land of promise.” When we are talking about the liberation story of Israelites, we need to be careful. We should not take the sides of either Israelites or Egyptians. Rather they should be seen as the paradigm forces of light and dark. There might be good people among Egyptians and there might be evil people among Israelites. We should see these as metaphors only. We need to see **YAHWEH** is taking the side of the weak and powerless over against oppressors. Wherever there are cries of the people for freedom, justice and human dignity,

**YAHWEH** is there pitching the tent among them and fighting the forces of evil. That is the message of the Old Testament. The foundations of Judaism are the five books of the Torah. They can be summarized in the following verses:

Deuteronomy 6:5 says “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might...” Leviticus 19:18 says “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus redefined this message of justice, human dignity and the restoration of fallen creation throughout his ministry. And he gave us two great commandments out of the Torah when he said: “Love God with all your heart and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.” These two commandments are highlighted throughout Jesus’ ministry (Matthew 22: 37-39, Mark 12: 29-31, Luke 10: 27-28). Dr. Christopher Duraisingh, a professor who taught systematic theology to Pastor Daniel Penumaka, always said: “Jesus was totally sensitive and totally available to the cries of the people.” God in Jesus died for us to prove how much He loves us.

The apostle Paul said that the Lord “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God as something to be exploited...” Philippians 2:5-11. The Lord who was revealed in the Bible is not the one dwelling in the heavens, but the Lord who came down to live with you and me. Jesus came to walk with you and me on our journey, in our struggles, frustrations, difficulties and hard times.

This is the truth, the way and the life of Jesus. The principle of being a Christian is to be a disciple and follow the truth who walks with us. This is the way in which Christianity differs from all other religions. In every religion there is a quest, a search to know the truth. It is a human goal to know

the truth. But in Jesus, the truth is revealed to us. It is not our attempt to know the truth. The truth has come to us and dwells among us, so that we are part of the truth. The Lord is calling you and me to this path. Why do you still hesitate? Come to the Lord. Submit yourself to the Lord.

## **SESSION 6: MARKS OF SPIRITUALITY**

### **Deuteronomy 6: 1-9; Matthew 25: 31-46**

In order to be a true disciple, we need to deepen our spirituality. There are several aspects of Christian spirituality. At least three major practices strengthen our foundation and provide nourishment for our faith. These are: reading the Holy Bible, spending time with the Lord in prayer, and living in a spiritual community.

#### ***Reading the Holy Bible***

Reading the Holy Bible is part of strengthening our faith. It is like reading a manual for an iPod, BlackBerry, or laptop. If we do not read the manual, how do we get to know how it works? To strengthen our souls we need to read our holy manual regularly. When we read the Holy Scriptures, we will find guidance for our journey of faith.

The Bible says in Psalm 119:9, "How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to your word."

God's word reveals the truth about God and guides us to grow strong in faith. It also helps us to have an active, living relationship with God our creator. In Baptism we became God's children, and as our heavenly parent, God speaks to us through the Bible. God's word also teaches us how to live a life faithful to God. Psalm 119:11 says, "I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you".

Jesus, Son of God, spoke of the Scriptures when the devil came to tempt him. As the Bible says in Ephesians 6:10-20, "For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God..." We need the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Reading and meditating on the Bible is very important.

Create your own pattern for study. If you read 12 pages a day, you can complete the whole Bible in 90 days. If you read five pages a day you can finish in about six months. And if you read even three pages a day, you can finish in one year. This holy collection was written over 1600 years by over 40 authors! You will find rich and amazing experiences here.

### **Spending Time with our Lord in Prayer**

We communicate with God through prayer. This is not a routine exercise of giving God a list of things to do. Jesus in his ministry connected with God through prayer. As St. Jerome said so many centuries ago, "let prayer be your pillow as you fall asleep at night." And Mother Theresa said "let prayer be your pillow as you wake up in the morning." Our day should begin and end with prayer, because it connects us to our heavenly Father, our friends, our neighbors and our world. We need neither wireless nor DSL connections in order to connect to the World Wide Web of Faith. We connect with our Lord each time we pray.

### **Living in Spiritual Community**

There is power in our spiritual community, we who share similar visions and values. There is power in a community that bears the name of Jesus and whose power is rooted in

the love of Christ. Friends and family who are Christian deeply influence our lives and help us to stand up against the wiles of the devil who wants to ruin our lives. Young people can find positive role models in Christian communities. Paul urges young Timothy to set examples for believers in speech and conduct, in love, in faith and purity, and we must do the same.

## **PART III THE PASSION TO SHARE**

### **SESSION 7: PASSION TO SHARE THE LOVE OF JESUS**

**Read: John 12: 20-26**

This world was created by God, but sinful minds of people can make a beautiful world non-livable. And though we have had other priorities in our lives, we must respond to God's call to change the world for the better. Once we are convinced of these realities, we do not have any choice except to follow Jesus Christ. We may have many heroes and celebrities in this world, but when we accept Jesus Christ as our personal savior we give our allegiance to him who is greater than any. We follow in the footsteps of the disciples of Christ to take up his cross. We know that this is the truth, the way and the life for us. If we are determined to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ, we do not hesitate to take on any hardship. We will be focused on the message of love, which is manifested in the life and ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

When we accepted the invitation to follow Jesus, we became one of his disciples. Now we need to share his vision for a better world, a new world, with our friends. How can we keep quiet about the "foretaste of the feast to come"? As we see the community of believers where people from all backgrounds, cultures and nationalities form the Christian community, can we keep all the benefits to ourselves? We

need to learn to share our joy with others. Let us share the awesome and great good news about Jesus with our friends. Look at Philip, the disciple of Jesus who brought many to Jesus. Philip was the connection, a bridge, a glue among the disciples of Jesus. Would you like to be like Philip?

- Philip brought his friends to Jesus and they became Jesus' disciples.
  
- Philip brought the boy with five small loaves of bread and two fish at the seaside to Jesus, who miraculously used the meal to feed thousands of people (Matthew 14:13-21).
  
- Philip brought Greek philosophers to Jesus.

## **SESSION 8: FIRST LUTHERAN MISSIONARY TO INDIA – BARTHOLOMAEUS ZIEGENBALG**

### **Read Luke 10:1-9**

The connection for Asians between the birth of the Christian way of life and the growth of the Christian mission in Asia go back to the work of the first missionary in Asia. Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg was just 23 years old when accepted the call to bring the Good News to unknown lands. He took great risks to preach the love of Christ. He not only converted non-believers to Christ, but he also converted to the culture of the people with whom he was working. He did not live long, dying when he was 33 years old. But the marks he left are significant. Let us look at the ministry of Ziegenbalg, a Lutheran missionary who came to Asia over 300 years ago.

Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg was born in Saxony in 1682. He studied at the University of Halle, then the center of the Pietistic movement in the Lutheran Church. This 23-year-old German Lutheran responded to a call from the Danish king to preach the gospel in India. He became the first Protestant missionary to go to Tamil Nadu in Southern India, arriving in the small town of Tranquebar on July 9, 1706.

Ziegenbalg came to India to introduce the German Lutheran idea of pietism (a devotional ideal) to India. In this mission he began reaching out many Indian Tamils who were already pietistic in their own way. He began learning and appreciating Tamil culture and literature. Local Hindus opposed him because the eagerness to learn about Jesus

changed the status quo. At the same time, Local Danish authorities opposed his work saying that he was encouraging rebellion. He was imprisoned for four months. Ziegenbalg was also the pioneer who introduced printing in Tamil, an Indian language. He translated the New Testament into Tamil in 1715 and had completed translating Genesis through Ruth in the Old Testament by the time he died. He built several churches and established a seminary to train Indian clergy. He baptized around 300 people. Today the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church carries on his mission in India. When he died in 1719, he was just 33 years old. On July 9, 2007, Christians in general and Indian Tamils in particular celebrated the 300th anniversary of Ziegenbalg's arrival. Commemorations by both Christians as well as people of other faiths celebrated his life and contributions.

## **SESSION 9: THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP – DECIMATION OF JAPANESE CHRISTIANS IN 1600**

### **Read: Matthew 5: 1-16**

The Reformation movement of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Europe divided Western Christianity into two parts: the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant/Reformed Church. The Roman Catholic Church's new missionary order, the Society of Jesus also known as the Jesuits, sent many priests to the new worlds of South and North America, and to Africa and Asia. Francisco de Xavier, one of the pioneer Jesuit priests, was the first missionary who brought the good news of Jesus Christ to Japan in 1649. Japan was a feudalistic society that considered the emperor not as a human, but as a god.

As we all know, the core teachings of Christianity proclaim that there is only one God and that his son is Jesus; and that all people are equal in the eyes of God.

These teachings were contrary to Japanese beliefs, and eventually the government prohibited the Christian faith. All Christians were asked to recant their faith in Jesus.

Christians were challenged and were under tremendous pressure. How could they recant their faith in Jesus their Savior?

In a diabolical move, the Japanese government mass-produced tablets with an engraving of the crucifixion of Jesus on them. They distributed these tablets throughout the region where Christianity had become a threat to the Japanese way of life. All people were ordered to come to

the government office and step on a tablet bearing the image of Jesus Christ.

For those who were not Christians that was not a difficult task, but to those who confessed Jesus Christ as their Savior, it became a momentous test. How could they step on the image of Jesus? To save their lives, some Christians did step on this image. But many Christians refused to desecrate the tablets and were sent to prison. They were tortured and crucified, just as their Master had been.

Is it this not the same as what happened with Peter, the disciple of Jesus who denied his Master three times at the courtyard of the High Priest? We want to be obedient to Jesus, to follow him diligently. But all of us deny him, have denied him and will continue to deny him from time to time. We are truly weak, sinful human beings.

The Good News, however, was given to us as sinners for whom Jesus died. We were forgiven, redeemed and loved because he died in our place. He conquered the power of death by his resurrection.

The promise of eternal life has been given to those who believe in him. So what is our task, our mission? You know the answer.

And if so, how do you convey this message of Jesus?

## **SESSION 10: THE DAY OF DEDICATION**

Invite your senior pastor

Sing a hymn

Read Matthew 7: 24-27 and

Matthew 28: 16-20

Share your experiences

Prayer of dedication

Anointing by the pastor

Lord's Prayer

Blessing

Fellowship meal