


reach

AUTUMN EDITION

ISSUE 34

A wide-angle photograph of a large indoor event space, likely a church or community hall, during a performance or presentation. The stage is lit with blue and purple lights, and a large screen displays the text "With all ears". Several people are on stage, some appearing to be in a musical or theatrical performance. The audience is seated in rows of chairs, facing the stage. The ceiling features a prominent wooden slat design with recessed lighting. The overall atmosphere is modern and professional.

But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! . – Matthew 13:8-9

CHURCH locations and programs

CHURCH SERVICE

CENTRAL

2/177 Beavers Road
Northcote VIC 3070
Tel: (03) 9481 6889
Senior Pastor: Victor Soo
Email: info@reachcc.org

Celebration Service 10:00am - 11:30am
Fellowship Lunch 11:30am - 12:30pm
REACH Kids 10:30am - 11:30am
STEP Classes 12:45pm - 1:45pm

WEST

Community Hub Featherbrook College
281 Boardwalk Blvd
Point Cook VIC 3030
Pastor: Ajibade A. Aibinu
Website: reachcc.org

Celebration Service 4:00pm - 5:30pm
Fellowship Dinner 5:30pm - 6:30pm
REACH Kids 4:45pm - 5:30pm
STEP Class 6:30pm - 7:30pm

PRAYER MEETING

- Monthly Ministry & Prayer • 1st Friday of the Month | 7.30pm - 9.30pm
- Intercessory Prayer • Tuesday | 7.30pm - 9.30pm
via Zoom, please contact our office for further information.

BIBLE STUDY

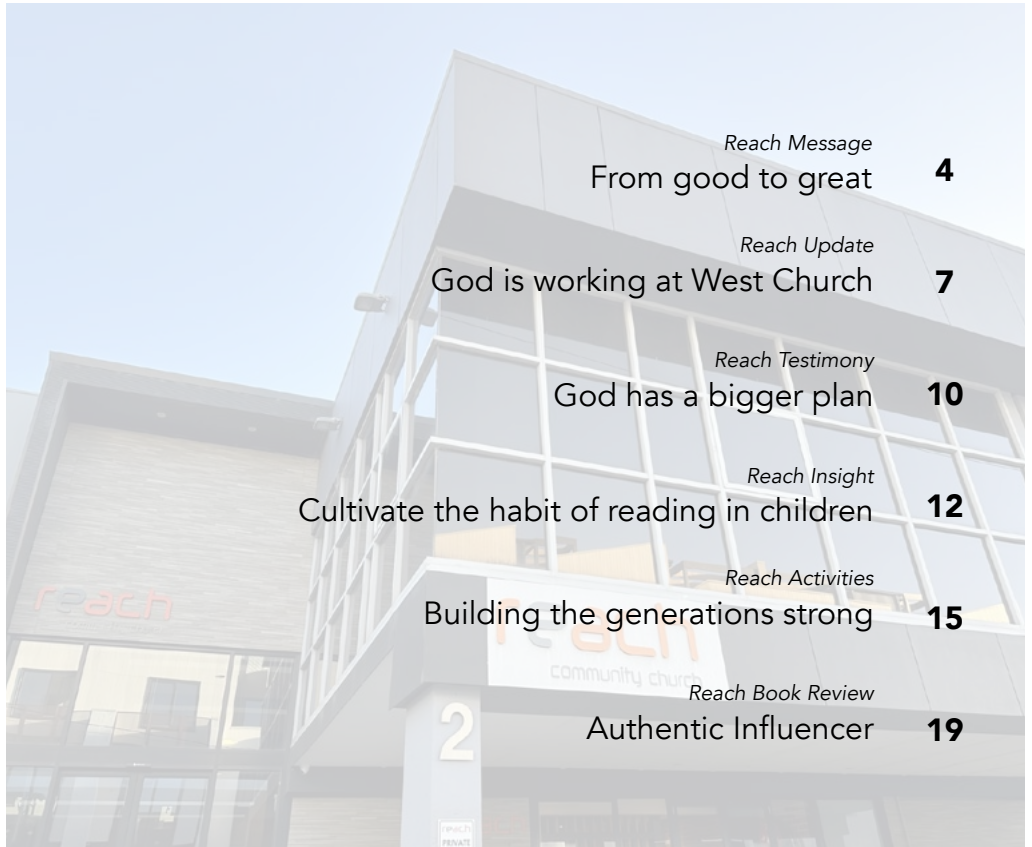
- Young Adults • Wednesday | 7.30pm - 9.30pm
- University & Youth Groups • Friday | 7.30pm - 9.30pm
- Family • Monday | 8pm - 10pm
Friday | 7.30pm - 9.30pm

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Mothers' Group • Every 2nd & 4th Tuesday | 10am - 12pm
- Men and Women's Ministry Events • Quarterly
- Seniors Group • Thursday | 10am - 2pm
- Ukulele for beginners • Thursday | 1pm - 2pm

WELCOME

Welcome to the 34th issue of REACH. The theme of the church for 2024 is Building the generations strong. We can see how God has worked in Reach Community Church, both the Central and the West Church. Let's believe that God has a bigger plan for us this year, and we will go from good to great. May He use us to be His authentic influencer.



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From good to great

God's Vision for you

Malachi 4:5-6 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

God's desire is that fathers and their families have a great relationship. God's Plan has never changed regarding marriage and family although this divine model has changed dramatically from its origins. God placed two imperfect people, a male and a female into the perfect plan developed by God called the Institution of Marriage. In any plan and program, it requires participation and commitment. Marriage and parenting are like bank accounts. You must have money present in these institutions in order to take the money out. Mediocrity is a big killer in any relationship. When the interaction is allowed to cool, focus goes amiss, and indifference creeps in; then rot starts to eat into the relationship. To develop the family from being good to great, you must not neglect to invest into the marriage and the children regardless of your age.

Matthew 13:3-7 Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying:

"Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Let us sow well into our families. I use the phrase of "Good To Great" acrostically to deliver the message with the following:

1. Good example

We have heard that we reap what we sow. Live to be a great role model. All children love super-heroes who show up when they are in trouble and are consistently living out their character. Children learn by mimicking, and they have keen eyes and ears from even their early formative years. Being exemplary is critical. Check with your children to know how they see you and let them know what you wish for them. Instill in them dreams and visions of greatness.

2. *Obey the Word of God*

Let God's Truth underpin your life whether you are at play, work or home. To achieve this, make time to study the Word to be equipped, encouraged and esteemed to walk tall and confident before the family and others. Your family wants to be proud of you. Let the family recognise your personal devotion to God, and also set up a Family Altar at home. Let God's Promises be made manifest all around the family.

3. *Own fatherhood*

Your position is an honoured role bestowed by God. The day you got married, God anointed you to be a husband, and when the first child came along, you were anointed to be a father. You can achieve what you have been elevated to succeed! Take up the ownership of both. Learn being a progressive father from others. Attend seminars or Men's events because fatherhood is a journey. Over time, this lifestyle shall reward your home with harmony, joy and life!

4. *Dedicate time to play*

To children, time spent with them reflects love. TIME is "This is my event" with the family and let everyone know it is a special time for all. Such moments need to be targeted so the family is aware what you are doing is precious and significant. Make time to be at home, eat out or go away. It is not the amount of money that is the highlight but setting the time to be together that counts. Events and moments are cherished more than expensive gifts.

Set time for one-to-one connection for you cannot buy time.

5. *To encourage risk*

Fathers play a particularly important role in the development of their children. They are more likely to encourage children to embrace challenges, take risks and be independent. Mothers are usually focused on safety and well-being. But children need to learn and be trained to face the real world by looking at their fathers' approach in handling difficulties. Allow your children to make mistakes but guide them in learning from them.

6. *Offer cuddles and kisses*

Besides words, lavish the family with lots of affection. It is known that sons and daughters who are raised in a safe and nurturing environment are wiser in their relationship with the opposite sex as they grow into adulthood. An intact family offers them the readily available love that pubescent children desire at this challenging time of their lives when hormones run rife in their bodies. Let the home be saturated with it so everyone cannot wait to be home for it instead of finding love everywhere else.

7. *Go and love the mother too*

It has been said that one of the best things a father can do for the children is to love their mother. Let this great expression be demonstrated at home through words and action. Keep adding love and aim to outdo your spouse in love. In the same way as you offer your children, help around the place.

● Reach Message

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Make the wife the queen and you shall be the king. Turn your house into a home. A house is made of bricks but a home is made of love.

8. Relate really

We can frustrate the children and spouse by shirking our responsibilities when confronted with hard questions. Avoid re-directing questions, needed decisions or requests to your wife when your children approach you. Seize these as opportunities for bonding and building trust. Like us, children need guidance also. Address tough topics from sex to bullies, and from school to finance even when you may not have all the answers. Keep the door open for all discussions now and into the future.

9. Eat together

Be wise and make the mealtime like a magnet that draws everyone together. Turn the focus from the food to the people around the table. Mealtime is an opportunity to train children to play their roles in setting up for their food. Responsibilities affirm their abilities and their positions at home. Strengthen family ties and build up the relationships here. Make time to talk with open-ended questions. Let them know you are keen to know about their day.

10. Affirm and encourage

The heart is the wellspring of life, and out of the abundance of it, the mouth speaks. Guard against words of death from your mouth but intentionally choose to speak life instead.

Promote change by always using positive statements. Encourage not only when the family excels but also when there be disappointments and failures. Do not bring up past offences but aim to highlight and promote correct behaviours.

11. The conclusion

These are some tips for fathers to develop relationships with their children and spouses. The family recognises the father is not perfect and more so as they themselves grow up to become parents. Importantly, fathers must grow the relationship at home from being good to great. Jettison the mediocrity and live out your call by the grace of God.

Abraham alone in a foreign land of unbelievers had a son in his very old age. That did not stop him to be involved in raising Isaac well. From Isaac came Jacob, and both were fathers of renown. Then from Jacob came Joseph. Abraham must have left behind a powerful legacy that impacted four generations strongly. Joseph became the second most powerful man in Egypt after Pharaoh.

Therefore, fathers, live out your role, your children are the Kingdom of God who shall rise through your nurturing and love to in turn do you proud. Build the generations strong!

God is working at West Church

By Janice Ko

Hallelujah, Praise the Lord that the Reach Community church West campus had started since March 2022, led by Pastor AJ Aibinu and his wife Kemi.



It all began when about 40 original members from RCC Central church, had decided in their hearts to step out and help pioneer the new church in the Western suburb of Point Cook.

At the moment, we do not have our own church premises, but we are blessed to be having our Sunday celebration services at Featherbrook College. However, it entails having to set up and pack up the worship team equipment and chairs etc every Sunday. It is wonderful to see the unity between the members, and their faithfulness in serving together with a cheerful heart.

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. – 1 Corinthians 12:12

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. – Romans 12:4-8

We thank God for bringing new people into our midst. A lady, who had just moved to Australia few months ago with her family and lives in Point Cook, has been coming to the church regularly now. She told us that she was looking for a church close by, she went online, googled and searched, and Reach Community church at Point Cook came up.

The church has also been encouraged by the enthusiastic children in Sunday school. Every Sunday, at least two children of different ages come up to the front of the church, to take turns to either recite a memory verse or summarise what they learnt from a Sunday school lesson. Many thanks to the awesome team of Sunday school teachers, who are helping to build the next generation of leaders.



West church is one big family. If someone or a family is going through difficult times, brothers and sisters will come together to pray for them, to support, encourage and lift them up. And it does not stop there, the church family will help with cooking or grocery shopping if there is a need.

Of course, in the good and happy times, we all come together and rejoice of the good news and testimonies shared, and give all the glory back to God. We have seen many prayers heard and answered and more.

Having our weekly Friday cell groups, it helps to foster this attitude of care, love, friendship and looking out for each other. It has been amazing to see what God has done through our brothers and sisters' day to day lives, and how some have grown in the Lord, with many desiring to draw near and know Jesus intimately. In 2023, we had two cell groups: held at Point Cook and Tarneit, and a Youth Group at Hoppers Crossing. This year, we will have three cell groups: at Point Cook, Tarneit, and Rockbank. The new cell group at Rockbank will reach out to the families living there, and those living in the surrounding areas. We thank and praise God for growth.

It has been great serving, worshipping and fellowshiping at the West church, with the strong sense of hunger and love for God among the congregations. May God continue to work in us and through us all, for the glory of His kingdom, Amen.

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching. – Hebrews 10:24-25

The cell groups of the West church:

Point Cook cell group - led by Pastor AJ and Kemi Aibinu

Tarneit cell group - led by Aguek and Ashay Akhaur

Rockbank cell group – led by Eric and Janice Ko

Youth group - led by Edwin and Denise Chee (meeting at Thornhill – Rockbank/Melton)

God has a bigger plan

By Caleb Ooi



This testimony is about my journey in 2023 which highlights how God's plan exceeded my expectations.

At the start of 2023, I entered my second to last year of undergraduate course of engineering and computer science at Monash University. As part of the transitioning towards a professional career, having experience in the field is crucial. However, finding the opportunity can be challenging. For me, the challenges included lack of experience, my international student visa status, and the fear of leaving my comfort zone.

Midway through the year, I encountered several job openings and decided to apply, carrying high expectations and confidence in meeting the qualifications. Initially, I was happy as long as I was successfully short-listed and got into the interview process. While I was not good at interviews, I was confident and trusted that my ability and key knowledge

would be good enough to get at least one of the positions. Unfortunately, all three positions that I had applied for ended in rejection. At the time I was very down, and doubted my abilities. I am grateful that I had people around me; the members of the Uni cell group had especially encouraged and supported me.

I was discouraged from this experience, and stopped looking for jobs. I thought of trying again the following year when I have more experience and more knowledge. In God's perfect timing, an opportunity arose within the first few weeks of the second semester - a role in a research team at Monash University. Initially, I was hesitant to apply as I feared that it would not be successful again. At the end, I decided to go for it. The process this time was quite smooth, I applied and received the interview invitation two days later. And after the interview I received the good news the next day that I had the job.

This is a good start for me to gain experience in the relevant field.

Fast forward two months later, time to apply for 6-month of Industry Based Learning placement for my course. This time the stake was higher. It was competitive, and spots were limited. I wanted to get in as it offers the opportunity to join companies that usually do not offer positions to international students. I had to do around 20 interviews with different companies and roles. Although interviews are not my forte, I am thankful that I had the experience of practicing and knowing what I need to improve on from my interviews a few months earlier.

I am also thankful that I had at least some exposure with the job that I got just a few months earlier and was able to leverage my experience working in the research team throughout the interviews. After the tedious interview process, plus an additional waiting for a few weeks, I received the good news that I had received a position in ANZ, surpassing my expectations. Praise God!

Reflecting on this journey, I am encouraged and reminded that God's plan is bigger than our plan. Entering 2024, the future is still uncertain, and I do not have concrete plans in place. But this experience gives me the hope and the faith to trust in God's unfolding plan for me in the future.



Isaiah 55:8-9

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways,” says the LORD.
“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are My ways higher than your ways,
and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

Reach Insight

When was the last time you read a book? Maybe the correct question is, “When was the last time you finished reading a book? Was it a fiction or non-fiction? A print book or an ebook?” If you are a frequent reader, this article will resonate with you; if you are not, you need to find out why you should become one. Importantly, there are many benefits of reading – to the mind, to mental health, and to social manners. This article focusses on the benefits of reading in children, which extends into adulthood and older age groups. Implementing strategies to help your children to enjoy reading (not simply reading for information), you will reap the benefits, and your children will thank you for it in the future.

Cultivate the habit of reading in children

By Dr Lee Chyi Lam

The benefits of reading

Cognitive development

It is not difficult to apprehend that children who read books regularly have greater vocabulary than those who do not. This is because printed materials generally consist of more variety of words than spoken language. As a result, children are more likely to encounter new and less frequently used words through reading than through conversation. Understandably, studies have shown that there is a strong correlation between vocabulary and general intelligence as well as academic performance. ***Acquiring better reading ability, children do not only improve their verbal intelligence, but also their non-verbal intelligence***¹. In addition, reading stimulates children’s imagination as they learn to convert the printed descriptions into visual images.

Emotional wellbeing

Reading has also shown to improve mental health, and this is particularly true when one is immersed in a good story. Recognising this benefit, psychologists have adopted bibliotherapy – “a therapeutic approach employing books and other forms of literature”² – as a form of treatment for mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression and grief. Not surprisingly, a large study overseas showed that ***children who learn to read for pleasure early in life have better mental health, as well as better cognitive performance, and the benefits extend into their adolescence years***³.

¹ Ritchie, S.J., Bates, T.C., Plomin, R. (2015). Does Learning to Read Improve Intelligence? A Longitudinal Multivariate Analysis in Identical Twins From Age 7 to 16. *Child Development*, Vol 86, pages 23-36.

² Psychologytoday.com

³ Yun-Jun Sun et al (2024). Early-initiated Childhood reading for pleasure: associations with better cognitive performance, mental well-being and brain structure in young adolescence. *Psychological Medicine* 54, 359-373.

Social development

It is already known that language skill is closely related to the development of the Theory of Mind, which is the understanding that other people have a different mind from us and hence different thoughts, beliefs, desires, and emotions from us. It is a skill that is usually developed in children between 3 and 5 years old, and is an important ingredient in developing successful social relationships with other people. According to a meta-analysis, there is also a correlation between reading fiction and the ability to empathise, further confirming the benefit of reading on interpersonal relationship.

In addition, cultivating the reading habit in children has the potential of reducing their screen time, which in turn improves their sleep and attention span. However, more is not better. Excessive reading can have the opposite effect. It has been suggested that 12 hours of reading per week is a good balance without compromising other important activities such as physical exercise, eating and sleeping. It goes without saying that the current challenge in our society is not excessive reading, but the lack of it. A US survey in 2023 revealed that teenagers between 15 and 19 years old spend less than 10 minutes per day in reading⁴.

With the increasing availability of digital books, it is controversial if there is any difference between reading printed or digital books. The bottom line is any reading is better than no reading. However, studies have suggested that comprehension is better when reading printed texts. In addition, a US survey reported that the majority of children (65%) between 6 and 17 years old “agree that they’ll always want to read print books even though there are ebooks available”⁵. So, do not rush to assume that your children prefer ebooks to print books.

Strategies to cultivate reading habit in children

We cannot impart onto others what we ourselves do not have. ***We modelled through our actions more than our words.*** If you want your children to reap the benefits of reading, you need to start reading yourself. Learn to impart and inspire, rather than instruct. The good news is that the benefits outlined above applies to adults. A large study in the US revealed that book reading reduced the risk of mortality in older people⁶. Not only that readers live longer than non-readers, those who read books live longer than those who only read newspapers or magazines. There are also suggestions that readers are more protected from developing dementia in the old age.

4 Healthyhappyimpactful.com/statistics-reading/

5 Kids and Family Reading Report, 5th edition. Scholastic.

6 Avni Bavishi et al (2016). A chapter a day: Association of book reading with longevity. Social Science & Medicine (164), Pages 44-48.

Reach Insight

Read aloud to your children from a young age. Start from birth, and even during the pregnancy. It is well known that children who are being read to regularly develop better language skills than those who do not have such privilege. Make reading time a special bonding time. Make it fun and interactive, use animated voice and action when reading to your children. Pick a suitable time and space. Do not do it when they are tired or hungry, which will only create a negative experience. Do not underestimate this special time with your children. The US survey showed that about 40% of children 6-11 years old did not want their parents to stop reading aloud to them, even when they have learned to read independently⁷.

Always foster and encourage the notion that reading is fun. Do not use reading as a form of negative consequence e.g., say to them "go to your room and read!" when they misbehave. Allow your children to choose what they want to read. As you introduce non-fiction, start with topics they are interested in. Children who get to pick their books are more likely to finish reading them. Be creative! Reading does not need to be restricted to indoor environment, pack a book or two when you plan your next family picnic.

Try to delay introducing screen entertainment to your children. Encourage another mode of entertainment to occupy their time. Before reading age, promote activities such as colouring, crafts, make-believe play etc. Turn on the audio books while they play, you will be surprised how much they absorb. As they grow older and have better concentration, many children enjoy audio books in itself.

Be actively involved in the reading program at your children's school. Show genuine interest in what they read at school. Make it easy for them to access books outside school e.g., making regular trips to the local libraries together. This can be coupled with a fun outing.

Lastly, impress onto your children that books are a great source of information. Create curiosity from young, when your children ask you a question, instead of brushing them off, show them how to find the information from books, and better still, research together.

In conclusion, do not underestimate the various benefits of reading for your children. Children who learn to read well and to read for fun will reap the manifold advantages in their cognitive development, mental wellbeing, and social relationships, these benefits will continue into adulthood, preventing dementia and reducing mortality in older age. Parents have numerous responsibilities in shaping their children's wellbeing and future. Do not neglect this important one to cultivate the love of reading in your children.

⁷ Kids and Family Reading Report, 5th edition. Scholastic.

Building the generations strong

The congregations of Reach Community Church consist of people from various ethnic background and various age groups. We are a big family! Apart from the church service and Children Ministry on Sunday, the central church has multiple cell groups held in different suburbs on different weeknights. Let's meet them and see what the leaders have to say about their group.



Seniors Group

– led by Pastor Victor and Crystal Soo, meets in central church on Thursday

“The seniors’ group is not a cell group but a community group composed of people from outside of the church as well as from within. This group meets every Thursday for a time of exercise through dance and table tennis followed by a great buffet lunch and fellowship. The program extends after lunch with a Beginner Ukulele Class. Once every two months, there is a full-day event with board games and refreshments ending with a dinner.”

Young Adult Group

– led by Kent Lim, meets in central church on Wednesday night

“The Young Adults group comprises of working adults who meet regularly on a Wednesday evening to worship, fellowship, and study the Scripture through engaging discussions and reflections to foster genuine connections and grow together in our faith journeys.”



Glen Waverley Cell Group

- led by Michael and In Chyi Lee, meets on Friday night



"The Glen Waverley Cell Group meets every Friday from 8pm to 9:30pm. The goal of the group is for members to discuss, learn and understand God's word with an understanding to apply in life and promote spiritual growth."

Balwyn North Cell Group

- led by Bernard and Joanne Huynh, meets on Friday night



"The Balwyn North cell group consists of families who are enthusiastic about God and sharing the love of God in all aspects of our lives. From worship, prayers for each other, our thought provoking and practical lessons, to our supper, we foster God's love in a fun, meaningful and impactful way."

Donvale Cell Group

- led by Geoffrey and LyLy Quach, meets on Monday night



The motto of the group: "Walking together in faith, hope and love to make disciples for the kingdom of God."

Northcote Cell Group

- led by Kevin and Anita Hua, meets on Friday night



"At the centre of the action, we span at least four generations and our goal is to build each other up in life, love and (Biblical) literacy. This is the ideal cell group for any families located centrally with the added benefit of the experience and wisdom of those who have seen it all."

Balwyn North Cell Group

- led by Ben and Ellen Kwong, meets on Friday night



"We are fun, loud, truthful (sarcastic), honest (direct) close-knit group. Our big family enjoys each other's company to learn God's Word, encourage each other, to have great fellowship, indulge in delicious food and speak lots of Cantonese!"

Chinese Group

- led by Philip and Linda Ye, meets on Sunday afternoon



"We belong to RCC Chinese Cell group. We meet every Sunday afternoon at 12.45pm after fellowship lunch at church."

Preston Cell Group

- led by Reuben and Rachel Kuah, meets on Friday night



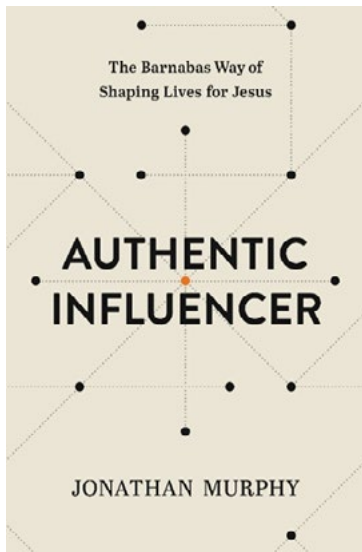
"A vibrant and trendy cell group with a love for fellowship, laughter, building strong relationships and loving one another. Our goal is to support each other through the seasons of life and to anchor our trust in the faithfulness of Christ."

Youth and Uni Group

The Youth group is led by Zai Liang and Anne Phoon, and the Uni group by Sarah Oen.



"The Reach Youth & Uni Groups are a bunch of high-schoolers and uni undergrads who hang out together on Friday nights discovering Jesus and having fun along the way."



Authentic Influencer

Author: Jonathan Murphy

Reviewed by Lee Chyi Lam

What comes to your mind when you see the word “influencer”? With the increasing use of social media, many people think of someone with many followers on the social media platform. However, when you ask an individual, “Who influenced you the most?” Most people tend to pick someone they know personally e.g., a family member, a close friend, a teacher, etc. So, whether you like it or not, you can have an influence on the people around you. The question is, “Do you want this influence to be positive or negative?”

In this book *Authentic Influencer*, Murphy shows us the “Barnabas way of shaping lives for Jesus”. Many of us have heard of Barnabas from the New Testament, but have minimal knowledge of him and his life - what he did and his impact on the early Church. This low-key humble man of God has more than we give him credit for, and Murphy’s great insight on his life and his influence will be an eye-opener for many readers.

Murphy takes us through the life of Barnabas in the book of Acts: how Barnabas exerted his influence through his generosity – with his words, with his wallet, and in his walk (Acts 4). Without him, Paul would not have been accepted by the early believers (Acts 9). Barnabas showed great leadership in difficult times (Acts 11). He played a vital role in the spread of the gospel (Acts 13 and 14). He guarded the truth through his courage (Acts 15). He dealt with conflict wisely and restored John Mark (Acts 15) who later wrote the gospel of Mark.

Through a detailed study of the life of Barnabas, Murphy gives us fifteen principles of shaping someone’s lives, for Jesus. It does not do the book the justice if I simply listed these principles here. Murphy inspires the readers to desire to make authentic influence on others. And one important piece of advice from him, “You can influence others well only if you are following God well yourself.”

And as Chip Dickens wrote at the beginning of this book, “There is no higher calling than to shape a life for Christ.”

Editorial team: Janice Ko, Lee Chyi Lam

Graphic design: Rachel Kuah

Cover photo by Keith Khoo

All the bible verses quoted are in the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise specified.

