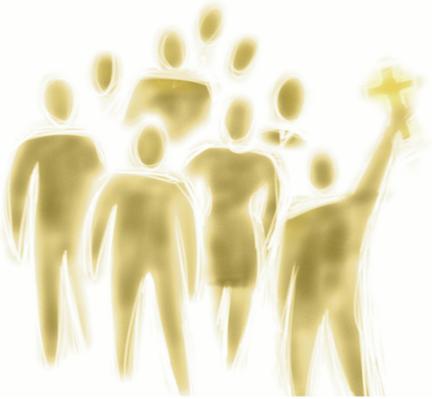


# ASIAN LUTHERAN DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES



## ASIAN LUTHERAN DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES

### **Project Manager**

Rev. Dr. Pongsak Limthongviratn

### **Editor**

Lily Wu

### **Discipleship: High School Students**

By Rev. I. Daniel Penumaka & Rev. Yutaka Kishino

### **Discipleship to College Students**

By Rev. Teresita Valeriano

### **Discipleship to Young Adult/Professionals**

By Rev. Kevin Cho

### **Discipleship to Adults/Immigrants**

By Rev. Chi-shih Chen

### **Discipleship to Women**

By Stacy Kitahata, Wendy Cheung, Rita Wang

### **Discipleship to Older Adults**

By Rev. Cora Aguilar, Rev. Szu-hsing Mao and Lily Wu

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## **COLLEGE STUDENT TRACK**

By Rev. Teresita Valeriano

By the Rev. Teresita Valeriano

Teresita ("Tita") Valeriano is an ELCA pastor developer enjoying justice and advocacy ministry in Berkeley, CA.

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## INTRODUCTION

Can you imagine our earth without trees? Especially in a era of climate change and environmental disasters, we cannot but see trees in a different way. Its importance is tantamount beyond our current issues. For Asians, trees are not only useful partially; all of their parts are important and useful, like the coconut tree for Filipinos. From its roots to its leaves and fruits, everything about the tree has its purpose.

Hence, the parts of a tree are used as a metaphor of growth in Christian spirituality. Each part grows connected and interdependent with the others. Our Christian spirituality is the same. Our being and community, as individuals and as a community, are connected and interdependent. Just like a tree, which is life for some cultures, the gift of being a Christian is life itself.

Using the tree metaphor, this Bible study uses parts of the tree to introduce the themes of discipleship. Each session is also written using the acts of growing a tree or plant, just as we anticipate the gift of God's of growing and learning.

- 1 Roots: Created in God's Image  
-- Being and identity
- 2 Trunk: Sustained and Sustaining  
-- The Power of Resistance
- 3 Branch: A Shared Life  
-- Relating and Communing
- 4 Leaves: Blessed are You  
-- Witnessing and Serving
- 5 Flowers and Fruits: Sent into the World  
-- Compassionate Servant Leaders

### **Christian Discipleship: A Way of Life**

Christian discipleship -- what does that mean? Do you live it, and if so, In what way? How do you know if you are a disciple? Well, as college students you are not very far from what a disciple generally is: a student, a learner. But what is *Christian* discipleship? Does it make any difference in your life if you are a disciple? How does one live out being Christ's disciple?

Being a student is truly a time of growth and exploration. Some people describe college life as freedom, independence and unlimited opportunities to maximize your potential and prepare you to face the “real world.” Some say it is a journey to equip you for your “dream” or “ideal” work or career. To be successful is an integral part of your motivation and challenge in your college studies. But we all know that college life is also not a bed of roses. It is a rat race in the real world, challenging and competitive. But it can also be an exciting, inspiring and structured invitation to the freedom of exploration.

Many anticipate this time for freedom, independence, and unlimited possibilities to learn and prepare yourself to succeed in life. But of course, many also learn that college life calls for maturity, responsibility, and discipline as go through tremendous growth and self-reflection, searching for your purpose in life.

Yes, a lot of discipline...quite a close connection to what we want to explore – discipleship. Generally, discipline means a systematic instruction given to a [disciple](#). The Latin word for disciples, *discipulus*, means pupil or learner – or a student like you, though not exactly as in college life. This word is related to *discere* (to learn) and *docere* (to teach). A disciple becomes a discipl-er, a teacher.

As we examine and reflect on Jesus’ ministry with his disciples, we will see how discipleship is more than learning or being a pupil. It is not about earning a degree. *It is about a way of life.* It is about turning one’s life around to heed the master’s call leads to living out your vocation. Discipleship in Christ is a gift and a way of life, impacting our core being and who we are as we grow toward becoming the new creature God envisions in us, grounded in being created in the image of God.

## **How To Use This Resource**

One of the blessings and challenges of being in the academic setting is that you are always invited to think and explore. This is both a gift and a task. This resource invites you to use the gift of critical thinking in a radical response to God’s calling to be and become a disciple. You are challenged to go deeper and learn wider in your faith journey and discernment of who you are, whose you are and who you are becoming.

Using the metaphor of a tree or plant, let us consider these five themes as our foundation for being and becoming disciples:

- 1 Roots: Created in God’s Image  
-- Being and identity
- 2 Trunk: Sustained and

- The Power of Resistance
- 3 Branch: A Shared Life
  - Relating and Communing
- 4 Leaves: Blessed are You
  - Witnessing and Serving
- 5 Flowers and Fruits: Sent into the World
  - Compassionate Servant Leaders

Then let us discuss each theme fully, using the metaphor of a growing tree. Some call it an agricultural cycle:

- A. Preparing the soil:
  - what do you see, hear and experience?
- B. Seedling and watering
  - 1. studying the word of God
  - 2. listening and storytelling
- C. Sprouting and growing:
  - empowered to serve and pray

Because music is central in understanding and expressing our spirituality, feel free to find songs that speak of the themes and topics for each session. Enjoy singing especially in the beginning of each session.

### **Who Is This Resource For?**

This is meant for a small group of students where leadership could rotate among the participants. This rotation of leadership accommodates the busy life of college students, and is also a training ground to be leaders. It can be done with co-facilitators if you wish.

Although there is minimal preparation, this does not mean that participation is not valued. In fact, it is an invitation to a strong commitment individually and communally. Therefore, it is recommended that the first gathering (before the five Bible study sections) be a time to enjoy and learn more about one another. The first session, "Knowing To Be Known," is one idea among many possibilities for doing this. Add your own creative ideas, including preparing snacks or a meal and drinks. Find a place where you can also be comfortable and feel safe and secure.

Finally, some words of courage and gratitude in your journey. Everyone is a special person. But no one exists to be alone and not grow. Have fun with one another. The journey may be hard but God is with you and the whole group. Pray for and with one another. Grow in your faith. Grow in love. Grow in a community.

### **KNOWING TO BE KNOWN: CREATING A COMMUNITY**

Start with simple introductions. This may include sharing names, majors, city of origin, and perhaps one special interest or passion.

The hope is that you will know each other more as a group by knowing yourselves better individually. This may be done creating your own "Identity Circles":

1. Put your name in a middle of a sheet of paper.  
Draw a circle around it.
2. Write around your name your family (as you define it). You may draw pictures of them if you want.  
Draw a circle around them.
3. Write around in the next circle other aspects about you – race, gender, religion, neighborhood, city of birth, class, etc. Draw descriptions if you want to, then enclose all of these in a circle.
4. Write down a next layer of aspects about you – your talents, gifts, limitations or areas for growth.  
Draw another circle around those.

Take some time to reflect upon your own identity circle. Then use the following reflection guides for sharing with the group:

1. Which words came out easily from you? Circle them.
2. Which words were more difficult to bring out? Put a square around them.
3. Why do you think some were easy and some were hard?
4. Which aspects or relationships were you born into and which ones did you grow into (or are still growing into)? Do you think identifying them separately has some significance? How were/are these important in your life?
5. Which of them could be easily identified or known to a stranger? Which ones are not? How important is it for you that these things are known to people?
6. Which words make you feel powerful? Which words make you feel powerless? Why?

This exercise is primarily to learn oneself as you learn from others.

End with a prayer of praise to God for who you are and for the diversity in your community that grows out of our diversity.

# **1. ROOTS: CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE -- BEING AND IDENTITY**

## ***Why are we here?***

- To explore the identity, gifts and challenges of Asian American Christians
- To reflect on God's gift of heritage that is freeing and its importance in your identity as a child of God living in a diverse community
- To share your own hopes for your time together based on the theme of the day

## **A. Preparing the Soil**

Share the story of your name. What does your name mean? Who gave it to you? Why?

Using a world map, point out where your parents, grandparents, or ancestors came from, and where you live now. If you do not know where they came from, it is okay.

Where would you want to live in the future? Why? Reflect on how these "locations" matter to who you are. If so, why does it matter? How do you think your ancestors' community and/or the community where you grew up shaped you?

## ***B.1. Seedling: Studying the Word***

Genesis 1 and 2

- ❖ What word, phrase, or verse out stands to you?
- ❖ Who is this God, revealed in the first and second story of creation? How are they the same? How are they different? What are the attributes of God revealed in this story?
- ❖ Reflecting the revealed God in these creation stories and your identity circles, how are you created in God's image? How do you see others also created in God's image?
- ❖ Reflecting on God's purpose of creating us in God's image, what does it say about your purpose in life?

## ***B.2. Watering: Listening and Storytelling***

Read *One Voice: One Story* (Chuck)<sup>1</sup>

*About two years ago, I moved into the Austin neighborhood here on Westside Chicago. It was a majority black, low-income, working-poor neighborhood. The program that I went through was called Mission Year. They provided the housing, roommates, and*

*structure... our objective was to make meaningful relationships with the neighbors within our one year commitment.*

*Contrary to what many of my friends and family members would have thought, the toughest part was not living in what suburbanites like to demonize as the "ghetto." The toughest part was living with my four white roommates.*

*It's strange to think that the self-realizing process of my Korean-American identity began in the streets of Chicago. I felt that I had to be white in my apartment... but my neighbors, my black brothers and sisters, would not accept that of me. They pushed me to come as something more akin to my experiences growing up. I've been given many gifts through my friends in the Austin neighborhood... but perhaps the greatest gift of all was them forcing me to be introspective.*

*They forced me to think deeply about myself and who I was...about my particular upbringing that gave me a unique set of experiences...and about how those experiences gave me a sense of commonality with my friends there. As I dove deeper into how I am a heterogeneous mix of identities... I realized all the more how human I really was.*

*I began to take ownership and responsibility of my history. That I am the child of immigrant parents who struggled self-sacrificially so that I would have a chance at a good life. That I have inherited years of struggle and hardship that act as the foundation upon which I grow.*

*And in a way that only God knows how to do, he connected my history intensely with emotion and with the histories of my neighbors. I realized that the immigration struggle faced by my parents became a beautiful place where my neighbors' struggles interwove with my family history.*

*The woman who poured out her sorrow of having to choose between diapers or food aroused in me the memories of my own mother... of how she, too, had to choose between the two. Even with the endless hours of work, my parents often could not make ends meet.*

*The sort of emasculation faced by my black brothers who are only able to work minimum wage jobs reminded me of my father's struggles and his deep sense of inferiority in not being able to provide enough. The agony of constantly being reminded that black was ugly and suspect in America reminded me of my own feelings towards myself, of never fully feeling accepted.*

*Many Voices: Our Stories*

This is a time to share your stories. These sample questions can get you started.

- What do you think of Chuck's experience? Can you identify with it? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- What does "identity" mean to you? Do you think your identity is important in your relationships? Why?
- Tell your own story that reveals your identity. How does your identity intersect with (1) the gift from God, your identity as a child of God, created in God's image and (2) with your following God or living out your faith?

***C. Sprouting and Growing:  
Empowered to Serve and Pray***

- ✓ Spend time reflecting on who you are (perhaps listing attributes, gifts about you) in the light of being created in God's image...and give thanks for those.
- ✓ In the light of being Asian or Asian American, how is God inviting you to be in relationship with God and other people?
- ✓ What would it mean for you know more about your parents, grandparents, and other Asian American stories?
- ✓ Find communities in your school, including faith communities, where multiculturalism is celebrated and racism is addressed.
- ✓ Close with a prayer naming those people and attributes that have made and continue to make who you are. Give thanks to them.

## **2. TRUNK: SUSTAINED AND SUSTAINING – THE POWER OF RESISTANCE**

### ***Why Are We Here?***

- To name and claim God's sustaining gifts in your life amidst the prevailing North American society's challenges (i.e. consumerism, individualism, empire-complex... you can add to this list)
- To find what sustains you in order to be able to live and be in relationship with others
- To share your own hopes for your time together based on the theme of the day

### ***A. Preparing the Soil***

Share with one another your educational journey. What is your major? Who chose it? Why did you choose it; what influenced you? What motivates you to pursue it? What are your challenges? What brings you fear or hope in the future as you pursue your profession?

### ***B.1. Seedling: Studying the Word***

Matthew 4:1-11

- ❖ What word, phrase, or verse stands out to you? What do you think this story is about?
- ❖ Describe Jesus' experiences before, during and after this temptation episode. Name the temptations. Did the group come up with the same words?
- ❖ Reflecting on God's purpose in calling us out into the wilderness, what has been the most difficult resistance you have experienced in living out your faith in the real world?

### ***B.2. Watering: Listening and Storytelling***

*One Voice: One Story (Chuck)<sup>2</sup>*

*Yet the harder thing, for me, was ironically living with my white roommates. I was unprepared for the sorts of racial tensions that would arise in our house. The feeling of alienation. The sense of isolation in only being able to bring a part of me into that house. The uninformed questions of my own culture. The stereotypes. Yet, the ignorance I felt being directed at me on a daily basis was*

*a minor problem in comparison to the deep seated anger that I held against my roommates.*

*Like many of you, I am the victim of years of racial slurs, dehumanization, emasculation, and effacement.*

*For example, growing up in a culturally Korean household, my vision and understanding of masculinity that my dad demonstrated seemed to conflict with the idea of masculinity in the dominant culture. My father is a product of the Confucian model of masculinity, which is that of the scholar, the philosopher. This can be seen by the importance placed on education in many families. Yet, this pursuit or posture of being was often mitigated in the sorts of social groups I was involved in. This meant that our respect for silence and posture of reflection is often translated into passivity.*

*I remember the sorts of feelings I had constantly being bombarded by these media images of passive, which meant incompetent, Asian males on television. Or the images of exotic Asian women who were to be swept up by more masculine white men. I remember deeply the sense of alienation I felt growing up in an elementary school where I was one of five Asian students. In fact, they kept me in English-language development till I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade... even though, since the third grade, I had scored in the top 95<sup>th</sup> percentile in English.*

*Put bluntly, I had to be white to fit in. This meant leaving behind a huge chunk of my identity within the four walls of my house. This meant walking five steps ahead of my parents in public. This meant feeling the sweat of embarrassment listening to my parents try to communicate with customers in English.*

*On a deeper level, this meant trying to rid myself of the very lifeline that embedded me into my parent's history. My self-worth, in many ways, was now being dictated by how well I could fit in seamlessly into the dominant white culture of America. It's a shame that I felt like I had to do that... and it's a shame that many of you had to do that. I can't even begin to tell you how many insecurities I have because of those years of self-hatred.*

### *Many Voices: Our Stories*

- What do you think of Chuck's experience? Can you identify with it? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- What are the temptations of being a child of God as an Asian American? How are they different from, or similar to, the temptations that others face?
- Tell your story. Jesus' story of temptation is about Jesus and his vocation. How do your temptations

reflect who you are and your vocation? What are the foundations (what sustains you) in your life?

- Who are the people who hold you accountable and to whom you are accountable as you journey living out your faith in words and deeds?
- What do you resist?

***C. Sprouting and Growing:  
Empowered to Serve and Pray***

- ✓ Reflect on the temptations or challenges that take you away from the foundations of your faith life
- ✓ How would you strengthen those foundations of your faith life in your community?
- ✓ Commit in ways in things that sustain you, i.e. prayer, reflecting on the word, actions to reach out to others.
- ✓ Close with a prayer for strength to grow in your spirituality grounded in God's grace.

### **3. BRANCH: A SHARED LIFE – RELATING AND COMMUNING**

#### ***Why Are We Here?***

- To learn about the importance and value of belonging to a community in an individualistic and consumerist society
- To realize or deepen our understanding of the role and purpose of church in our lives
- To share your own hopes for your time together based on the theme of the day

#### **A. Preparing the Soil**

Share your experiences of a community. Where do you feel safe to be who you are? What are the values or characteristics of a group that you want to belong to? What are gifts you bring to this group? What kind of community would you like to be a part of? What is church for you?

#### **B.1. Seedling: Studying the Word**

Romans 12 and Acts 2:41-47

- ❖ How did Paul describe the “body of Christ” in the Romans chapter? Write all the descriptions down and then review the list. How did the first Christians express their community in Acts?
- ❖ Are there warnings that Paul gave in living out the “body of Christ”? What are they?
- ❖ How does your present faith community differ from the one described in Acts 2? If you are not part of any congregation, how is Acts 2 different from or similar to a community you would *want* to belong to? What was central in this community?
- ❖ How important do you think relationship was for Paul and the first Christians?

#### **B.2. Watering: Listening and Storytelling**

*One Voice: One Story (Chuck)*<sup>3</sup>

*As hard and sorrowful as these moments were (his time at Austin neighborhood in Chicago – see the first story)... they were actually liberating. Liberating because I found commonality. I realized that at the end of the day, we are human. Brokenness, by nature, doesn't play favorites. Yet, we find acceptance in the*

*midst of each other. In common brokenness, you can assert your freedom and make a choice to let it empower you.*

*Our scars become our power to love. They become the very glue that interconnects us to everyone. We recognize that we must forgive all. For my roommates did not choose to be born where they were. They did not choose to inherit the sort of history tied to their race. Their identity, like mine, is contingent.*

*We must all recognize that about each other, and learn to love each other in the midst of that. Not over-looking injustice... No... we must prophetically call people to take responsibility for that which has been done. We must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, fight alongside the oppressed in solidarity... we must do what Jesus calls us to do. But it also means moving beyond that towards a place of reconciliation.*

*I believe this kind of redefinition of "forgetting" is crucial for personal relationships. It is crucial for self-love. We realize that we love only because we forgive and are forgiven.*

*To forget in the way of repentance is that we must acknowledge our past, and find acceptance within that. And we must forgive.*

#### *Many Voices: Our Stories*

- What do you think of Chuck's experience? Can you identify with it? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- Do you feel you are a part of a community? Where, how and why?
- How do you think a congregation would be helpful in your belonging and growing in faith and service?
- How is forgiveness important in the body of Christ? In the larger community?

#### **C. Sprouting and Growing: Empowered to Serve and Pray**

- ✓ Write down the gifts you can offer for God's work
- ✓ List areas where you want to learn and grow
- ✓ Find a community to be a part of spiritually and socially -- where you can learn and serve. What kind of community would be best for you? What characteristics will you look for when you search?
- ✓ Pray for discernment and commitment to be part of efforts that promote belonging and caring

## **4. LEAVES: BLESSED ARE YOU -- WITNESSING AND SERVING**

### **Why Are We Here?**

- To discuss justice and peace as a way of life for witness and service
- To explore what “kingdom of God” means in daily life, here and now
- To learn about holistic mission – proclamation, service and advocacy
- To share your own hopes for your time together based on the theme of the day

### **A. Preparing the Soil**

Share about moments of joy and sadness in your life. Can you remember a time when you were blessed (in this case “blessed” may mean receiving God’s favor)? Do you feel “not blessed” when things go wrong in your life? Why?

### **B.1. Seedling: Studying the Word**

Matthew 5:1-16 and Luke 6:17-26

- ❖ Among the qualities that Jesus mentioned in Matthew, which can you identify with? Please feel free to share stories of your own, or ones you have heard, about this quality.
- ❖ Have you heard the term “model minority”? How does this Asian stereotype challenge Jesus’ invitation to be light of the world and salt of the earth?
- ❖ What do you think of Luke’s version, especially verses 24-26, amidst the dominant American culture (i.e. consumerism, individualism, etc.)?

### **B.2. Watering: Listening and Storytelling**

*One Voice: One Story (Tita)*<sup>4</sup>

*I left my job in the most successful stock brokerage in the Philippines and studied church music at the Asian Institute for Liturgy and Music, where I learned songs that talk about things I did not hear from the Lutheran church. A young woman’s songs about being an internal refugee, a young boy’s prayer for protection and peace while his father joined guerrilla fighters to change the social system to give his son a better future, about*

*justice and peace not only inserted into a song but calling us to leave our comfortable house of worship.*

*I was transformed and my journey continued. I left the Philippines soon after I finished my music degree. My composition recital was in a form of worship where Filipino expressions and music about the role of women in church and society challenged and invited the Immanuel congregation to walk the journey of justice.*

*There was joy during those youth gatherings, in those “aha moments” of knowing what it means to be a Christian in the “vineyard,” protesting on the streets for justice, in my journey to come here where though I embrace my “new” label as a person of color, I continue to raise my voice for justice not only for racial relations here but also for economic justice here, in the Philippines, and beyond.*

*Okay, I am not talking about being a pastor as if only those ordained have a “Holy call.” I am also not talking about my long journey to ordained priest-ess-hood, taking the route of first becoming a certified public accountant, then a church musician. Though my route to find my vocation took many turns, those were checkpoints in my life to grow and mature. I am also not saying that your career choice is your vocation as many of you may have heard. And yet it is vital to understand the profession you choose vis a vis your vocation quest. Career or profession is something that you would do to eat but your vocation is what you embody, to live for the sake of the one who called you.*

*As many campus pastors do, I use Frederick Buechner’s definition, “Vocation is where your deepest joy and the world’s greatest hunger meets.” The Roman Catholic program in Santa Clara on vocation discernment elaborated on this, asking three questions,*

*What gives you joy?  
Are you good at it?  
Where is the community that would need it?*

*In both definitions community and joy are important. How do you define joy for yourself? Sometimes joy can withstand challenges. Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that “joy” means comfort and fulfillment, rather than finding a community – but joy doesn’t come without community, just as vocation does not.*

*The meeting of one’s joy and another’s hunger happens in a community. But I would also turn around Buechner’s definition to make it complete. Vocation is also where my greatest hunger and the world’s deepest joy meet. Hunger, joy, and community. This is how transformation happens in full circle. And it happens over and*

*over again, as we continually ask, who am I? Who are we? Who am I becoming? Who are we becoming?*

*Many Voices: Our Stories*

- What do you think of Frederick Buechner's definition of vocation? Ask the three questions and share with one another.

***C. Sprouting and Growing:  
Empowered to Grow and Pray***

- ✓ List some people in your community or other communities who have experienced injustice
- ✓ Reflect on how your gifts could be offered to walk with the community
- ✓ Set a date and time that you will visit another community – first to know them, then know your gifts to offer and then walk with them
- ✓ Before leaving, share in advance the questions from the last session on being sent into the world as compassionate servant leaders.

## **5. FLOWERS AND FRUITS: SENT INTO THE WORLD -- COMPASSIONATE SERVANT LEADERS**

### ***Why Are We Here?***

- To learn about the word “mission” and how it can impact your life
- To explore concrete and practical possibilities for your vocation in the world, as it intersects with God’s mission
- To commit ourselves to being and becoming servant leaders and storytellers for God’s love

### ***A. Preparing the Soil***

What first comes to mind when you hear the word “mission”? If you have heard it before, what was the context? Do you think it had different definitions from other friends, generations or religions?

Name someone you admire because he/she is doing mission. Why did you choose this person?

As Asian Americans, do you think we have a different expression of mission from the dominant society? Or is it the same? If not, what is our uniqueness?

### ***B.1. Seedling: Studying the Word***

Luke 4:16-21 & Galatians 5:13-25

- ❖ What are the words that resonate with your vocation or call? Why?
- ❖ What was the context when Jesus mentioned prophet Isaiah in this gospel reading? To whom did he read the passage?
- ❖ What are the challenges Paul shared with the Galatians about living one’s faith and core convictions? How are these similar to or different from yours?
- ❖ How is freedom defined in this writing? Do you agree? Why and how?

### ***B.2. Watering: Listening and Storytelling***

*One Voice: One Story (Tita)*<sup>5</sup>

*Pastor Zamora, my pastor when I was a young person in the Philippines, took us out to what we call Smokey Mountain. This*

*was not the same as the Appalachian Mountains, but was a mountain of burning garbage where children and youth my age were scavenging for food. I heard many stories about children buried in this mountain because of landslides during rainy season, but I did not know how to respond as a Christian then.*

*No one had ever before told me Bible stories in this light. That was when I felt deep in my being that Christianity was not all singing “Jesus loves me, this I know.” That Jesus’ invitation to a relationship with him is not just about Matthew 28. (Anyway, who gave the title the Great Commission to this text, suggesting that “converting” people is the only way to the kingdom?)*

*I read the Bible myself, and though I thought that I was moving away from the church that sheltered me, I was becoming closer to God – through my relationship with the children and youth in the slums, or with the nomadic indigenous people, where I learned songs from my country I never heard before, but which did not only touch my heart and soul but gave me joy.*

*But this was just the beginning. My road in finding joy started with finding my own discomfort. The 1986 People’s Power revolution happened as the people of the Philippines rose up peacefully against their corrupt dictator. Pastor Zamora gathered all young people at the church. Millions of people were marching on the streets at this time that eventually became known as the EDSA Revolution.*

*I thought we were going to pray for them at the altar; but instead we boarded a bus. Our pastor took us to EDSA, the main street of the protest, where the military was all over the place with their big guns. I had never felt peace overcome fear this way. This was it... This was what Jesus’ vocation was all about, after his baptism when he went back to the synagogue. Luke 4:18 reads:*

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
Because he has anointed me  
To bring good news to the poor  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind  
To let the oppressed go free  
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

In the new ecumenical landscape, when the projection in 2050 is that there will be more Christians in the South than in the North; when many young faith communities do not belong to the traditional churches in the ecumenical bodies; when in a globalized world, new forms of paternalism and colonialism are happening in mission; when because of migration and globalization, many different faiths have not only encountered each other but are also finding ways to know each other before suspicion and fear lead us more conflict than ever – who are we and who we are becoming as the body of Christ? And where are young people in this journey?

In the ever-changing human landscape, where despite the unprecedented wealth the world is accumulating, we are also experiencing an unprecedented gap between the rich and the poor; where unprecedented numbers of people, especially among the poorest countries, are devastated by HIV/AIDS and other forms of disaster and/or conflict and violence; where encounters of people from different cultures, traditions, ethnicities and races are not just brief encounters but people learning to live as a community, hopefully in peace and harmony – who are we and who we are becoming as the body of Christ? And where are young people in this journey?

How about climate change? How about having mangoes in wintertime? They say “only in America.” Is this the context that you are living in, too? Or are the issues too big to comprehend? Are we able to connect or relate our present financial crisis, food shortages, high unemployment rate, very high student loans, belonging to a faith body that is struggling to be bold in proclamation amidst the conflict on the issue of sexuality, or perhaps living in a country where hope is as high as fear and insecurity...to our living faith? Does the whole body of Christ share our challenges and concerns?

If one’s identity is formed communally, and communal identity is comprised of individual identities shared and united in God’s grace and love, where does our vocation and identity relate to the vocation and identity of the body of Christ?

*Many Voices: Our Stories*

- Who has been “Pastor Zamora” in your life? Who took you to the “marketplace” to see God at work?
- What are your concerns about the world/community you live in? What makes you angry or sad about it?
- Where does your passion lead you? How will you grow in this passion toward servant leadership? Any challenges or barriers? How do you overcome them?

**C. Sprouting and Growing:**

***Empowered to Serve and Pray***

- ✓ What does being a disciple mean to you? How do you practice the marks of being Christ’s disciple, here and now, with all of who you are?
- ✓ Creating an action plan and covenant are almost the same but not quite. For an action plan, here are suggestions to guide the process:
  - a. Following the marks of discipleship, what do you believe God is calling you to be and do (Goals)?
  - b. Breaking down your big goals, set some smaller and achievable objectives?

- c. Who are we doing this with and for?
  - d. What resources (both material and non-material) are available?
  - e. What are the challenges you foresee and how can they be overcome with the resources available? If resources are not available yet, what steps could be taken to develop them?
  - f. Create a three-column list. Show action items in the first column, match these with responsible people in the second column, and write targeted deadline dates in the third. Include in the last column times for periodic and final assessment.
- ✓ Our covenant is with God and our community. Let us go back to our baptismal covenant, using the Evangelical Lutheran Worship liturgy, “Affirmation of Baptism.” (Even if you have not been baptized, this may help you explore what it would mean to go through preparation for baptism.) Close the sessions of this journey with this conversation about our baptismal covenant.

## Endnotes

1. Excerpts from a sermon by Charles “Chuck” Kim, delivered at the “Asian American Discipleship in Vocation, Empowerment and Transformation” young adult conference, Chicago, 2007.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Excerpts from a keynote presentation by the Rev. Teresita Valeriano at the “Lutheran Student Movement Conference,” Chicago, 2008.
5. Ibid.

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