



by **Richard Showalter**

# Simple Discipleship

Tan Kok Beng, president of Asia-Pacific Missions and a Singaporean Mennonite pastor, spoke passionately in his first meeting with a young pastor, his wife, and me. I had just invited him to give us an update on the mission, but he was not about to omit his testimony.

“Only about one percent of all funds Christians give to missions goes to reach the unreached,” he said. “Most of what we do goes to support already-existing churches and ministries.

“But our goal here at Asia-Pacific is to reach the unreached. Early in my missionary work, I noticed how often people go into missions but then get burned out. There were team conflicts on the mission field, and I even saw some couples get divorced. I knew something was wrong.

“I realized that a big problem was training,” he said. “People would get their training in seminaries, but only one of ten seminary students would actually go into missions. Others would go to Bible schools where they received good biblical training, but they were not prepared for the rigors of cross-cultural service.

“So we started a training school specifically for missionaries. We mentored them carefully, preparing them for the shocks and surprises of going to a new culture. We taught them how to plan to begin new churches in a place where none existed before. We taught the importance of language learning, cultural adjustment, mission strategy and planning. We taught them how to hear God and to live by faith.

“Then we started to send them out. But we realized that we could multiply workers in every place by training some to train others and start new training schools in the places they go.

“So today we have more than 800 training schools in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America. Each year there are at least 16,000 new workers sent into the harvest from these schools.”

But Tan Kok Beng was not finished. “The two most important things we teach our students,” he said, “are to learn to hear God and to trust him completely as their provider.

“This is not theoretical,” he said. “For 55 years I have lived without a salary, trusting God to supply my personal needs. We operate our training schools the same way. We

never speak in churches on behalf of our schools, write prayer letters, talk with people personally about our needs, or raise funds in any way. God knows what we need, and he always supplies.

“Because we want to demonstrate to our students what it means for us to live by faith, we do not ask them to pay for their education or their visas to live in Singapore. It is all free for them. They see that we are trusting God on their behalf. Singapore is a very expensive place to live, so if God can provide for our needs here, he can provide for our students anywhere they go!

“Each month it costs us about \$20,000 just to pay for our rent. Each month God provides. When he asks us to do something, he supplies what we need.

“For too many Christians, trusting God is theoretical. In our minds we trust him, but we are taking no steps of faith.”

Walking away from our conversation with Tan Kok Beng, I reflected once again on the meaning of discipleship. A disciple is one who lives each day like Jesus did, depending on the Father for direction, for courage, and for provision.

Not many of us will lead mission training schools which impact thousands as they multiply, but all of us are called to serve and reach out to others in everyday, ordinary faith—loving, witnessing, and trusting our great Provider. All of us can learn to hear God and obey.

As we do, we too will see the glory of God.

Discipleship is that simple.

Richard and his wife Jewel have served as evangelists and church planters all over the world for the past 45 years. RMM is pleased to have them sharing at Annual Conference this summer for the Sunday morning Missions Day Program.



**Top Left Photo**

Tan Kok Beng praying for a Mennonite participant at the 20th anniversary celebration of Bethany International University in Singapore, 2013.”