

# JCC RETREAT 2019

20 – 22 June 2019

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## *ARISE AND SHINE (Isaiah 60:1-3) – LIVING AN IMPACTFUL LIFE*

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Wow! More than 100 pax from JCC descended on The Katerina Hotel in Batu Pahat for the retreat. In the hotel room, I found the sign that posed the questions: HUNGRY? THIRSTY?

The 100+ plus among us must surely be hungry and thirsty. By the end of the retreat, they would be well-fed on the bread of life and never be thirsty. (Jn 6:35)

Take a moment to think: What is the real meaning of the Church retreat when we have the Sunday School, Care

Groups, Pulpit preaching, Bible classes, etc. throughout the year for those who are hungry and thirsty to be filled? (Mt 5:6)

Sunday School, CGs, pulpit preaching and Bible classes don't replace one another. Similarly, a retreat is a worthwhile complement to our other church activities. Going to a retreat, we temporarily withdraw from the busyness and distractions engulfing us in our life. In a peaceful atmosphere, we reflect on our spiritual life and listen to God's Word. We then return to our normal surroundings to be salt with its flavour restored and the lamp that is boldly put out on a stand to shine before men so that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. (Mt 5:13-16)

Indeed, to **ARISE AND SHINE** (Isa 60:1-3) was the call we received at the retreat, in connection with the retreat theme of **LIVING AN IMPACTFUL LIFE**:

- 1. Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.*

2. *See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.*
3. *Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*

Our spiritual state can at times become like our mobile phone running out of power. When the power becomes low, we may notice it and go for a recharge. Sometimes, however, we miss noticing it and then what happens? The consequence of having a phone without power is understandable. How about a life in a spiritual state that is running down and out?

It is consequential when spiritual complacency sets in. The retreat speaker (Rev. Dr. Philip Tan) urged all to arise from a complacent state. He shared inspiring messages about being impacted by God's glory, restoration of a despondent life and becoming a light bearer for Christ.



I identified a common thread that runs through the messages; i.e., it is never by our own effort that we can reflect God's glory. To be light of the world, our light essentially derives from God. Just like the moon reflecting light, the light that we shine into the darkness does not originate from us but from Christ. The glory that we reflect is consequently God's glory:

- “For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.” – Rom 11:36
- “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” – Habakkuk 2:14

What is God's glory? Rev. Dr. Philip Tan had us understand the three-fold manifestations of God's glory:

- His manifested presence (Jn 1:14)
- His manifested power (2 Chron 5:14)
- His manifested goodness (Ex 33:18-19)

The speaker cited examples of the Holy Spirit ministering personally, a person recovering from serious physical condition and a person released from bondage to bad habit. He also shared about how God's goodness extends to blessing His people in financial aspects, such as the miraculous provision of the huge finance we needed in the church rebuilding project despite the meagre sum we had in the bank at the start of the project.



"Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get." – Forrest Gump

Is our life like a box of chocolates as we experience the rat race, the heavy burden on our shoulders and the series of hardship? Is the thief stealing the goodness of our life? (Jn 10:10) Money not enough?

If your life falls into the doldrums, God can restore it not just to its original condition but to many times better. (Job 42:12-15)

There was just so much of inspiring nourishment to satisfy our hunger and thirst that, unfortunately, it is not possible for me to replicate them in writing. The messages on repairing the broken altar (by Rev. Dr. Philip Tan) and repairing the broken wall (by Rev. Anthony) were among the food for our digestion.

I should not forget to give thanks to God for the outstanding Prayer Walk activity. It comprised several prayer stations set up across a few rooms in the hotel. The retreat participants would individually traverse through all the stations and each station would have instructions for them to engage their mind and emotion in-depth to allow God to speak to them through their silent prayerful postures. The following (not listed in sequence) were the meditative focus points of some of the stations:

- What can wash away my sin?
- Transformed by His grace
- Who is this God we serve?
- Impacted by His glory
- Become a light bearer
- Where is the harvest field?

I joined the retreat with much initial hesitation because I was under some stress of dealing with the messy state of HDB upgrading work in my house and was concerned about the possible clash of dates for some additional work. Nevertheless, I finally decided to go for the retreat, and the Prayer Walk was just a good opportunity for a quiet moment to seek the needed spiritual salve.

It was the first time I experienced such a Prayer Walk activity at a retreat. Apart from the essence of the spiritual activity, a lot of effort by our young and talented church members also shone through the planning and organizing of the various stations. We give thanks to God for the retreat committee, for the retreat speaker, for the physical resources God made available for our blessing and **NOT FORGETTING for our youths and young adults who ARISE AND SHINE** for the Lord in their dedicated service.

Have you missed an opportunity to attend the retreat?

Apart from the benefit of being separated from our hectic routines to engage with God, there was also the benefit of forging bonds with one another in the body life of the church. What we shared and prayed might be a blessing to our fellow brothers and sisters; and similarly, what they shared and prayed or how they interacted in the various activities might be a blessing to us. So, in the end, it was not just personal gain but a profit to the body. **We were not just blessed at the retreat. We were also a blessing at the retreat!**

If you have missed the retreat, do not despair. Our God is so good and His blessing to us is not limited to whether we participated in the retreat or not.



*John Lee*