

*Support
his hands*
Exodus 17:10-13



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Pastor Appreciation Month - Launch of Prayer Shield "Support his Hands" Exodus 17:10-13

By Rev. Dr. Eu Hong Seng

Ministry is an amazing call, full of great joys and significant moments in people's lives: officiating weddings, presiding over funerals, seeing first-hand how lives are changed for Christ.

But it's also full of tension: intense conflict, unrealistic expectations, relational strain, almost puzzling misunderstandings and, at times, soul-aching loneliness.

Many pastors experience this unexplainable phenomenon - when church members are pleased, they say nothing. But if they are not happy about any programs, plans or projects of the church, they will be vociferous and relentless in their criticisms and negative comments.

If the people like the sermon you don't hear any encouragement. If they don't like it, they will share their assessment freely with others.

Many in church have little understanding of the immense burdens that pastors bear.

To help us remember Pastors Appreciation Month, I want to reflect on Exo 17:10-13

Exodus 17:10-13 (NKJV)

10 So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

11 And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

12 But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

13 So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

The title of my devotion is based on v12 "Aaron and Hur supported his hands."

May I suggest 7 things we can do to support our pastors -

- Go up to the mountain with your Moses v10.**
Not only go up but go right up to the top. Some accompany their pastors but abandon them before they reach the top.
10 So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.
- Learn to observe what your pastor is doing.** In v11, Moses held up his hand on his own accord. And in v12a, his hands became heavy. To care for a person, you need to observe that person. This Scripture is there, to remind us that we need to sometimes observe, discern, watch, to see ... what is happening to the man we are supporting. Don't just mindlessly do sightseeing in Church.

11 And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

- c) Thirdly, **Appreciate the immensity of the spiritual battles he is engaged in and the significance of the tasks God has called him to do.**

How do we begin to appreciate our shepherd if you do not know where he is, what he is doing and what he is going through? Here Moses is up in the mountain, fighting the Amalekites in the spirit realm and his hands became heavy.

Here, Moses in engaging with the arch enemy, the Amalek.

Pastors often are caught up in serious intercessory work. Friends, believe me, they are not only just spending time in prayer. They are sweating and fighting for the destiny of the nation.

11 And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

- d) Fourthly, **take the initiative**... “so they took a stone and put it under him”

12b But Moses’ hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it.

Don’t always wait for NECF to prompt you, for someone to remind you, or wait for Oct to come ... go all out to make the first move - “they took a stone and put it under him”. There was no evidence that Aaron and Hur were asked. They just did it. It is time, the Church matures.

- e) Fifthly, **support your leadership as a team.** Note the plural pronoun “they” - they took a stone ... Aaron is his brother. Hur, according to Jewish tradition, is the husband of Miriam, hence his brother in law.

12 But Moses’ hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

Together we can do more. Together, we can be more effective in supporting the workers. Together, we cover up for each other’s lack or neglect in supporting our leaders and pastors.

- f) Give practical, full and unwavering support.

v12b And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

Many think, as long as they are not stabbing the leadership in the back, we are doing good. The Bible tells us, we need to be on both their sides - this speaks of practical and full support. “Until the going down of the sun” - this speaks of “unwavering support.”

- g) **Show up at the battle front.**

13 So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

I just finished listening to a talk on leadership, on how both young and old can rise up to be leaders ... I think many are preoccupied with “positional

leadership.” All these “rising up” is quite pointless. After serving in the Church for over 5 decades, I tell myself, I don’t want them to rise up - rather I want them to show up. At the battle front.

What joy Moses must have felt, when he saw Joshua showing up to wield his sword, to defeat Amalek and his people.

What is the point of praying and praying, if the Joshuas will not show up to do battle.

We need to stop talking about the Joshua generation taking over. First, they must show up and wield the sword. It is senseless to transit to the new generation, when they can’t find their sword, and if they find it, don’t know how to use it. Or if they know how to use, they can’t identify who are the Amalekites.

Today, we don’t need perfunctory leadership and positional leadership - so many taking up leadership positions where their only gift is giving advice on what needs to be done.

What we need today is for people to show up at the battlefield and support their pastors.

“Well done pastor” - ok, that is good but we need more than just a pat on the back. We need practical support.

How can we say, we appreciate God’s workers, when we don’t show up at the front lines? It was the Bee Gees who sang “its only words, and words are all I have.” Well, in the real church world, words are not enough.

In conclusion, let me add this -

Most pastors who serve with right motives find it difficult during the Pastor Appreciation Month - to take up an offering for themselves.

Can you imagine your pastor stepping up to the pulpit on Sunday and saying, “Good morning church! Before I begin my sermon, I want to remind you this month is Pastor Appreciation Month. And, if you’re wondering, I would love a 3-day 2- night stay at this fabulous holiday resort”? Of course not. The apostle Paul said, in 1 Thessalonians 5 -

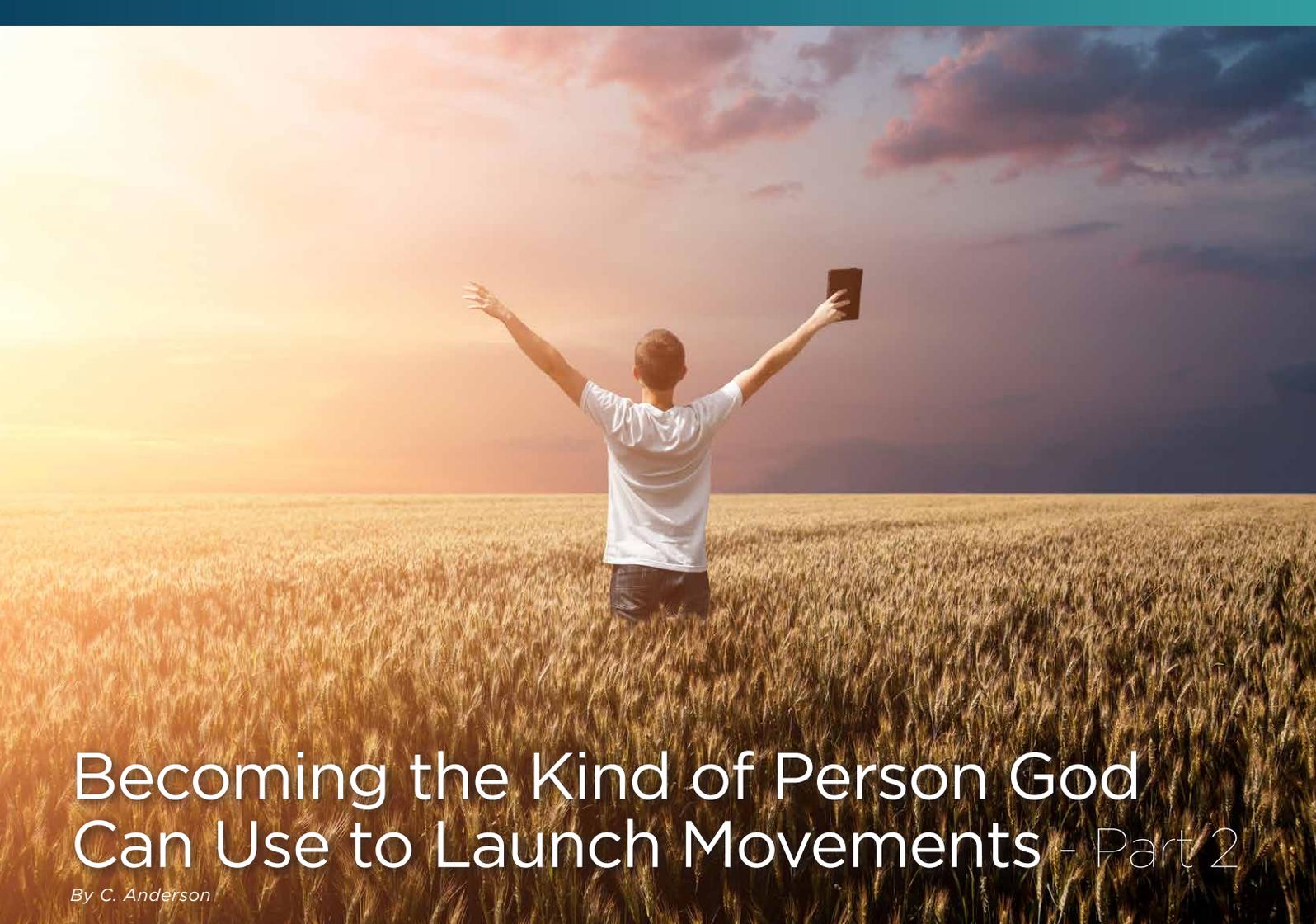
12 ... recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.”

One sure way to esteem them is to bless them ... bless all our workers. Of course, I want to encourage you to express care for your pastor every month. Let October feel like a bonus month! The month of October is not the month to make up for mistreating your pastor the other 11 months of the year.

Why not take up an offering and use it to bless those who labor among you? It is practical and meaningful. A small sacrifice to encourage those who make sacrifices all the time for the members of the church.

Let us not be stingy in our words of affirmation and encouragement.

God bless you. God bless all the pastors, leaders and full-time workers in our nation.



Becoming the Kind of Person God Can Use to Launch Movements - Part 2

By C. Anderson

This article first appeared in Mission Frontiers' e-Newsletter March-April 2021 issue on <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/>. It is reproduced here with permission from Mission Frontiers.

The Apostle Paul exhorted the Galatian church to walk in freedom. The young church had been infiltrated by Judaizers who wanted everyone to be circumcised.

In Galatians 5:4, Paul writes, "You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace."

As humans, we like to be doers. Church-planters and Disciple Making Movement (DMM) practitioners want to do things right. We are always learning, searching, reading and talking to people about what is the most effective strategy or fruitful practice we can use to bring the maximum number of people into the kingdom as quickly as possible.

There is nothing wrong with this. In many ways, it is good. The millions of unreached peoples will never become faithful Jesus followers without hard work, realignment to New Testament methods and the embracing strategies for multiplication. We must do, and do a lot.

In the midst of this, it's easy though to lose sight of other things just as vital, like the importance of being the kind of people who reflect Christ to a hurting world.

We sometimes focus so much on doing that we fall away from grace and are "alienated from Christ." No longer do we resemble Him—His goodness, His kindness, His compassion, or fervour for His Father's will. It is possible to do everything right as far as a strategy but fall short in our personal transformation. God rarely entrusts His greater fruit to those who ignore the importance of being as well as doing. It is our Christlikeness that attracts unbelievers to consider our message. Our character, as we imitate Christ, is the foundation a movement is built on.

In Part 1, (see Mission Frontiers Jan-Feb 2021) I wrote about six characteristics of the kind of person God can use greatly. If you missed this first part, please take the time to read it.

The first six characteristics:

- 1) They have an ever-growing relationship with God and an extraordinary prayer life.
- 2) They are bold and faithful in witness.
- 3) They are willing to face persecution from enemies.
- 4) They are willing to be misunderstood by friends.
- 5) They innovate, evaluate and change.
- 6) They are willing to stop doing unfruitful activities and focus on a few high impact things.

This list is not exhaustive. Here in Part 2, we will consider six additional characteristics of those God entrusts with His great work of releasing movements. As you read these, take time to ponder. Discuss the questions with

your team or spouse. Journal about them. Allow the Holy Spirit to stir within you a fresh longing to grow in these areas.

7. They are filled with God's Spirit and Word.

Because these leaders have extraordinary prayer lives (see #1, Part 1), they drink deeply of God each day and throughout the day. Abiding in Him has become a way of life. Regular meditation on Scripture is a habit that brings a fullness of the Word deep within. This naturally overflows from their hearts as well as their lips as they disciple, train and share the good news.

In tune with the Spirit of God and full of His presence, they follow God's leading in both big and small decisions. Heightened sensitivity to what He is doing is apparent. They have their "spiritual antennas" up and are sensing listening and aware of God's work around them. Responding to His nudges, they obey and flow with God.

The power of God's Spirit works through them. Signs, wonders, and miracles are the natural result of a life lived in deep dependence upon the Holy Spirit.



8. They persevere through times of suffering, loss and spiritual deserts.

Perseverance in hardship is a common characteristic of movement leaders. This can be observed in the life of Jesus, Paul and the apostles, as well as the early church fathers. An imbalanced theology says if we love and follow God our lives will be easy. This false teaching has crept into the church in many parts of the world.

Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days. His close friend and cousin, John the Baptist, was murdered unjustly. The Lord suffered and died. Paul was beaten, stoned and imprisoned. Peter was crucified upside-down. Hardship is part of the pathway toward the release of greater kingdom fruit.

The movement leaders God uses greatly will experience suffering. Spouses or children may fall sick or even die. Grief is not a stranger to these leaders. Many experience seasons of spiritual dryness, or what might be called a Dark Night of the Soul. In all these challenges, they refuse to quit on God or His calling for their lives. The vision the Father has placed within them compels them to continue. They share the gospel with one more person, even when no one seems to listen. They choose to once again

trust and develop leaders under them, even when betrayed by those they mentored in the past. These leaders continue, despite deep personal pain.

In Matthew 14, John the Baptist was beheaded. Verse 13 says that when Jesus heard this He withdrew, but the crowds followed him. He had compassion on them and healed their sick, then fed the five thousand. Despite a great personal loss, He continued in the ministry God had given Him, loving and serving the multitudes.

9. They have a strong faith in the God of the impossible.

Movement leaders must have unshakable confidence in God's power to do what they cannot. They have a lowly opinion of themselves, but an incredibly strong belief that God can and will come through to fulfil His promise. These leaders have tested and seen Him be the one who works miracles.

Like David, they started by taking on smaller challenges- lions and bears. This gives them faith to believe God can slay giants. They are willing to ask God for great things because they experientially know their God to be a God of great power and might.

Their trust is in God and His Word, not in what they see or in past experiences. As a result, they regularly take risks of faith to boldly ask God for the miraculous.

10. They are continually releasing power and responsibility to others.

These leaders are not hungry to be on stage in front of adoring crowds. Instead, they embrace the joy of developing others. As a result, God places key Timothys in their lives to encourage and train.

They believe in "rough diamonds" and are willing to work with people, shaping their ministry philosophy, modelling, praying and investing in them until they become the kind of people God uses greatly. Their relationships with those they coach or mentor go deep, far beyond a weekly meeting. Sharing life, they stand by them, fight for them. They are more than happy to stand in the background while those they've trained take the front.

This willingness to stay in the shadow and develop others is key to seeing a movement grow. These leaders don't care about becoming a big name or personality. Instead, they want only to see every disciple grow and develop in their gifts and strengths to be all God intends them to be as disciple-makers and leaders in their realm of influence. This means sacrificing personal fame and gain to invest in others and see them succeed.

11. They are kingdom, not organizationally minded.

Similarly, they are not consumed with building their denomination, organization or team into a successful entity. They generously share what God has taught them with others. Even with those outside their network. This mindset causes them to collaborate and partner with other DMM practitioners often.

Wanting to see your denomination or organization become known and be respected is a powerful human tendency. We all want to be attached to something that experiences success.

The kind of movement leaders and catalysts God uses have died to this fleshly desire and continue to die daily. They champion and value the fruitfulness of others, above their group. Philippians 2:3 says "consider others as more important than ourselves." These leaders practice this in their lives and ministry plans. Because of this kingdom mindset, God adds to them freely.

12. They walk in an ever-growing humility.

Like Paul, movement leaders God uses must be aware of their weaknesses. They count their accomplishments as immaterial. (2 Cor. 11:30) Glory goes to God when things go right, yet they take responsibility for their own mistakes.

Humility is the final characteristic in my list because it is one of the most important. It is also one that takes time to develop. Humility doesn't grow in us quickly. It's rarely found in the young who have not yet walked through great pain, failure or hardship.

Pride and insecurity are common to all. Two sides of the same coin and if you are a living, breathing human, you will battle these. When we fail, we wonder if we are worthy to be used by God. We swing toward insecurity. In times of success, we tend to think we are better than others, and pride rears its ugly head.

Humility is shaped within through the times when we are hurled to our knees by life. We desperately cry out to God for help and wisdom. At the end of ourselves, we know that unless God intervenes we are in deep trouble. His life is being formed within us.

In the next issue, we will look at further characteristics. Which of the six mentioned above do you find most challenging? Take steps to address these areas by first taking them to God in prayer. Then take action steps of how you will work on these areas in the coming month. Share those with your team or coach.

Giants, Mountains, and Immovable Obstacles

Our faith in God's mighty power and our love for the lost leads us to ask Him for great fruit. As we pursue our God-sized dreams for many more movements we will encounter giants, mountains and seemingly immovable obstacles. These challenges grow us in humility, and many of the other characteristics I've mentioned in this two-part series.

Don't despise the giants. Don't despair when climbing a great mountain, far bigger than yourself. The immovable obstacles are training you. They are shaping your character into the kind of person God can use to bring about His incredible kingdom purposes.

Success Will Tempt You, But God Will Help You

Great fruitfulness will tempt you to take glory for yourself. You suddenly face the opportunity to build your name or kingdom. You can raise money, make a name for yourself, have material blessings or build a grand building. Beware. The choices you make at the height of fruitfulness will determine whether the movement grows far beyond you, or stops in its tracks.

God has plans for your future and mine far beyond what we can imagine. His work on earth is not yet complete. Millions wait to hear. Will we become the kind of people He can use greatly?

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Malaysia Day Celebration 2021

I Will Wait for You (Psalm 130:1-7)

This year, NECF conducted the Malaysia Day Celebration in four languages to meet the needs of our respective language groups. We received quite a handful of constructive and positive feedbacks for our four online celebrations conducted via Zoom, Facebook live and Youtube channels. The number of viewers accumulated up to now from all our online platforms is at a total of 21,000 people.

Tamil Celebration

Tamil churches celebrated the Malaysia Day on 14 September 2021. The event started at 8pm with about 300 participants via Zoom meeting. Ekklesia Evangelical Fellowship, Seremban led the participants into a time of high praise and worship followed by an inspiring message by Rev Sesuraja Anthony, the chairman of NECF Tamil Commission. He exhorted God's people to go deeper into intercession and continue to wait with assurance and confidence for the Lord. He mentioned in his message that the outcome we hope to see and receive from the Lord, will be His abundant redemption and breakthroughs in our families and nation.

BM Celebration

The NECF Malaysia Day Celebration was broadcasted via the Youtube and Facebook channels with about 460 viewers on the night itself with event that started at 8pm on 14 September 2021. Worship was led by Youth Calvary City Life, JB and the message was by Rev Sam Surendran, the chairman of NECF Bahasa Malaysia Commission. Participants were encouraged to wait upon the Lord when our country is in the depths of distress going through the pandemic as well as both political and economic uncertainties. Rev Sam shared that waiting takes time and patience but as believers, we need to "bind together" with the Lord and not to be limited by time and situation in the world. Our perception would gradually change when we understand the meaning of waiting upon Him (Psalm 130:1-7).

English Celebration

The English celebration was broadcasted via Youtube and Facebook at 8pm on 15 September 2021. The event recorded nearly 4,000 participants for the celebration via abovementioned channels. PJ Community Baptist Church led a wonderful and spirit-filled worship, followed by different pastors and leaders that have assigned to pray for the youth, family, education and marketplace. Besides this, Rev Ronnie Chiu and Pr Chin Chi Kiong represented the West and East Malaysians to pray for the nation.

Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng, the chairman of NECF, in his sermon explained the six reasons why one has to wait for the Lord (Psalm 130:1-7):

- a) We are not out from the depths;
- b) We learn to cry till He hears our voices;
- c) There is very little fear of God;
- d) The answer from God is a certainty.
- e) The atmosphere of despondency over our nation is real.
- f) It relates to our hope of "ultimate redemption"

Chinese Celebration

The Chinese language congregation had a countdown session to commemorate the celebration and it started at 10.30pm on 15 September 2021 and ended 10 minutes into Malaysia Day (September 16). The night event was accessible via Zoom, Youtube and Facebook, and there were more than 1,200 participants, with the young and the old, celebrating joyfully together for the national event.

The incisive message was broadcasted by a voice-over video version which was shared by Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng, the Chairman of NECF. Agape Community Church led the worship session followed by 3 young pastors praying for churches & families, marketplace & communities and politics & economy with in-depth, insight and power. The event ended with a high note of shofar blowing and declaration of blessings over the land of Malaysia.

Conclusion

The emphasis on waiting as conveyed from the Celebration is a tough call when there is an atmosphere of despondency over our nation. Waiting is a Christian virtue and demands patience and foresight. After finishing the 40-Day Fast & Prayer with the theme "Be Still", the challenge to continue to wait can be stressful for many.

In spite of this, we press on to worship a God who works in mysterious ways well beyond our human infinite understanding. To Him, obedience is better than sacrifice, and that is what waiting demands out of each one of us.

Remember God is at work while we wait. Therefore, we need to position ourself to wait with expectancy. For when the answer from God arrives, we will be like the wise virgins rather than the foolish ones. Here is where our hope lies - **the ultimate redemption.**