

INFORMATION

Colombo Theological Seminary

THE BEREANS WERE BETTER

FROM
THE
PRINCIPAL'S
DESKDR IVOR POOBALAN
PRINCIPAL

I dislike comparisons because it feels like we are simply dissing someone. But you cannot get around it. We are constantly making choices based on comparison. We instinctively evaluate to decide what is better: for restaurants we will patronise, teams we will follow, or organisations we would like to work at.

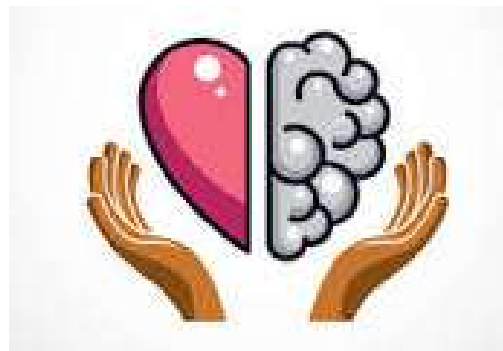
This is what Luke does when he introduces us to the Jews in Berea. He compares two cultures – the Jews of Berea with the Jews of Thessalonica – and says: ‘Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica’ (Acts 17:11). Although they shared the same religious background, they had developed very different qualities. The Bereans were better in their essential qualities than the Thessalonians.

This kind of comparison is not strange to God’s ways in the Bible. He values those who choose to do what is better. We are told that God accepted Abel’s better sacrifice and rejected Cain’s offering (Hebrews 11:4); and that Jesus rebuked Martha saying, ‘Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her’ (Luke 10:42).

Three Outstanding Qualities of the Bereans

In education theory, we say that there are three important aspects involved in effective learning: the head, the heart, and the hands. Learning requires intellectual grasp, but that is not all. It must involve our emotions and must be actively applied for education to reach its completion. We call these ‘cognitive’, ‘affective’, and ‘effective’. Interestingly, it was this integration that made the Bereans very different to the Thessalonians: they were more open-minded, more eager, and more hardworking (Acts 17:11).

Heart. Head. Hands



The word translated ‘noble’ by the NIV has a strong connotation to their attitude and behaviour in their meetings with Paul: they were more open-minded to understand the message. The Thessalonians, on the other hand, had minds that were shut by prejudice, and Paul found that preaching God’s message to them was deeply frustrating (Acts 17:1-9). Today, another reality threatens to undermine open-mindedness among Christ’s disciples: information-overload. Being constantly attached to our phones, we cannot escape the steady barrage of notifications, posts, and video clips, all taking up our limited mind-space. How can we deal with this? How can we make sure we hear what God is saying about our relationship with him, family-life, work, habits, and opportunities? Are we open-minded enough to hear God?

The second verb that is used talks about the Bereans’ eagerness to receive the message that Paul preached. It was not an easy message to accept but they did not equate this with the latest cricket news or a new recipe! This was a message about their eternal salvation and they were willing to be passionate about it: ‘They received the message with great eagerness’.

Their emotions were fully engaged. Christians are often ambivalent about emotions: uncertain about the role they play in our spirituality. We misunderstand and think that our affective responses are outside of our control, when in fact our passions are unlocked and steered by the will. Are you today choosing ‘great eagerness’ for the things of God?

The third, and complementary, quality of the Bereans was that they were hardworking to validate the message. Yes, it was the great rabbi and apostle Paul, who was teaching the Gospel message, yet the Bereans took ownership to ensure that they validated the ‘truth’. So, ‘they examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true’.

These are the qualities that made the Bereans better. As a result, ‘many of them believed, as did a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men’ (Acts 17:12).

It is our hope that the Berean character will adorn every graduate of CTS and increasingly become the standard of every local church. We are choosing what is better. I guess this means dissing anything less.



First-Ever All-Island Graduation Service of Thanksgiving and Commissioning

The 14th Graduation Service of Thanksgiving and Commissioning, held on 15th July 2023 was a landmark event for CTS. At this first-ever all-island Graduation Service, a total of 173 students hailing from 9 study centers across the island received their awards. The Chief Guest was Dr Theresa Lua, the General Secretary of the Asia Theological Association (ATA).



The Class of 2023 was composed of 173 award-recipients: Certificate in Christian Studies (91), Advanced Certificate in Counselling (4), Diploma in Theology (55), Bachelor of Theology (17), Post-Graduate Diploma (1), Master of Arts in Biblical Studies (5).

A Celebration of Cultural Diversity



The trilingual service, from beginning to end, was reflective of the multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-denominational character of the Sri Lankan Church.



The CTS student worship team leading the congregation in praise and thanksgiving



Chief Guest's Message

Dr Lua's stirring message on 'Transformational Leaders for the Mission of the Church', reflected the integral role theological schools like CTS must play in nurturing and equipping leaders for biblical transformation in Church and society.



'The Church as a missionary Church is the agent of God's mission in the world, and as such the "agent of spiritual and social transformation in its community".'



Introducing the 18th Volume of the Journal of the Colombo Theological Seminary



Presenting the new Publications to Rev Dhiloraj Canagasabay (President, CTS Council).



Presenting the new publications to Prof G P V Somaratna (Research Professor Emeritus).

Launch of New CTS Publications

Dr Prabo Mihindikulasuriya presented the latest CTS publications

The Call to Servant Leadership



Awardees received book vouchers to help build up their personal theological libraries.

Graduates were presented a towel as a reminder of Jesus' call to servant leadership.

The Commissioning and Blessing



Recommending Pastors praying over the graduates.



Rev Charles N Jansz (Former President, CTS Council) delivers the Charge to the graduates.

Flanking Rev Charles Jansz are faculty members Dr Sanath Athukorala (L) and Julian Devadason (R), who translated the Charge into Sinhala and Tamil, respectively.



The Bruce and Esther Ker Memorial Community Award

Rev Dr Ted Rubesh (Chairperson, Academic Affairs Committee), presenting the award to Sampath Perera. This special award is presented to a graduating student, who has exemplified a commitment towards CTS.



Remembering those who have gone before... *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down" Hebrews 12:1*



Three students were awarded their Certificates/Diplomas posthumously. Seen here is the widow of Raju Ramesh, who was martyred in the Easter Bomb at Zion Church, Batticaloa, accepting his Diploma.

Commemorating Rev Neville Koch, Founding Principal of CTS, who passed away in early 2023.



Honouring the memory of Rev Dr Ila Fernando (Founder Council Member), with the hymn 'රජරාජ මහලලායාවේ ගීත'.

The Blessing

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Colombo Theological Seminary



The final prayer and blessing by Rev Dhiloraj Canagasabey



The Hymn for Sri Lanka

The 14th Graduation Service of Thanksgiving and Commissioning



Click to watch





Ivor Poobalan at the Keswick Convention 2023

CTS Principal, Dr Ivor Poobalan, at the Keswick Convention 2023 speaking on 'Foundations for Life in Genesis 1-11'. Click the links below to listen to these life-giving messages.

- [Our God and His World – Genesis 1:1-2:3](#)
- [Being Human and Responsible – Genesis 2:4-25](#)
- [The Voice, the Choice and the Noise of Sin – Genesis 3:1-6:8](#)
- [Rescued for Relationship – Genesis 6:9-9:17](#)
- [Rediscovering Purpose in a Rebellious World – Genesis 9:18-11:26](#)

Equipping Children's Ministry Workers Certificate in Christian Studies: Children's Ministry

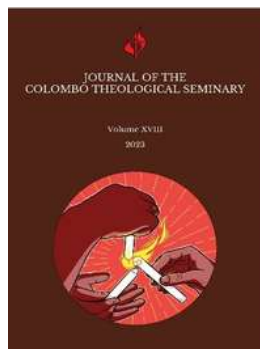
The second cohort of students on the Certificate in Christian Studies (Children's Ministry) spent two days at CTS Capital, in August, engaging in their first set of onsite workshops, and having fellowship with their fellow-students and lecturers. The students hailed from Batticaloa, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Hatton, Welimada, Balangoda, Hambantota, Embilipitiya, Colombo, Polonnaruwa, Negombo, Puttalam.



This fully online programme is designed to equip Christian Workers involved in ministering to children, and is delivered along two parallel tracks: in Sinhala and Tamil.

CTS Publications

Journal of the Colombo Theological Seminary



The peer-reviewed articles in the 18th volume of the JCTS are:

- Identity and Politics: The Patriarchal Narratives in the Formation of Early Israel | Ivor Poobalan
- Interpreting Paul's Conversion Analogies (Gal. 3:22-26; 3:29-4.3) through a Traditional Sri Lankan Story Motif | Prabo Mihindukularuriya
- Social Service or Social Justice? The Church's Response to the Crisis in Sri Lanka | Mano Emmanuel
- What Does Politics Have to do with Pentecost? First Steps Towards a Sri Lankan Political Theology | Nathanael Somanathan



Make sure you visit the new CTS Bookstore and check out the latest publications

CTS Publishing launches three new Sinhala books



Three Sinhala books authored by Prof G P V Somaratna were launched at the 2023 Graduation Service:

- Selected Writings by Prof G P V Somaratna translated into Sinhala
- A Glossary of Christian Terms: English - Sinhala
- Christianity is A Relationship

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