

Conclusion

In my travels I have visited many different kinds of markets, such as flea markets in Seville, black markets in Belgrade, floating markets in Bangkok, the stock market in Wall Street, the Covered Bazaar in Istanbul, the Ginza in Tokyo, flower markets in Holland, fruit markets in Lyons, ancient “souks” in Damascus, a deserted slave market in Santo Domingo, the Forum in Rome and the great market of religious paraphernalia located in the Vatican.

We are surrounded by marketplaces. Some are literal markets, where money, goods and people flow freely. Modern Western markets have grocery stores, cinemas, fruit vendors, sporting goods suppliers, restaurants, fast food outlets, clothing distributors, travel agencies, IT service centres, news agencies and much more. Others are virtual markets, consisting of “places” (such as the Internet) where people meet, work and play together. Both are, in their own ways, modern equivalents of the ancient “agora”, the locus of social intercourse.

If the Church of Jesus is to make an impact in the postmodern world it must be centred here and speak the language of the common man and woman. That is what Jesus did. That was why He connected. That is what drove the early church and “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6).

Evangelist Billy Graham recently said, “I believe that one of the next great moves of God is going to be through believers in the workplace”. Christians everywhere are being mobilized to by God to make a difference in their world of work.

In this series, we have addressed the dual values that prevail in the Kingdom of God and the non-Christian world around us. We have emphasized that all Christians are full-time ministers for Christ, regardless of their occupation. We have looked at the life of Jesus in a non-Christian world. Finally, we have cited examples from the Bible that reveal how “ordinary” people surrendered to God were able to make “extraordinary” differences in their generations and continue to speak to ours. The challenge is bridging the gap in our time and space.

“For the glory of Jesus Christ”

The following is a true story of what one man was able to accomplish as a Christian in the marketplace – or, rather, what God accomplished through him.

Orchard Road is the shopping Mecca of Singapore. The vast majority of the nine million visitors who pass through Changi International Airport each year end up in the shopping malls of Orchard Road where the lights and sounds create a shoppers’ paradise. The strip is also a popular destination for Singaporeans.

One of the most impressive buildings in Orchard Road is a department store called *Tangs*, adjacent to the Marriott Hotel. Few visitors know the story of this landmark that has come to be regarded as a Singaporean shopping institution. It is worth recounting.

Tangs was created by Tang Choon Keng. Initially selling door-to-door from a hired rickshaw, CK Tang built a retail business worth millions of dollars. He opened his first store on Singapore's River Valley Road in 1934, quickly establishing a reputation for stocking traditional Chinese handicrafts.

In the late 1950s he decided the time had come to expand and against the advice of friends in business he bought a small plot of land on the then unfashionable Orchard Road. Business boomed. In the early 1980s the Orchard Road store was expanded to more than 15,000 square metres and five floors of shopping space.

The son of a Presbyterian preacher, CK Tang was a committed Christian and until he passed on control to a new generation his store was the only one in Orchard Road to be closed on Sundays. This was so that his staff could go to church. Tang used to say that his success was due in part to honesty, integrity and value for money. But he and his wife were also open in declaring that the main reason he did well was the blessing of God. Long before the emergence of Singapore's mega-churches, Tang unashamedly shared his faith with friends and business colleagues. The retail industry was literally his "marketplace", where he believed God called him to serve others.

Tang would meet with his staff and share his faith in Christ. He would encourage them to seek God's will for their lives and put integrity into their decision-making and honesty into their inter-personal relationships. He was a great believer in people knowing their God-given vocation and pursuing it because the calling carried its own enabling. He would pray with fellow-Christians in the business. Tang believed God would give them strength and ideas to become what He planned, if they would put aside time to listen to His voice.

On 4 September 2000 CK Tang died. He was 100 years old. One life. Soon past. But what Tang did continues to speak to our generation. A plaque in the congested main thoroughfare, overlooking the corner of Orchard and Scotts Roads says it all and is a reminder to us of what the surrendered life can accomplish in peoples' lives for eternity.

TANG PLAZA

NAMED IN HONOUR OF
MR TANG CHOON KENG
AND THE LATE MRS TANG SOK KIAR

DEDICATED TO
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST
17 FEBRUARY 1995

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

What will be *your* legacy in *your* marketplace?