

## Post-SARS reality check

Reality checks are good. Firstly, they help us to view the happenings around us in a more realistic and personal way. Rather than dismiss them as irrelevant and distant happenings, we begin to see that changes in the environment do actually affect us directly or indirectly. For example, the war in Iraq was not a distant event. Most of us in Singapore felt the impact when Wall Street dipped, and our fathers begin to lose their jobs and income. Secondly, reality checks also help us to be more realistic about our own soul condition. When a crisis hits home, like SARS, we become more aware of God's protection and the privilege and joy of living.

The war in Iraq and the SARS outbreak were troubling crises that shook the world, including Singapore in the first part of the year. The crises are not exactly all over. The Middle-east tension can potential erupt into another bloody conflict, though I doubt it will end in another war. The SARS is more or less under control. It can happen again, we all know. But at least we are all definitely now in a safer sphere, and more prepared when it breaks out again.

Now that these things are put behind us, people just want to get back into the streets to shop, to eat, to party and to hang loose. Everywhere I hear people saying, "Let's go out and play".

Sure, we cannot be gloomy all the time. Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 3 that there is a time for everything under the sun. There is a time for gloom and a time for cheer. But in putting the past behind, we must never put the lesson of providence behind as well. In both crises that happened in the year so far, God is the one who caused it to happen from behind the scene. He does this in order to teach us important lessons about life and faith. When gloomy trials loom large over our heads, we should especially lament and turn to God in faith and discover the unusual lessons about life and faith.

I am not suggesting that we should remain indoors and continue our mood of gloom. But there is something inappropriate when the first pictures following a "SARS free" declaration from WHO are pictures of pubbing and partying at Boat Quay. (This is of course to be expected from the world). I wholeheartedly support the Government's move to get the people back into life; and at the same time, take a cautious approach. But I also believe that we need to learn why God has let the crises happened. It is easier to discover the lessons now that most of us are less panicky about the SARS crisis. Why did God send us two major troubles in the first period of 2003? What is He teaching us?

Post-SARS Singaporeans are definitely more careful about health and hygiene. One spit can cost you \$500. For people with sinus, we better not let the tissue fly from the table to the floor. But we are also less tolerant towards those beautiful feline creatures. Alas, a cleaner home, but a less gracious people.

But let us do better as God's people. Let us put the crises behind, but let us do a reality check and learn the lessons that God wants us to learn from the global crises. And let us press forward to the high calling of attaining the heavenly prize in Jesus Christ.

**By Pastor Cheah Fook Meng**