

Question: What does the Transformasphere Movement mean to you?

Having come from a pre-Christian home, I found myself growing up with a secular mindset. "Study hard now and you'll get to enjoy life later on." "If you want a good life, work hard and get good grades in school." These had been what I heard from my parents over and over again since kindergarten. So I grew up with this kind of mindset for the earlier part of my life, until I came to know Jesus Christ. For the first time in my life, I began hearing something different from what I have been taught. "Study hard and do your best in school because God can use you." With this new found motivation, my life changed dramatically. From being an average student in school, I began to do well in school and eventually made it to one of the top high schools in the nation in Singapore. But the Lord's blessings did not end there. He gave me an overseas scholarship to pursue an engineering degree at one of the top colleges in the States: The University of Michigan. When I first started off my college education, I asked God how I could serve Him with what He had given me. What could I do for Him with an engineering degree?

Over the past four years of my engineering studies, God has helped me to realize that my engineering degree can be used for His glory. Although engineers may not be able to come up with a good business plan or model, they have the technical know-how to design a product or system that will enhance the business model and give immense value to the customer. Engineers may not be able to heal the sick, but they can improve living conditions that may be the cause of the illness in the first place. Take for example the lack of accessibility to clean water in some parts of the world. The lack of clean water supply in these places has led to outbreak of diseases like cholera and typhoid, causing much suffering and heartaches in the lives of people. Engineers can come in and develop proper treatment technology and build facilities that make clean water accessible to these people. This is just one of the many problems that the world faces today and certainly, engineers are in the position to address these problems.

The most important thing that God has shown me is the relevance of engineering in the world. There is a need for engineers all over the world. Because of this, engineers have high job mobility. They can go anywhere and find a job relatively easily. What does this mean? This means that God can use engineers in missions, the work of bringing the gospel message to people groups that have not heard about Jesus Christ. Most of the unreached people groups left in the world are in third world countries, places where there are significant amounts of development going on and a need for engineering expertise. In some of these countries, officials would not allow clergy into their country. However, they would welcome an engineer into their country to help them develop a new technology or address an issue. Hence, an engineering degree would allow me access to places where traditional missionaries cannot enter.

An engineering degree can make a difference. God can use engineers to fulfill His kingdom purposes, in ways no less than other spheres. If you are an engineer, I hope you will join me in using our profession to impact and transform the world, not only with the technical knowledge and training that we received from an engineering degree, but also with the gospel message that many has yet to hear.

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Question: What is your vision for your sphere of influence?

Every year, my program hosts a Thanksgiving-Graduation dinner. This event is a time of gratitude, celebrating the successes of those who have overcome so many barriers in life. I love this social event because it reminds me of the purpose of why I am a social worker: I get to see how God changes people's lives.

When I first wrote this essay, I struggled to find the words that best describe the past six years without sounding too idealistic or pessimistic. As I reflect upon the past, different stories and people's faces blur together in my mind. Although there are many different facets of social work, my field has been with the homeless and low-income individuals and families. By responding to this calling, God has led me to work as a case manager, shelter operations manager, and now a team leader of a clinical program that provides wraparound services for homeless individuals.

Whenever I tell people I work with the homeless, I get different reactions. Some say that my work is noble because I am helping people. Others readily ask questions about the homeless people they see on the street begging for money or wonder why they cannot get a real job. A few will strike up a conversation about how the government is going to resolve this issue through changing the system, or not.

What is significant for me in my sphere of influence is the journey I take with staff and participants. I can share in the joy when I see person's face light up when they finally have a place to live after two years of homelessness. I can empower another person who continues to say "no" daily to the bondage of using alcohol, cocaine, and heroin for the past two years. Successes can be found when people finally get a job after many rejections due to their criminal history, slowly fix their credit mistakes, or take responsibility for their child support. A breakthrough is when a woman comes into the program and finally says "no" to the abuse by her boyfriend and can begin the steps to heal. When people begin to take those difficult routes to change their lives, I remember the purpose of my calling.

On the other hand, the journey is not easy. Studies say that the average social worker burns out in their field after two years. And I can understand why. My phone constantly rings and people have many needs. There are times that I want to release the tears and pain after I counsel someone through a devastating situation. I am challenged to love when a person after they have yelled and threaten me because they are in a state of crisis. There are moments I wonder if a person with persistent mental illness will find peace after counseling and taking daily medication. At the end of some days, I am called to lead staff in resolving a resident's conflict with the police or need to clean out a vacant, trashed out apartment. Sometimes, all the above events happen in one day. In those moments, my only comfort is found when I cling onto God's strength to be made perfect in my weaknesses.

My vision for this field is not glamorous, but I hope it is compelling. I can think of a dozen of things that I would love to create to eradicate homelessness. However, my real prayer for every social worker is that he/she will be the hands and feet of Jesus to the weak, the poor, the dysfunctional, and the unworthy. One day, I would like to train future Christian social workers who will enhance practice by embodying this philosophy.

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