

# KIRBSTONES

## ALONG THE NARROW WAY

**curb-stone** (kürb'stön') - *noun* - one of the stones or a range of stones forming a curb, as along a sidewalk or roadway. Historically, the curbstones were placed vertically along the edges of the roadbed and the paving material was backfilled against the row of curbstones. The curbstones served <sup>(1)</sup>to hold the material in the roadbed, <sup>(2)</sup>to prevent the scattering of the material along the edges, and <sup>(3)</sup>to define the road itself from all the adjoining areas.

<sup>13</sup> "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT.  
<sup>14</sup> BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT." - MATTHEW 7:13-14 - NIV

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All you POD people, listen up! "Who are the POD people," you ask? What constitutes a POD person? With acronyms having taken over the world, as we know it, Christians now have a place among the myriad acronyms that we encounter in our lives. For decades we have referred to each other and to groups, to which we belong, by their initials. Translating these can foster frustration.

Society has adopted so many acronyms that we often become confused. I see EPA, and I wonder if the information I am reading is referring to the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the (UMC) United Methodist Church, or if it might be a nod to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Similarly, when we see headlines for something happening with reference to the SEC, I cannot help but wonder if the news is about the Southeastern Athletic Conference. It could be a headline regarding a decision about the Securities and Exchange Commission. We have to stay on our toes!

It is easy to fall prey to the ambiguity and confusion around acronyms. For our purposes in this column we will examine the acronym POD. However, we will look to the person responsible for this, as it relates to the continued revitalization of Christian congregations.

Bishop Sundo Kim has taught the truths behind this acronym for over half a century, but I will take responsibility for naming the POD people. Bishop Kim is the founding pastor of Kwanglin Methodist Church in Seoul, South Korea. It is the largest Methodist Church in the world with 94,000 members. No, they do not meet in one worship service as one congregation, but they do thrive as active participants in accountability to their participation in small groups.

Bishop Kim received his M.Div. at Wesley Theological Seminary about fifty years ago through the generous support of a Washington, DC, adult Sunday school class, returning to his homeland as the founding pastor at Kwanglin.

Bishop Kim was invited to speak at our Tuesday chapel at Wesley Theological Seminary, when I was there nearly two decades ago. He focused his remarks on his congregation's thankfulness to God for the opportunities they had to share in the Body of Christ. At that time their membership was approximately 75,000.

This faithful South Korean pastor told our group that the reason for the size of the congregation was a simple formula, which they followed in everything they were about, every planning session, and every activity at Kwanglin.

Bishop Kim taught us that the Kwanglin Methodist Church firmly adhered to the concept of being a congregation with (1) an active prayer life, (2) a dedication to obedience to God's Word, and (3) a plan for discipleship that they were careful to execute. *God blessed this!*

There it is in all its simplicity! While the acronym was my idea, this formula defies all the complicated excuses we have made for the poor health of our post-modern churches. We can do this! Prayer. Obedience. Discipleship.

If every Christian congregation adopted this POD methodology, I can see all our issues fading into the past. This is what God is after in our lives! Why does this continue to be so difficult?

If our Creator has always desired to be in communication with us through a healthy, vibrant prayer life; and, if God desires his people to be obedient to his Word; and, if God has commanded us to go out and make disciples of all nations, I wonder what would happen if we were to adhere to the three simple concepts of Prayer, Obedience, and Discipleship.

How simple is it? Where do we begin? Where do we enlist? How can we not be the Church that God desires? Why have we failed for so long? Are you with me?

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**19 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."**

**Matthew 28:19 — NIV**