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SHARE YOUR STORY

BAPTISM

2023

—

FOR GOD
SO LOVED
THE WORLD THAT
HE GAVE
HIS ONE AND
ONLY SON,
THAT WHOEVER
BELIEVES IN HIM
SHALL NOT PERISH
BUT HAVE
ETERNAL LIFE.
JOHN 3:16

—

God works in many different ways. In these pages you hold in your hand, you will see how He has worked in the lives of these baptism candidates. One of the many privileges I get to enjoy as a pastor is teaching the baptism class. I get to meet some wonderful people and hear stories of how God has changed their lives. They are now sharing these stories with you.

The stories in this testimonial are written by the baptism candidates. They reveal how different people from different backgrounds experience God in totally different ways. They all, however, point to the fact that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. They confirm that Jesus is the answer to our quest for meaning in life. I hope that some of these stories will connect with you.

The Christian faith is not a religion, but a relationship with our one true God. It is personal. It is real. And it changes lives. We do not serve a distant God. We serve a living God who wants to be connected with us. The Bible calls us God's children and in that relationship, we can see how close He considers us to be. He loves us and wants the best for our lives (see John 3:16).

If you are not a Christian, I encourage you to read these stories. I pray that you will see something that sparks your curiosity and moves you forward in your search for God. The Bible promises us that we can find God when we seek Him with all our hearts (Jeremiah 29:13).



Jeff Lam
Deputy Director
Equipping and Care Group Ministries

YOUTH BAPTISM • 2023

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ADEN MAHIL

Hi, my name is Aden Mahil, and I'm very proud to be here today to declare my faith through baptism.

The road to getting here today has not been easy. In the past, I thought that materialistic products would fill this emptiness, but they did not. Although I had all the games, clothes, and everything I wanted, the satisfaction was temporary and would ultimately fade away after a few days.

I disrespected the Lord, detested Jesus, and misunderstood the true meaning of the Word. I often found myself cursing God for the problems of this world. I spiralled into depression and self-harm because I did not know what I was missing. It did not matter how many times I dyed my hair or engaged in activities I thought were fun; I did not feel happy in myself or feel welcomed in my group of friends.

This continued into 2022, where I reached my lowest point mentally and struggled with self-harm and depression once more. I felt I had hit rock bottom and could not sink any further. I often found myself eating excessive amounts of junk food as a way to fill the void, which made me feel even worse afterward. I did not like anything, and I felt that surely there could not be a God, given I was dealt such a poor hand. I disrespected God, disrespected churches, and felt that I would never get out of this dark ravine I had found myself in.

That was until my brother found the Lord in late 2022. He and I had been going through similar experiences, and I wondered how he could believe in God if we had lived through the same situations. At first, I found his faith to be a joke, and I saw his belief as foolishness and idiocy. However, he was truly happy in the Lord. He had a happiness within him that I had not felt in years, and I really wondered, "What could make him feel this way after everything that has happened? Shouldn't he be as low as I am?"



My views on Christianity began to slowly but surely change. I went to church with him for the first time, and though I was still shy and stubborn, deep down, I understood what had touched him.

THE IDEA THAT JESUS STILL LOVES ME
AND DIED FOR ME DESPITE ALL
I HAD DONE TRULY TOUCHED ME.

These feelings did not fully manifest until June 11th, 2023. As with every evening, I was in my room playing video games. I had started going to the gym and had made significant physical progress, feeling physically better. However, mentally, I still felt that I had to improve, but I did not know what would help me reach that stage. That is until I had the realisation that if there was a God, He should have detested me in concept. Now, I had heard that God loved everyone, but I thought, "Surely that only applies to the believers. Why would He love a sinner like me who has gone against Him countless times, even in the last few days alone?"

As I began to do research on Christian beliefs, I realised something that truly changed the way I saw the Lord. Despite all my transgressions, He still loves me and always will. You see, human love can be gained and lost in an instant. Practically no one will love you if you trespass against them enough. However, the idea that Jesus still loves me and died for me despite all I had done truly touched me. I felt the presence of the Spirit, and for the first time in three years, I truly felt joy.

I asked my brother in which order I should read the Bible, and upon reading Scripture, I felt the Spirit working again. I cried at some points, and I felt happy at others. However, throughout all of John and Matthew, which I read over the summer, I felt a joy that, for the last few months, has not left me, and I know it never will now that I have accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour.

I know the road of faith going forward will not be easy. However, I know that my faith can move mountains, and with the Lord, anything is possible.

ELAINE POON

I grew up in a Christian household, so faith has always been a part of my life. I never doubted God as a kid, in fact, I was certain my relationship with God was indestructible when I joined the Youth Worship Team, spent time with my peers, and experienced the love and grace God has given to each of us. However, everything took a sharp turn when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Unfortunately, life can throw some pretty heavy stuff our way, and various mental illnesses including anxiety and depression hit me hard at that time. I felt I was drowning in darkness, with no way out. What affected me the most was how I perceived my relationship with Christ. I remember thinking, when the anxiety was in full swing, that I was hopeless.

Those times were terrifying. I repented of every sin I could think of, and then, like Luther, I began repenting of things that probably were not sins at all. During this time, I realised that I am not the master of my fate, nor captain of my ship. It was here that I began to turn my eyes away from myself and back to Jesus. Two truths gave me footing. “Was God powerful enough to stop this?” Yes; and “did He know what I was going through?” Again, the answer was, yes.

With these two truths, the sovereignty of God began to take root. Regardless of how I felt, the Word of God said I was His child. This meant He loved me. So, if He knew this was happening, and He was powerful enough to stop it, it must be His decision that I face this: a decision He made because He loved me.



I would cry out to the Lord and say, “If you want me to draw close to you, why would you allow me to face something that makes You seem unapproachable?” Even though my anxiety turned a blind eye to Jesus, and every emotion in my body said He was not there for me, I had something more secure and more trustworthy than my feelings. I had the Word of God.

My anxiety forced me to trust His Word regardless of my fears. He is greater than our feelings. Nowhere in the Scripture does it tell me to trust my emotions, but it continually tells me to trust His Word.

The Lord began to give me a firm Scriptural footing. The anxiety still raged, and I was still miserable, but I had a foundation. I remember attending a get-together at a friend’s house. It was one of those beautiful summer evenings when everything was just right, and my soul was in anguish. I remember looking at the beautiful setting sun and saying to myself. “I may never ever have another pleasant moment in this life, but I have Jesus and He is everything” I began to see that this life is not the place we are called to rest. Our rest comes later.

This life is where we are to reflect the light of Jesus, and often, the light shines brightest in dark places. I would regularly find comfort in His Word that I would have never known existed had I not been chained up in the prison of anxiety. I also began to notice that He would put someone else in my path that needed the same comfort I had been given. Had I not experienced a similar darkness, I would not have been able to comfort them in the Lord.

THIS LIFE IS WHERE WE ARE TO REFLECT THE LIGHT OF JESUS, AND OFTEN, THE LIGHT SHINES BRIGHTEST IN DARK PLACES.

There are many other things I learned during this time. For example, I began to realise just how many worship songs focused on me, the singer, and how I was feeling. What I needed most during this time was not music that pointed me to my feelings; what I needed was praise that pointed me to my God. An example would be the song *Firm Foundation*, proclaiming that Jesus will not fail no matter how the ground might shake or how hard the winds might blow. Eventually, the Lord moved me out of that period of my life.

I still struggle with chronic conditions, but the symptoms are different now. They can still be devastating, but the depression is not what it used to be. Now, my feelings often do line up with the truth of His Word, but I still know where my foundation lies. I am not anchored to the sinking sand of my emotions; I stand on the solid rock of the Word of God.

ETHAN DOO

I was born into a Christian family who loved and cherished me. My parents would bring me to church every Sunday and we often prayed together before meals. We always do devotions every Sunday, where my mother told me stories that helped me be closer to Christ. My grandparents would also bring me to church whenever I went back to my home country. Thanks to them, I have known Christ for almost my entire life, and I am thankful for this fact.

My parents brought me to Sunday school and Kids Club since I was young where I learnt many stories and lessons about Jesus. Even though I found it boring at first, I gradually started to believe in Christ, making new friends as we got closer and closer to Christ together. My mother led me to accept Christ as my personal Lord and Saviour when I was 5 years old. She also led me to rededicate my life to Christ when I was 12 years old. After I got older, I started joining Island Youth, where I learnt even more about Christ through the camps that I attended and sermons that I heard.

My life has been relatively peaceful, with my faith in God increasing gradually and stably, from my early Sunday school, devotions and Island Youth. All these things have helped me in this regard, but sometimes I would doubt my faith, from people talking about losing their faith in God, to the passing away of my relatives. However, I would always remember all the things that I have been taught, and all the stories that helped me become closer to God, along with my friends and family. These experiences have all helped me regain my love of God. These experiences have also strengthened my belief in God even further, allowing Jesus to be more and more involved with my life, and for that, I am thankful to Him.

Even though my faith in God has been steadily increasing, I am not without my faults. There are still ways that I can improve on my faith, for example, with despair and overthinking about certain parts of my life. But I always remember this verse from Romans 8:28, “and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose”. I think about how I should trust in God more, and how because I love God, I should trust in the plan He has for me, and thus, should be more confident in Him. And even if I am going through adversity, I should have faith in Him.

God has done a lot for me. He has created a loving family for me, provided enough food, a home for me to live comfortably, and much more. I am currently going through my final year of exams before going to university, where I will face many more trials

and tribulations. But I have faith that God will have a plan for me, and I should trust in Him to guide me through my life, through this point, through university, and through any adversity that I am going to face. Thus, I am eternally grateful to Him, which leads me to my conviction to be baptised, where I can declare myself happily as a Christian.

**I AM ETERNALLY GRATEFUL
TO HIM, WHICH LEADS ME TO MY
CONVICTION TO BE BAPTISED,
WHERE I CAN DECLARE MYSELF
HAPPILY AS A CHRISTIAN.**



JENAILA R LIM

God blessed me with a Christian family, enabling me to grow up in a Christian household. However, my life as a Christian was not smooth sailing. Looking back, I realised that despite the fact that I knew about what was beyond death and the salvation Jesus brought to us, deep inside, I felt that doing what my understanding of what God intended and wanted us to be or do was lame. Moreover, I realised I never admitted this to myself when I was younger since I did not want to think of myself as a ‘bad’ child.

To be more specific, I disliked going to Sunday school, reading the Bible, or anything alike because in the back of my mind, I thought being a Christian was uncool and troublesome. From what I remember, my mum would often encourage me to go to Sunday school and I would sometimes agree but attend it half-heartedly. Moreover, when I was young, I hated reading; I saw the idea of reading as uninteresting and dreary which is why I avoided reading even the Bible. Additionally, I realised I disliked Sunday school since I felt forced to do things outside of my comfort zone, the activities the teachers assigned seemed troublesome, I could not keep up with the other children, and everyone seemed to have their own group of friends resulting in me feeling a bit excluded.

With that said, that did not mean I did not want to know more about God even back then. However, I never took the initiative to become closer with God (until now). I would sometimes pray at night when I remember, but sometimes do not, thinking that it is annoying and difficult. However, I can say that I was a happy child growing up; I just did not know God personally aside from the fact that Jesus died for our sins so we can be saved.

At the age of ten, I became a bit more knowledgeable, and my eyes were more opened; as if my blurry view of the world became a bit clearer. I believe that I took God a bit more seriously and became closer to Him. I recall a night where I asked my mum, “How do I know if I will be in heaven with God when I die?” and we had a conversation that ended with my mum and I praying together and accepting Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. That age was the age I started to make attempts to read the Bible, try to understand the preacher in Sunday services, and generally give more effort to know more about God; things were getting better.

Unfortunately, when I turned 11, I discovered something that eventually became an addiction. At times, I still longed for more. Despite having some friends, something still felt missing. You could say it was greediness, but whatever that feeling was, it made me find out about graphic manga. I fell into an addiction to reading those mangas although I knew it was wrong. There was also something tapping my shoulder or something telling me at the back of my mind that what I was doing was wrong, but I would crave to read those mangas.

At the start of the month, I finally told my mum about my addiction because I got fed up with keeping secrets, lying, and hiding. In the past, I would often say to myself that I would stop someday or today and that telling my parents (mum) was unnecessary, but the guilt and the voice at the back of my mind kept bugging me. I have only gotten much more serious about God recently, and I want to keep knowing Him and live like Jesus. Although my story may be disgusting and someone like me should not be a Christian, forgive me, but I want to know about God. Personally, I want the day of my baptism as a sort of mark or point in my life where I publicly announce that I call myself a Christian and the day that I am ready to start my journey as a Christian without any distractions (my addiction), and stop being a people pleaser. I want to put God above everything and everyone else.

I WANT TO PUT GOD ABOVE EVERYTHING
AND EVERYONE ELSE.



JODIE LI

Having grown up in a Christian household, I have always known about Jesus ever since I could remember. Like many Christians, I attended church from a young age and enjoyed my Sundays having fun in service with my peers. Throughout my elementary school years, God was always present in my life and blessed me immensely with His grace. I lived out my life in faith and my childhood was filled with bliss and joy.

However, as I entered my adolescent years, I slowly drifted away from Christ and fell away from my faith. Even though I always believed in His presence and knew He was a true and existent God deep in my heart, I was so consumed and blinded by the values imposed by the world that I gradually lost myself. I started placing my self-worth on what others thought of me and battled to satisfy worldly expectations. I sought approval from others and spent my time and energy trying to prove myself to the world. I felt distressed, confused, and full of fear. To fulfil worldly expectations, I did things I was not proud of and hated myself for committing sins that my younger self would never have imagined myself doing. This only led me to stray further away from Christ, which finally resulted in a breaking point. I felt worthless, sinful, and ashamed of myself. I hated myself and could not picture how I could redeem myself in those moments.

Thankfully, God always has His way in me. God refused to give up on me even during the darkest of times. Like a Father, He brought me back to Him by introducing me to Island ECC. I was a lost sheep, and God was the Shepherd. Through listening to the sermons and sharing by the youth pastors, God spoke to me, disciplined me, and comforted me in many ways time and time again. I felt incredibly loved, thankful and could not even fathom how great the mercy I received from the Highest of the Highest was. Gradually but surely, I slowly rebuilt my relationship with Christ. Although it is nowhere near perfect, I am confident to say that I am a child of God today and that I have a place

in my Father's house. I know that I can always turn to God no matter the situation, and the joy and peace I have from that have been the most wonderful and irreplaceable gift I have ever known.

I still go through countless temptations and battles each day. Like many students in Hong Kong, I worry about my future and tend to rely on myself sometimes. I make mistakes and fall, and am learning how to entrust God with everything, be it my academics, health, future, and even marriage. However, I know that no matter what happens, I am and will always be safe in God's hands. I know that God will lead me and guide me in my journey, to walk and live in truth, and that He will always be the source of my strength and joy. It continues to amaze me that the same God who created the heavens and the earth has a purpose for me, a 17-year-old teenager, in His plan, that I am chosen and not forsaken. Even though I do not know what God has planned for me, I want to continue walking in faith. I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit and live a life in Christ.

A major change I noticed in my journey with Christ was the betterment of my relationship with my parents. God has played a huge role in mending my relationship with my parents and I have since then felt even closer to them than ever before. I trust in God and accept Jesus into my life. Accepting Christ has been the greatest blessing I have ever known.

I AM CONFIDENT TO SAY THAT I AM
A CHILD OF GOD TODAY AND THAT I HAVE
A PLACE IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE.



YIDA SUN

My name is Yida. I was born in China and raised as an atheist by my maternal grandparents who were both scientists. My parents had moved to Italy when I was only three years old, looking for a better life and future. At the age of 11, I joined them in Italy. The first years there were very difficult for me. I felt very alone. I had left my friends, my grandparents who were very dear to me, and I found myself in a foreign environment and culture, whose language I did not know. I had no friends, and my parents were in the midst of a litigious divorce. One of my teachers took care of me. She was very kind and affectionate to me, helped me with Italian, and introduced me to the Catholic religion. She spoke to me of faith, and of God; we read the Gospels together. This introduction to God had made me feel less alone and had sustained me through those difficult early years.

A few years went by. During my final year in high school, I decided to move to the U.S as an exchange student. There again, I found myself alone, without family nor friends in a new country, with a different culture and language. And once again, God came into my life. The host family I was staying with took me to their church, this time it was a Baptist church. And there I met other teenagers from different parts of the world who had moved to the U.S. I enjoyed going to the Sunday services and the various educational and social activities. I made friends and I felt I was part of the community that I belonged to.

After high school, I continued my university studies in the U.S and I went on to have a career that I am proud of. I have worked and lived in many countries and have travelled the world. Two

and a half years ago, I met Adam, who recently became my fiancé. He has a kind soul and a gentle heart, and he adores me. But he comes from a very different culture and religion. He is an Egyptian and a practicing Muslim. With him we talk a lot about faith, both the Christian and the Islamic faith. During our conversations and discussions, I have often “defended” Christianity. It is precisely through these exchanges that I felt my love for God and my desire to make my faith public through baptism as my declaration. I believe God has revealed Himself to me throughout the years, on numerous occasions.



Even though my faith has not always been constant, and I have turned to Him perhaps only in times of difficulties and needs, He has always been there for me. So, it is time for me to fully embrace Him, to surrender to Him and to trust Him.

Adam understands my decision and has accepted it. In fact, we have decided to get married, despite our religious and cultural differences, which we are fully aware of. However, this has not been an easy decision. I know there will be many challenges and difficulties along the way, that we will always have to consider the other’s point-of-view and be willing to meet halfway. But I am also convinced that our differences can enrich us and make us more tolerant and accepting. It is God who gave me the strength and the confidence to embark on this exciting new journey, and I know He will be there with me along the way.

EVEN THOUGH MY FAITH HAS NOT
ALWAYS BEEN CONSTANT...HE HAS
ALWAYS BEEN THERE FOR ME.

TRACY CHENG

Growing up in an Asian culture, we were taught at home, at school and by the culture to work hard for everything we wanted — that there's no free lunch. Also, our culture does not encourage sharing feelings, as it is considered showing signs of weakness. As a result, I grew up with a lot of inner vows. "It is not acceptable to make the same mistake twice", and "I should only rely on myself and not anyone else".

Having these kinds of inner vows, I strove at work because I had high expectations of myself, but I neglected my own feelings and most of all, I didn't know how to love myself. The problem with not knowing how to love myself also meant that I didn't know how to receive love from others. There was a big gap between what I knew (head knowledge) and what I felt.

The disconnection between head knowledge and feelings finally reached a tipping point; I started questioning the purpose of life and what a truly fruitful and meaningful life meant. Overthinking didn't give me answers, rather, it added more weight to unbearable stress at work. I was totally lost.

I was in a pit during that period of time; I could not cope with my emotions. I eventually quit my job and went overseas to take a break. That's when I started reading the Bible to look for the truth and find answers. I can still picture the scene — I sat on a bench at the front of a church and bowed down in deep thought. When I raised my head and looked up, I saw the statue of Jesus Christ being nailed to the cross. We were face to face and emotions stirred deep within me that was inexplicable.



After I came back to Hong Kong, my ex-colleague introduced me to Island ECC, I then joined Alpha, Care Group, Grow Discipleship Class, Bible study and other groups to get to know God and develop a personal relationship with Him. It was a journey with spiritual highs and lows, and it still is.

Unlike some other followers, there was no instantaneous transformation in me. Rather, it has been a slow journey of growing faith. Faith sometimes is crushed by life challenges and doubts aroused. At times I walked away, but God pulled me back every single time; He has remained faithful.

Baptism is a public profession of my relationship with God, that I believe in the Saviour Jesus, who sacrificed Himself such that I am able to have a relationship with God. Baptism has another personal meaning to me given my history of walking away from God in difficult circumstances. It is to put death my old self so I will never walk away from Him again after I am given a new life in the Holy Spirit.

AT TIMES I WALKED AWAY,
BUT GOD PULLED ME BACK
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After meeting Jesus, I was given a new heart; I stopped bottling up myself with all the emotions and inner vows. I broke loose the chains and I feel a lot lighter and more free with the new heart by knowing that God will always be there for me. I have hope because He is faithful. He will never forsake me. He continues to give me faith, joy and hope which flows like an everlasting fountain. I get to see life from a different perspective. Free gifts do exist — grace through Jesus that sets us free and an almighty God whose thoughts are higher and plans are better than ours. I no longer have to do things on my own, using my own strength.

Faith is a journey. God never said there would be no hardships, but He promised that He will always be with me whenever I go.

TANIA NG

Having attended Sunday school with my siblings, I accepted Jesus as my Saviour as a young child through a prayer led by my youth leader. It seemed logical at that time as I had grown up hearing stories of Jesus' miracles and how He died on the cross to save us. As years passed, the same-age group of people attending the youth group slowly dwindled, as did my ties with the church community. I began attending church as a weekly routine but not letting God be a part of my everyday life.

I continued attending church throughout secondary school, hearing God's Word on Sunday but not letting God be a part of my day-to-day life, until I had an accident where I fractured my knee. Being the sporty person I was during my teenage years, I immediately lost all the chances of being active, and my source of freedom of movement and enjoyment. During my hospital stay, I experienced first-hand the community that surrounded me, my family, and the well-wishers from church that visited and sat with me. Instead of the anger I expected I would feel towards God for letting this accident happen, I felt God's grace for limiting my injury to just my knee, and that the accident didn't result in death. There were many reminders of God's loving hands that I experienced during my rehabilitation and recovery.

Soon after, I entered university and then the workforce. I no longer attended church regularly and occupied my time with studies/work, and sports. My newfound freedom to style life as I wanted only included God on the occasional Sunday. I allowed myself to live full of activities that left God out of the equation, however that newness and excitement soon dulled. At this time, my mother invited me to attend Island ECC, after only attending one service at the recommendation of her friend. Despite the far commute, I slowly started attending more and was more immersed into God's Word through the sermons and Scripture.

Looking for a way to be more involved in this community, I enrolled into the GROW study where I bumped into an old family friend who invited me to attend her Care Group. With fellow Care Group members, I then signed up for Ark dragon boat. I had a blast paddling, a new form of sport, as well as being a part of the Ark community. After the Ark season ended, I volunteered in Kid's Club and enjoyed seeing God work in the children's lives through their excitement at church.

As I filled my calendar with more activities, I started to burnout. My mind fatigued with all the busyness that I chose to occupy my time with. Though I attended service, I grew complacent in my walk with God; my heart wasn't there. I was living without truly living.

During COVID, my workplace became my focal point. I was overworked, sleep deprived, felt hollow, and my mind focused only on my job. I had lost direction in life, and since nobody could meet up, I was left alone with my thoughts. A verse from GROW came to me: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). I soon realised that God was there not only to protect my physical being but also to guard my heart and mind. I didn't need those walls around my heart that prevented me from opening to His Word, and to those surrounding me. That change in mindset shifted my priorities from being excessively involved, to finding a good balance between work and doing things I enjoyed.

Recently, I competed in a small weightlifting competition and most of my Care Group and family came to support; with some holding up banners. Feeling slightly embarrassed as it was just a local meet, I realised that God had placed these wonderful people in my life, and that I was a part of theirs. I'm more inclined to share when we gather as a Care Group to study the Word of God. Though I still have my downtimes of feeling alone like a fly on the wall, I know that God is with me, and that my journey with Him is ongoing. Those perceived dark times are not the end nor forever. "Trust in the LORD with all you heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

I SOON REALISED THAT GOD WAS THERE
NOT ONLY TO PROTECT MY PHYSICAL
BEING BUT ALSO TO GUARD MY HEART
AND MIND.



SHERWIN YAM

I grew up in a Roman Catholic girls school in Tsim Sha Tsui throughout my primary and secondary school life. During my childhood and adolescence, I did not know the difference between Catholicism and Christianity, but I always believed in the existence of God and would occasionally say a little prayer when I felt the need to.

After my high school graduation at the age of 19, a friend introduced me to Christian worship in an international church. I found worshipping in this church to be more relaxed, fun, and exciting compared to the traditional Catholic Mass I was accustomed to. Since then, I have felt more comfortable with Christian worship.

At the age of 23, I started feeling lost about my future, and a university classmate suggested that I place all my anxieties and worries in God's hands and to make Him the centre of my life. By doing so, God would be the driver, and I would be merely a passenger on life's journey. If I made Him the centre of my life, all my worries and anxieties would be like little dots that lined up neatly, and I only needed to trust that He would provide the best plan if I strive for my best. I would say that I somehow received Christ after receiving a little booklet from my university classmate, although my faith was not that strong.



After graduating from university, I became involved in a Christian community. Although I didn't attend services nor listened to sermons very often, I was part of a house church community. My house church leader would reach out to me. Looking back, I believe I was going through a mid-twenties crisis after graduating and entering the job market. I was exploring different aspects of life, including the Christian life. My work schedule was always very busy, and I had to juggle various activities and find time for rest.

I became a qualified solicitor of the High Court after completing my traineeship. I remember holding a Bible before me during my admission ceremony as a solicitor and taking an oath in front of an admission Judge to do my job to the best of my abilities. Since then, I have felt that my career path as a private practice solicitor has been like riding a roller coaster. There have been challenging times, such as dealing with difficult clients and working with demanding bosses, as well as exciting times, such as meeting deadlines, attending meetings, and making submissions before Masters at Court. I would say that God has been there all along, even though I was not a very devoted Christian and did not enjoy reading the Bible at that time, as I considered it an old-fashioned religious book.

Around November last year, during the peak of the Covid outbreak, I started rethinking and reflecting on the meaning of life. As a result, I attended a small class at a Christian church near my office. Under the influence of a pastor, I downloaded a Bible app, and since then, I have enjoyed reading Bible verses. The daily devotion and categorised Bible verses on various topics, such as friendships, family life, career, and different emotions, have been a source of inspiration for me.

I DO NOT KNOW WHAT
THE FUTURE HOLDS, BUT
I HAVE FAITH IN JESUS

I believe that the Holy Spirit is guiding me in my Christian faith and gradually shaping me. I do not know what the future holds, but I have faith in Jesus because "hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently" (Romans 8:24). I will live my life earnestly with childlike faith and hope.

RYAN CHAN

I grew up in a non-religious family, and I was initially brought into a Christian Primary School when I was 6. While my parents' decision may have been based solely on the academic ranking of the school, it was there that I was first introduced to God. Despite having to attend Christianity classes and listen to sermons, I didn't have strong beliefs at such a young age. I felt more like a routine participation rather than a genuine spiritual connection with the Lord.

However, there was one thing that left a lasting impression on me. It was the very first time I heard the song "Unreserved Love." This song brought me a sense of peace and comfort, even though I didn't fully understand its meaning at the time. It resonated with me on a deeper level and planted a seed of curiosity about faith and spirituality.

As I grew up and transitioned to a non-religious secondary school, the absence of believers in my daily life gradually led me to drift away from God. Without the support and guidance of Christians, I found myself becoming more distant from spiritual matters. This shift in my mindset was accompanied by the development of arrogant and rebellious behaviour, and I began to prioritise my relationships with friends over my family. The familial relationships widened further when left to study abroad in Canada at the age of 16.

God's plan for me became evident as I rediscovered my connection with Him in various ways. One significant event that deeply impacted me was the heart-breaking moment when my grandmother was diagnosed with stage four cancer during my teenage years. In her final days, she found solace and devoted herself to Christianity and God, leaving a lasting impression

on me. Additionally, my father, who had never been a believer, started working and serving in a Catholic Church in Hong Kong. Through his day-to-day conversations, he shared meaningful stories about the church's impact on the community. These stories resonated with me and sparked a curiosity about the true essence of faith.

But it was meeting my wife, Kelly, three years ago that truly deepened my understanding of the true spirit of the Christian faith, as she had brought me to Island ECC. The majority of her family members are devout Christians, and their love and support have played a crucial role in my spiritual journey. We met just before the onset of the pandemic, and together we have faced numerous hardships, always with the presence of the Lord. I am immensely grateful for Kelly's unwavering support, especially during the most challenging moments, and I firmly believe that she is the greatest gift I have received from God.

Looking back, I am thankful for the journey that brought me to this point. While my upbringing may have been non-religious, it was through the exposure to Christianity in my early years and the subsequent exploration of faith that I found my spiritual path. Today, I am committing myself to Jesus and declaring my faith in Him. Through this commitment, I trust that He will continue to strengthen me every step of the way, as well as grant a deep sense of peace, joy, and fulfilment found in Him.

I WHILE MY UPBRINGING MAY HAVE BEEN
NON-RELIGIOUS, IT WAS THROUGH THE EXPOSURE
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RONALD LI

Having been brought up in a non-Christian, single-parent family, I somehow wanted to go to church from the age of around seven. I took the bus and went to church on Sundays, alone. I sang hymns and prayed by following the adults. I prayed at church, at home for my mother's health, and other things that I dreamt of. But like seeds fallen on anything but good soil, my faith was challenged, shaken, and lost before primary school ended. For the next several decades, I continued to believe but would not commit.

At my Christian school, I had the best grades in Bible study, which was my favourite subject (with Biology). I particularly enjoyed Jesus' parables from the Good Samaritan to the Prodigal Son, and always admired His wit of answering difficult, trap questions through simple yet powerful counter-questions. I hid it so well that even my best friends did not know.

Faith without action is dead. James 2:17

As I started developing my profession, I was constantly in awe of God's designs before my very own eyes. What an amazing art the α -helical DNA structure is! I spent hours daily rotating and looking at the 3D architecture of cardiac proteins which precisely govern how our heart conducts electricity and pumps. One-thousandths (1000th) of a second difference is sufficient to lead to lethal arrhythmias. What appear to be stochastic are in fact on average governed by invisible laws. How amazing is it that a single atomic difference can account for a normal life, or deadly inheritable disease? You and I are all walking miracles! I appreciated the simplicity, and the complexity. Life is so simple that most of us take each breath for granted. Yet, the

underlying basis is so complex that thousands of years of collective efforts by even the most brilliant minds have not led to a full understanding, despite the very blueprint being right in our bodies!

Yet, God allowed me to make the first genetically engineered human heart cell beating in front of me, and to subsequently clone the first human mini-heart that defined my professional career. At crises and when challenged, I would quietly seek energy and comfort by listening to and singing "*Onward Christian Soldiers*" in the middle of the night.



Blessed are those who have not seen yet have believed. John 20:29

With all the miracles that God put before me, I witnessed and believed, but still would not commit or even admit. As my life prospered by earthly standards, my spiritual life was withering. I was surrounded by people but was lonely. I travelled the world but was lost. I reacted and existed but was not living. Things worsened when Covid, lockdowns, separations, economic meltdowns, political shakeups, de-globalization, climate changes struck so quickly within such a short time. I even farewelled my beloved mother during the time.

"Even Satan believes", I was told.

I was struck. So, who am I? I did not commit because I withdrew for convenience and was afraid of the obligations as a Christian. But God had patiently continued to guide and teach me by placing the right people at the right times in my life. All friends, opportunities, villains, and adversities have served to get the best out of me. Humbly, I wouldn't say that I was blind but now can see, but whatever this new start is, I know it is just the beginning.

GOD HAD PATIENTLY CONTINUED TO GUIDE AND TEACH ME BY PLACING THE RIGHT PEOPLE AT THE RIGHT TIMES IN MY LIFE.

For several decades, I hid behind my "good causes" but was in fact driven by desperation, insecurity, pride (or the lack of it), desires and anger. I now pray for God to grant me the wisdom to energise from love, patience, and hope; to equip myself better to spread God's Word. If I could have asked Jesus one question as a seven-year-old, it would have been "What is my role?".

As triathletes, we swim in the open ocean, bike, and run for miles and hours to reach our destination. Occasionally, we misstep or even gobble sea water but would still stride towards completion. Isn't this also true in life? An Ironman is nothing but a mortal man. What is more important? Earthly or eternal life? What is your destination? Have you started embarking on your own Ironman spiritual journey or better yet, helping others to do so?

Suffering produces endurance; endurance produces character; character produces hope.
Romans 5:3-4

PRASHEENA HARILELA MAHTANI

I have always believed in God. From my earliest memories, when I was two years old, I just knew there was a God. Being raised as a Hindu, I learnt all the prayers and tradition. After my marriage, I left for Africa and faced some challenges. I reached one of my darkest moments when I was in London. My faith was strong, and I turned to several Hindu Gods. I fasted, prayed, followed rituals, remained vegetarian, and prayed some more.

But nothing shifted. I felt hopeless. Then I met a Muslim man who felt my sadness and offered to pray for me, and together with me, so I said yes. I had tried all the prayers I knew, and nothing had happened, so I felt why not? I believe in prayers. When he prayed for me, he prayed in the name of Jesus and not Allah and I was bewildered. He said he was a born-again Christian.

Therein begins my journey. The next day there seemed to be a sliver of hope in my life which was astonishing, and I began to ask the question, “Who is Jesus?”. I had never read the Bible or been aware of any Christians around me, and suddenly they popped up everywhere, guiding me towards Jesus. I was a naughty child; I questioned Jesus incessantly. I asked Him for trivial things to prove that He was listening to me – like for a cab on an empty street when it was raining heavily in London. Then I asked Him for more serious things, like returning my daughter’s computer, which she left at school, with her IB work, and I just sat and prayed. It was found and not stolen.

I got more and more curious. Who is this God that seems to be hearing me? Why was it when I prayed to Hindu Gods nothing happened? Why is it that I feel His presence, like He is chasing me down, determined for me to know the truth? Who is Jesus? From that moment life just changed.

I moved from London back to Hong Kong, met more Christians who led me to Bible Study Fellowship (BSF), to study the Bible, and finally to Island ECC. I had never attended a church before. Only one person replied to me to attend this church but when I came here, all I saw was a coffee shop and a band – “this is not a church” I thought. I turned around to exit and there was this 6’ 5” blond-haired man with blue eyes that saw my confusion. He encouraged me to stay for the 11:30am service and offered to stay with me, though he had attended the earlier service.

I can’t even begin to tell you what I felt when I stood up for the first gospel song. I started crying incessantly and he kept giving me tissues which I stuffed into my rather large handbag. Then Pastor Brett spoke, and I felt he was only speaking to me, no one else, for it was pertinent to the challenging experience that I was having then. And I cried some more. He kept giving me more tissues and then I sat for the last gospel song, and he gave me more tissues.

WHY IS IT THAT I FEEL HIS PRESENCE, LIKE HE IS CHASING ME DOWN, DETERMINED FOR ME TO KNOW THE TRUTH?

At the end of the service, when I turned around to thank him, the seat was empty. We were in the middle of the middle row. I asked people from both sides if they had seen the man leave. They hadn’t. No one was there besides me, they said. I thought I was crazy but when I looked into my handbag, it was stuffed with used tissues. I want to cry even in writing this. No one at church had seen this man. I asked the pastors, some people in the congregation, yet no one had seen him. I wanted to thank him.

Jesus chased me down. He didn’t give up on me. He loved me so much that He accepted my cheeky behaviour, my doubts, my questioning, and my refusal to accept all the miracles that I saw. I owe my life to Jesus. He was with me at my darkest moments. He never gave up on me. I am a child of God! That is who I am!



NIQ LAI

In late 2022, I entered a very serious stage of depression whereby I had to take a three-month sabbatical from work, as to reset my life. Whilst experiencing depression is extremely difficult, it has cleared my mind to what is important in life — it has been a true blessing in disguise. Today my life is far richer as I appreciate my free will far more. Today, my happiness is determined by my controllable free will actions, rather than uncontrollable outcomes and the envy of material expectations. I stress that with God being the determinant, this does not mean I sit idly waiting for God's instructions, rather I need to exercise my free will and work hard to pick my path and run down it, yet embrace that the destination is what God has set for me.

As highlighted by Tim Keller in his book "Counterfeit Gods", idolatry (the worship of counterfeit gods) is a limited, partial account of reality that is raised over time to the final word on things. An example would be money = success = respect = perpetual happiness or even family & friends = love = perpetual happiness. A false idol always looks perfect until it is not.

Today, I look down on the naivety of the ancient Greeks with their elaborate temples housing idol gods representing their deepest desires, e.g., Aphrodite for beauty, Ares for war, Artemis for fertility etc, and wonder what craziness would make them believe that human sacrifices would please these made-up gods? Yet in the modern world, I have similar temples but disguised as office towers, studios, gyms, spas, etc. Today, instead of sacrificial human "killings", I had sacrificed my children and family via neglect as I placed career ahead of loved ones. Looking back at my life, I have made such sacrifices for my career but had justified it as "doing it for my family and for supporting life-saving charities".

Life is not lived in simple right or wrong, rather it is our free will that determines the balance that we live by. Things that start off good can become bad when done to excess. Ambition

vs greed, focus vs obsession, confidence vs arrogance, conviction vs stubbornness, optimism vs foolishness etc, are examples of the mix that we need to balance. False idols will always lead us to imbalance and only God can fill the void in my heart.

FALSE IDOLS WILL ALWAYS LEAD US TO IMBALANCE AND ONLY GOD CAN FILL THE VOID IN MY HEART.

The Bible says the worst thing that God could ever do to anybody worshiping a false Idol is to give them what they so desperately want, as the false idol never truly satisfies them. There is distraction in the chase but once the idol is caught and it fails to deliver the life enriching promise, this makes their life-long chase seem meaningless. Worship is not merely what we do in a temple or church, rather it is what we dedicate our lives to. The insidious thing about false idols is that these forms of worship tend to be unconscious, and most people don't sense them until it is too late. Alfred Adler, a leading psychologist said that it's very hard to find out one's idol by asking "What I am really living for?" as we tend to lie to ourselves with convincing and acceptable self-righteous answers like family, society etc. Rather a more authentic way to find out what you're truly idolising is to ask oneself "What is my worst nightmare that would almost take away my desire to live if lost?".

During my three-month sabbatical of deep reflection, I realised I had a "God-shaped hole" that cannot be filled by material outcomes. I was consumed by "vanity", i.e., seeking material status in vain. As I have embraced God, I now accept full responsibility for my free will decisions but now appreciate that God will determine the results, as I embrace God's determinations rather than struggle against them.



MATTHEW LIEW

My story is one of finding inner peace and realising God's presence, and sometimes intervention — in my many stages of life, especially during the difficult times.

I grew up in a Christian family. We went to church every Sunday, and often attended sermons delivered by visiting preachers. I only had a surface-level understanding of Christianity, which was not helped by the fact that I then left to the UK to study at boarding school.

Compounding this lack of understanding of Christianity was a pattern in my life of being let down by people, specifically those who called themselves Christians. What disappointed me the most was the hypocrisy of using Christianity as a label or "branding" to seem better than others, while in reality, they fell short of the standards required even of being decent people. This left me very unimpressed, and I gradually turned away from the faith.

Hence, the years from 13-22 were a period of self-reliance and independence. While adapting to a new environment, I became very driven and motivated, and went to study at university in Beijing as I wanted to work in Asia. Given this environment was completely different from the UK, I worked extremely hard to make sure I was on track academically and career-wise. It was a very intense period; I was sleeping at 2-3am almost every day, and at one point I even had to do my university finals in travel quarantine. Covid also made finding internships very difficult. One time I knew for sure God had intervened because I prayed to him in a moment of sheer desperation, and He granted me a miracle. But I was not yet ready to fully believe in God.

I felt all my effort was redeemed when I found a job I wanted. However, the workplace had its own set of challenges, and I didn't always achieve what I wanted even as I was giving it everything and working very hard as I always had. This led me to turn back to what I knew as a child — Christianity — and to seek answers there.



During these challenges, I learned to commit what I valued most — my career and my ambitions — to God. As I began a habit of praying and reading Scripture, I felt a burden gradually coming off my shoulders. I watched "The Passion of the Christ", a movie about Jesus' trial and crucifixion, and that really helped me understand grace and forgiveness. Whenever I feel frustration or resentment, I do my best to let go of these feelings, commit them to God and pray that I may forgive whatever happened in the past. I found that very effective in calming myself down.

I furthermore reflected on key moments where I got "lucky". Could it in fact be that God provided for me, and that it wasn't by my own strength alone that I accomplished everything I achieved? With the doors that closed, could it be a way for God to open other doors for me? Turning to God has been a humbling moment, but it has also encouraged me to be more reflective and therefore improve as a person.

WITH THE DOORS THAT CLOSED, COULD IT BE A WAY FOR GOD TO OPEN OTHER DOORS FOR ME?

Adversity has strengthened my character and opened up opportunities and growth — both personal and career-wise. If going through temporary setbacks are the price I must pay for turning back to salvation, so be it.

For those who feel let down by Christians, I deeply hope you can reconsider Christianity in a new light, seek new Christian role models, and forgive what happened in the past. Only God is perfect, and man is not, and you will always have the free will to choose salvation.

LYKA ANGELA DELOS NIEVES

Hebrews 10:36: “For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised.”

The quote mentioned above was significantly embedded in me. It is also one of the reasons why, up until now, I am doing my very best. However, persistence is not the only important thing here because the main thought is that by enduring, someone will extend their hands to aid the problematic situation that you are currently in.

I am the eldest daughter of my parents; while growing up, I shouldered all responsibilities, which is why my siblings depend on me a lot. It was tough as I did not have anyone to rely on. That was when I decided just to let everything go with the flow of life. Jumping from one country to another for work, I reached Hong Kong.

To my surprise, someone illuminated the path for me and became the bridge for me to connect with God.

I cried desperately, tired of everything, but I could not give up on life. My parents hammered the thought into my mind that everything happens for a reason, and God will not give us battles we cannot overcome. Hence, I confessed everything to God, including my most profound emotion: sadness — because of my situation, fear — due to the future I couldn’t see, and confusion about whether I am doing and selecting the correct choices in life.

Finally, I realized in Isaiah 41:10: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” From that verse, I concluded that the “righteous right hand” alludes to God’s power, authority, and blessing. God declares that He will “hold up” His people with His “righteous right hand,” indicating His desire to deliver them from the curse of sin and exile, and bless them with His presence and salvation. The sense of suffocation disappeared, and I could now breathe properly.



Through that experience, I could reflect on life — that by having faith and believing, He will open a path for you so you can be enlightened on how to approach things. It might be an exaggeration that I feel lost since I haven’t found my purpose before. I also felt helpless when one of the most important people in my life — my mother, was hospitalised.

I had very little money for her to undergo surgery. I didn’t know what to do during those times as I was far from her, but I prayed; I trusted God that everything would be fine. Now, my mother has successfully recovered.

They claim that how you regard God influences everything else in your life. Yes, that was ideal for me. By sharing that experience of mine with God, I gained peace of mind, healing, joy, and security. I have always had a challenging time walking with Jesus. I continue to go through numerous hardships, have to forgo my favourite pleasures, and must learn to act in ways that go against my natural tendencies, such as showing forgiveness or loving others. Despite that, I know I don’t have to do this alone. He supports and encourages me, and He never leaves my side.

The best decision I have ever made was to give my life to Christ, and I will never be able to thank or honour Him enough for approving the steps that brought me to this choice. Finally, I can rest assured because I am not alone on every journey I take; Matthew 28:20 states, “And behold, I am always with you, to the end of the age”.

BY HAVING FAITH AND
BELIEVING, HE WILL OPEN
A PATH FOR YOU

KIN WING CHAN

I come from a family leaning towards Christianity. Both of my parents attended Christian schools, and I feel fortunate to have also received my education in one locally. Despite being surrounded by a Christian environment for many years, I never truly embraced the faith. It wasn't until Form 5 and after my public exam that I experienced my first glimpse of Christian life by accompanying my friends to a local church. It marked my initial participation in a Christian community. It was a beginning for exploring the purpose of life and delving into the meaning of faith. I spent several years in the local church until I graduated from university.

When I started working, I was confronted with temptations from the secular world and was distracted from my faith. Balancing a demanding workload, striving for career progression, and networking with colleagues can easily lead one to drift away from the Christian path. During the early stages of career development, I found myself questioning the existence of God and whether faith would truly assist me in achieving my aspirations. At times, I even contemplated atheism and doubted whether God truly exists or could provide assistance in overcoming life's challenges. There was a moment when I felt on the verge of permanently departing from Christianity.

The critical turning point in my faith journey occurred four years ago when I had the fortune of meeting my fiancé, who was also a child of God. Initially, I hesitated to return to church when our relationship began. However, over time, my heart softened, and I started joining her occasionally for Sunday services at Island ECC. In the Spring of 2021, she encouraged me to participate in the Alpha course and re-engage with Christianity. Amidst the challenges of the Covid pandemic, we were unable to gather in person to share our thoughts on the purpose of faith but we still met over Zoom. Despite grappling with numerous questions about Christianity, one message resonated deeply within me: that God had never abandoned me. Even during the long period when my heart had drifted away, God remained by my side unwaveringly. I understood even as a Christian, there will always be questions about God and the purpose of life. However, why not choose to believe first and spend the rest of my life seeking the answers?



Frankly speaking, when I recommitted to God again, I didn't immediately experience dramatic and life-altering changes. However, upon reflecting on my journey and the events that have unfolded, I can genuinely sense the closeness of God and feel grateful for His abundant provision. I feel incredibly blessed to have a loving family, to have navigated through challenging work environments, and to have found my loved one. Last year, I switched to a new job, and discovered a group of fellow Christians at my workplace with whom I could engage in weekly authentic conversations. The presence of numerous signs and guidance has reinforced my faith to follow Jesus Christ. I have also decided to join a Care Group with my fiancé at church in the same year.

At times, I have experienced disappointment from those around me when I reveal that I am a Christian. Some people may react with shock or criticism. However, during the Summer of this year, I felt a strong calling to publicly declare my faith through baptism. This act serves as both an outward proclamation to others and a personal affirmation that I will not turn my back on God again. "When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12) I have made the decision to remain in the light with Jesus Christ, steadfast in my journey of faith.

**DURING THE EARLY STAGES OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT,
I FOUND MYSELF QUESTIONING THE EXISTENCE OF GOD
AND WHETHER FAITH WOULD TRULY ASSIST ME
IN ACHIEVING MY ASPIRATIONS.**

KELLY CHAN

Growing up in a Catholic school from kindergarten to high school, I was exposed to the teachings of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit from a very young age. Our daily prayers at school formed the foundation of my spiritual journey, yet it was in my quiet moments of personal prayer before bedtime that I truly felt a profound connection with God.

Throughout my life, I have experienced God's presence and His willingness to listen to my prayers. Prayer has become a steadfast habit, especially during challenging times. I recall the nights before exams or tests when nervousness would consume me, but through prayer, I found peace and was able to rest.

During my primary school years, I would often become frightened by ghost stories told by classmates. Sleepless nights filled with fear would follow. Seeking solace, I turned to a sister who worked at my school. She reminded me that God was always with me, ready to protect me. This simple truth brought comfort, and I started to remind myself of God's presence whenever fear gripped my heart.

My big sister, Carolyn, has played a significant role in my life as a mentor, friend, and even a mother figure. She embraced Christianity at 15, and it was through her that I first encountered the teachings of Christianity when I moved to Canada at the age of 14. This newfound exposure opened my heart to a deeper understanding of God's love and grace.

Family has always held a special place in my life, particularly my grandparents. However, my grandfather's ongoing battle with heart disease brought uncertainty and frequent hospital visits. One fateful day, I received a phone call from my aunt, informing me that my beloved grandfather was in the hospital. While we hoped it was a routine check-up, the devastating news of his coma shattered our hearts. Desperate and confused, I fervently prayed for his recovery, unable to comprehend why God would take him away. The pain and loss strained my relationship with God, and I distanced myself, struggling to understand His plan.

In 2018, during a visit to Hong Kong, I reunited with my faith. My aunt and uncle accompanied me to Island ECC every Sunday, where my connection with God reignited. I witnessed the transformative power of faith

in my family as well. My grandfather, previously unreligious, expressed his desire to become a Christian and was baptised before his passing. My grandmother, who had long believed in Buddhism, embraced Christianity through my aunt's guidance. Even my parents, who had never been religious, found solace and became a Christian during their time in Canada.

Upon returning to Hong Kong after completing my university studies in Canada, I have faced numerous challenges. Throughout the ups and downs of life, my parents, sister, aunt, uncles, and grandma have always stood by my side, offering not only their prayers but also their genuine care and guidance.

Even in the midst of being immersed in a partying lifestyle, God brought a remarkable man named Ryan into my life. Our paths crossed by divine intervention, and we soon realised that our relationship was orchestrated by God. Ryan's kindness, strong

family values, care, love, and patience mirrored the qualities I had always hoped for in a partner. Together, we have navigated challenges, placing our trust in God through prayer. We are eternally grateful for the love and guidance of our heavenly Father.

In 2022, I experienced another heart-breaking loss when my beloved uncle passed away due to a heart condition. We shared a deep connection and supported one another through life's journey. When he slipped into a coma, our family fervently prayed for his recovery. However, this time, I did not harbour anger or question God's plan. Instead, I found peace within, trusting that God had a purpose and a plan for each of us. My heart remained open, devoid of resentment.

In all my experiences, both joyful and sorrowful, I have come to realise that God's plan surpasses our human understanding. His love and wisdom guide us through the darkest of times, and His presence brings strength and solace. Today, I stand before you, ready to be baptised, symbolising my unwavering faith and commitment to follow Jesus Christ.

I proclaim my faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour. I am grateful for the guidance and support of my family, and my loved ones who have walked alongside me on this spiritual journey. May my testimony serve as a testament to the power of God's love, the transformative nature of faith, and the assurance that His plan is perfect, even when we cannot comprehend it.

MAY MY TESTIMONY SERVE AS
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KAREN MUI KONG

Hello! My name is Karen, and I am a mother of two young children. I grew up in the USA and relocated to Hong Kong four years ago with my young family of four. I was raised in a Buddhist household and was the eldest of four children. While growing up, I was always studious, obedient, followed my parent's rules and would never get into trouble (I am the typical poster child for Asian parents).

Being the eldest child, my parents (especially my Baba) expected that I set a good example for my younger siblings so that they follow my footsteps; so, all his children would stay out of trouble and not bring shame to him or the family.

Because of my Baba's expectations, I was always striving to be perfect in everything I did and did not dare to fail in school, career and in life as new, young mother. Even though I graduated top of class with honours and had a great career, I did not receive acknowledgement or recognition from my Baba, because he is the typical Chinese Baba that favours sons over daughters. My childhood moulded me into a persistent, stubborn, driven adult, but I lacked the love and joy that a daughter desires from her father, which resulted in a hardened heart that lacked grace.

The Christian faith was introduced to me in my early 20's by a mentor at work, who always prayed for and shared about the gospel to me. At the time, I was not interested because I did not want to bring dishonour to my family or my Baba because I was raised as a Buddhist. Also, I wanted to focus on my career.

Fast forward to June 2019 when I was still a career-oriented mother of two children (aged two and four at the time), we moved the entire family from the USA to Hong Kong because of my husband's work. Hong Kong was new and foreign to me, and my closest loving friends and family were all back in the USA. I knew no-one in Hong Kong besides my husband and two children.

We had a very hard time adjusting to Hong Kong life. Both my children cried mornings and nights for two months wanting to return to the USA to their loving grandparents, cousins, big house, and big space. And they did not fit into the local schools while we were waiting for acceptance into international schools.

In November 2019, unknowingly to me, God sent angels. I met two local strangers: a grandpa and his daughter-in-law. They connected my family to a small, private Christian kindergarten located on Hong Kong Island. My two children got accepted into the private Christian kindergarten which brightened their lives. Every day after school their faces lit up, filled with God's joy and love. They talked non-stop about who Jesus was, what He did and said we needed to pray every night.

I followed my children's lead in reading their kiddie Bible and praying. Because my two children started sharing the Gospel in our home, I started to ask about Jesus and

MY HEART OVERFLOWS WITH JOY
AND GOD'S BLESSING BECAUSE OF
HIS UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.

God because I also wanted to fill my heart with joy like my children. I then enrolled in the Fall 2021 Alpha gatherings at Island ECC. In October 2021, during the Alpha retreat, Jesus showed Himself to me, and since then my journey with God began!

Coming to Christ has been a turbulent journey. I have decided to be obedient and allow Father God to transform my heart, soul, and spirit. I've transitioned from a career woman to a homemaker and am enjoying my time as a mum, bonding and caring for my two young children and family in Hong Kong.

My heart overflows with joy and God's blessing because of His unconditional love. I am connected to a Care Group to help grow my faith and attend Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) to know God better and to be closer to Him. I also discovered my key pillars in life are:

1. "Humbly allow God to parent us so we can parent our young children" to help the next generation and in hope to stop any generational curse.
2. No matter what stages of life you are in, "Be humble, Be honest, Be vulnerable and Be Faithful to God". His faithfulness and unconditional love will strengthen and carry you through both turbulent times and times of celebration with joy in His Glory.
3. "Share your overflowing cup of joy and God's blessings with those in need. Be Jesus' shining light!"



JENNIFER LEUNG

Hi, my name is Jennifer. Before I begin, I want to give thanks to our Heavenly Father, who gave me the courage and strength to share my testimony. May His name be glorified through my sharing. And to all my brothers and sisters-in-Christ who've been there for me every step of the way (you know who you are), I appreciate you more than words can say.

By the grace of God, I was born into an atheist family but attended Catholic schools. It was there that I was introduced to some of Jesus' most renowned stories. Learning these biblical stories at a young age instilled in me a steadfast belief in the existence of God and Jesus. Whenever I felt scared, worried, or overwhelmed, I would recite the Lord's prayer and talk to God. The sense of peace I experienced was profoundly comforting. Little did I know, God had already planted a seed in my heart, longing for me to come "home".

At every stage of my life, God has always been there, guiding and shaping me into the person He created me to be. During high school, He sent a Christian friend into my life who introduced me to the concept of faith – to walk by faith, not by sight. At first, I didn't fully embrace it, partly because of some biases I had towards certain Christians I had encountered. But everything changed when I met this newly converted Christian. I was captivated by his radical transformation and unwavering dedication to knowing and following Jesus. It was at that moment I decided to seek a deeper relationship with God. His grace is truly immeasurable and continues to overflow, even during the times when I knew Him but rejected Him.

Just like most Christians I've met, my relationship with God has its ups and downs. There are seasons when all I want is to be close to Him, and then there are other seasons when I mess up, hide in darkness, and let my desire override His teachings and promises. But no matter how disobedient or sinful I am, God always forgives me, welcomes me with open arms, and provides exactly what I need at the time. I vividly remember the first time I attended Sunday service at our church; the song "10,000 Reasons" moved me to tears, stirring emotions I couldn't contain.



*You're rich in love and You're slow to anger,
Your Name is great and Your heart is kind;
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing,
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find.*

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,
O my soul, worship His holy Name.
Sing like never before, O my soul.
I'll worship Your holy Name.*

The lyrics beautifully illustrated God's character – His holiness, lovingkindness, patience, and forgiveness.

It was at that very moment I understood how only His love can truly fill my heart. His mercy saved me from trouble, even when I didn't deserve it. He desires to teach me the true meaning of repentance and help me understand that His grace will always be enough.

As I write this testimony, I can't help but reflect on those moments when God protected me from what I believed was good. A few years ago, I missed out on a job opportunity that left me feeling disappointed and discouraged. I kept searching for answers, but it felt like God was silent until my mom fell ill a few months later. By God's grace, I was able to fly back home to New Zealand to take care of her. Looking back, if I had gotten that job, I wouldn't have been able to leave right away and be there for my family during that challenging time. It's amazing how what initially seemed like a "no", a rejection, or a disappointment, turned out to be a blessing from God. He really understands our needs and knows how to turn every situation into something good. I can't praise Him enough for His unfailing love, even when I have doubts and question Him.

My story with God doesn't end here, He is still working on me. It's an ongoing journey of experiencing His presence, learning to lean on Him, surrendering, and most importantly, seeking to know Him in every season of my life until the day I reunite with Him in eternity.

HE DESIRES TO TEACH ME THE TRUE MEANING
OF REPENTANCE AND HELP ME UNDERSTAND
THAT HIS GRACE WILL ALWAYS BE ENOUGH.

GIGI LEUNG

I used to believe that my testimony would be about how Jesus fixed all my problems, healed my wounds, and granted my desires. Sharing the highlights of my seemingly perfect life seemed the fitting way to testify about God. However, my testimony today is nothing like I had envisioned.

I start by acknowledging that God has blessed me throughout my journey, although I took those blessings to an extreme. I didn't grow up in a Christian family; my parents divorced when I was 11. I verbally accepted Jesus in a bootcamp, and the rest is boring. I was never truly interested in understanding who God is.

Things started to change three years ago when my career became my sole focus. I prayed fervently to work for the top company in the film industry. I switched jobs three times in a year, always dissatisfied and pleading with God to fulfil my desires. It was only when I surrendered myself completely to Him and committed to doing my best in my current role that I witnessed a miracle – I obtained the job I had yearned for. After three months, I was unexpectedly laid off. By God's grace, the job was extended for a full year before I eventually left the company. Then, after a nine-month waiting period, another dream company appeared and offered me an even better role. It became clear that God had been providing for me all along, granting consecutive career miracles.

Since then, I've invested more time in my relationship with God. The more I sought Him, the more He revealed areas of my life that needed attention. He helped me address my anger, addictions, and family relationships. He reshaped my beliefs in love, helped me unlearn old patterns, and gradually restored my all-time low self-esteem. I became more aware of my personal issues and started working on them.

While I'm grateful for the blessings I have received, I had a misconception about what "God's blessings" meant. I believed if I eliminated my old ways and stopped sinning, God would grant me everything I desired – a specific job, a partner, the life

I wanted – and that I had to earn His grace. The problem arose when I realised that the more I tried to not sin, the more I failed. Whenever I fell short, I would beat myself up and believe that I wouldn't receive God's blessings, which led to dissatisfaction with my life.

—
AS I FIX MY EYES ON HIM,
MY ANXIETIES FADE AWAY.
—

A few months ago, I faced redundancy once again. My unsatisfied soul began to frantically ask for my next blessing/miracle. Until recently, I grew tired and felt like God was not answering any of my wants anytime soon. This led me to approach God differently. A song called "*Relationship*" by Phil Wickham came up on my playlist one day, and the lyrics reminded me that God desires a relationship with me. For the first time, my soul felt satisfied.

I realised that God is more than just a dispenser of blessings; He desires a deep and meaningful relationship with me. As I fix my eyes on Him, my anxieties fade away. Writing my testimony, I can't simply use a few incidents to demonstrate how my life changed after faith. It's an ongoing experience as I discover the gifts, purpose, and freedom that God has already prepared for me. To be honest, these revelations may not always align with my own interests, but thankfully, God is patient and reveals them gradually, in His perfect timing.

It's funny that I used to think I needed to have what everyone else had to be satisfied as a witness for God, but really, I was basing my worth on the wrong thing. With that being said, I am still learning and embracing my new identity in God. I am learning to savour the joy and peace that comes from spending time with Him. I still have, and am praying for my "earthly desires", but as I continue to trust God on this journey, I have learned to be content in His presence, "whether I have an abundance or am in need," because I know "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:12-13).

The transformation that God has worked in my heart has moved me to share my relationship with Him openly today.



GERALDINE VIRAY

My life before knowing God is like broken glass with a missing piece; like me, not knowing where I would place myself because I'm a single mum with one son to survive on my own. I came to Hong Kong to pursue my dream not only for me, but also for my son and my mothers — to provide what all they need and have a better life. And I think that is my only goal, but I was wrong. I didn't expect the reality that God made a way for me to know Him better. He spread His Word for me that reminds me how grateful and powerful He is. He saved me from the collapse of being an unbeliever, and from the struggles from the past. Because of what He gave me, I survived.

When I was a kid, I didn't know what religion we belong because we attend different Bible study like Protestant, Baptist, Christian and Catholic. My parents didn't teach us how to pray and didn't tell us who is God. We only know about God every time we attend Bible study and read some Bible verses by sharing and memorising it. We sung praises and we dance during Sunday service, but one day our father gets mad, and he didn't let us attend the Bible study, for the reason of we have nothing to gain from it. Until when I'm in high school, I learn how to pray the Rosary and I lead the Prayer of Rosary every time there's a death anniversary, then I began going to church every birthday and Christmas.

Until one day, my father got sick, and then he learned how to pray, and seek God's healing. My mother has a friend that knows a pastor and she invited him into our house to pray for the healing of my father, to ask forgiveness and repent his sin. That was the start of my parent's recognition of God. They learn how to pray, learn about Christ, and how to worship God. Praise God for He is faithful.

On the day of my father's baptism, he didn't want to go because he can't walk due to his arthritis. The pastor said "we would help you walk, or yet we will lift you"; that is the time that God made a way. My father was convinced to go, and he was baptised. That day God made a miracle that confirmed his gratefulness because my father can walk back to our house after he was baptised. To God be all the glory.



I'm praying, I'm going to church but still I don't know who really God is and I don't even read the Bible. I only start to know God when I had

I'LL ALWAYS PRAYING TO GOD THAT HE WILL GUIDE ME, GIVE ME WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE HIS WORDS.

a thought, and I got some invitation to attend a Christian worship service every Sunday. While we sing gospel songs, I didn't notice that I got tears from my eyes while singing. I didn't expect that after that I feel some freshness from my heart.

One night, one lady from Island ECC called me, we chat, talked about life until she asked me about my relationship with God. She asked me if I accepted God (Jesus) as my Lord and my Saviour? I stop for a while and didn't answer it immediately. I didn't notice that my eyes teared and I didn't expect that moment. I realised that I must learn and know more about God and accept Him as my Saviour and God. I came to know more about God when I'm here in Hong Kong and become part of Filipino ministry in Island ECC. I join Kairos course and learn lot of things of how to share the Gospel with other people, for the unreached and unbelievers, and joined "Witnessing as the Way of Life".

At my first time to attend I always think that I can't do it. There are rejections or even thinking that maybe they have more knowledge than me, but I didn't give up. I'll always praying to God that He will guide me, give me wisdom and knowledge to share His words.

I came to know God because of seeking my missing piece and I found it in Him. My life is better now, He made my life complete every single day, as He always heal me in my sadness, and all the pain in my heart. He's my revival and my Saviour, as Philipians 4:13 says "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me".

FLORENCE LAU

I received my primary and secondary education in the same Christian school. I loved going to the church next to my school for weekly assembly for feeling peacefulness whenever I was there. Scriptures were simply biblical stories to me as a primary and secondary student. In 1972, I was invited by one of my best friends, who is a very faithful Christian, to attend her church. I went for several months but stopped due to dialect and language problems (her church is for local Chiu Chow speaking Christians). However, my best friend never got angry with me, and our friendship keeps on until now — for over 50 years.

In 1996, I changed my job from commercial to teaching. Two of my colleagues are faithful Christians who invited me to join their Christian Union's gatherings together with students in our institute. In 2006, one of them invited me to join Island ECC's Women's Bible Reading but I turned down due to time constraint. I was very curious why she wanted me to be a Christian. She replied that she did not want me to go to hell but with her to heaven. I have been surprisingly, and deeply moved by her love.

In 2018, one of my alumni — who attended Island ECC told me her story of transforming to a Christian. In October 2020, my mother had to undergo colorectal cancer surgery and I was totally blank at that moment. It suddenly came to my mind to call my alumni and tell her of my mother's surgery. She prayed for my mother and I over the phone and I kept on crying because her prayer was so comforting. I started to join the Island ECC Women's Bible Reading at the end of October 2020, which I was supposed to join in 2006. I wonder if it

was such a coincidence. My mother was baptised during her hospitalisation by the clergy-lady in that hospital. I got hold of the same clergy-lady to arrange my mother's funeral ceremony after her passing away in March 2022. To my surprise, she still remembered my mother and I. Undoubtedly, I admit it is God's grace for us for such a miracle.

The glory of Almighty God brilliantly shines into my life for placing so many angels around me even though I was not yet a believer. From all the people I mentioned above, I have learnt to see them as God's children to love and to serve.



God had repeatedly given me chances, but I turned away from Him for more than 40 years. It is strange that I used to pray whenever encountering hurdles, yet God had continually answered my prayers. Regrettably I failed to realise what He tried to reveal to me — His love and faithfulness, from the very beginning. Being grateful I still have been given chances to turn to God, I accepted Jesus as my only Saviour in March 2021.

Through Bible Reading and Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) since the end of 2020, I have learnt the true meaning of Scripture instead of taking them as stories from when I was young. From sharing and praying amongst sisters, I understand that Christianity is not the kind of religion simply for worship. Truly, it is to build my faithful relationship with Father God. I am not free from problems and hardships, but God sees, loves, and values me, and prepares me for the plans He has for me. Although it is free to be a follower of Jesus, it might be costly. However, Jesus gives light and new life to those who believe in Him.

THROUGH FAITH IN GOD, I HAVE FOUND TRUE LOVE, PEACE, AND JOY IN HIS PRESENCE.

Heather Marshall Dixon, author of *Ready – Finding the courage* writes “God does not always remove our problems, but He will make a way to get through them.”

I have been so blessed and grateful for God's answering of my prayers though not 100% and immediately. Through faith

in God, I have found true love, peace, and joy in His presence. It is more blessed to give than receive, but Jesus gives me much more than I deserve to receive. With Jesus as my model, I am motivated to be humble, righteous, and patient. I have prayed to walk with God together with my family so that we can glorify Him for His love and faithfulness.

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8

ERI INOUE

I grew up in a non-religious, mixed racial family with a Chinese father and a Japanese mother. I was always confused with my own identity. My parents were hardworking; they wanted to provide us what they didn't have. A typical working-class family in Hong Kong, my brother and I were raised by our helper. Although we were privileged with what we had, there was always something missing in my life. Throughout my teens, the urge of longing had gotten stronger in me, and I started to hangout and seek advice from wrong mentors. And that is when my family fell apart even more.

Despite the fact I was not a good daughter to my parents, Father God kept planting seeds in me. Although my mother was not a Christian back then, she had strong principles — help others, be nice to your neighbours, don't hold grudges, don't revenge, and always see the goodness in that person. Mom's principles really enriched my life.

I volunteered for the poor orphanages in Brazil, and during weekend free time at boarding school, I joined my teacher to serve homeless people at church. I especially enjoyed working at the hospice, speaking with the old patients who were afraid to leave anytime. Although I had no religion, God planted me a serving heart and it fulfilled and satisfied me as a whole. For the first time, I felt needed. Romans 8:30 says "And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified." God worked indeed in the heart of mine. He chose His people and called me to His ways.



I started to attend church with my mom. In my mind, I knew this was the only way to comfort her emotionally. It was my way of paying back to her, as I had a rough and challenging relationship with her. During that time, she was battling for her life, and thankfully, she conquered cancer. She became cancer-free.

After a year or so, my mom's health deteriorated. Her cancer cells spread out, and she passed away after battling cancer for ten years. When her cancer came back, I blamed God. I stopped attending church. I lost faith. I thought God was absent. When my mom left us, that was the most painful time in my life. I thought it was a punishment I had to live with for the rest of my life.

Then God worked on me again. Within the length of three months after my mother passed away, my husband kept running into our neighbour couple. We were meant to get together since we were always bumping into each other. My daughter's classmate's mom who I got very close with, encouraged me to visit a church called Island ECC. I then bumped into a long-lost friend, who is also a devoted Christian. In this dark, grieving time of my life, God used these godly children of His, to work on me!

When I first attended Island ECC, I ran into the same neighbour couple who we were meant to meet. Then I encountered the worship song "Goodness of God". I couldn't read the lyrics because I was crying — not because I was broken, but because this song spoke directly to my heart. I had flashbacks of memories and I then realised that He was there for me the whole time. He was faithful, even when I was not. He was guiding me through my loneliest times as a child to young adulthood.

Although my mom passed away after battling for ten years, God granted her ten years of life despite her stage four cancer. My angry heart, started to soften and little by little, I started to understand God's holiness.

You hear that God works in miraculous way. It felt natural to me that these godly friends of mine were encountering me because God wanted me to come back to Him. It took me a long time to find that absent piece I was always looking for, and now I found that final piece of my puzzle. Christ was my missing piece.

I know I'm still living a life full of obstacles, but my spiritual journey is ongoing, and I sincerely feel that God will work it out with me. I realise Father God is walking with me, He is for me, and that I am going to be fine. That unexplainable feeling of peace in me is something that no one can take away from me.

If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31

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DAISY NICOLAS

My life before Christ was uncertain, I grew up in a family that did not talk about religion or about God, but I was aware that “I am a Muslim and Muslim by blood” because my mother was a Muslim. I grew up under the care of my grandparents on my mother’s side.

Sometimes I wonder what the meaning of life is or why I was born. I struggled a lot in life, abused, humiliated and after all of that, I felt so worthless, and I couldn’t find my value in life. I was longing for something, and I even tried to end my life, but I failed.

As a Muslim woman, they tried to arrange my marriage to my uncle, but I refused. Instead, I ran away and worked abroad just to escape from them. During my days, months, and years in Lebanon, I embraced Islam more, yet I did not understand why my life was still missing something. I did not have peace of mind, forgiveness, or hatred, but most importantly, I was missing the assurance of life.

Until one day my eldest brother talked to me about Jesus. He had become a Christian and started to share the Word of God with me, but I rejected and refused to listen to him; I even told him “You stay with your God, and I have my God too”. But God has a better plan for me. My grandmother passed away and I couldn’t go to her funeral, since she was a Muslim and must be buried within 24 hours as per Muslim beliefs and traditions. My heart was in pain at that moment and a lot of questions ran through my mind. I was hopeless and it was hard to be alone and accept what had happened. For the second time, I attempted to end my life by

jumping from our building. But then, I heard a voice calling my name, and suddenly I returned to my senses. After five and a half years, I decided to go back home (Philippines) on December 20, 2014.

After taking a break from work, I started to apply to work here in Hong Kong. I arrived on July 12, 2015, and didn’t know what fate I had here. Until one day a friend of mine who was here also invited me to a church. Fresh in my memories was July 19, 2015, where I attended a Bible study. That was the moment for the very first time I heard John 3:16 — a verse that changed my life and my beliefs, because the Jesus that I had known was just a

prophet for us, a special one. But everything suddenly changed because that Jesus, that same Jesus was God, who gave salvation to me and to those who believed in Him.

I believe not because someone said so, or because the Bible said so. I believe because at that moment my heart felt joy, comfort, happiness, and the love that I had been looking for, for a very long time. In that moment, I accepted Him in my Life as my Lord and my God, my personal Saviour, and I started reading the Bible that my brother gave to me on my birthday. I found peace, hope, forgiveness, and assurance to my life because Jesus loves me. Even though I was a sinner back then, He gave me hope, love, and salvation that I could not find anywhere else.

As I continue to know Him and read His Word, sometimes I feel like I was a young child, longing for the love of a Father which I found in Him. I know that my life was not perfect, and I believe that in this life, though I face many trials, the Word of God and His Love for me will give me strength and protection. He will never abandon me. These are the things I hold on to.

I was once lost, but now I am found; I was a sinner but now I’m forgiven. Declaring my faith, I follow Jesus, with no turning back. To God be the glory. God bless.

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CLIFF CHONG

I did not grow up in a Christian family. Instead, my parents followed the teachings of Buddhism. However, life had a surprise in store for me. I ended up attending a Christian primary school and a Catholic high school, where I was introduced to Jesus. It was undoubtedly an unexpected turn of events, wouldn't you agree? To be honest, those were challenging times. I lacked dedication as a student, failing to invest the necessary effort, and ultimately it came back to haunt me during the HKCEE public exam.

Making matters worse, I even chose to skip the Religious Study exam. Yikes! But luck was on my side, and I received a second chance to pursue higher education in Australia. Eventually, I proudly graduated with a Bachelor of Human Nutrition. Fast forward to 2018 when I returned to the bustling city of Hong Kong. I was eager to secure my first job, but things didn't go as planned. I felt lost, uncertain about my career path, and lacking a sense of direction.

Then, in 2020, my former boss, who happened to be a Christian, entered the picture and everything changed. She quickly recognized my struggles and lack of confidence, and she suggested that I give prayer and faith in God and Jesus a try, assuring me that it would boost my faith and confidence. Although I wasn't a believer at the time, I thought, "Why not give it a shot?" And you know what? Things started to shift, my friends. I experienced smoother sailing, even though I couldn't quite pinpoint the reason. Deep down, I knew that a higher power was watching over me.

In February 2023, an incredible thing happened. I had the pleasure of meeting my amazing girlfriend who also happened to be a Christian. I was immediately captivated! Wanting to deepen our bond, we made the decision to join the Alpha Group and explore our faith in God further. One of the most remarkable experiences was going on an Alpha retreat with my group. It was a day filled with gratitude, joy, and fun with my newfound brothers and sisters. Additionally, I took a significant step by attending a day

camp with people I had just met, which was a remarkable personal achievement. Through my journey with the Alpha Group, I have genuinely learned more about God and Jesus. My faith has grown stronger, and I am committed to being the best version of myself, praying day and night, regardless of whether life is smooth or filled with challenges.

I take pride in declaring myself a child of God, which is why I made the meaningful and significant decision to publicly declare my faith through baptism. It's a monumental step for me, especially considering my past as a directionless and unmotivated young boy. While I am presently engaged in cancer research at a public hospital, I have yet to attain the status of a professional dietitian, which has always been my dream occupation. Nevertheless, I firmly believe that God will equip me with the faith and determination needed for the road ahead. Overall, I can feel a profound transformation unfolding within me. I am evolving into a responsible individual filled with hope and dreams! I eagerly anticipate the future, envisioning a life enriched by God, family, my girlfriend, and fellow believers.

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BRIAN CHAN

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 1 John 5:11-12

My life so far has been split into two chapters: In the first chapter, I did not really have Jesus in my life. Like many typical local Hong Kongers, I was raised in a family without Christian belief, but God has very lovingly planted His seed of salvation in my life by sending me to Catholic Primary and Secondary schools. During those years, God's Words in the Bible were very much like other subjects, and indeed Religious Studies was one of the nine public exam subjects I took with the lowest grade. Apart from Religious Studies, I was blessed with good academic results and both my studies and career have progressed pretty smoothly and appeared to be well under my control – good results would come with hard work. This has made me become more arrogant, worshipping money as idol and indulging in worldly desires. I did believe there should be an almighty power above all but did not know who that was.

Despite having a superficially successful life, my heart did not feel secure, and I regularly had nightmares. Then, something really tragic and unexpected happened when a person very important to me was diagnosed with terminal cancer without any prior noticeable symptoms. This was a huge blow to my life as I always thought everything was under my control. I started praying to God for his healing, unfortunately He seemed to ignore me and took away the person's life after a two-years' hard-fought battle. It was the darkest hour in my life and for the very first time I realized how delicate and hopeless a human life could be. However, during these darkest times some Christian friends came to pray for us, gave the person a bedside baptism, and organized a peaceful Christian funeral. I was so touched by their unconditional love and care.

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. Romans 5: 3-4



BEING A CHRISTIAN HOWEVER DOESN'T MEAN WE ARE FREE OF FAILURES AND SUFFERINGS, BUT WITH JESUS NOW IN MY LIFE, I HAVE LEARNT TO CAST MY TROUBLES AND WORRIES TO HIS ALMIGHTY HANDS

The second chapter of my life then began. After some time has passed, I started going out with a friend who brought me to the Christmas Eve service at Island ECC in December 2014. The experience completely changed my perception of what Christians were like: from “boring and rules-complying” to “lively” (the music) and “wise” (the sermons). I then joined the Alpha course the following Spring and a miracle happened to me at the retreat. After I prayed the sinners' prayer, a mature Alpha leader whom I had never spoken to before suddenly shared his life experience with me, which surprisingly resembled my tragic experience! He said that God had not forsaken him but instead used him to preach his words through many Alpha courses and gave him strength and a loving family. This was so encouraging to me as God was using this brother's mouth to give me direct comfort!

Since then, I committed to be a Christian and God has blessed me plentifully. I have a wonderful Care Group with whom we have walked our faith journey together for 9 years. I am no longer troubled by nightmares or insecure feelings. Most importantly, my amazing wife (the angel who brought me to the Christmas Eve service) with whom we have built a Christ-centred family with 2 adorable boys. Being a Christian however doesn't mean we are free of failures and sufferings, but with Jesus now in my life, I have learnt to cast my troubles and worries to His almighty hands, and faithfully follow what He prepares for me because “in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:6). I am so glad that God has accepted me into His Kingdom, and am very pleased to be baptised on 26th November 2023, to declare my faith in Jesus and my commitment to follow Him through the rest of my life!

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!
2 Corinthians 5:17

ATHENA LIU

I was born in a Christian family, but I was not as religious as I should be. Being a Christian once meant nothing more than a church-going routine every Sunday. Connecting the dots, I realized God took me a long way to arrive at today's baptism.

In 2016, when I was studying overseas, I encountered a different style of worship. One filled with live bands, drum sets and faces that conveyed profound joy. This reignited my interest in Christianity. Afterwards, a friend introduced me to Island ECC. In 2019, I joined a Care Group at Island ECC. By God's grace, several random strangers blossomed into a support system that helped me through the inevitable ups and downs in my walk of faith since then. Such a beautiful blessing.

In 2021, God put me in a new role at work. I had more time to organise my life and reflect on other aspects that had been overshadowed by work. I began to grapple with some bigger questions looming at quarter-life, especially on faith.

While I enjoyed the wisdom from sermons and Bible study, I realized I was unable to explain to non-Christians why I believe what I believe. I never questioned God's existence as it was instilled since childhood, and I had experienced Him personally. So, I took a step back and reassessed what Christianity is.

Eventually, I fathomed the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of Christianity. My research also convinced me of its credibility, which I did not think mattered before that. I

always knew the story, but I saw it the same as any other stories in the Bible. Not until then that I finally recognised its significance in the big picture. This epiphany solidified my identity as a believer. I said to myself I am getting baptised after Covid, not expecting God to throw me another challenge.

In 2022, my grandpa passed away. It was devastating — not because of death itself, but because it exposed the cross-generational estrangement of the family. Inadvertently, I realized how the family dynamics shaped

my character flaws and led to past regrets. I resented my upbringing so much so that I resented myself for having such thought at all. This insoluble dilemma brought me closer to God, nevertheless, it also stirred up hesitation on baptism. I felt ashamed to call myself a Christian.

ALTHOUGH I AM STILL
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My perspective changed again after reading "What Happened to You?" by Bruce Perry and Oprah Winfrey. The book pointed out that behaviour is a result of experience — If no one ever spoken to you, you can't speak; if you have never been loved, you can't be loving, naturally. Knowing that ignorance may cause unpleasant behaviour, I became more empathetic and forgiving toward myself and people around me.

My key takeaway was that awareness is the first step to transformation. Experience may have driven certain propensity. To not act on instinct, though requires conscious discipline, is not impossible. My past is an explanation but not an excuse, for who I am and what I do. I need God to give me direction and strength to do what is right rather than what is easy and familiar.

Today, I am here to make a change. Although I am still a work-in-progress in so many ways, I do not wait to be perfect to declare God to be my Lord and Saviour. Instead, it is only through the Holy Spirit can I defy the evil in me and pursue a better self. All things are lawful; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful; but not all things edify (1 Corinthians 10:23). I depend on God to guard my heart, for from it flow springs of life (Proverbs 4:23). There's nothing more reliable. There's nothing more powerful.



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FOR GOD
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HIS ONE AND
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BUT HAVE
ETERNAL LIFE.
JOHN 3:16

—

God works in many different ways. In these pages you hold in your hand, you will see how He has worked in the lives of these baptism candidates. One of the many privileges I get to enjoy as a pastor is teaching the baptism class. I get to meet some wonderful people and hear stories of how God has changed their lives. They are now sharing these stories with you.

The stories in this testimonial are written by the baptism candidates. They reveal how different people from different backgrounds experience God in totally different ways. They all, however, point to the fact that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. They confirm that Jesus is the answer to our quest for meaning in life. I hope that some of these stories will connect with you.

The Christian faith is not a religion, but a relationship with our one true God. It is personal. It is real. And it changes lives. We do not serve a distant God. We serve a living God who wants to be connected with us. The Bible calls us God's children and in that relationship, we can see how close He considers us to be. He loves us and wants the best for our lives (see John 3:16).

If you are not a Christian, I encourage you to read these stories. I pray that you will see something that sparks your curiosity and moves you forward in your search for God. The Bible promises us that we can find God when we seek Him with all our hearts (Jeremiah 29:13).



Jeff Lam
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