

Testimonies for 26 June 2021

Baptism:

Chua Yee Ling (yeelingchuayl@gmail.com)



I grew up attending a mission school and was familiar with the name Jesus. When I was 15, I gave my life to Jesus after hearing the gospel preached at an outreach event. Growing up in a family with three brothers, I had always felt as if I was competing against them for my parents' love and affection. On my own effort, I worked hard to get good grades and win school competitions, but it felt like I could never be the perfect daughter. Hearing about God's great and unconditional love for us, His children, touched me deeply. "For God so loved the

world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16), I know that I have a friend in Jesus who laid His life down for me despite my imperfections. I turned to trust in Jesus Christ

God continued to show me His love by placing me in a community of Christian friends who demonstrated to me Christ's love as I was growing up. Even when I felt as if I was already following and serving Christ, I struggled to put to death my sinful ways. I held on to anger and hatred towards those who had hurt me before. It was ironic that though I had so eagerly received God's love, for a long time, I could not extend the love and forgiveness that God has shown to me towards some people in my life.

God is faithful, and He sent loving and patient friends to journey with me who helped me confront my unforgiveness. Jesus paid a heavy price when He died on the cross so that we can be forgiven of our sins. This reminds me that I am only saved by grace and compels me to love God and obey His commands to love and forgive others, even when it is difficult to do so. I can do it with His strength!

"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:7-9). Though I have Christ in my life, I will continue to struggle with sins and the challenges of this world. But with Christ I have His enabling Spirit to live a life pleasing to Him.



I knew Christ existed; but I never knew the significance of Him, neither did I care.

Before I trusted Christ alone to save me, I used to be prideful and extremely short-tempered. I was focused on being the “cool-kid” and valued my achievements and my works. I guess the word to accurately describe me was “self-righteous”. Things spiralled in junior college, and it hit rock bottom after completion of studies. There were no achievements to boast, and nothing to be proud of. I was not getting what I wanted, and everything was crumbling. I

was lost and did not know what to do; I did not know who I was. I lost my identity, I was a failure. By God’s grace and mercy, I was given an opportunity to further my studies through the support of my parents.

In 2015, my first year of university, I was being led to an on-campus Christian ministry, and I started to re-explore further who this “Christ” is. A pastor then mentioned to me: The only way to know that the chair can hold us, is to trust and put your weight on it. Similarly, the only way to know that God can hold you, is to trust and put your weight on Him.

I decided to take this leap of faith at Easter camp 2015, and lay down my past, my pride and my possessions at the cross. The camp theme was “Who am I?”. Coming fresh off the boat from a troubled year of identity-loss and failures, it was a wrap. I am a child of God not by works, the lost sheep that our Shepherd put His energy to find, the lost son [daughter] that the Father was yearning to embrace. My identity was not in my successes or failures but, in my Rock, and Redeemer. My assurance is that my sins were paid for at Calvary, undeservingly.

Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” The verse that stirred me up.

There is no turning back for me. Now six years on with life in Christ has not always been a bed of roses, but I have had multiple opportunities to trust on this “chair” that I sit on. I have tasted and see that our Lord is good, and He has never failed. This baptism is my declaration of faith and affirms the union between Christ and myself.



Hello church, I'm Joshua and I am 17 this year. I grew up in a Christian family, so have been attending church around about the entire of my life. And like most second-gen, gen-z Christian, my walk with God is essentially about finding my own identity and my purpose under God's sovereignty.

If I were to describe my time in Sunday School in one word or part thereof, it would be straightforward-ish. All I had to do was to follow my parents to church and attend Sunday School, fairly simple. Not to belittle the fact that I had really good Sunday School teachers who were foundational to providing me with a clear picture of the Bible and who God is, but being young, understanding the importance of having a personal relationship with the Saviour had not hit me yet. Other than that, Sunday School has also provided me with relationships not just with my peers but with my teachers as well. To sum it up, the two main takeaways are knowledge and friends.

Moving on to youth, it was the time where most of what I call, "being challenged". As a natural progression from Sunday School, besides learning more deeply about the Bible, the youth group focused heavily on building a personal relationship with God. In my case, reading the Bible more regularly and having thoughtful discussions among small groups are key in building up my relationship with God. As I slowly got to understand the character of God, I quickly realised how in need of a saviour I was. That Jesus Christ the perfect lamb took on my sin so that I might become the righteousness of God. In addition, from the many Christians who have been investing in my life, such as the youth leaders just to name a few, I realised that all of them do the work of the Lord just because they love Him and me. So, this got me thinking; if everyone who loves me does it because Christ loves them first, this love that Christ first showed must have something so special about it that I only see it in Christianity. As to when this happened, I could not point to a single period but it happened throughout my walk with God.

As to how my life is like in light of God's word, knowing the Bible and God's character compels me to live differently from my non-Christian peers, such as having a different outlook on my studies. With regards to church, I just hope to be a good example to those around me, especially the younger youths. My life will change and I'll grow, but I will choose to place my faith in Jesus Christ whom I know will carry me through it all.

Transfer:

Ryan Ang (ryanazr95@q.ucla.edu)



A purposeless blur.

That's how I would have described the first seventeen years of my life *in the past*. Previously, all that I remember from this period were:

Living in a dysfunctional family—my parents fought over their religious differences daily and my father was a hot-headed man with an extraordinary temper; the standard multiplication table fails to account for how many times he would beat me up (for no rhyme or reason) when I was growing up. He was a Christian, or at least he said he was, although he didn't go to church...

Attempting to survive through secondary school—on Mondays, the bullies came for my wallet; on Tuesdays, they cornered me in the bathroom; on Wednesdays, they showered me with their favourite song, "Roly Poly Ryan, rolling all the way home. Smelly Smelly Ryan, stinking all the way home;" on Thursdays, they literally trashed my bag; and Fridays were the worst...

The familial tragedies that occurred—my uncle committed suicide when I was thirteen, my grandma died of a stroke a year later, and my dad became bankrupt when I was sixteen. In coping with the latter incident, I left school altogether, labouring as much as twelve hours a day in backbreaking jobs...

Turning to binge eating and pornography as sources of escapism—developing severe depression and insomnia in the process as they only sought to destroy my self-esteem...

Struggling mentally in NS as I worry for my parents—they were getting a divorce while I was in the army... and although the divorce proceedings ultimately did not go through, this short-lived joy was displaced by the sudden demise of my father, who had returned to church that year, poured himself into the Word, and made considerable changes... Alas...

In the present, however, my perspective has largely changed: the first seventeen years of my life, the pain, the tragedies, the suffering, and the trials were episodes used by God to shape me and to draw me towards Him:

During the year my dad died, I too have gone to church... by some strange turn of events, I have found myself in an ambulance, on the way to the hospital, talking to a sergeant who happened to be a Christian. Through this encounter with him and a subsequent friendship that developed, I was eventually invited to church. As it so occurred, I got intrigued by the subject of the first service I attended, and after that, I just kept going back for more. Despite my initial and previous aversion to the Christian faith, my heart was inevitably softened... and as I went back week after week and voraciously consumed the Word of God through the sacred words in His Scriptures, I was healed from my depression and insomnia and freed from the sinful habits I developed.

Giving my life to Christ was the best decision I have ever made and it wasn't just the best decision, it was an utterly necessary decision, for apart from Him, I am convinced that the fullness of life cannot be realized. In the frantic pace of Singapore life, it can be so simple for us to feel overwhelmed and view everything as *a purposeless blur*... In the midst of our sufferings, it can be so easy for us to forget Christ's love for us and regard everything as *a purposeless blur*... but life in Christ is truthfully anything but *a purposeless blur*. In Christ, our once ostensibly enigmatic life is granted great clarity and immense purpose: we are called to *love God, love people, be Holy, and spread the gospel*, and we can do all these things, because *God first loved us* (John 3:16).

And in Christ, we have the assurance of His promises... among them:

"And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." (1 Peter 5:10)

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4)

Since coming to know Christ, much has occurred to me. While I have been pruned in many ways, I have also likewise been blessed beyond measure.

Whereas I did not believe I could have the means to graduate college previously, He blessed me with graduating from UCLA with First Class Honors; whereas I would never have imagined being able to visit the Holy Land that early in my years, He blessed me with opportunities to visit Israel and Palestine four times in 2019. And whereas I did not think my mother would ever come to faith, given that she was a staunch Buddhist for over five decades, she has since come to faith.

As cliché as it may sound, God is good, and every breath that we take is an opportunity to be loved by Him and to love Him. He loves you and He loves the neighbour next to you in all seasons. Instead of a *blur*, life in God and with God is a beautiful tapestry, unfolding and waiting to unfold...

“God’s plan is like a beautiful tapestry. And the tragedy of being human is that we [often] only... [look at it] from the back, with all the ragged threads and the muddy colors. And we only get a hint at the true beauty that would be revealed if we could see the whole pattern on the other side...as God does.” Unknown

[You can read Ryan’s full testimony [here](#).]

Bernard Lim (bernardlim86@gmail.com)



I grew up in a broken family where my parents divorced when I was 5 or 6. I lived with my father who worked a lot and was not present in my childhood; I was left to the care of helpers. I was taken to church by one of my teachers when I was 9, and I continued going until I was 17, during this time my father and older brother also started coming to church.

Going to the church every Sunday was an opportunity to meet friends, and going to church camps was fun but at this point I did not have a relationship with God. In fact, I resented Christianity at that time because I saw it as a form of punishment forced upon me by my father because when he was angry with me, I was made to copy the Bible. I saw my father, despite claiming to be a Christian, not behaving as other Christians did around me, which furthered my confusion and resentment in the Christian faith.

During my university years in Australia, I stopped going to church for the most part, but would occasionally go to Hillsong Church. For years, I was not part of a church and did not attend regularly, until I met Janine, my wife, in London. We initially worked together whilst both at university and one day she invited me to her church. I started attending her church regularly with her but at this point I was still not a believer.

During this time, I had a feeling of being lost, unsure of the purpose of life, not knowing which direction to turn and generally feeling low and depressed. One night I felt a moment of clarity

that transformed my heart. I remember seeing a bright light shine through the curtains in my room despite it being evening. In that moment I felt the Holy Spirit come into my heart, I felt energised and I remember reading John 3:15, when Jesus explained to Nicodemus how a person must be born again through believing in Jesus who died on the cross for our sins.

“No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” John 3:13-15

Ever since then my depression lifted and the Holy Spirit calmed my heart. I felt God’s comfort and reassurance knowing God had forgiven my sins through Jesus. I felt Him guiding me and filling me with a feeling of purpose.

Subsequently I was baptised in Emmanuel Church in Greenwich London, and with God’s help have followed Jesus ever since.

Since my conversion, I have been happier than ever knowing my life and my salvation is in Jesus Christ. I greatly look forward to becoming a member at Grace Baptist Church and hope to continue participating in the church community and serving in the church wherever there is a need.

I thank God for the gift of Jesus Christ who died on the cross for my sins and for saving me from my despair.

Janine Marie Lim (janinemarielim@gmail.com)



I grew up in a Christian household, going to church every Sunday and attending Sunday school along with various kids camps and such. Throughout my childhood I did not have a relationship with God, I believed He existed but that was the extent of my relationship with Him along with an obligation to go to church with my parents.

During my early teens I started to become less interested in church, many times skipping church to stay in bed in the mornings. It wasn’t until my late teens that my life drastically changed for me and God put me on a journey to face my reality and my relationship with Him.

When I was 15 years old my mother was diagnosed with cancer and this was a huge shock to our family as we grew up being a really close family unit. She battled with cancer for nearly two years until we lost her in 2006, I had not long turned 17. This shook our now 3-person family to the core, we struggled through with the help of our church, looking back now I can really appreciate that support from them.

During this time, I became angry at God, I remember my godmother telling my sister and me that it was “ok to be angry at God, he can take it”, she said. This was the first time I felt anything towards God.

For the next four years I sunk deeper into a hole of wretchedness, suffering from various mental health issues and punishing myself for my mother’s death, just so I could feel something besides the numbness of the grief I felt.

During this time, I started a relationship with someone who had ties to the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church. At that time I didn’t think too much of it, especially as he wasn’t actively practising. After a while though, he began getting more involved in the SDA church. And one day he gave me an ultimatum, “Join the SDA church otherwise we cannot marry and have a future together.” In my mind the answer was immediate, because I didn’t believe in what they believed in. This then begged the question, “What did I believe in?”

This relationship quickly ended and looking back I can see how God was working in my life at this point. I started attending my family’s church more regularly and found myself reading the Bible more and praying for God to show me a direction.

One Sunday evening at my family’s church, one of the elders was speaking on Romans 8. In particular verses 28-30 which says: *“And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be confirmed to the image of His Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined He also called, and those He called he also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified.”*

It was then I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit and I felt like my eyes were opened to what the verses were truly saying and to the realisation of God’s love for us which is shown through the gospel. That night I gave my life to Christ. Shortly after I attended baptism classes at our church and was baptised along with my sister.

From then on, I have followed Christ and He has shown me how He worked in my life in order for me to be saved. He has been so gracious to me and I thank Him for His incredible sacrifice.

Low Jay Sen (jslow1994@gmail.com)



Growing up, I had attended church regularly with my family since my primary school days up till junior college. Looking back on this journey, I did so dutifully to my family but never faithfully for Christ. We were never far from Christianity, yet we were never close to it as well. I also failed to root myself within a strong and supportive church community in my previous churches, and this only contributed further to my disillusionment, in my perception of myself as a disengaged individual just performing religion procedurally. My intrinsic lack of faith and an inability to pursue a meaningful personal relationship with God inevitably led me away from Him, as my personal interests and commitments continued to increase in

my youth and I left church completely around junior college.

Yet, while I distanced myself from Christ, my sense of guilt from attending church faithlessly continued to grow, and this void was never forgotten, continually sitting in the recesses of my brain. I remain constantly thankful for how God has watched over me and patiently shepherded me back to Him, amidst my self-denial and confusion. In 2017, a 'chance' meeting with a friend who was attending Grace Baptist Church, and subsequent reading together of the Gospel Primer re-opened my eyes to the gospel and the goodness of God's people. The gospel showed me that I was a sinner and that only Christ's sacrifice as propitiation for my sins could bring me to salvation (Romans 3:25). It showed me that God's grace was truly sufficient.

I continue to struggle as a sinner everyday. It was also extremely challenging that several unprecedented personal matters occurred simultaneously around 2018-2019 when I was still finding my way back to Christ. However, I was incredibly moved once again by the support of friends in GBC, as well as God's constant presence and responses to every challenge and burden I encountered in this trying period. This continued to emphasise to me the importance of faith in the gospel, and of the need for a strong church community. Despite my struggle with daily repentance, I draw strength from prayer in reminding myself of Christ's eternal grace for me and how I have been saved through faith (Ephesians 2:8), not through my individual doing or reparations for my sins. In joining GBC as a member, I hope to grow in

my love for Christ as my Lord and Saviour, to daily reciprocate the love and support that my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ have shown to me and continue to walk faithfully with God in this journey of life together.

Jordan Ng (jordannngjr@gmail.com)



Life before I knew Christ was a mess. I was hot-tempered, directionless, and often found myself unable to break out of a lifestyle of sin. I willed myself to change for the better, but everytime, without fail, I found myself falling back into sin. It was hopeless.

Thankfully, God sought after me. In my recollection, there were three instances that God sought after me: the positive witness of an aunt and uncle, a fellow National Service (NS) platoon mate in Basic Military Training (BMT), and the weekly request of my mum to follow her to Church.

Since I was young, my extended family gathered weekly at my grandparents' place. It became increasingly uncomfortable to be there because there was constant conflict among my aunts and my grandparents. In contrast, one particular aunt and uncle behaved completely different. Their peacemaking, gentle manner towards everyone intrigued me. I told myself that I wanted to be like them. Little did I know, God was knocking at the door of my heart.

Many years later during BMT, on one of the evenings when everyone was in their bunks, I noticed that a fellow NS platoon mate was reading a little book. This NS platoon mate was different; he never used foul language and had a calm demeanour. I went up to him and he shared that he was reading one of the gospels. He later invited me to his church, and I went. However, I did not give my life to Christ then. Once again, God presented Himself, but I turned away.

A year later, my mum became a Christian. Ever since her conversion, she diligently prayed for the family, and invited us to join her at church. At first, I brushed her off but soon her persistence gave in. Through the sermons I heard at church, I was drawn to the freedom and peace that Christ provides to Christians in the gospel. Interestingly, my aunt and uncle also attend that same church. Soon after, I gave my life to Christ.

Life after knowing Christ was not an immediate 180-degree change. It was gradual. As I began to understand the gospel better, the transformation began to take shape. My heart overflows with love for God, knowing that I am saved from my sins by the grace of God through faith in Christ and what He has done on the cross for me. I repented from my sins and will continue to do so daily. Once I was directionless, but now I live for Christ. Now, I look forward to living and having fellowship with the sincere and genuine brothers and sisters in Christ at GBC. All Glory to God.

Deborah Nga (deborah.nga@gmail.com)



I grew up as an only child in a Christian family, attended a Christian school, and went through the motions of going to Sunday school. I knew about Christian morality, but very little about Christ. When I was around 14 years old, I heard a presentation of the gospel and asked Jesus to “come into my heart”. I wonder whether or not that was when I became justified in God's eyes.

These days I doubt it, especially now that I know my Bible better. There was no significant change in my behaviour, and very little conviction of sin. In fact, I went through a phase where I became a very hard and unkind person. I reluctantly obeyed the letter of biblical morality but not the spirit, not crossing the line only out of fear of God punishing me. There was no outward display of egregious sin in my life, but there was very little fruit as well.

However, God in His mercy pursued me and would not let me go. Over the course of time, His spirit increased my conviction of sin, and helped me understand that nothing would save me from God's just wrath except the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Christ. He also graciously placed specific events and milestones in my life to sanctify me, build my love for Him, and ground my confidence in my salvation. Some of them include:

- When I was leading a double life in university, partying and getting drunk at debate tournaments overseas and vehemently arguing in favour of unbiblical positions. At the same time, I was attending VCF, Bible study, and evangelising! Around my third year, the Holy Spirit convicted me of my double life, and I stepped away from the team.
- When I moved to the US in 2013, and He pushed me towards a church that made me grow in love for God's word, His church, and my desire to obey Him. In the lead up to, and during this time, He also increased my conviction of sin.

- In 2015, when God crushed my spirit and the Holy Spirit convicted me of a new sin every day over a period of 3 months. During this time, my usual forms of comfort (shopping, friends, TV) were ruthlessly stripped of their power to distract, and the only thing that brought me comfort was studying God's word, and listening to sermons and hymns.
- In 2017 and 2018 when I had a really intense period of spiritual growth and hunger for God's word.

I can't say the exact point God broke my heart of stone and replaced it with a heart of flesh. At what point did He open my eyes to see my true standing before God, embrace Jesus and the cross? I can't say. But at some point, it happened. And I praise God for His grace and mercy for His glory.

Jocelyn Soon (joce.soon@gmail.com)



Having grown up in a Christian family, I am blessed to have been pointed to Christ at a young age. I acknowledged my sins and my need for forgiveness and accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour and was baptised when I was a teenager.

In my teenage years, I actively served in my former church, and going to church on the weekend was the highlight of my week. However, as I grew older, I found that I no longer felt aligned with the church. I soon grew disillusioned and jaded with the idea of being part of the church community and left the church. It was at this time where my priorities also shifted to focusing on my studies and social life in university, and later on, my career after

graduation.

I was in complete denial about my faith. I would tell myself and others that I am a Christian, even though I had neglected my prayer life and personal walk with God for years. However, having personally experienced God's faithfulness and grace on countless occasions in the past, I knew that I could not deny that He is my Saviour, and still longed for Him in my life. There were times when I tried to return to church, but felt ashamed, guilty and perhaps even too prideful to turn back to God after being away from Him for so long.

Acknowledging my own sin and shortfalls has not been easy, but God has truly been good to me. I thank God for continually making His presence known to me (even at times when I did not see it yet), and for allowing me to continue to experience His love through the people He

has placed in my life. I have been attending an amazing CG in GBC for the last couple of months, and I thank God for opening my eyes and heart to see and understand the need for Christians to be part of a church community. During our study of the word and time to fellowship with one another, I find myself comforted that I am not alone on my walk with God, and encouraged by how we can point each other to Christ.

Looking back at my own journey with Christ, I am truly grateful for His mercies and unceasing love for me. It is likewise my desire to be an encouragement to others, and to live out my life in a way that honours Him.

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:22-23)

Cindy Teo (cindy2508@gmail.com)



I went through divorce, suffered emotionally and also condemned myself for not giving my 5-year-old son a complete family. It was not until 2002, that I attended church for the first time (former church is a megachurch now) and came to know about who God is, His love and grace. “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5) was the first verse that arrested my attention and I clung to God’s unfailing love, hope and promise. Three months later, I committed my life to Jesus, received His salvation and forgiveness of sins. By God’s grace, I was finally released from the burden that I carried for years; set free from all grievances, pain and condemnation and could also forgive my ex-husband.

In February 2021, during my personal Bible study, I perceived contradictions and confusion in my former church’s preaching; truth mixed with prosperity theology. No teachings on repentance of sin; all past, present and future sins were already forgiven. Sufferings were not taught and emphasis was on receiving health, wealth and success, the “name it and claim it” positive and faith confessions. It made me feel like a “little god” as I was in control and could speak things into existence. After a fervent search about the origins of these teachings, I was convinced that they were not only unbiblical but heretical. I was in fear, repented for following blindly as it was my responsibility to test all things. However, I was clear and decisive that I had to get out of this immediately. I sought the Lord, cried out for help and deliverance out of this deception. I thank God for His providence and mercy on me, for illuminating the truth and giving me spiritual courage to act on it. God showed me that the

good news of Jesus Christ and how He offers forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God is far better than health, wealth and anything the prosperity gospel offers. I prayed for the Holy Spirit to lead and guide me to a sound doctrine church. My only desire is to know and worship Jesus of the Bible and not a god made out by men. Thus, I was led to GBC when I googled for “expository preaching church”.

Praise God, I have been attending GBC since 8 March and also joined the Friday Ladies Bible Study Group. I am blessed by the way of learning, sharing and expounding God’s Word.

I have tasted the goodness of God. I am a weak sheep who daily needs my Shepherd and I gladly abide in Him, for without Him I can do nothing.

“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!” Psalm 34:8

Thia Hui Ting (thiahuiting@gmail.com)



While I had the opportunity to attend church from a young age, I never thought much about it. Attending church was a weekly routine that I would often break to make more time for studies and other pursuits, as I believed that I can be self-reliant, independent and be able to achieve what I want if I put my time and hard work into it. Life had largely been smooth sailing until later when challenges came. I have often been encouraged to let go and submit to God, but I struggled hard with that idea. In hindsight, through many events in life and reflecting upon them, it became clear to me that while I could work hard, I could never

rely on my human strength alone to get some things to go the way I wanted. While I strayed from God several times in my own pursuits, God has graciously provided when I was most in need.

*Trust and obey,
For there's no other way,
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.*

This chorus from the hymn *Trust and Obey* is a constant reminder to me that God is my strength and refuge. No matter what troubles come my way, there is a purpose behind it, I will faithfully submit and trust in Him. I am convinced that I want to follow Jesus all my life. I

am grateful to have come to know Him, a loving God who paid a ransom for the salvation of undeserving sinners like myself.

While it is hard not to be distracted by worldly responsibilities and pursuits, I pray for the desire to always walk closely with God. I am thankful to have found a CG in GBC, a new family in Christ whom I can read the word with, to serve one another and grow together towards maturity in Christ.

Cory Zimmerman (cory.zimm@gmail.com)



I grew up in a Christian home, and my family moved to a new country about every three years. Despite the sound word coming from the pulpits of the churches I attended, it fell on my mostly deaf ears. When I was thirteen, I lost my trust in God. I had always felt my sin was too much to bring before a God I erroneously thought to be stern, exacting, and retributive. Subsequently I struggled with self-loathing into my mid-twenties, and dealing with it directly and honestly seemed overwhelming.

By God's grace, I realised I wasn't meant to live this way. Through prayer, Bible-reading, counselling, and a bevy of Christian books, I came to know God's character more and more, and I found a God who, despite everything I'd done, stood ever beckoning me to accept His loving embrace, having covered my sins through my belief in Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross.

That Easter Sunday in 2011 I distinctly remember the verse printed on the front of the bulletin, John 11:25, which I was familiar with but looked upon with new eyes: "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live...'" I knew in that moment that the life that God offers through Christ is more joyous and fulfilling than any life of my own contrivance. At long last I realised that God's grace was extended to me—yes, even me!

In the next few years, God challenged me to find my identity in Christ alone, and not in the people or places of the world. During that time, I met my wife Sarah, and the Lord very quickly replaced the fears I would typically experience when pursuing a close relationship with feelings of joy, contentment, and thanksgiving for His wonderful gift. Shortly thereafter, Sarah and I married, moved to Taiwan, and then on to Singapore a year ago where our son Samuel was born.

For any of you who know what it's like to instinctively run scared from the prospect of something so amazing, know that the Lord has *created* you to know Him and be embraced by Him, and that Christ stands ever ready to accept your petition for His forgiveness.

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I was born in a family where Christ was known and God's love regularly taught in the portion of the United States nicknamed the Bible Belt where cultural Christianity reigns. At age seven, I confessed a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord of my life and was baptised. My understanding of the Gospel was a basic one: I knew that God created me and that my sinful actions separated me from Him and that His Son, Jesus, died on the cross to save me from my sins and rose from the grave to give me eternal life. The Lord used the programs of the church my family attended to help me grow in my knowledge and love of Him.

But as the hymn writer Robert Robinson stated, my heart was "prone to wander" and "leave the God I love." When I departed for college, I started to grapple with things outside of the safe bubble of Christianity that my parents and community had kept me in. My heart was drawn towards materialism and idolatry. Like the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32, I chose the immediate pleasures over the eternal ones. I lived in unrepentant sin for almost a decade outside of the authority of any church.

My life came to a turning point when the relationship I idolised came to an abrupt end. I spent the following days reflecting on how I had come to such a crossroads. Like John Bunyan's pilgrim, I felt that my life was strangely unburdened but I couldn't figure out why losing someone I loved could lead me to feel relieved. The scripture I had memorised as a child flooded my mind and the words of prayer my mother often messaged me filled my every thought. Jesus sought me like the shepherd of Luke 15:1-7 and held me close as He lovingly brought me back into the fold.

I began attending a healthy church in Washington, DC, where I heard the gospel proclaimed afresh. I came to understand that my sin was not only outward actions but a curse on my heart and the heart of every human. Ephesians 2 captures it well: I was dead in my sins and nothing I could do would save me from them, "but God being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ." He did this through the Saviour I claimed as mine when I was seven,

and when I repent and turn from my sins, putting my faith in His saving grace alone, He enables me to live a new, holy life, free from the weight of sin.