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SHARE YOUR STORY

BAPTISM

2025

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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

—

Just like our birthdays, graduations, weddings, and the joy of welcoming new life, baptism is a significant milestone for us as believers. Today, in the presence of the church body and other witnesses, we celebrate this moment with those who publicly proclaim their acceptance of Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour (Acts 2:38-39).

The stories in this booklet, written by the baptism candidates, reveal how different people from diverse backgrounds experience God in unique 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 some of these stories resonate with you.

If you are not a Christian, I encourage you to read these testimonies. I pray they spark your curiosity and move you forward in your search for God. The Bible promises that we can find Him when we seek with all our hearts (Jeremiah 29:13).

We are grateful for all the baptism candidates today and for their willingness to share testimonies of God's loving pursuit and transformative grace in their lives. May this day mark the beginning of a wonderful, magnificent, adventurous and enduring faith journey with our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.' Acts 2:38-39



Alan Leung
Director of Connections
Island ECC

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CHARLENE KURESEVIC

I was born into a Catholic home and baptized into the Catholic church as an infant. Throughout my entire life, I have always relied on God. God remained faithful during my most difficult times, and I have always sensed His presence. Yet, sometimes I strayed from God, but He never stopped pursuing me. Even while we face challenges, He wants us to walk with Him.

I arrived in Hong Kong in 2019, and in 2022, I began searching online for a church. I came across Island ECC and attended the 9:30 service. It felt so warm and welcoming, and the worship deeply touched me. As I watched the baptisms, I felt a stirring in my heart; I wanted to get baptized again. However, my fear got the better of me. I kept putting it off, as I have always hated public speaking. Yet, God spoke to me through the scriptures: “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go!” (Joshua 1:9). Pastor Kevin’s sermon on January 26th – *People of God, On Fire*, also encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone. When you become spiritually stagnant and are pulled out of your comfort zone, you can experience God differently.

After deciding to get baptized, I felt great peace, and the weight of uncertainty lifted from my shoulders. One day, it struck me that I had made a prayer request to God a while back,



I HAVE SEEN YOUR SUFFERING AND THE SCARS ON YOUR HANDS, HOW YOU LOVE ME, AND HOW YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PRESENT IN MY LIFE.

though He never seemed to answer me all these years. I asked God, “Why have You not answered my prayer?” That same day, God replied to me through an email I receive daily from *Alive to God*. It read, “John 11:6: When He heard that Lazarus was sick, He (the Lord) stayed where He was for two more days.” It can be difficult when there is a delay in the answer we hoped for, but a delay is not a denial. The Lord knew exactly what He was doing in Lazarus’ situation. He knows what He is doing in your life, and He will reveal the prayers of the righteous in His perfect timing.

I stand in awe when I consider what You have done, Lord, and your sacrifices. I have seen Your suffering and the scars on Your hands, how You love me, and how You have always been present in my life. Your grace has transformed my heart and given me hope in times of despair. I am eternally grateful for Your unwavering support and guidance. All honor and praise to You! Hallelujah!

So today, I’m choosing to be baptized to declare my faith and commitment to You, God. This act of baptism is not just a tradition for me; it is a profound declaration of my relationship with You. I want to share my journey with my family and friends, encouraging them to trust in Your plan, even when it seems unclear. I am grateful for every step that has led me here, and I look forward to growing in faith and fellowship with this community.

Thank you for being part of this special moment in my life!

ERIC LEE

I was raised in a non-Christian family. I briefly attended a local Christian secondary school but did not study any subjects related to faith. The majority of the classmates that I mingled with were atheists. I never visited any church and did not fully understand why Christians would attend church every week. Given my limited knowledge about faith and unawareness of God, I thought that a lot of problems in life could be resolved by using my own effort and strength.

Before I knew Christ, I used to lead a monotonous life. I would go to work on weekdays, visit cafes on my own, and attend gatherings with friends during weekends. Other than that, there appeared to be nothing much in life.

A few years ago, I encountered a major interpersonal conflict. No matter how hard I tried to resolve it, the situation kept deteriorating. Subsequently, my parents were also affected by it. Although they did not blame me and refrained from mentioning the incident in my presence, I could feel they were overwhelmed with sadness and constantly worrying about me. This made me feel very guilty and ashamed. I was deeply sorry that I let my parents down. At that point, I realized the importance of maintaining proper boundaries

with people. Eventually, I made a final attempt to do whatever I could to alleviate the situation and thereafter cut contact with toxic people and end unhealthy relationships. With the hope of leaving this unpleasant experience behind me and starting a new page in life, I moved to a new neighborhood with my parents, made new connections, and expanded my social circle.



I FELT THAT EVERYTHING HAPPENED IN ITS OWN TIME, AS IF SOMEONE HAD ARRANGED EVERYTHING FOR ME

Last May, I met a new friend who is a Christian. She was invited by her friend to help out at an event at church. As a token of appreciation, her friend gave her a complimentary ticket to the event. One day, she asked me whether I would like to use the ticket and attend the event. Initially, I thought that there was no harm in trying something new. Without much hesitation, I accepted her invitation. It turned out to be an eye-opening experience. Although this was my first time listening to worship music, I found it to be quite pleasing to my ears. Even though I attended the event alone, I did not feel lonely and enjoyed every second. As my friend noticed that I was pretty receptive to exploring Christianity, she invited me to attend the Sunday services at church.

My first-hand experience attending Sunday services completely changed my perception of the church. I initially expected the atmosphere to be quite solemn. To my surprise, the worship music is quite modern, the sermons are engaging, and the congregation is friendly. This made me want to go to church week after week. Notwithstanding that I have become a regular churchgoer, I still had a lot of questions about faith in my mind, such as whether God would listen to my prayers and arrange my path for me. I sometimes tried praying to Him to seek His answers to these questions.

As I continued to attend the Sunday services at church and seek answers through praying, I gradually grew closer to God and to my friend, who has now become my girlfriend. Not long after that, my mother fell seriously ill. Coincidentally, my girlfriend's parents, who are medical professionals, were able to give a lot of helpful advice and offer timely help to my mother. After a few rounds of treatment, my mother's condition had already improved significantly.

I felt that everything happened in its own time, as if someone had arranged everything for me, had been leading me all the way, and had removed my burden. I believe "someone" is God and am truly grateful for Him. From all He had done for me, I could feel His love for mankind. As His follower, I cannot wait to see how His plans unfold for me, and I would like to take this opportunity to declare my faith in public.

FIONA TSANG

I accepted Christ in 2010. Even though I accepted Christ, I don't think I've become more 'Christian' nor do I behave in a more Christ-like way, other than telling people 'I'm a Christian'. In other words, I'm pretty much a lukewarm Christian for many years. I have the words and vocabulary when I'm with Christians. When I hear stories of people going through a rough time, my heart sincerely tells them I will pray for them. However, I often forget about it when I'm alone. I talk about having faith, trusting God, and staying patient, but I have never, really taken any steps forward to cultivate those qualities. I was taking up the role as a Christian without taking up the identity. I must admit, I don't reflect on my actions and thoughts from a Christian perspective.

Throughout these years, life happens, some good and some bad. In 2015, something significant happened to me and my family. It was the most challenging year. I prayed the hardest that year, asking God, daily, to take away my immense pain. It didn't happen. When 2015 was over, I looked back, realizing He had put many angels around me to help me get through that year. He made it known that He is always with me and will not abandon me. However, that year didn't make me more devoted to the Christian faith. I returned to being lukewarm when I was in a better mental space. I lived the

lukewarm Christian life for a few more years. Honestly, I didn't like that feeling, especially since I became increasingly aware of His presence and love in 2015. So, in 2022, I signed up for the Grow class at Island ECC. I wanted to know more about Him and be more committed to my relationship with God. I was blessed to get into a group with amazing mates and facilitators. Their stories and experiences



HIS PERSISTENT AND UNDYING LOVE FOR ME MAKES ME WANT TO BE A BETTER PERSON, FOR HIM, FOR OTHERS.

are relatable, but their desire to have a better relationship with God is even more inspiring. We share our ups and downs in our walk with God during these three-month weekly meetings. Tears were shed, hugs were given, and love and hope radiated. And I went back for a second round of Grow class. I was much more diligent in reading His words after the first round of Grow class, and my curiosity towards Him grew. I guess this was the beginning of my commitment to God.

Today, it is my rebaptism. I want to lean into God. I want to commit to living the values and love God has graciously given us. I don't deserve the good stuff and forgiveness, but He gives them to me because He is who He is. His persistent and undying love for me makes me want to be a better person, for Him, for others. I know my walk in life will be full of ups and downs, and it will be much easier to bear the downs because He is watching over me. He sends the right people and paves the way for me. He always does. I am grateful to Him for giving me many opportunities to grow my faith, patience, love, and hope during challenging moments. I want to do Him proud. I don't know what's next, but whatever that is, I know I can count on Him.

Trust the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding. Proverbs 3:5

HEMAN LU

With much blessings, I was born into a family centered around the Christian faith. One of our family's pastimes was to recite verses from the Bible, and my favourite verse to recite would be Proverbs 3: 5 – 6, simply because it was nice and short. Strangely, while I could recite these Bible verses from memory, the words felt distant and never held any meaning. That feeling would persist as I attended church early on Sunday mornings out of obligation, only to fall asleep throughout. For all I knew, I couldn't understand what this Christian faith was all about and why my parents placed so much emphasis on a God that I couldn't see, feel, or touch.

From hearing other Christians' testimonies, it always seemed like God appeared in people's lives through miracles, whether through curing an incurable disease or saving someone from a potentially tragic accident. Reflecting on those testimonies, I felt that no 'miracle' had happened in my life to sweep me off my feet, and without it, I wouldn't have been able ever to feel God's presence in my life.

As life went on, I went through my college years without putting any more thought into God and stopped attending church for five years. At this point in my life, life was fun, and everything went smoothly. As far as I knew, I was completely fine without God.

In around 2020, I met my girlfriend, who attended Island ECC. Through our conversations about the struggles of feeling His presence, she encouraged me to pray to God about the questions on my mind and reminded me that anyone who seeks, God promises that they will find (Matthew 7:7-8).

As I was waiting at a bus stop at Hung Hom after a late night at work, I remember praying daringly to God to show His presence in my life if He was real. After making this prayer, almost like clockwork, I was assigned on a work trip that same month with a trusted senior

I CANNOT UNDERSTAND THE FEELING OF PEACE THAT TRANSCENDS ALL UNDERSTANDING, BUT I KNOW THAT THE SOURCE OF THAT PEACE IS TRUSTWORTHY.

at my workplace whom I knew was a devout Christian, but never had an opportunity to speak with. Seeing this as an opportunity, I began to ask about her faith and why I couldn't feel His presence in my life. She responded, "Well, you get close to God like you become close with your friends – you must spend time with them. How much time do you spend with Him?"

With her guidance, I began to share with God as if He were a friend. I prayed about the struggles in my life and the highlights of my day. Slowly but steadily, when life would get bumpy, whether it be seeing close family members falling ill or struggling with career problems, I began to feel His presence. Sometimes His presence would come in the form of a timely verse (often those verses that I recited in my younger days), or at times, it was an overwhelming and unexplainable sense of peace that transcended all understanding. These moments became the miracles in my life.

Even though I had experienced these glimpses of His presence, I still felt skeptical and unconvinced and needed something more to hold onto to make this faith my own, especially if I was really to devote myself to this faith and be ready to make a defense to anyone who asks me for the reason for my hope (1 Peter 3:15). For a year, I asked several questions "Is God real? Is Jesus real, and did He walk the earth and perform miracles? Did Jesus die and resurrect? What does it mean for Jesus to die for our sins? Am I really that sinful?" All of these questions flooded my mind, and I would spend nights searching online and listening to debates between apologetics and atheists in the hope of finding some irrefutable piece of evidence that could answer all my questions.

As I began seeing some of the answers to my questions, my faith began to consolidate. While I still don't have all the answers, I understand that nothing can be explained similarly. I cannot understand the feeling of peace that transcends all understanding, but I know that the source of that peace is trustworthy. Through this journey, I have slowly learnt to believe in Jesus without seeing – otherwise it would not be called a leap of faith.



JAY SHIU

It's a blessing to have been born into a Christian family that poured all their love and effort into raising me. This included weekly church attendance and the constant reminder that God should be the foundation of our lives. However, the significance of these regular practices eluded me. They were mere disciplines or practices rather than meaningful spiritual growth opportunities. I was never truly aware of what it meant to love God or live out the teachings of the Bible. Instead, these concepts became "rules" that I had to follow.

Once I entered secondary school, my close classmate invited me to join the Island ECC. Initially, I was hesitant because I was already a member of my parents' church. However, after repeated requests from my company, I decided to try it. Surprisingly, my appreciation for this church has only grown since then. Looking back, I believe God's purpose is to use people in our lives to guide us towards the desired path and position He wants us to be in.

As I grew into my teenage years, something began to stir. I started to unconsciously listen, remember, and reflect on the content of sermons, gradually transforming it into a self-initiated practice. One of the most profound messages that resonates deeply with me today is the concept of "everything happening for a reason" and "everything is a gift."

These words have profoundly shaped my mindset, guiding me toward resilience during good and challenging times.

Interestingly, one of the most significant changes occurred when I transitioned into university. As I explored the university campus, I was suddenly overwhelmed by an intense desire to participate in university Christian groups and fellowships. This desire also led me to apply for worship teams, but unfortunately, I was rejected for various reasons, primarily due to a lack of sharing in Christian beliefs. The sudden and intense rejection based on my faith prompted me to reflect on my true intentions for participating in such groups within the university community and my faith.



Perhaps God had other plans or knew that I wanted to explore other communities and didn't want me to commit to such large-scale involvement – I tried to console myself with these thoughts.

I genuinely believe that God's work is incredible. Shortly after, during a sermon in one of those communities by a guest pastor, he invited me and other fellow students from my course to join a fellowship group. There was another Christian mentorship group specifically for students of my university course, which I also participated in. Finding Christians in our smaller community is significant because it fosters a stronger bond by sharing similar hardships and experiences in life, enabling us to grow together in the Word of God. Furthermore, I was fortunate enough to join a part of the worship team with my friends, spreading the message of God through music.

The friendship in such a community was also impactful, and the craftsmanship of such relationships is so beautiful in a way that is only possible with God. I was once going through a stressful time, and I met a good friend to talk it out. As he mentioned putting the uncontrollable things to God, my phone buzzed. It was a message from my friend in that community, containing a Bible verse. As I looked at the verse, it read: But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you, Matthew 6:33. This was precisely the reminder I needed at that moment, allowing me to let go of my worries and put everything in God's hands by focusing on Him. The timing was surprisingly perfect, and I still remember it vividly.

With my newfound perspective applied to various aspects of life, I've come to realise that the experiences we encounter may not initially appear favourable. Still, they are all part of God's intricate plan, allowing them to happen. While it may seem contradictory initially, God never fails to reveal His plan to us, revealing its profound beauty. We find ourselves in similar situations to sheep, often becoming stray, lost, unconscious, and easily distracted. However, God provides us with unwavering care, vigilance, and guidance as the shepherd, leader, and King, leading us back to His path. He protects us from the dangers we may accidentally step into. His love for us is boundless and selfless, as He puts Himself first to save us from our sins. His bold and mighty presence is always there for us, as long as we open our hearts to Him. Therefore, this opportunity would be a calling for me to open my heart so that He could guide my life in His ways.

THE FRIENDSHIP IN SUCH A COMMUNITY WAS ALSO IMPACTFUL, AND THE CRAFTSMANSHIP OF SUCH RELATIONSHIPS IS SO BEAUTIFUL IN A WAY THAT IS ONLY POSSIBLE WITH GOD.

JESSICA CHU

In the Baptism class, we were asked to reflect on our journey with God by dividing it into three parts: life before Jesus, how I met Jesus, and life after Jesus. Initially, I found myself questioning what this meant for me. After all, Jesus has always been a part of my life. I grew up in a Christian household. My parents, fervent Christians and actively involved in the church community, took me to church every weekend. It felt like Jesus had been in my life for as long as I could remember.

As I transitioned into my teenage years and went abroad for high school and college, my relationship with faith faced new challenges. My parents encouraged me to seek out churches near my school, emphasizing the importance of maintaining my spiritual roots. While I continued to believe in God and felt His presence in my life, I gradually fell out of the habit of attending church regularly.

However, during those formative years, I experienced a pivotal moment with God. A friend invited me to Hillsong church in London in my first year of college. The atmosphere was casual, filled with energy, and the songs, similar to those sung at Island ECC, departed from the traditional hymns I had grown up with. Witnessing the passion of others as they sang, with arms raised and bodies swaying, deeply moved me. For the first time, I felt a wave of emotion in a church setting, and I teared up. Looking back, this moment began my journey with God.

I returned to Hong Kong and found a new spiritual home at Island ECC. I started attending services more regularly, and one thing remained constant: every Sunday, I still feel a surge of emotion when we sing. Over time, I interpreted this as a sign that God speaks to me and connects with my heart.

Over the years, my parents have encouraged me to deepen my relationship with Jesus. My dad often expresses his desire to one day see me again in heaven. This sentiment has resonated with me, prompting me to reflect on the significance of my faith. I firmly believe that God always looks out for me, guiding me through life's challenges and triumphs. In my view, everything is in His hands, allowing me to live every day with a peaceful heart.

Despite this lifelong connection to faith, I must publicly declare my commitment to Jesus. To me, baptism signifies a spiritual rebirth and renewal. It symbolizes the washing away of sins and the beginning of a new life in Christ — a life filled with purpose, hope, and the promise of eternal salvation. This moment represents a transformative step in my spiritual journey. It is an expression of gratitude for His unwavering love and guidance. I believe baptism will strengthen my connection with Christ, allowing me to understand God and my faith entirely. Just as you cannot truly date someone without getting to know them, I realize I cannot have a meaningful relationship with God without truly knowing Him.

I also wish to inspire those around me. Since starting this baptism journey, several people have expressed interest in taking the same step. Many have contemplated baptism for years but haven't had the courage to do it. I want to be part of their journeys, helping to transform hardened hearts into open and receptive ones.

I am excited to embrace this new chapter in my spiritual journey. Through baptism, I hope to deepen my faith, connect with God more intimately, and inspire others to explore their own paths of faith. Thank you.

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JOAO MUSETTI

Both faith, struggle, growth, and searching have marked my journey with God. I was blessed to be born into a Christian home in Brazil, where my family instilled in me the importance of faith and the significance of attending church every Sunday. We prioritized going to church, and it became an integral part of our lives. When my family relocated to Canada at an early age, we continued this tradition, ensuring that our faith was a guiding light as we adjusted to a new life in a new country.

As a child, I was actively involved in our church community. I participated in various groups – Friday evening children’s gatherings, youth group meetings, and, eventually, young adults’ programmes. I cherished the summer and winter camp experiences where I could deepen my understanding of God and strengthen my bond with fellow believers. I felt a strong calling to share the Gospel with my friends at school, often encouraging them to accept Jesus into their hearts. Yet, as I transitioned into high school, things began to shift. The excitement of youth distracted me from church and God. I grew tired of waking up early for Sunday services, and my parents, noticing my reluctance, allowed my brothers and me to attend a later service so we could sleep in.

As I ventured into college, my independence and detachment from the faith grew. With church only a distant memory, we occasionally appeared for Christmas and Easter services. My friendships during this time were with good people, yet I felt a void and lacked the guidance of God in my life. When challenges arose, I found solace in my understanding rather than seeking divine help. There was a pivotal moment when I encountered legal troubles after a fight, which left me discouraged and struggling to find work in Canada. It was during this dark season that I turned back to God. Hopeless and overwhelmed, I started attending church again and rediscovering the power of prayer.



I’VE LEARNT THAT FAITH ISN’T JUST ABOUT THE HIGHS AND LOWS, BUT NAVIGATING THROUGH THE LOWS WITH GOD’S UNWAVERING LOVE AND GUIDANCE.

A year and a half later, I received an incredible opportunity to work in Hong Kong, which gave me hope. Moving in 2015, I felt I could start fresh, free from the distractions that had once clouded my faith. I found a church community at Island ECC, and, for the first time, I attended services on my own. I no longer needed my mother’s gentle nudges to get me out of bed on Sunday mornings. I made it a point to prioritise my faith and felt an unmistakable joy in my life.

However, as is often the case, I began to drift again, this time becoming entangled in distractions from dating apps. It wasn’t until 2022, while recovering from COVID-19 and spending a week in a hotel room alone, that I began to reflect on my spiritual journey. I realised my faith had been like a rollercoaster, filled with ups and downs, often feeling like a lost boat in the vast ocean. I craved consistency and a deeper relationship with God.

That solitary time gave me clarity about my need for transformation and commitment. I acknowledged that my walk with the Lord needed to be more intentional and that it was time to surrender my life to Him fully. I’ve learnt that faith isn’t just about the highs and lows, but navigating through the lows with God’s unwavering love and guidance.

Today, I take this step of baptism as a public declaration of my renewed commitment to Christ. I am excited to embrace this new chapter, growing in faith and seeking a deeper understanding of His love.

JOSEPH GREYLING

My story begins in 1970 when my parents experienced a miraculous encounter with God. That night, in separate rooms of their home, unaware of each other's actions, they surrendered their lives to Christ. This happened as believing family members prayed fervently for them. Soon after, my mother, pregnant with me, read about Hannah dedicating Samuel to God's service in 1 Samuel 1:27-28. She thanked God for salvation and committed me to the Lord before birth. Growing up, I felt God's presence pursuing me — a gentle whisper I couldn't fully escape.

Yet, as I entered adulthood, I rebelled. I turned from God, chasing a hedonistic life where pleasure dictated my choices. This path led to addictions and self-destructive behaviors. I drowned out God's voice with fleeting thrills and sought spiritual meaning in false religions. But 30 years ago, I hit a wall. Emptiness consumed me as nothing could satisfy me. In desperation, I turned to someone else's Bible because I did not own one and asked God to speak. As I expectantly opened it, my eyes fell on Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock..." Instantly, I knew the God of my childhood was calling me back. That moment sparked a change, though my journey remained rocky. I stumbled, returning to old ways, still wrestling with surrender.

Then, 20 years ago, God broke through again. At a family gathering, a Christian relative humbly confessed their failures and sought forgiveness. I felt God's presence pierce my heart in that raw, honest moment. My sin became clear, but so did Christ's love. I surrendered fully to Him. By God's grace, my wife joined me in giving her life to God. But our faith came at a cost — persecution tested us — but God's faithfulness never wavered.



God blessed us with two precious children, Matthew and Hannah. Like my mother, we dedicated them to God before and during their births. Though I'd been baptized as an infant, I later desired to be baptized as an adult alongside my children, praying they'd one day choose faith for themselves. This past year, God answered that prayer. Matthew and Hannah committed to Christ and expressed their desire to be baptized. Today, we stand together, a family united in faith, to publicly declare our trust in Jesus through baptism.

Island ECC has been our spiritual home for four years — where God has worked mightily in us. The preaching of God's Word has sustained us through trials: my wife's professional struggles, my health challenges — including cancer and learning I have only one functioning kidney — and other challenges we faced. This church has been a lifeline, offering our family truth and grace. For Matthew and Hannah, it's provided a community that challenges them to grow and holds them accountable in love.

As we prepare for this baptism, we reflect on God's goodness. Every step reveals His grace, from my parents' salvation to my own winding path, from my wife's redemption to our children's faith. Baptism is our response — a public act of gratitude and obedience, symbolizing the death of our old selves and the life we now have in Christ. We don't stand here as a perfect family but as a redeemed one, wholly dependent on the God who pursues, restores, and sustains.

To Him be the glory forever. May our story point you to the same grace that has carried us — the grace of a Savior who knocks, waits, and welcomes all who turn to Him.

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TO OUR CHILDREN'S FAITH.

JOSHUA TANG

Being born into a Christian family, I met Jesus as long as I can remember. However, like most kids and teenagers, I spent many years seeing the church as a Sunday chore. I never had a real, genuine connection with God, and typically went through suffering. When it came along, I complained and asked God, “Why?”. This “hi, bye” relationship with God lasted for too many years, with my old church and the church near my university “not being my vibe”. Even after I returned to HK after graduating, I found I was the “lazy and stagnant” believer Pastor Kevin talked about. While faith has been part of my life, I’ve never experienced a genuine, natural, and sustained relationship with God.

God has constantly been watching over me throughout my life, with countless blessings like a wonderful and loving big family that I’m close to, financial support, and numerous chances to get closer to God despite my laziness. However, funny enough, my renewal of faith came from my previous relationship, which was my first real relationship. It sparked when I was given a book to read called *What Every Man Wishes His Father Had Told Him*, which talks about struggles men experience if not given proper fatherly advice and how the Bible acts as fatherly advice from God. After reading the first couple of chapters, I would be overwhelmed every Sunday with an urge to go to church to worship and listen to God’s word. However, this was soon tested when I was met with toxicity, and this spiraled. I lost friends, precious time with family, and most importantly, time with God. I would sometimes skip church and pray less. The moment I was at rock bottom, after repetitive hurt and betrayal, I suddenly turned to God. I looked towards God the moment I was met with suffering, hurt, and betrayal, and I was met with peace. I made every effort to attend

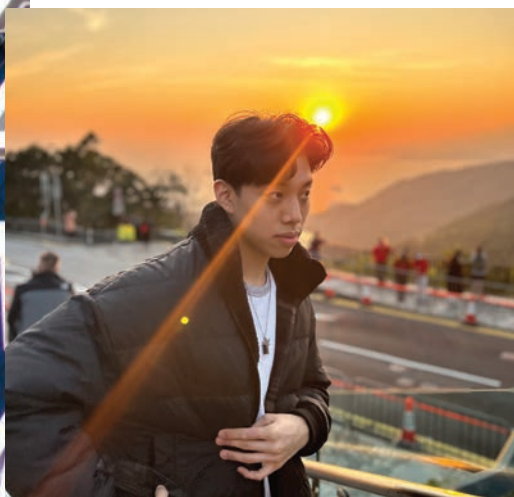
Sunday service. I kept praying for signs of whether I was where I was supposed to be and for God to empower me with the qualities I needed. And guess what? He gave me many opportunities to show

patience and forgiveness, and what I’ve learned from Sundays. I went from asking, “Why is this happening, God?” to “God, if this is the path you’ve put me on, please guide me”, trusting His plan for me.

While God guided me, I still experienced sadness. After countless signs from God, I chose to end the cycle of toxicity, and even though it was messy, it felt like it was what God was telling me to do. During this difficult time, old wounds of questioning self-worth resurfaced, and I became increasingly depressed. It wasn’t until my parents and I attended service, and saw the *shift vessel* young adult ministry that I started healing. With it being my first small group experience, I had my doubts, but I was quickly welcomed. Soon, on one of the prayer nights, I realized I had found myself, a new relationship with God, and some of the most wholesome friends I could not be more thankful for. I’ve even shocked myself when looking back on my journal, seeing my mental health go from self-hate to self-love and love for God!

I felt that God had given me such a journey to realize the importance of faith and the strength He provides, albeit with its challenges. Through those, I built a reliance and connection I want to share with you. He continues pushing and inspiring me, with urges to become more involved in the church community, like ARK, ITC, and Vessel.

I WENT FROM ASKING, “WHY IS THIS HAPPENING, GOD?” TO “GOD, IF THIS IS THE PATH YOU’VE PUT ME ON, PLEASE GUIDE ME”, TRUSTING HIS PLAN FOR ME.



KEVIN KONG

Hello, I am Kevin Kong.

Praise to God!

I grew up in an immigrant family in Chinatown, New York City. My parents raised me with Chinese Confucian and Buddhist traditions, and I dutifully obeyed my parents, worked hard, followed rules, and was a good boy. Although immigrant life had financial hardships, I did not feel poor or discriminated against because I was in Chinatown, surrounded by other Chinese immigrant boys and girls, so I felt normal growing up.

I lived a blessed life, where small circumstances and situations helped smooth me through different stages of my life. God always walked next to me, although I didn't know it then.

In high school, I became aware of my gifts: my looks, intellect, and charm. I leaned on my gifts as my strengths to improve my lot in life – get good grades, get in a prestigious college and job, attract beautiful girls, and someday improve my wealth, status, and accomplishments. I would become a self-made man in America, and my gifts will get me there.

In college, my curiosity to find the meaning of life led me to the Bible, going to church, and exploring other religions and philosophies. My interest was intellectual, so I did not dive deep into Christianity. After all, why did I need God if my looks, smarts, and charm would take care of me?

In my 30s, although my heart knew what was right and wrong, I intentionally turned my back on God because I could not bear to face God while I played with sinful pleasures. Sweet temptations of the world whispered to me, suggesting that I try this and enjoy that. What harm was there? Why can't I enjoy some pleasures? I also understood that following God required a cost: personal self-sacrifice, submission, and obedience. And I lacked the courage to obey, suffer, and carry my cross. So, I intentionally clouded my eyes from the light and turned to the darkness – where sinful pleasures of the world were clothed in glamour, did not look ugly; and where I indulged in my



I AM NOW A MAN REBORN, A CHILD OF GOD, AND I LOOK FORWARD TO SERVING MY FATHER.

desires, lust, pride, and sins in the shadows, obscured from guilt. I continued to put my faith in my gifts to power me forward, chasing lust, status, self-importance, and wealth. I worked hard and earnestly, while trying to be a good man. Looking back, the pleasures were fleeting, and I wasted time and my gifts. Hevel. Vanities of vanities. Vapor. 20+ years.

In my 40s, while still refusing to accept God, His patience and kindness orchestrated my marriage to my wife 12 years ago. My wife is genuinely a good, pure, kind-hearted person, which is why I married her. My problem was that I also wanted to do worldly sinful things, and my wife would not help me along. She blocked and denied me from using my gifts to advance in status, career, and wealth. I bitterly resented my wife for the first 10 years of my 12 years of marriage. Only in the past 2 years, with the grace of God, have I started appreciating my wife, a redemptive love path that I am still walking today.

In lumine tuo videbimus lumen. “In thy light, we shall see the light.”

In my 50s now, through the grace of God, I slowly opened my eyes to the light. In 2019, my family moved to Hong Kong; my two toddler children brought home the Gospel with their Christian school's children's Bible, and my wife (raised in a Buddhist family) was transformed from a stubborn person to a virtuous wife who was baptized at IslandECC in 2023. I attended Island ECC Sunday sermons, Alpha, BSF, Re-Engage, Men's Fraternity, and other activities where God and the church softened my heart. I had the best job in my life, accumulated the most wealth, and achieved my highest career accomplishment through coincidental circumstances that I can only explain as the hand of God.

In December 2024, I quit my corporate job to cut off the stronghold of my career as my first priority, identity, and idol. In January 2025, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I submit myself as a living sacrifice and to carry my cross.

I am now a man reborn, a child of God, and I look forward to serving my Father.

Praise the Lord!

KRISTINA LAU

The last time I found myself in a similar moment at the hospital was when I gave birth to my firstborn, Zachary. Back then, the roles were reversed — my mom would lie beside me on the guest's pull-out bed, watching over me and my newborn with quiet care. This time, however, the feeling is different — not one of celebration, but of reflection and surrender.

As I lie here beside her tonight, my thoughts drift to her surgery tomorrow. I wrestle with doubt, wondering if we're doing the right thing by putting her through another round of treatment in her battle against cancer. Life is unpredictable, even ironic at times, filled with down times like illnesses and even death. Yet there we were, awake at 3:30 a.m., talking about faith, love, and the promise that — no matter what happens — we will see each other again in heaven.

Even in the darkness, God's love surrounds us. It's a love that whispers of beauty and reminds us of the vibrant tapestry of life He has created. This was recently brought into sharp focus for me when we attended Coldplay's concert that was prearranged before Mom's admission to the hospital. It was on a weekday at an unfamiliar location, far from where I needed to be. God knew how empty and tired I was, but He chose the day Mom was discharged to bring me to this big party. He awakens me through extraordinary architectural minds, the explosion of color, the translucent voices, and the music; He reminded me that beauty exists even amidst hardship. Life is so beautiful.



My mom was the one who first brought me to church. No matter what challenges life threw her way, she faced them with resilience and grace. I remember her navigating a packed car — three kids under four and two elderly parents — down the freeway, handling it all with strength and poise. She was unbothered despite any darkness or loneliness she might have felt; her faith upheld and empowered her. I watched her handle it all with such fortitude and composure. Her faith has always been her anchor, and now, as I prepare for baptism, I realize it has become mine too.

Recently, I was asking myself, “How will I change after being baptized?” I hesitated and admitted “Maybe not much.” God pressed gently: “Then why get baptized?” I then thought of the meaning of marriage and how, after years of love, you don’t do the wedding ceremony to transform the relationship, but to declare it to the world. To say: This is who I am, who I belong to, and I want the world to know. That’s why I’m here today. God’s love has been steady long before this moment, just as my mom’s faith has been my compass. My baptism is a gesture of gratitude and acknowledgment of God Almighty love and power. Baptism is my — yes to God, my way of stepping into the light and saying: I’m committed to this love, this grace forever.

HE REMINDED ME THAT BEAUTY EXISTS EVEN AMIDST
HARDSHIP. LIFE IS SO BEAUTIFUL.

VICTOR LEUNG

We're constantly searching for purpose and why we're here. It's a journey I began long ago, yet only fully internalized in recent years.

My first contact with Christianity was through attending Sunday school in primary school. Though I attended routinely, read biblical stories, and made friends from church, all this was simply me going through the motions. In high school, I transferred to a boarding school in the US, which I attribute to shaping my core character. Those four formative years gave me some of the most indelible experiences and encounters in my life that I will cherish forever. Yet, I had no touch with God during them.

I made it a point to reconnect with my faith in college and joined an on-campus fellowship. I established an understanding of worship, prayer, and reading scripture. Most importantly, I sowed the seeds of growing through community, with friends who were strong in the faith and who encouraged me to do the same.

Then 2020 hit. While we may all remember its start as being filled with anticipation and excitement for the decade ahead, those sentiments quickly withdrew into worry and uncertainty with the advent of the pandemic. With it, one of my long-standing motivations – studying abroad in Tokyo that Spring, which I planned to leverage in shaping my life beyond college – was cancelled. I was in a lost headspace, shattered and confused, with plans completely evaporated. But, in hindsight, God had other plans in store for me.

Instead, I found myself studying abroad in Shanghai that Fall. Five months there gave me powerful solace from my rock bottom and reframed my circumstances through new encounters, travels to new cities in China, and new experiences – a new lens through which I made sense of my new reality. However, I didn't attribute much of this to God and thought I could rely on myself.

I maintained this view up until my college graduation. Though I was somewhat distanced from my faith then, I was uplifted by some encouraging words from our senior pastor at college. He pointed me to Island ECC via past connections, encouraging me to seek Him again.



I COULD NOT HAVE FORESEEN, IN THE TIMES I NEEDED IT MOST, GOD'S TANGIBLE ORCHESTRATION IN MY LIFE

In ways I could not have foreseen, in the times I needed it most, God's tangible orchestration in my life manifested itself in two ways: providing me a job opportunity during a time of little direction, and planting a mustard seed in my heart that blossomed my faith into realizing His wondrous workings in my life. It reminded me of something I had forgotten, recognizing my lack of power. By opening God's door, He will let you see Him. "Seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you." Matthew 7:7.

Unlike my previous self, who went about my faith with little intent, I have grown through community and from co-leading my care group. Recollecting my countless blessings throughout life, it's hard to believe He isn't in my midst. From my career to my relationships to my personal growth, I've gained so much perspective on my place in His kingdom, allowing the Holy Spirit to dwell in me and help me see things I would not be able to see otherwise. Because I receive His undeserving favour, I may be filled with joy.

The numerous times I wavered in my faith all played a part in bringing me back to Christ, and in realizing my imperfections, I know He saves me, and I cannot save myself.

The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of His heart through all generations.
Psalms 33:11.

In my weakness, I am strong in Him. I am forever changed because He is with me in both the battles and blessings. In dying to the self who did not have Jesus, I trust and commit my life to Him, following Him as my Savior.

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

What It Means To Become A Christian

HE LOVES

God loves you because He chooses to.
“God wasn’t attracted to you and didn’t choose you because you were big and important ... He did it out of sheer love...” (Deuteronomy 7:7-8).
He loves you so much that...

HE GAVE

He gave Jesus, His one and only Son. While we do wrong things daily, Jesus is sinless. Though sinless, Jesus took our sin. He died on the Cross in our place. Our response to this great gift is simple...

WE TRUST

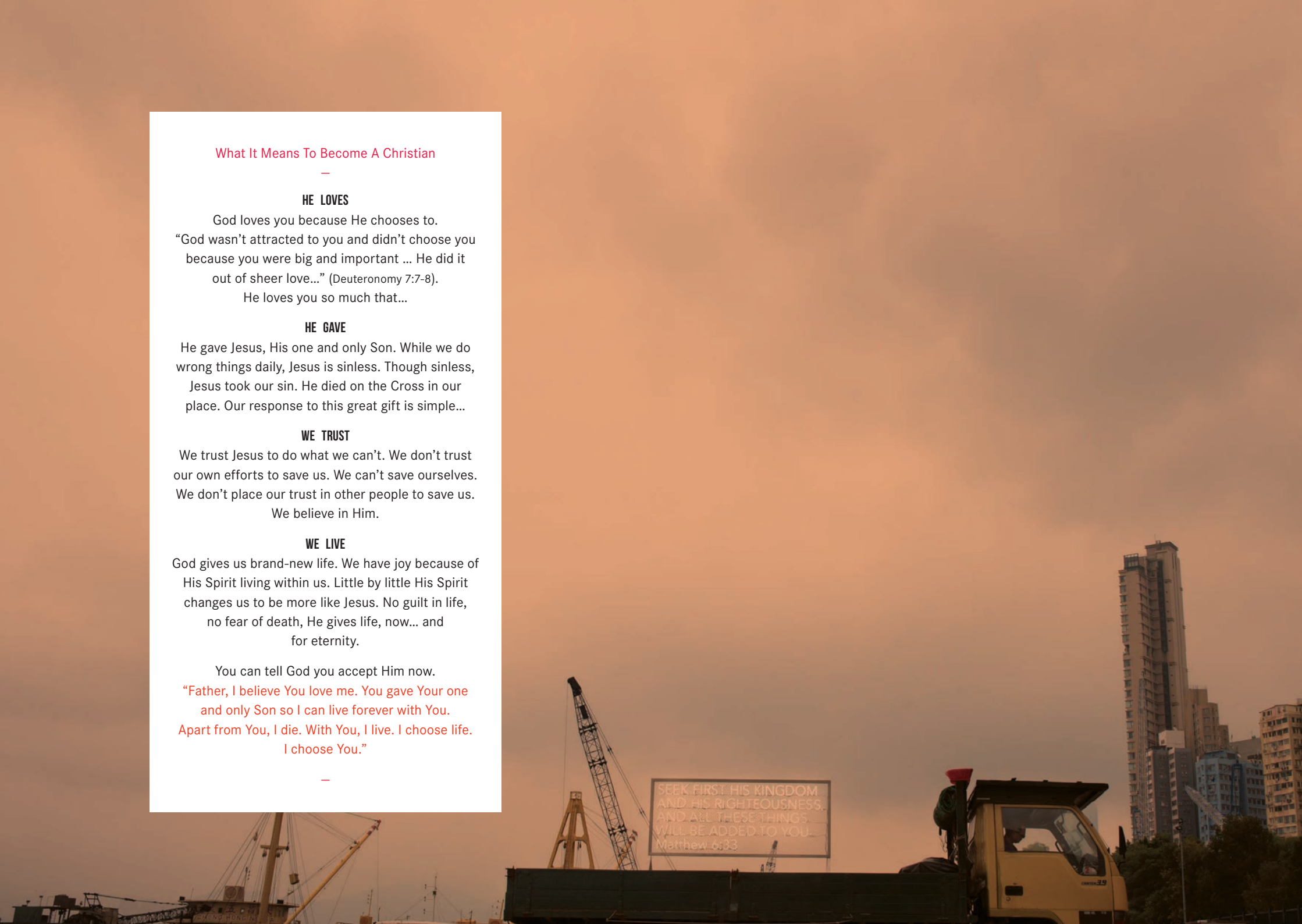
We trust Jesus to do what we can’t. We don’t trust our own efforts to save us. We can’t save ourselves. We don’t place our trust in other people to save us.
We believe in Him.

WE LIVE

God gives us brand-new life. We have joy because of His Spirit living within us. Little by little His Spirit changes us to be more like Jesus. No guilt in life, no fear of death, He gives life, now... and for eternity.

You can tell God you accept Him now.

“Father, I believe You love me. You gave Your one and only Son so I can live forever with You.
Apart from You, I die. With You, I live. I choose life.
I choose You.”



SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM
AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS,
AND ALL THESE THINGS
WILL BE ADDED TO YOU.
Matthew 6:33

25

5.25

SHARE YOUR STORY

BAPTISM

2025