



candle the dark

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Candle In The Dark

Stories In The Field As Told By SIM's Missionaries



Candle In The Dark

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Endorsements

These heart-warming stories candidly shared by men and women in missions are refreshing and challenging all at once. Their poignant, honest struggles with submission to God's call, their experience of God's comfort, provision and enabling presence, their wonder and joy of seeing lives mysteriously transformed all speak volumes of the faithfulness and sovereignty of the God of the nations. Truly uplifting and highly recommended!

Dr Ho Chiao Ek
Principal, IDMC Institute

Candle in the Dark presents realistic accounts of cross-cultural workers at various stages of their call. An engaging read for all who aspire to cross cultures for the Kingdom and for leaders or missions policy makers who would want an inside glimpse of what goes on in the psyche of a called-out servant of God in cross-cultural missions.

Christy Lim
National Director, Interserve Singapore

These delightful personal testimonies and life stories reveal the Missionary Heart of God who continues to pursue the lost by calling His servants from around the world to join Him in cross-cultural ministry. May you be challenged to know our Missionary God as you read these stories and hear His calling for you to join Him in bringing the Gospel to the nations and drawing the lost back to Him.

Alvin Tan
Senior Pastor, Bartley Christian Church

This inspiring collection of personal stories spans continents and ministry types, yet what holds it together is their shared testimony of the Lord's faithfulness in providing for those He calls and removing obstacles before them. The stories told here will inspire obedience, correct misperceptions, model pathways into missions, and all together outfit the reader with new ways of seeing and serving. This e-book proves once again that the Lord accomplishes His eternal aims with His everyday people. I endorse it.

Dr Joshua Bogunjoko
SIM International Director

The testimonies in this collection testifies that God never fails as one steps forward in faith and obedience to serve Him. Even in the midst of this Covid pandemic and conflicts in the world, the global mission work of God to raise and build His people to advance His kingdom here on earth continues. I commend this e-book to the Next Generation believers who are either engaging in missions (Sending & Giving) or Exploring missions (Going) that as they read these stories from the field, they will be challenged and inspired to learn that God's Spirit is moving in unprecedented ways around the world and they can be part of it!

Charles Ho
Executive Director, Wycliffe Singapore

This e-book contains modern-day real-life stories of "five loaves and two fishes" – of Christians from diverse backgrounds and nations who have given their lives and hearts to serve our Lord Jesus Christ. I am humbled to read about these brothers and sisters who lovingly, joyfully give from their "widow's mite" in full assurance and confidence of the LORD. God provides

and will use each of us when we serve humbly and with the courage He gives.

Dr Tan Lai Yong
Associate Professor, National University of Singapore;
Received "Friend of China" Foreign Expert Award
for his work in training village doctors in Yunnan (1996 to 2010);
Member, Bethesda Frankel Estate Church since 1975

Candle in the Dark is a collection of stories of men and women of faith who have heard and obeyed. As you read the stories, you will find the common threads of receiving a call from God, the wrestling and counting the cost, step of faith into the unknown, navigating the field mission challenges and the reward of their obedience. This book is a worship to God.

Joe Chean
Chairman, Fellowship of Missional Organisations of Singapore (FOMOS);
National Director, Youth with a Vision, Singapore

The next generation represents the only means to sustain global missions long term. What assurance is there that God is leading them to the field? Stories stir the imagination and move the heart. The stories in *Candle in the Dark* are riveting and encouraging. They share a common trait— true tales of God's power and presence. Each storyteller experienced God's grace first hand. The task, however, needs more labourers. For anyone serious about God's leading to significance on the global stage, this book provides the impetus to go with confidence.

Dr Gilbert Soo Hoo
Adjunct professor at various local seminaries

Reading the 29 stories in *Candle in the Dark* brings to memory my own journey of responding to God's Call and serving as a missionary in Japan. I would highly recommend this book to any believer seeking to serve in the Missions Field. The conflict-resolution to the many issues affecting the consideration of obeying the Great Commission would give you courage to fully trust in God's Sovereignty. Who knows, when you become a missionary, you would have your own story to share about what God can do through you for His Glory.

Rev Dr Peter Teo
Mission Pastor, Mt Carmel BP Church

Candle in the Dark will ignite and inspire your journey of living out God's call of ministry for your life. These authentic stories from the global south encompass diverse circumstances and challenges that will give you strength and courage as you hear of God's faithfulness to the obedience of the faithful.

Rev Dr Ivan Liew
Executive Pastor of Woodlands Evangelical Free Church

We are often fearful of the things unknown to us. We dare not go to places where our friends have not been to. It is natural for humans to behave that way. The 29 testimonies in *Candle in the Dark* are real stories of people who have taken up the challenge of stepping into the unknown and gone to places that no friends have ventured. May these real stories be an inspiration and encouragement to you!

Dr Stanley Ling
Advisor, SIM East Asia;
Former Regional Director of SIM East Asia

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For the SIM East Asia 40th Anniversary celebration, 40 SIM missionaries globally were invited to share their field experiences and their journey as God's messenger to the Nation. Twenty-nine missionaries responded and their testimonies were edited into this e-book *Candle in the Dark* as a resource to mobilise the Next Generation for cross-cultural mission.

We wish to thank the coordinator, Michael Chay the SIM Singapore Director, for ably leading his team comprising Mae Wong the Chief Editor, and Sub-editors Pastor Lim Kheng Hai, Pastor Yap Beng Shin, Elder Wong Foo Mun and Alex Quong in putting the collection of testimonies together. Our gratitude, too, to Lee Meng Choon for offering his creative talent in designing the front and back covers.

The task of the Sub-editors involved communicating with the authors to realign and rewrite their testimonies with a dominant theme that will resonate with the young readers. This arduous process took some follow-up as missionaries were always on the move in their ministries. Nevertheless, we thank God for allowing this to be accomplished.

Our Chief Editor Mae Wong, highly skilled as a writer, was most patient in guiding the rest of the team through the torturous process of ensuring that the testimonies communicated their intent clearly. SIM East Asia is most grateful for her partnership in publishing not only this e-book but also a few earlier ones.

We are also thankful to others who supported this publication: the many who ardently endorsed this compilation and our International Director Dr Joshua

Bogunjoyo who, despite his hectic schedule, was most forthcoming in giving his endorsement.

The team felt most blessed by God who allowed us to produce *Candle in the Dark* and we look forward to its legacy as a mobilisation tool for the Next Generation for the Great Commission.

Thanks be to God!

The Management Team
SIM East Asia Ltd

FOREWORD

It is my joy, pleasure and privilege to write the foreword to this e-book as a fellow missionary who has been called to serve His Lord and Master in His mission. I'm glad that you are reading this inspiring e-book presenting the journeys of ordinary men and women who have totally committed their lives to their Master to be His candle in a world of sin and darkness. Their wicks were lit by Him to shine where people live and die without knowing Him and to fulfil His purposes during their lifetime.

Just as their Master's life, during His ministry days on the earth, was full of challenges, ending with His death on the Cross, their adventurous journeys too have not been easy or smooth but full of twists and turns, uncertainties, anxieties, pain, discouragements, difficulties, crises and most importantly, amazing divine encounters. As they share their experiences with you through these testimonies they seem to also declare along with the Apostle Paul, *"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8: 37-39). But for His faithfulness, grace, and strength they would not have survived those challenging experiences. How true it is the fact that, *"a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; He will faithfully bring forth justice"* (Isaiah 42:3). Those God-ordained experiences have constantly reminded them of their Master's call to His early disciples and missionaries, *"If anyone would*

come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). It is very encouraging to know that even if they are surrounded by grave difficulties on every side, they are determined to follow their Lord, move forward in their missionary journey, and serve Him faithfully till the end.

This e-book consisting of inspiring testimonies by SIM East Asia missionaries serving in different fields around the world was originally written in conjunction with the 40th Anniversary of SIMEA. We are confident that anyone who reads these testimonies on how the grace of God has led His servants during their missionary journeys would be encouraged and emboldened to be witnesses for God wherever they are. It is also our prayer that as you read these testimonies, they would renew your souls and fill you with a sense of excitement for the things of God and His mission. May God use this e-book to help you clearly understand the journeys of His ambassadors of the Gospel and motivate you to uphold them in prayer before the throne of grace.

Watson Rajaratnam
Regional Director, SIM East Asia

PREFACE

Candle in the Dark is a compilation of 29 testimonies by SIM East Asia's missionaries in the mission fields all over the world.

The compilation of these testimonies was initially collated for publication to celebrate God's faithfulness and goodness during SIM East Asia's 40th Anniversary, but this did not materialise. Obviously, God had other plans.

One observation that emerges from our interaction with Churches and Mission Agency leaders of the next generation of believers is their eagerness to step into the shoes of their forebears for cross-cultural missions. Survey findings, however, suggest that they are held back by challenges from many fronts. Considerations such as finance, security, personal risks, retirement plans, and family commitments directly or indirectly delay or erect barriers to their willingness to respond to the Great Commission.

The collection of 29 testimonies is a precious documentation of, in the words of one of the endorsers, "true tales of God's power and presence". It comprises tales of men and women journeying with their God: hearing, answering His call with trepidation and trembling, witnessing His abundant grace, experiencing His guidance and leading, depending on Him to navigate difficult terrains as they tread faithfully to find victory in the field. Indeed, it is their offering of praise and worship to their Jehovah Jireh: the Provider.

In putting their stories together, however, we were mindful of keeping their identities confidential. So, we used pseudonyms, especially for those serving in sensitive regions or countries where there is a high degree of security risks. We

have also opted not to disclose specific mission fields to avoid jeopardising their mission.

What our missionaries faced in heeding the voice telling them to “Go” echoes what the Next Generation is experiencing in trying to overcome their resistance to respond to “Go”. That is why we decided to re-angle the collection to address the Next Generation’s struggles to obey their calling to the nations.

We hope that *Candle in the Dark* will speak loudly to young people, especially to those who find it a challenge to obey their calling to cross-cultural missions. Mission Pastors I met similarly mentioned it is challenging to mobilise especially the millennials for cross-cultural mission and it is our desire that this e-book would be an added resource for you to consider the step of faith.

Every believer in Christ is a candle in a dark world and we thank God that some are called to the nations overseas to light that candle to brighten their world with the light of Jesus.

The God whose presence was with Joshua, the leader of the Israelites traversing into the Promised land, was with your forebears and will also be your leader and guide in your journey of obedience.

May the aspirations of the generation who have heeded the call be your inspiration as you respond to the God who is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Michael Chay
Singapore Director,
SIM Singapore

I Hear His Call



That Summer In 2015

Rebecca

Rebecca is from Hong Kong and was gainfully employed when God called her into full-time mission work. Before her call, she was happily making annual mission trips organised by her church. She's single and has been in the field for four years.

My name is Rebecca. I am single and a former secondary school teacher in Hong Kong. I have been serving for the past three years in North-central Asia among at risk young adults who were edged out or had to leave the government/charity-run shelters as they no longer qualified for the shelters since they exceeded the mandatory age limit.

In 2013, I signed up for my first mission trip to North-central Asia through my church. Following that, I kept returning to North-central Asia every six months. The summer of 2015 was my fifth time in North-central Asia and I served there for two weeks. During the first week, I was in high spirits because I was having so much fun playing with the orphans in all the fun activities. But things took a turn in the second week.

The Vision

One night during my second week in North-central Asia, I was listening intently to one NGO staff member's testimony when all of a sudden, I had a vision. In my vision, I was sitting in a circle with two other NGO staff officers. I was sharing my testimony about working as a full-time missionary. This image lasted only a few seconds but it was enough to scare me silly. I kept telling myself it was an illusion. I did not tell anyone in my team about the vision as I was still grappling with it. That

night before I slept, I was unable to control my tears. I struggled deeply as I told God I was not willing to serve in North-central Asia as a long-term worker.

First Confirmation

The day before we left North-central Asia, the NGO director's wife approached me cautiously. I sensed she was acting somewhat out of the ordinary. She put her hand on my shoulder and said calmly, "Rebecca, I just want to tell you something. Yesterday, I cast a random glance at you and I heard God telling me that this sister, that is you, will be our next team mate. Last night, some of the staff came to my house and we prayed for your calling." I remembered I got goosebumps right after hearing that. I did not expect to receive God's confirmation this way.

Second And Third Confirmation

The first week after I returned to HK, I was still very upset about the calling. I deliberately refrained from praying or reading the bible because I wanted to avoid hearing from God.

One night, while having dinner with three other ladies from church, I shared a sermon about the Jordan River that I had heard in North-central Asia. I also told them about my vision. After dinner, one of the ladies sent me a text message. She took a screenshot of the devotional that she had read that night. It was about the Jordan River. She told me she could tell that God was using people around me to speak to me even as I tried to hide from Him. The first line of the devotional seemed to jump out of the page at me, *"The Jordan River represents the type of separation where you have no fellowship with anyone else, and where no one can take your*

responsibility away from you. There is no use in saying that you cannot go – the experience is here, and you must go.”

That week, I kept asking God “Why me?” while crying buckets every day. On Sunday, during the church service, the pastor preached from the Book of Jonah. This, as I saw it, was definitely NOT a coincidence. In his sermon, he mentioned a professional tennis player called Arthur Ashe who contracted HIV from a blood transfusion he received during surgery. One of his fans asked him, "Why does GOD choose you for such a crippling disease?"

To this he replied: “In the world, over 5,000,000 persons learn to play tennis; 500,000 persons learn professional tennis; 50,000 persons come to the circuit; 5,000 persons reach the grand slam; 50 persons reach Wimbledon; 4 persons reach the semi-finals; and 2 persons to the finals. When I was holding a trophy cup, I never asked GOD ‘Why me?’ And today in pain I should not be asking GOD ‘Why me?’”

That day, after hearing the sermon, I surrendered to God. I said, “If it is your will, I will follow and obey you.”

Bargaining With God

Although I said I would follow and obey God, I still withheld part of myself from God. I began bargaining with Him. I remembered when I was filling in the application form of a mission agency for the very first time in 2016, I sat in the office grumbling and negotiating with Him. “God, I am willing to serve in North-central Asia but how about me going there ten years later? When the time comes, I will have been more spiritually matured and I will have saved up more money.”

I learnt that sometimes, when God calls you to do something, His prompt response to your prayer can be very ‘scary’. One night, I met up with my care group

for Bible study. It so happened that the chapter revolved around the topic “The Rich and the Kingdom of God” which was based on Matthew 19:16-28. My tears rolled down my cheeks when I read the verse, “When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth” (Matthew 19:22, NIV). This verse hit me like a ton of bricks. I was like the rich young man who was unwilling to give up his possessions to follow Jesus. I was so ashamed of myself, especially when I had been proudly proclaiming myself to be a ready servant of Jesus Christ all this time. God knew my heart - He knew deep down I was not willing to sacrifice my very stable and highly-paid job to serve Him. Being a strongly independent woman from Hong Kong, I could not adjust to the idea of depending on well-wishers’ donations for my sustenance. In short, I did not feel comfortable to raise funds for myself. As a matter of fact, it went against my pride and dignity. How could anyone commit to financially supporting me and my work in North-central Asia on a regular basis for an extended period of time? Yes, my close buddies but otherwise, not that many, I thought.

Final Surrender

In the winter of 2017, I signed up as usual for a mission trip to North-central Asia. I was there for Christmas. Two days prior to my return to Hong Kong, I witnessed the baptism of five teenage youths that I got to know over the years. I had watched them growing up in the shelter since 2013. During the baptism, the Hong Kong team prayed aloud for them and sang “Holy Spirit You are welcome here”. I was so moved to see them one by one declaring “yes” to follow Jesus Christ. I told myself, “Rebecca, what is more joyful than to share the Good News of Jesus Christ and witness people seeking God and becoming a believer? It is a blessing

indeed.” I closed my eyes and made a promise to God, “I am so sorry for disappointing you so many times but I will resign this academic year and will serve you wholeheartedly. Thanks for choosing me as your vessel to glorify your Kingdom!”

A Stranger’s Donation

After the mission trip, I signed up for a 10-week Kairos course in church to prepare myself as a full-time missionary. On graduation day, everyone had to go on stage to say a few words. I shared I would be moving to North-central Asia as a full-time worker. After I walked down from the stage, an African lady, a friend of my classmates, approached me and said, “Rebecca, when I heard that you will be serving in North-central Asia, I know God has answered my prayer. I have been praying to God for the whole year to send someone to serve in a very cold country like North-central Asia and here you are. Here is my offering to you. I thank God for His answer.” It was HKD50 (about SGD8.6/ US6.4). I was speechless. What? A stranger giving me an offering? Honestly, HKD50 may not even get me a lunch set at a *Cha Chaan Teng* (Hong Kong-style café) in Hong Kong but it was definitely a huge sum for this lady. I was so touched and kept crying because her generosity was like a miracle to me. Truly, “...nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37, ESV). I am still keeping that HKD50 note in my wallet to remind myself of God’s faithfulness.

The God Who Multiplies

Six months before I moved to North-central Asia, I was preparing for my fund-raising event. I invited 60 people to the event, and 50 of them said they would

attend. As an “experienced” event organiser, I estimated that 30 to 40 would turn up. I started feeling nervous and anxious as the day drew nearer. “What if I cannot raise enough funds to serve in North-central Asia? What if fewer than 20 people show up?” Suddenly, I lost all confidence in God. I was thankful when a friend reminded me, “Rebecca, even if there is only one person attending the event, it is still worth doing it because it is NOT your event but God’s event.” Wow, so true! I had been focusing on myself so much that I had forgotten that it was not about me. It was all about God. To my surprise and beyond my expectation, 100 people turned up. Wait! Where did these people come from? I had to ask my church helpers to bring in more chairs! I was and still am puzzled by the turnout. God must have stirred their hearts and got them to come. I managed to raise enough funds within two weeks. My supporters included some of my friends and people whom I did not know at the event. God showed me that He was gracious to provide all that I needed even though I did not ask for it.

North-central Asia is the place where God wants me to be. It was confirmed time and again in my prayer and in the years I’ve been serving there. From the first time I said “yes” to God to serve Him as a missionary in the field, I had simply acted out of obedience, not love for the people. But God has transformed my heart gradually, almost imperceptibly. I’m now getting really excited to see how God will reveal His plan for me and for the people of North-central Asia, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11, ESV).



Preparing coffee for delivery in winter

The Awakening

Nancy

Nancy, aged 33, is from Nagaland, Northeast India. She is married and has been serving among children and youths in South Asia for three years. Her prayer is that she will always serve God faithfully with a cheerful and grateful heart.

I was born into a non-Christian family of six sisters and four brothers. My father rejected the Christian faith and was critical of it. When I was eight, a friend introduced me to the Christian God. Despite that, the love of God was foreign to me. He remained a distant figure. That would change in the years that followed.

Growing up, I often watched my parents fight with each other. I grew increasingly frustrated as the fights became more frequent. Yet, I understood that the tension between my parents was inevitable. My father was irresponsible and often under the influence of alcohol. My mother had to take on the mantle of both the caretaker of the family and a breadwinner. That left her with little time for us as she struggled to keep food on the table and pay for our education.

My mother was despised and treated like a prostitute because she sold wine for a living. People had this notion that anyone associated with alcohol was cheap. I hated my parents and cursed my life for being born into this family. I was so focused on complaining to God about my family background that I overlooked God's purpose for me. Little did I realise that even while I was in my mother's womb, God had already chosen me, undeserving as I was, to serve Him.

I was awakened to God's divine plan for me when my friends registered me for the worship team. I started getting to know God more intimately as opportunities to learn about Him presented themselves. Soon there was a noticeable change within me. God planted in my heart a love for my father. I was also able to forgive him for his failure as a parent, something I was quite certain would not have happened at all if not for my spiritual awakening. I began praying for his salvation. God was moulding and shaping me for His grand design.

As I grew spiritually, God impressed upon my heart that as I loved my father and desired him to be saved, God, too, loved the lost and the unreached. There were still many people in the world who had not heard the good news and it was my responsibility to share it with them. God was planting in me a mission heart. The vision soon held me captive and I became restless even as I struggled with it. I finally decided to surrender to God's will for me. If He wanted me to serve Him in the mission field, I was prepared to go. My father was not happy with my decision. Every time after I returned home from church, I would get an earful from him. My mother who regularly went to church with me stopped going because he would pick fights with her upon her return.

My zeal for mission work intensified as I grew older. In 2022, I decided to pursue theological studies to prepare myself for it but I could foresee every obstacle that would make this theological pursuit impossible. But God assured me "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4: 13, ESV). I was confident that just as the Lord was instructing me, He would guide and always provide for me. With this newfound confidence, I informed my family of my plan to do theological studies. My dad objected strongly. It was a setback to my mission plans. But I refused to give up till he came round to it. I kept praying every morning

for a week. Then one morning, my father told me that I could go ahead but at the same time asked how on earth they were going to support me.

God in His own time made all things possible. I eventually got the support I needed for my studies. But more importantly, I got to witness my father's conversion while I was in theological college. That he accepted Christ as his personal Saviour brought the family much light and joy.

Since I took the step of faith, God has shown me infinite possibilities. My mourning has turned into great joy as God continues to teach me that nothing is impossible with Him. I'm blessed beyond imagination. Mere words are inadequate to express my deep gratitude for God's grace and mercy. Today, by His grace, I am happily serving in South Asia.

The Open Door

Roopa

Roopa, from North East India, has served in the field North Central Africa for just one year. Although new to the field, she is determined to fulfil her calling as a powerful testimony of God's love. Roopa is 32 years old and single.

I was comfortable growing up in a Christian family in Nagaland, the North East Indian state. My home state has a Christian majority with hundreds of churches and church members numbered in the thousands. I have the opportunity to read the Bible and the freedom to worship in a church.

For a long time, I had been oblivious to the thousands who were dying without knowing Christ. Thousands who were searching for the Truth and thousands who wanted to worship and read the Bible but had no access to it. They were denied religious freedom. God placed a burden in my heart for them. I knew that God was calling me to bring the gospel to unreached people and places.

For years I prayed for opportunities and open doors. I was passionate about cross-cultural missions. I desired to work in a hard-to-reach community in one of the African countries. God finally opened the door for me to serve in North Central Africa through SIM. North Central Africa is a landlocked country and French-speaking. So, my first task was to learn French.

On March 10, 2020, I landed in Bamako, the capital of Africa for my French language study. It would take nine months to a year. Upon completing the course, I joined the mission team in North Central Africa where I focused on discipleship

training. I also strove to build relationships with the people, especially with the children and women folk.

Seeing the ripe harvest and the lack of workers in the field, I am continuing to pray for more of God's children to respond to His call. The need is great and the labour is hard. But to be able to taste the joy of the Lord and share God's power at work with my people and church surpasses every struggle and obstacle. My simple prayer is to be a powerful testimony of God's love and grace.

A Turning Point

Karuna

Karuna from North East India is 34 and single. He has been in the mission field for four years. Together with a specially-assembled international team, he is involved in pioneering work in Africa.

Have you ever been to a place that leaves a permanent mark in your heart when you visit it for the very first time? Today, I want to share my part of the story in God's grand mysterious journey for His people.

Most of us try to cope with anxiety for our future by planning ahead. Unfortunately, God is often out of the picture in our plans. But God has His own plan for us and decides on the exact time and place to make it happen. Man plans but God purposes (Proverbs 19:21).

As I look back on the past two years of my journey as a missionary under SIM, I can vividly see the hand of God nudging me in the right direction a little by little. When I first embarked on my missionary journey, I was assigned by SIM and commissioned by my church to serve in a particular location. (I'm unable to reveal the place for security reasons.) My mind was set on it. I was all ready to go. But it did not materialise. I was told I was now assigned to some other place. I became confused and asked God why this change of direction. As I studied God's Word, this verse caught my eye, "... He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live" (Acts 17:26, NIV). It became clear to me that it was God

who would set the time and places where we should live, not us. He was the one determining when and where I should be. I just needed to learn to wait on Him.



In October 2019, I visited Africa. My meeting with a particular group of people called *Maure* (or Moors) got me all fired up. I was amazed to hear the history of this people group. I learnt that there were only about 588,000 *Maure* in Africa but sadly, only a small number (fewer than five) were Christians. My heart was filled with a yearning so strong that I started thinking of mission strategies to lead them to the kingdom of God. I also pondered on what and how I could contribute to this people group.

Missionaries had been working with this people group for many years but it seemed the *Maure* were a stiff-necked people whose hearts were made of stone. They were resistant to the gospel. I began wondering how God would break their resistance and create a breakthrough. After my visit wrapped up, on my journey home, Ezekiel 36:26 (NIV) kept storming my brain, "...I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." I committed it to prayer. I continued praying for many days for this people group. One day I strongly felt that God was calling me to work among them. God knew that I enjoyed challenges and probably



decided that I should work among this people group for now. Preparations to work among the *Maure* went smoothly with no hindrances. In fact, my church leaders were excited that I could serve in this challenging part of the world. But I will not be

alone. I will be working with an international team in Africa when they arrive.

Accepting the change of mission field was one of my hardest decisions but we can trust in God's divine plan for us

Cross-Cultural Challenges

Sophie

Sophie comes from Taiwan, the Republic of China and has been serving in the field in Indonesia for six years as a teacher in a seminary. Before joining SIM, she had served in a Christian organisation and church for more than 30 years.

It is not easy to answer a new calling from God for someone who has reached middle age. In 2014, I entered cross-cultural ministry at a time of my life when I thought uprooting would not even be a remote possibility. Yet at the age of 75, Abraham was called to go to the land of Canaan. Abraham's story taught me a valuable lesson – when God calls, all I have to do is to obey and follow Him. God, and not us, is ultimately in control of our life situations.

Abraham's story did not end there. When he encountered a famine in the land of Canaan, he went to Egypt. While there, he faced challenges adapting to a different culture. Just like in Abraham's story, I was reminded I would face many challenges in cross-cultural mission work.

The Bible teaches us to view different cultures with humility. When I understood this truth, all the embarrassments that I faced in cross-cultural situations became valuable learning experiences for me. As I look back now on the little things I have experienced, I am grateful to God for giving me the opportunity to learn and appreciate different cultures, to accept their richness and diversity. Indeed, God places us in different situations and different environments so that we may appreciate the diversity of His creation.

Same Yet Different

Language is uniquely peculiar. I am a teacher in the Chinese department of a seminary in the field country. In our department, we have Chinese colleagues who come from different regions. They have different terms for the same item. For example, a colleague once told me that a tomato was called *hongshizi*. But later over lunch, I was informed that a tomato in that culture was *xihongshi* and not *hongshizi* which actually referred to a persimmon.

The Way Back

It is so easy to misunderstand each other in a culturally different environment. During my first year in the field, I borrowed a car from my colleague because I needed to purchase some items from a nearby town. On my drive back to the seminary, I became lost. A colleague once told me that it is very easy to find the way back even if one gets lost in the area. All you needed to do was to turn back from where you came from and look for familiar signs. So, I turned around confidently expecting a familiar road that would take me back to the seminary. After driving in circles, I decided to stop at an intersection to ask a small shop owner for help. The shop owner, an old man, gesticulated enthusiastically the direction. Although I couldn't fully understand his hand gestures, I could roughly make out what he was saying as he kept pointing to a specific route. After thanking him, I drove off in that direction and sure enough I found myself on a familiar road that I knew would lead me back to the seminary.

After a while, I noticed two motorcyclists trailing me. I wondered if they were bad guys. While stopping at a traffic light junction, the motorcyclists came right up

to my car door and tapped on my window. Since I was almost reaching my destination, I was not too worried about whether they were going to rob me. I lowered the window to hear them better. They were speaking in the local language and pointing in a certain direction. Then I heard the name of a familiar road mentioned. I finally understood what they were trying to tell me. I thanked them and we parted ways.

The shop owner had asked his friends to escort me on their motorcycles to ensure that I was heading in the right direction. They must have thought I was going the wrong way and that was why they stopped to redirect me. The old man and the two motorcyclists were like angels that God had sent to guide me. I was thankful that God was watching over me. This incident, however, reminded me to learn the local language well in order to communicate effectively with the people.

A Hawker's Language Lessons

The right attitude to learning can bring surprising results. There are some street vendors hawking food outside the seminary. I particularly like the store specialising in fried chicken. A couple runs the store and I often buy fried chicken from them. The husband knew that I was learning the local language. Each time I bought fried chicken from him, he would teach me some words and phrases used by the locals. I was able to improve my vocabulary and learn stock expressions with his help.

There are many other incidents where God provides help and guides me in a timely manner. And I know that these incidents are not coincidences but divine opportunities where I can learn to communicate with the local people. To serve

effectively on the cross-cultural mission field, I must embrace the local culture and know the language well. Only then can relationship-building begin.

Ten Years In The Making

Misheel

Misheel comes from North East India. She is married and has two children, a son and a daughter. As she serves God in North-central Asia with her husband, she holds close to her heart Philippians 1:6 (NIV), "...He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

The Call

From a young age, I sensed the Lord's calling to missions. But I did not know exactly what it meant until 2004 when I fully committed myself to Christ.

My church had organised a leaders' event. I did not sign up for it but attended it anyway with my friends. The speaker shared from Judges 3:31 (NIV), "*After Ehud came Shamgar son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad. He too saved Israel.*" The mention of Shamgar struck me. He was from a mixed race but God had called him to save Israel. The speaker challenged the congregation with the statement – "God called Shamgar to rescue the Israelites and now He is calling you, will you give your life to Him?" The Holy Spirit was stirring within me; I started to tear up and that night, I surrendered my life completely to God for His service. That night was the start of my missionary journey.

I spent the next ten years undergoing training to prepare myself for the mission field. Throughout, God was grooming me and at the same time performing many miracles. I experienced what a surrendered life to Christ was all about. Finally, after much testing of my patience, God answered my prayer. On 3rd October 2014,

God led me to beautiful North-central Asia. I was all ready and willing to serve, and excited to see where He would lead me.

The Confirmation

I had been offered a chance to serve in several other countries but I had chosen North-central Asia because missionaries from SIM North East India were already serving in those other countries but not in North-central Asia. I wanted to be a pioneer in a fresh field.

The process of getting to North-central Asia was slow but smooth. As I left for Kolkata to collect my visa for North-central Asia, I was suddenly seized by doubt. Questions assaulted my mind, “Does God want me to go to North-central Asia? Am I really prepared for it? Will I be able to work there? Is this the place for me?” But the Lord remained silent as I collected my visa. As I struggled with my turbulent thoughts, I recalled Acts 1:8 (NIV) “...and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all in Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” And then I recalled how God had lovingly affirmed my decision to choose North-central Asia over other countries, and how He assured me that my ministry would be a huge blessing to the North-central Asians. My response to God’s call started at a missions training in 2012 in South India where one of the speakers asked us, “If God wants you to work in any part of the world, where would that be and why would you want to work there?” The verse from Acts had simply led me to say “yes” to God’s call. Going to North-central Asia was not yet in the works.

Then I recalled my roots. There is a folklore recounted among my tribe, handed down from generation to generation, of how we the Garo people were from a Mongoloid race and had settled in North East India. I decided then that

North-central Asia would be my Jerusalem and I would return to work among its people since my own tribe originated from it. I was subsequently able to offer confidently the narrative of God's guidance and direction to North-central Asia whenever people asked me, "Why North-central Asia?"

Into The Future

I have served in North-central Asia for the past six years, joyfully teaching at a university and seeing God working in the lives of students as they step forward to experiencing life in Jesus. In my sixth year in North-central Asia, I married the most amazing and godly man, Jonah, who happened to be our team leader. The Lord blessed us with a beautiful daughter and a son. We know that as a family, God has work for us to do. We are not done yet. But whatever God's plan and purpose for us in North-central Asia may be, we know He will take us by the hand. We will not be alone nor forsaken.

Redirected

Shohe

Serving God in Africa was Shohe's original plan. But he soon realised that God had a different idea. Shohe is 32 years old, comes from North East India and is now serving in the Philippines.

God's call to each individual to serve in His vineyard is unique. This is my testimony of how God called me to serve in the Philippines, where I am currently based.

After I graduated from a bible seminary, I applied to join SIM. I was praying for God's specific revelation to where He wanted me to serve. My heart was set on Africa because I was moved by the pictures, stories and videos presented at a mission training course. Little did I know that God had other plans.

I was having repeated dreams of the Philippines but my stubborn self was resisting the images and refusing to accept that they could be from God. Nevertheless, I did a Google search of the Philippines and learnt that 90% of its population were Christians. I concluded I would not be of much help there. I was determined to go to a place where the gospel had not made any inroads. So, I closed my mind to the Philippines.

But God made sure the Philippines was firmly fixed in my mind. He led two people to draw my attention to the country. The first was my former professor whom I had not met for a long time. Strangely, he asked if I had just returned from a trip to the Philippines when I had actually travelled elsewhere. The second was a

friend who asked if I had been living in the Philippines. The number of times the Philippines was brought up caught me off balance.

I was still in a state of uncertainty some weeks later on my way to the SIMNEI (SIM North East India) office to fill in an application form. I was wondering which country I should state as my country of preference. Just then, a bus passed by and it had the word “Philippines” sprayed in bold letters on its side panel. I thought to myself this just could not be a coincidence. I was literally seeing “Philippines” everywhere in dreams, pictures, and conversations. So, I prayed about it and finally decided to state the Philippines as my country of preference for service in the SIM application form. Still doubtful, I silently prayed once more asking God for a final sign that I had made the right decision. As I stepped into the SIM office, the first thing I saw was an SIM Philippines magnet sticker on a metal cabinet. It was the only magnet attached to it. There were no magnets of other countries. I smiled to myself saying, “Okay, Jesus I will take that as a confirmation”.

So, yes, when I arrived in the Philippines in Feb 2018, I knew for sure that I was where I should be. God placed me in a community of people whom I have connected and bonded with. I love what I do, teaching children, discipling teens and women at our apartment. It gives me great joy to love and be loved by the people I am serving.

I never imagined I would one day be leading a big Indian fellowship here in the Philippines in Luzon. But God surprised me with this leadership opportunity. He is also moulding, shaping and changing me. I had always thought my calling was about God using me in the ministry but with God, nothing is a one-way street. I am thankful God has shown me my flaws and shortcomings and the need to grow in many aspects of my life. Along with that realisation, He has given me opportunities

and platforms to learn and unlearn, grow, improve, and change. He has also expanded my perspectives of Jesus, His life and mission. In fact, I felt that my learning far outweighed my contribution.

I am confident that this is just the beginning and that He has great plans for me. Plans to prosper and give me hope and a great future with Him. Not because I deserve it but because His love is measureless. God's ways and thoughts are infinitely higher than mine.

Restored For A Reason

Grace & Mark

Grace and Mark were originally from Hong Kong. They migrated to USA and became citizens. Not satisfied with living a mundane life, they embarked on an extraordinary journey by heading to a creative access nation. A few years later, Mark suffered a stroke that paralysed him. Thanks be to God, Mark has since recovered and is mobile again.

A T-shirt belonging to Mark's co-worker and hanging in front of Mark's workstation had these words emblazoned across it, "I am not everyone, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. For what I ought to do by the grace of God I will do it." This message spoke to Mark who had been praying for the Lord's direction in joining full-time mission work for the past two weeks, and propelled him into action.

Struck By Stroke

In 2003, Mark suffered a massive stroke which almost killed him. But it might have been the best thing that ever happened to him since it drove him to accept Christ as his personal Saviour. After his stroke, he was blind, suffered short-term memory lapses and needed total care. But to his wife's surprise, Mark was able to recall recent events and recite precisely what were said despite the doctor's diagnosis.

Grace, Mark's wife, had received Jesus as her Saviour in 1992, much earlier than Mark. She felt the call to serve Him full time in 1995 at a mission conference

although she did not understand much about missions. But the bigger issue was that she and Mark were separated at that time. Mark was determined to become rich and be a successful businessman. While pursuing his dream, he left his family broke from his previously failed business and forced Grace to raise their son alone in the US. But Grace managed to finish graduate school and got a stable job while raising a toddler. She could not understand how serving God full time would even be possible given their family situation, but she decided anyway to get involved in the church's evangelism and mission ministry. She went ahead to take classes in seminary to learn more about serving in missions.

God Prepares His Workers

Given the tension between Mark and Grace, divorce seemed inevitable. After all, the couple had been living separate lives for ten years. But the Lord had been preparing and healing the family through the years. Mark and Grace not only did not end up with a divorce, but were also reunited when Mark returned to the States after his medical crisis. Grace rose to the challenge as Mark's caregiver. She had to juggle work, raise a teenager and ensure her own physical health on top of caring for Mark. The church rallied in support and care of the family and the first two years after Mark's return flew by quickly. Over the next ten years, the Lord gradually healed Mark's body. Mark regained vision in one eye which he was grateful for because the scariest thing for him was to be completely blind. After months of rehabilitation, Mark was able to take care of himself and even work at a thrift store to sort out donated clothes and to serve in the church choir. As he became physically stronger, he accepted his responsibility of being a better person, but he

was generally still careless about others' salvation. As he saw it, that was their problem, not his.

Meanwhile, Grace was contented and the family became involved in church as the family situation stabilised. She continued to serve in the church mission committee, leading short-term mission teams, but no longer entertained the thought of serving God in full-time ministry. Then in 2013 when their son was in college, the Lord prompted her to consider it again. Out of obedience, she asked Mark what he thought about serving the Lord full time. Mark simply replied "no" but he was willing to pray about it. To him, that meant asking the Lord not to send him. When Grace prompted him to seek God's will about serving Him, his daily prayer was, "I do not want to go, please do not send me." But after two weeks of prayer, the Lord changed Mark's heart and helped him understand that by God's grace he can serve. His prayer subsequently changed from resistance to submission, "Lord, I do not know what I can do, and where I need to go, but give me strength, and I will do it." And as Mark grew in the Lord, he finally came to understand that it was a blessing to be able to serve Him. As Mark continued reading the bible and praying daily, the Lord changed his attitude about service. Besides healing Mark's body, the Lord had also transformed his heart and mind.

God Provides For His Workers

Although the Lord had made His calling to Mark and Grace loud and clear, they were still unable to see how it could all work out given their limitations. But they soon realised that it was not their responsibility to think about how things would turn out. It was their responsibility to just obey and move along with God. They talked to their church leaders about their decision and Grace resigned from

her position in the committee so that her presence would not affect the committee's decision. It turned out that the committee unanimously supported their decision. Mark and Grace also decided that they would only apply to one sending mission agency. If the agency turned them down for whatever reason, they simply would not go because they would rather others see that it was the Lord (not any effort on their part) who opened the door. After much paperwork, hours of psychological testing and many interviews, the sending agency accepted them with the only requirement that the field of service must have the necessary medical support for Mark's healthcare. The application process and confirmation of the field took ten months but it only took four months for the Lord to provide the support they needed for the field. God had honoured their little faith by assuring them repeatedly that in Him, all things were possible. In a world that seeks accomplishment through human effort, God is in no hurry and patiently moulds His vessels.

For Mark, his life had been restored for the Master's use. The words on the T-shirt, "For what I ought to do by the grace of God I will do it" should be the heartfelt desire of every believer.

I Prevail



Ready For Sacrifice

Neiwete Chirhah

Neiwete Chirhah, 58, comes from North East India and had served in South Sudan and Myanmar until God called him back to service in his homeland. He is blessed with a God-fearing and loving wife, Rovino. Their three children – Eliluu, Sesomiso and Micumiso – accompany them on their missionary journeys.

My parents were poor and illiterate but God-fearing and prayerful. Their example and Christian beliefs provided the foundation for my own faith in God as a child. My blossoming faith eventually developed into a desire to serve God in the mission field. This desire that took root in my childhood took a firm grip in my adulthood.

I grew up with two brothers and two sisters. My parents struggled to put them through school but finances were so tight that eventually they were unable to continue with their schooling. So, it was nothing short of a miracle that I could make it all the way to university. But that privilege came with responsibility. I felt the burden to support my family financially after graduation but that desire to serve God in the mission field tugged relentlessly at my heart. For two years, I struggled between seeking a job to support my family and doing part-time Christian ministry and serving God full time. I had no peace in my heart. I prayed for God's direction and finally felt my calling confirmed by Jesus' words, "No one can serve two masters..." (Mathew 6:24, ESV).

In November 1982, I told my parents about my desire to study theology and serve God in full-time ministry. My mother told me that she had often prayed, "Lord,

you have chosen this child from my womb to serve you. May my son hear your voice. How can he serve you if he does not hear your voice?" Soon after my parents gave their blessing, I felt peace and joy in my heart. In the years I served in the mission field, my mother's prayer would be a constant reminder to me of my calling and to fully depend on Him and follow His ways. God led me to places that I never even dreamt of. It only exemplified how seeking the Lord's guidance in all things is paramount.

I was led to serve God in South Sudan in my first year as a missionary. One day I fell sick with malaria and stomach flu. For days, I felt drained of all strength and energy. I also experienced a strange hollowness or void in my heart, spirit and body. I thought to myself that perhaps I was dying. I had heard that people on the brink of death sometimes had this strange feeling. My thoughts drifted to where I might be buried. But God had other plans for me. In April 2011 while transiting at Nairobi airport on my flight home, I suddenly felt my heart bursting with joy upon seeing the blazing morning sun. It was as if it had been a long time since I last saw one. I knew then I was miraculously healed. I also suddenly realised that South



Sudan was shrouded in darkness and the few missionaries serving there were like bright shining stars. I can see dawn breaking for the Africans one day.

God led me next to the Naga area in Myanmar. We served there for nine years. Villagers in the Naga region endure extreme

hardships and sufferings. They also live in constant fear of military skirmishes. On several occasions I was caught in the cross-fires. Each time, God protected me from harm. Facing such life-threatening situations, I could have sought greener pastures for my family. But I had committed my life to God and was prepared to die any day. The local people started noticing this and began talking among themselves, “He loves us and stays with us because he is a missionary of God.” In spite of the dangers, I was not consumed with fear. I was instead a testimony of the living God. I felt like a living burning bush with God speaking to people in and through my life.

I am thankful to be able to partner SIM in working together with churches to fulfil God’s mission locally and globally. Through SIM, many churches in NEI (North East India) are learning the importance of partnership in missions, member care,

lifelong learning, thriving, and bearing lasting fruits. It is a joy to see churches sending workers to the field and we rejoice, too, that God's hand is at work in and through the lives of missionaries.



“Kill Us One By One”

Ramlan & Lastri

Ramlan and Lastri are currently serving in the Philippines. They were married in 1999. They had been serving together for seven years with several Christian organisations in different places from 2006 until they decided to join SIM East Asia as cross-cultural gospel workers in the Southern Philippines.

Ramlan and Lastri were first assigned to Mindanao in a location named Bahah city. It is a small city located in the heart of Mindanao province about five to six hours' drive from the capital of the province, Davao City. Meanwhile, Davao City remains the busiest city in the Southern Philippines.

Arriving at Bahah city, Ramlan and Lastri were initially at a loss as to how to start their ministry and who they could call friends. From first impression, they thought it would be easy to adjust to living in the Southern Philippines because their Asian features and similarities between their languages would enable them to blend in easily. However, they were very wrong. They discovered many differences in language, cultural norms and behaviour. They knew that the best way to master the local language was to use it in public places. But, they had to first confront their fears. Their ministry was in a notoriously dangerous area where kidnappings, robbery, bomb threats and murders were rife. These encounters were common for the people living at Bahah city.

In the fourth year of their ministry among the people at Bahah, Ramlan and Lastri met their first student contact who introduced them to the community. Her name was Yuni. She had two older sisters - Tuti and Tiwi. Yuni's father was Radja,

and her mother Aida had worked overseas for many years. Yuni and her sisters helped Ramlan and Lastri to connect with the community. Ramlan and Lastri started by giving tuition to children at a religious school, then conducted baking and cooking classes for the students and their mothers. They also played games such as badminton with them.

They were aware that Yuni's father had a drinking problem. He would get drunk daily as he sat drinking with his friends throughout the day. In his drunken state, Radja would start creating trouble. There were rumours that he would often send his henchmen to kill his enemies. That was why both Ramlan and Lastri always kept their social distance from Yuni's father, especially in his drunken state.

Ramlan and Lastri discovered that the students had never been to the city of Davao and were longing to visit it. So, they decided to arrange a trip there on a public holiday. In total, eight girls registered for the trip. Lastri told the girls, "Please ask your parents for permission. Otherwise, we would be held responsible for any mishaps." Ramlan and Lastri promised them that as long as their parents gave approval, they could tag along. To their amazement, the parents granted their permission.

At around 9.30 p.m. on the night before they left for Davao city, Ramlan, Lastri, and the girls heard their front gate banging repeatedly. It was obvious that someone was angrily banging on it. Lastri decided to check out the situation and found three policemen dressed in uniform beside two other men. One of the men was the father of the three girls who were leaving with Ramlan and Lastri for Davao City early the next morning. Ramlan was meanwhile in a room on the upper floor but he could hear, although faintly, Lastri's conversation with them. Suddenly, he heard the three girls crying hysterically. Ramlan immediately descended the stairs

from his room and invited the men in for a talk but they refused. The girls had burst into tears because they were afraid for Ramlan and Lastri as they sensed that the policemen were here to arrest them. Indeed, one of the police officers charged, "We received a report that these students are going to be taken out of the country. You are trafficking children. We are here to investigate."

Ramlan and Lastri could hardly believe their ears. How was it possible? The man who lodged the police report was someone they had known for a long time. That man knew very well how much the couple had helped his daughters. That man was Radja, Yuni's father. For many years when his wife was working abroad, Radja had been living with his mistress. He had neglected their daughters and Ramlan and Lastri had stepped in to care for them. The girls frequented Ramlan and Lastri's home, confiding in them in both good and bad times. They were like parents to the girls. It was almost normal for Lastri to go to their school to talk to their teachers when there was a problem concerning their studies. They attended the baking and cooking classes conducted by Lastri and engaged in creative art and craft sessions. They also brought their friends to Lastri's classes. In addition, Ramlan and Lastri had been providing financial assistance for their education. Surely, all these would vouch for their integrity and untarnished relationship with the girls.

As they faced Radja, Ramlan and Lastri were at a loss. Radja's motive puzzled them although Ramlan suspected that Radja was trying to blackmail them by manipulating the policemen. The couple were fully aware that Radja's henchman was known to be notoriously trigger-happy and always eager to do his evil bidding. The thought that this was their last night ran across their minds.

Suddenly, the daughters yelled at their father, “If you want to kill them, kill us one by one first!” Everyone present was shocked to hear them say that and wondered why they were behaving so disrespectfully to their father.

The policemen insisted on checking Ramlan and Lastri’s passports to ensure they had the proper documentation to stay in the country. The police flipped through the pages taking note of their personal particulars. The couple told the police officers that Radja’s allegation was false. Ramlan explained that they had been living in the country for over five years. He said, “If needed, I’ll call my friend’s wife who is the Head of the Immigration Department or I’ll call the barangay captain who is a friend of mine. They can help clarify who we are.”

Ramlan also mentioned his connection with some *Datu* in the city (*Datu* in the local language refers to the title for chiefs, sovereign princes and monarchs. It’s conferred by the royalty and are still currently used, especially in certain parts of the Philippines). At that, the police officers turned silent and appeared scared. Then, Ramlan asked for their names one at a time. They refused his request out of fear. Ramlan assured them, “Don’t worry, Sirs. Don’t be afraid of me. I just want to know your name, so that we can be friends. How should I address you?”

The most senior policeman looked terrified but eventually gave his name. He turned to Radja and rebuked him for being rude to Ramlan and Lastri. Ramlan heard the policeman telling Radja, “They are not ordinary people, there are some *Datu* behind them and we can all be in serious trouble.” Then the police ordered Radja and his henchman to leave the house quickly. Before leaving, Radja said to Ramlan and Lastri, “It’s okay to bring my daughters to Davao city. They have my permission.”

Radja’s daughters continued crying even after they all left. They failed to understand why their father had made false allegations against Ramlan and Lastri.

The couple asked them, “Why did you yell at your father?” They said their father often acted recklessly. There was an occasion when he had almost shot his own wife with a gun. Upon hearing this, Ramlan and Lastri requested all the students, especially the three daughters, to pray for Radja. God had kept the couple safe from the wicked ones and they used the occasion to testify to the girls what the Bible said – that if we were to go God, He would never leave nor forsake us. He promised to be with us always, to the end of age (Matthew 28:20). Lastri further affirmed, “Those who believe in God need to believe that He is never too late and is always there in times of need.” After that, she led all the girls in prayer before retiring for the night.

Some people in the local community came to know about the incident. They cautioned Ramlan and Lastri to be watchful every time they stepped out of their house because they had drawn the attention of some very evil people. Ramlan and Lastri were aware that they were engaged in spiritual warfare. As their ministry grew, the devil was stirring trouble.

Although Ramlan and Lastri eventually moved to another place, they continued ministering to the Bahah community whenever they came back for a visit. But they were careful to stay alert every time they returned to serve there.

Regardless of dangers, the couple saw their ministry as a privilege of seeing God at work. They both held on to God’s promise that “He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it” (1Thessalonians 5:24, ESV). They had personally witnessed God’s faithfulness through all the years and knew that no harm could come to them without God’s knowledge and protection.

No More Spot

Nokdang Jamir

Nokdang Jamir hails from North East India and has been in the mission field for six years. He is currently teaching English at a university in Thailand. He is 52 and married to Amongla.

My wife and I taught English to a class of MBA students at a university in Thailand some years ago. It allowed us to not only reach out to the young professionals and intellectuals but also engage with the university staff and professors. We were often presented with opportunities for testifying to God's power. I recalled one incident where God demonstrated His healing power.

On one clear sunny afternoon, we received news that the Associate



Professor of our faculty was rushed to the Ram hospital. We immediately set off for the hospital to visit her. On the way, we managed to talk to her on the phone to check on her

condition. She explained that she had suddenly fainted the previous day and landed on the floor. The doctor did a CT scan of her brain and found a spot there.

When we reached her hospital room, she was preparing for MRI (magnetic resonance imaging). We asked if we could pray for her. She willingly accepted our offer of prayer. She put her palms together in the typical Thai Buddhist fashion

when they pray to Buddha. It is called the *wai* posture. We laid our hands on her and prayed for complete healing of the spot in the name of Jesus, bearing in mind Jeremiah 17:14 (NIV), *“Heal me, Lord, and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved, for you are the one I praise.”*

We left her as she was wheeled to the MRI room for further examination. We were informed the following day that the doctor could not find the spot in her brain at all. When we had a chance to talk to her later, she expressed that she experienced healing as we laid hands on her and prayed. We said we simply asked Jesus to heal her; it was Jesus who had removed the spot in her brain. We wanted her to know that there was nothing that was beyond God’s ability, that her miraculous healing stemmed from His power, that there was no way the human mind could unscramble the divine puzzle. She responded, “I like your teaching, and I am interested to know more about it.” The Bible tells us, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their own



craftiness’; and again, ‘The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile’” (1Cor. 3:19-20, NKJV).

We have now moved on to another city. The last we heard, the Associate Professor is doing well. We do, however, keep in touch on social media. We offer her prayers, share with her Bible verses and Christian songs. This is not the end of our ministry with her. It is only the beginning of a journey we will take together.

The River Changes Course

Ken & Mariko Ogawa

Ken and Mariko Ogawa had served in Tanzania, East Africa under SIM East Asia ten years ago. In the course of their ministry, they encountered several difficulties and eventually had to return to Japan, their home country. Amid the challenges, they were encouraged by the Word of God. God used a particular Old Testament incident to instruct them in His ways.

In 2015, we moved to Dodoma, the capital city of Tanzania. Upon our arrival, we worked with Alfred, a pastor of a local church. Both Alfred and his wife Happiness were our good friends. We knew them even before we went to Dodoma. They had started a ministry called MAPANA there. It was a discipleship programme aimed at mobilising the church for missions. We joined their ministry in 2015 and often got together to pray that God would mobilise the inland churches to reach out to the coastal area where Christ was least known. A few years later, Alfred was assigned to work in another location far away from Dodoma. Soon after, his wife Happiness went home to be with the Lord. It was a difficult time for all of us.

Despite our loss, we kept on praying for each other and for the ministry to progress. Our prayer was to see this ministry developed in a few churches. For that to happen, however, we needed recognition from one of the dioceses. After persevering for a few years, we finally saw the ministry being acknowledged by the leaders of the denomination. The church committee would now hand the ministry over to the denominational department. We were excited to see what would happen next.

But soon after, we started facing several problems. We had difficulties with renewing visas, re-registration of SIM in Tanzania, and money was stolen from our bank account. Furthermore, news of the Covid-19 pandemic spread quickly through the world, and we started to lose peace. We felt as if our life and ministry were threatened.

At the same time, our field Director advised us to return to Japan because of our medical history. He was concerned that our family might need medical treatment that was unavailable here. With much reluctance, we finally decided to leave the field. We felt utterly discouraged and stressed, not knowing when we would return. We left all our belongings in Tanzania, and we could only communicate with the churches and friends by phone. We kept asking God, “What are you doing in this situation? When will we be able to return? What will happen to the ministry and plans?”

God’s Miraculous Victory And The Threat of Jezebel

It was during this time that God led us to 1Kings 19:11-12 (ESV). From these verses, God taught us several lessons. Let me give a brief background and context of the passage first.

After Elijah experienced God’s miraculous victory over the Baal worshipers on Mt. Carmel in Ch.18, he had hoped that the northern Kingdom of Israel would repent and turn to God. But Elijah felt betrayed as his expectation failed to materialise. Things didn’t turn out the way he had planned and hoped. The situation was much worse than could have been imagined. King Ahab’s wife, Jezebel, who was also known as the evangelist of Baal sent a messenger to threaten his life. Prophet Elijah feared for his life and went into hiding.

We were able to draw parallels from Elijah's story. We, like Elijah, had experienced God's miraculous victory in our missionary life. The ministry of MAPANA was advancing and we were thrilled by it. But our ideas, plans and schedules all fell apart. We felt betrayed as our expectation failed to be realised. We were directly told by the labor office when we renewed our visas that we were not allowed to work. And the pandemic forced us to leave everything behind us.

God's Comfort Amid Despair

In the middle of the hopeless situation, Elijah fell into depression and asked God to take his life. Ironically, he had run away from Jezebel to save his own life. Interestingly, right after Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to threaten him. God, too, sent him a messenger (God's angel) but he was sent to bring him comfort.

When we arrived in Japan, we were utterly exhausted. Before our departure for Japan, we had busy weeks following up on visa issues and assisting the Director with SIM re-registration. We were sleep-deprived. But our colleagues' prayer and encouragement upon our return home cheered us. We were also encouraged by our sending home church, supporters and SIM Japan committee who understood our situation and were looking to prepare us for our return to the field. We were filled with gratitude for their support. SIM East Asia Office also helped, prayed, and advised us through the process. Through His people, we experienced God's care and love. This year, SIM East Asia led by Watson invited me to attend the Mission Mobilization Café to learn and prepare for future ministry in Tanzania. SIM International Leadership also provided us with the opportunity to learn more about leadership and what we could do to prepare for the ministry. We were completely overwhelmed by the warmth and care of God's people.

A Fresh Encounter with God

After God's special care, Elijah continued to travel and finally, he arrived at Mt. Horeb also known as Mt. Sinai. There he encountered God in a new and deeper way, "And he said, 'Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD.' And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper" (v 11-12).

Elijah experienced the wind, earthquake and fire. He was looking for God in each element because his instincts, based on his experiences with God, led him to believe that he could find God there. But God was not in the wind, the earthquake or the fire. Elijah's expectation once again failed him. In effect, Elijah had his own ideas and plans. He was trying to fit God into them. Having personally experienced God's grand miraculous work, Elijah expected Him to work in a similar manner to bring about life-changing moments in the people. But God does not always work in grand, dramatic ways. He can choose to reveal Himself as He did to Elijah in a whisper. Elijah had tried to squeeze God into a box. God defied his limitations of Him. We have the same tendency to do that, don't we?

We waited prayerfully for a year and a half for a miracle to happen, namely, for God to re-open the door for us to re-enter the country and for the pandemic to end immediately. Instead, God led us to stay and serve our sending home church in Japan. He gave us opportunities to meditate on the Word and serve our community at home. And God brought us to the realisation that the end of my

ministry in Tanzania doesn't mean the end of God's ministry. God can continue His work without us. We are not indispensable.

It had been a humbling but important time for us as we re-encountered God in a new and deeper way through His Word. While waiting on God, our home church asked if I would be willing to serve the church as one of their pastors in the near future. Ken once declined the offer in April 2021, but after much prayer and meditation on the Word and seeing that God had closed our door to re-enter Tanzania, we decided to accept the challenge. We realise that Japan is also considered as one of the unreached countries. We are convinced that our place and time to serve in Japan are part of God's plan and timing. This doesn't mean we will discontinue our relationship with SIM. In fact, we believe that God will strengthen our ties with SIM even more. We also believe that God will tie the ministry here in Japan with the ministry in Africa in the future.

God's Plan

When things turn out differently from our ideas and plans, we can easily become discouraged. God tells Elijah that He has a plan, and He is sovereign. Let us be reminded that our God is sovereign, and He has a better plan for us. He was already at work while Elijah was discouraged and had chosen Elisha to be ordained by Elijah. God also already had a plan to use a foreign king for His work.

God's mission continues regardless of our failed plans. We often place our hope on people or gifts. We expect God to do miraculous things through them. Of course, nothing is impossible with God, and He does perform miracles but only as He chooses. Elijah's faith in God and his efforts were significant. The result of the victory on Mt. Carmel was miraculous! But God is preparing other people as well to

accomplish His work. God's work can only be achieved with other people who are directed by God. There are no solo performers.

Are we ready to wait for God's plan to be revealed to us? Are we really listening to His voice? These questions continue to echo in our hearts as we take a new step forward in faith. We trust that you will also find God in a new and deeper way amid the crises you are facing.

Four Miracles

Roshan

For security reasons, Roshan is unable to reveal his mission field. Throughout, he refers to the country he serves in as the Beautiful Land and indeed it is, for it holds a special spot in God's heart. Together with his wife, he has been serving in church planting and discipleship ministries for 13 years.

In 2009, I brought my wife and my five-month-old son to the Beautiful Land to serve as cross-cultural missionaries. It is a closed country for the gospel. But while the doors may be closed to the gospel, we soon realised they were not impenetrable. When we were there, we experienced the healing power of God in our lives and witnessed that same power in the lives of the people we were ministering to. Through God's miraculous healing acts, people came to know the gospel.

First Healing

In November, 2016, I was diagnosed with dengue fever and was admitted to a hospital in the Beautiful Land. My blood platelet count was very low – only 10,000 blood platelet count when it should be 150,000. I was bleeding from my gums and nose. I was unconscious for twenty-four hours in the ICU. When I recovered, my doctor told me I was not supposed to be alive. He explained he

never came across anyone with my condition who survived, “It is impossible humanly speaking. Your God is a powerful God!” I told him, “My God is the living God, the Creator, the Healer and the Mighty God.” Through the fervent prayer of the believers, I received complete healing from God.

As I shared my experience with the people in the Beautiful Land, they marvelled at the God we worshipped. My suffering became a blessing as it paved the way for me to share the gospel with the people around me.

Second Healing

The second healing miracle involved the healing of a four-year-old boy whose parents were school teachers. They were Christians but had not been attending church. One day In December 2016, their son fell very sick and became unconscious for three hours. The mother brought him to our house and requested me to pray for him. I believed that God would heal the boy and glorify His name. I laid my hand on the boy as I prayed. By God’s grace and his mother’s faith, the boy was miraculously healed. After witnessing God’s healing power, they believed in Jesus and repented of their sins. Their son’s full recovery opened their eyes to the God who has the power to heal.

Third Healing

The third healing occurred with our landlord's eight-year-old granddaughter. In September 2018, she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Her family requested me to pray for her. I laid my hand on the girl's head as I prayed. By God's grace, she was healed! The whole family became believers as they witnessed God's miraculous healing power. We witnessed the transformation of their lives as God worked in them.

Fourth Healing

The fourth miracle was in the healing of a demon-possessed man. He had been suffering from epilepsy for three months. He had sought remedy from doctors and lamas (monks) without any success. In November 2019, when he heard about Jesus through a local evangelist, he decided to attend one of our Sunday worship services. On that Sunday I was preaching, "And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons"(Mark 16:17, NIV). Miraculously, he was healed at the service. He subsequently accepted Jesus as his Lord and Saviour.

These are just some of the many miraculous healings that I have witnessed in the mission field. Indeed, our God heals. But for us, while we rejoiced in the people's physical healing, we rejoiced more in their spiritual healing. God healed their physical bodies that He might tend to their spiritual wellbeing. God's deep and immeasurable compassion broke down all the doors. It is a lesson we learn everyday as we serve Him in this beautiful land.



Baptism

No Insurmountable Mountain

John & Jenny

John and Jenny graduated from the Singapore Bible College (SBC) in 2013 and returned to serve in their home country. A friend recommended them to join SIM. It was a move in the right direction as Dr. Ling, the then Regional Director, and other co-workers offered them help and supported them through all those arduous years of ministry.

When we first returned home after graduating from SBC, we were certain of our next step. We wanted to serve in a theological college environment but theological education was a long and arduous task, full of challenges which required strong and ongoing support, whether in the form of lecturers, books or other resources. We also faced many societal pressures because we were in a CAN (Creative Access Nation) where faith was suppressed.

Despite these obstacles, we were determined to be engaged in theological education. We were conducting classes in secrecy, dodging detection by seeking out different churches where we could hold the sessions. This constant movement and mobile flexible learning method caused many inconveniences and greatly affected the students' learning process. We turned to God to resolve the problem, mindful that His will, not ours, be accomplished. A while later, God spoke to a Christian sister to invest and build a four-story house specifically for the seminary. Upon its completion, we called on the churches to dedicate the building and to furnish it and purchase the necessary equipment. Under the guidance of God, the renovation was completed in three months. In September 2017, at the start of a new semester, we entered the new school building with gratitude and with an

immense sense of relief. We now had a permanent venue; we no longer had to move from place to place. Teaching and learning improved significantly. To boost the library collection, we called on Christian brothers and sisters locally and overseas to donate their pre-loved books, while at the same time encouraging people to give financially towards the library project. After some time, the library was stocked with two thousand volumes of books.

A permanent school building ensured some stability. So, we were ill-prepared for an incident that threatened our permanence. At the beginning of the school term in 2019 just after the Spring Festival, two of our students were undergoing internship in a church. As they were attending a gathering in church, they were suddenly surrounded by the police. They were taken away and their computers and Bible were confiscated. I was worried about the college being implicated, so I immediately suspended classes for two weeks. By God's grace, the college was spared and we could resume classes.

In 2020, Covid-19 hit the country. It was as if someone had pressed the pause button on the entire country as it went into the lockdown mode. Everyone had to stay at home; no one was allowed to step out. The same was true of our college. Students were unable to attend school. We immediately responded by switching to online classes for our current students. Many teachers had to change their travelling itinerary and all courses were readjusted for virtual learning. There were, however, advantages in attending classes online because students could complete their studies at home. When others heard of the online courses, many church workers signed up for studies at the college as well. We saw an increase in the enrolment of online students. In an unexpected twist, the epidemic had actually enabled the college to serve more churches and fellow believers.

Through our experience, we learn that there can be no mountain too high to climb, no ocean too vast to swim if God is at the helm. We also learn that sometimes what appears to be limiting can actually turn out to be a blessing in disguise. Put simply, God will work things out according to His plan and purpose. Nothing can stop Him; nothing can stand in His way.

He Journeys with Me



It Is Well With My Soul

Mila

Mila is from India and started serving in North-central Asia in August 2018. Since September 2019, she has been teaching at the North-central Asia International University as an Assistant Professor. She is involved in Campus ministry through “Open Fellowship” and “Prayer Cell Group”. In January 2022, she enrolled in an online course from India for a Master in Biblical Studies to equip herself for student outreach. Mila had been suffering from rheumatoid arthritis for years until God healed her.

When I first responded to God’s call to cross-cultural mission in 2018, I believed I was raised for just this purpose. Exodus 9:16 (NIV) really spoke to me: “But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you My power and that My Name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” But I had one major physical challenge that threatened to derail my vision. I suffered from arthritis and was aware that I would be afflicted with Erythema Multiforme infection till the age of 40. But I was determined not to allow this to affect my plan for cross-cultural mission. As I set off for the mission field, my physical frailty was the farthest thing from my mind.

My first year in the field was fruitful despite North-central Asia being a very challenging country for ministry. I knew that to connect with the people, I had to pick up the local language. So, I attended a formal language class. I was at first a little anxious, but it proved to be an exciting time for me. Throughout, I made new friends and God provided me with many opportunities to witness to the people.

This would be the pattern of my ministry as God led me to different people in different situations.

But in March 2019, I was hospitalised because of a viral infection caused by air pollution. North-central Asia is the second most polluted country in the world. I was given an IV injection for one whole week. I was unable to swallow my saliva, let alone food, because my whole body was infected. My team members were troubled by my condition. They asked me, “Do you want to go back to India?” I replied with conviction, “Not at all. I will get better and go home, but not to India.” Even as I said that, I wasn’t sure if I was merely expressing hope or exercising faith. How would it be possible for me to continue serving in my condition? But as I lay on the hospital bed hooked up to the IV tubes, God put a song in my heart,

*When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say
It is well; it is well, with my soul.*

It dawned upon me that God was in control. I trusted in His promise that He would fight against my enemy and turn all my sorrows into joy. I resolved then that I would not stop serving God, not even if I were bedridden. I began seeing North-central Asian patients in my ward as people whom I could minister to. I began sharing the good news with them. I also gave them Bibles and witnessed to the nurses and doctors. God was using my handicapped state to minister to them! If I had not been hospitalised, I would never have met these people nor be given the opportunity to tell them about God. So, while it had been a tough year, it was also a year I saw the hand of the Lord working mightily on my behalf.

On 22 January 2021, I called my North-central Asian language teacher to ask if I could visit her. She was surprised as she knew I could hardly walk because of the inflammation. But what shocked her more was my request that she prepare *Tsuivan* which was made of flour, meat, sheep tail and some vegetables. Some of the ingredients were toxic for my body. She asked me, "Are you sure? Can you eat that?" I replied cheerfully, "Teacher, yes, I can and there is a story behind that." It had been years since I ate meat and sweets. They were off limits. I had been able to eat only raw vegetables, salads, and some grains. My teacher was long aware that fruits and rice would inflame my body and joints.

I met her on 27th January and shared that God had healed me. I was now able to eat all kinds of food without worrying about allergic reactions or side effects. In the past, if I had taken even a tiny bite of a banana or swallowed a spoonful of rice, I would have been unable to move. I would also break out in chills. Since my healing, my weight had increased from 39 kg to 48 kg. I took the opportunity to share with her the salvation of God. My testimony opened her eyes to God's miraculous power because she had personally witnessed my poor state of health. She had accompanied me to the hospital for my medical check-ups. She had seen me taking painful steps and struggling to swallow food when we dined together. In short, she knew exactly how ill I had been.

I gave her a North-central Asian Bible that she had never seen before. We read Romans 10:9 (NIV) together, "...if you confess with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." I was overjoyed when she accepted Jesus Christ as her personal Saviour. Since her conversion, she had personally experienced God's answer to her prayer for a baby which was itself a miracle. She considered that as God's greatest blessing for her.

It's been more than four years since my hospitalisation and I have not suffered from any allergic reaction. I'm physically holding up well. I have learnt that our greatest suffering is our greatest testimony. My suffering was a privilege



because through it, I was able to share the gospel and testify of God's goodness. God had brought me through my moment of suffering and turned it into a powerful testimony to bring somebody else through his/her suffering. In no way had my suffering affected my ministry at all. Rather, it enriched it.

A few months after I was healed, a new North-central Asian student joined our Chosen Girl's Bible Study group. She had been seeking for the truth. At prayer time, we asked if she had any prayer requests. As she started sharing, she broke into tears. It was her first time attending such a group. Oze (not her real name) said, "I've been struggling with depression for years, and I've tried to commit suicide many times. I don't want to be around people and when someone asks me about anything I get irritated." We prayed for her. After the prayer, I was prompted by the Holy Spirit to pray for her again, to specifically break the stronghold of depression which I strongly felt came from the devil. I asked her, "Can I pray for you again?" She nodded readily. I held her hand and prayed in the name of Jesus to break all the strongholds in her life.

When I went to class the following Monday, she greeted me saying, “Hi teacher, how are you?” I was surprised she recognised me although I was masked up because of the pandemic. I noticed a certain brightness in her eyes and face, so different from the last time I saw her. She went on to say, “Teacher, see you on Friday at the Bible Study.” The girl who didn’t want to be around people and desired to be left alone said that she was coming for the Bible Study! I was taken aback and praised God for working in her life. It was indeed a miracle. She has since been attending our Bible Study which I host in my home.



We now have more than ten girls joining our weekly Bible Study. I’m so blessed to be a part of these beautiful souls and to see them growing together in the Lord, encouraging and inspiring one another through testimonies, prayers and sharing the Word of God. Sometimes their parents persecute or stop them from joining the Open Fellowship, Sunday service and the Bible Study, but they have never given up. I feel so encouraged by them. They have taught me to be strong and stand firm in the Lord despite difficulties and persecutions.

I count it all joy and privilege to spread the Gospel in North-central Asia. I praise God for healing me so that I can continue to make disciples in His name. I thank Him for teaching me to smile even in suffering and say, “It is well with my soul.”

He Heals My Heart

Biu

Biu comes from a tribe in North East India. She is single and has served in Malawi for some years before moving on to South Sudan where she is now engaged in trauma healing ministry. South Sudan is a nation wracked by civil war.

Growing up in a remote village with eight siblings should have provided me a storehouse of cherished childhood memories. Instead, family demands that sapped my energy, and the physical abuse I endured were the stuff of my childhood. And I carried with me the pains of my childhood through to adulthood.

I had little time for play unlike other children as I was always looking after my younger brothers and sisters. I was also constantly busy doing household chores and the little free time I had, I spent working in the field.

My parents worked hard to send my siblings to a good school in the city but decided that I should remain in the village until grade ten. Only after grade ten was I allowed to leave for college. The college was in the city because we did not have one in my village. I graduated with a degree in Commerce. All I ever wanted to do was to study and attain higher qualifications, but instead of backing me, my parents decided it would be better for me to return to the village for a teaching job. I was devastated by the thought of returning home. But at that time, there wasn't much I could say or do. I had to accept my parent's decision. I didn't question them because I knew they were struggling financially to support my siblings' education. Yet deep inside me, there was pain. I felt the full burden of having to take financial care of the family at the expense of my own life and childhood. I often thought they

treated me differently from my siblings because they did not love me. I carried that pain lodged deep in my heart.

The Mission Call

My faith suffered during college when I lived in the city. I had nothing to do with God and lived for worldly pleasures. When I obeyed my parents and returned to the village as a teacher, I was mourning the loss of a life I thought I should have. Never did I think I would experience a turning point in my life. I recommitted my life to Christ. By God's grace, I was changed into a new person. I became very active in church, especially in children and youth programmes.

At a church's mission conference, God clearly spoke to me that I should go and serve Him as a missionary. The pastor had been preaching from Isaiah 6, and at the end of his sermon, he challenged everyone to respond, "Here I am. Send me." I raised my hand and dedicated my life to His mission.

However, a major roadblock presented itself – I was unable to afford the seminary fees. Apart from my parents, I chose not to reveal this to anyone. Instead, I prayed, trusting that God would make a way. One Sunday morning in church, as I listened to the announcements, I was amazed to hear that the church would fully sponsor any lady who planned to go for seminary studies. This sponsorship was being offered to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the church's revival. I duly applied and realised that I was the only applicant! Perhaps God had specially planned this for me. The church leaders affirmed my calling by approving my application. I broke the news to my parents who agreed that I could now leave my government job and enrol in a seminary.

God's Provision

In my second year of Bible school, I lost my mother. My father became the sole breadwinner. Yet our Jehovah Jireh continued to meet all our daily needs. When I finished seminary, I thought my church would have a role for me in their ministries and projects. But due to financial constraints, they suggested I explore openings with other churches and organisations. (At that time, it was common for women who graduated from Bible school to be unable to find work with churches in North-East India.) I was disappointed and began to regret resigning from my job. I even doubted that God had called me as I was now unable to support myself financially. But God never forsook me. A faith-based organisation which had heard about me through the principal of the seminary offered me work. This in turn led to the Presbyterian Church of India selecting me to attend an 11-month overseas mission course in South Africa and India. It was a great chance for me to learn more about missions and the missionary life.

I came back to India and began working with street children and prostitutes with the Reach Shillong Ministry. Although I loved working with them, my heart longed to reach out to unreached people groups in Africa. I could not quell the desire to return to Africa. So I applied to SIM Northeast India (SIMNEI) in 2011. However, the Presbyterian church that I had been attending was not willing to support me financially. It was a big blow to me. But through the efforts of the brothers and sisters of the SIMNEI office who shared my plight with the Garo Baptist churches, I was able to raise sufficient support to be sent to Malawi. This was most unusual as I was unknown to the churches and came from a different tribe and church denomination. God supplied my daily needs in an amazing way through my family, friends, and people I met in the ministry. He also reminded me

by affirming that “The Lord is my shepherd; I have all I need” (Psalm 23:1, NLT). I served in Malawi for over three years before moving on to serve in South Sudan.

God’s Healing

Despite the progress I made in my spiritual journey, I had yet to find healing for the pain in my life. I did not realise that even though I was active in church, had studied in seminary and was involved in ministry, I still carried with me the emotional baggage of insecurity, unforgiveness, bitterness, and rejection. However, upon joining SIM, I had the opportunity to undergo counselling. It was the start of God’s healing in my life. In 2017, when I joined the SIM South Sudan team, I attended a Trauma Healing facilitator’s workshop. At the workshop, I learnt that there were past hurts that I needed to wholeheartedly surrender to God. I penned a lament on all the pains I had experienced and brought them to Jesus’ feet. As the workshop participants sang "It is well with my soul", I could not stop weeping. I knew then that a huge weight had been lifted from my heart. This spurred me to return to South Sudan to serve with the Trauma Healing ministry, to similarly impart healing. God indeed cares for us and wants to heal us. “The Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18, ESV).

Being a missionary is not easy. We have to give up many things like a job, family, friends, relationships and so on, but I assure you that the joy and peace that I experienced is worth more than all of these. I grew so much as a person and also in my relationship with God. Whenever I went through tough times, I learnt to cling to God. He has shaped me to be humble, to persevere and to rely totally on him in all circumstances. I keep reminding myself that I am a broken vessel that God has moulded to bring hope to the hopeless. He has healed me and has helped me to

journey with those who are hurting so that they can bring their pain to Jesus, our great healer.

Healing Past Pains

The mission field has exposed me to the many pains that people carry in their lives. Many have had their childhoods snatched away, and many take on the financial worries of their parents just as I did as a child. Women, particularly, live with long-held pains that cripple them. I see it all too often in the refugee camps. But thanks to God, I have grown a heart and a passion for women and children who are hurting. I have seen in my own life how God can use difficult situations and turn them into tools which can help to heal others. This is one of the greatest mysteries of God, that in His good time, He can make something beautiful out of pain.

Great Is Your Faithfulness!

Khrieko & Nitho Peseyie

Khrieko and Nitho Peseyie have been serving the Lord in Thailand for over 12 years. In all those years, they have witnessed and experienced God's faithfulness in every area of their lives. They have learnt that no one can fathom God's thoughts nor His ways for His thoughts are higher than our thoughts and His ways are higher than our ways. The Peseyies have two daughters.

The Peseyies will be the first to testify that there is never a dull moment working alongside God. Their ministry is filled with stories of God's faithfulness in different situations demonstrated in a most unexpected manner. From each situation and encounter, God revealed Himself in new and exciting ways.

God The Provider

Khrieko and Nitho were experiencing financial difficulty. Their daughter was now attending school in another province which was about 175 km away and that added to their costs. Although SIM paid for their accommodation in Chatturat, they had to pay for their own electricity, water, food and travel expenses. Now that their daughter was in Khonkaen, they had to foot her accommodation and living expenses as well.

Their finances were stretched further when electricity bills shot up one year during one of the hottest months they had ever experienced. They knew it would be impossible for them to settle two bills – their own and their daughter's – without help. So they did what they knew best. They lay their financial anxiety before God

and trusted Him to provide. Day after day, they were expecting a miracle but nothing was stirring until the day Khrieko received the power bill. He was stunned as he stared at the bill in his hands. Nitho's heart sank as she studied his face. She gathered that the sum must have shot through the roof. But then Khrieko turned to her to say that the month's bill stated zero sum payment. They knew God would work a miracle but they certainly did not expect this! For Khrieko and Nitho, God demonstrated not only a wonderful sense of humour but also His faithfulness in meeting their needs.

When Covid-19 hit the country, the government introduced a policy to ease the citizens' burden of huge power bills. Many ended up paying less than usual for power. But for Khrieko and Nitho, they did not have to pay anything at all for three months!

God The Safe Harbour

A heavy downpour after an evangelistic outreach to a neighbouring district one day took Khrieko and Nitho by surprise. It was risky by any standards to drive home in such wet weather but they decided to take the chance. As they steered their car along the highway, the rain pounded it mercilessly. Some distance later, they noticed a huge tree next to a small rest house and decided to park under it for a short rest and to wait for the rain to stop. The rain with the accompanying strong gusts of wind were, however, relentless. Since they were only about ten minutes away from home, they decided to brave the weather and eventually reached home safely.

The next day, they heard news that a car parked under the huge tree where they had stopped and rested for a few minutes was damaged by falling branches.

There was one casualty and several injured parties. They were sad to hear that, but they thanked God for His protection of them.

God The Protector

Khrieko and Nitho experienced another divine protection. They were waiting for the traffic light at a busy intersection to turn green so that they could swerve right to get to their destination when the car in front of them suddenly switched lanes. So they inched forward to occupy the vacated spot. Just then, a bus coming down the bridge that lay parallel to their lane hit the pole of a huge signboard. The signboard crash landed on the exact spot where Khrieko and Nitho's car had been just a few seconds ago. The car that was occupying the couple's earlier spot was badly damaged and the driver and his passengers sustained injuries. Khrieko and Nitho had missed being casualties by mere seconds. God had protected them in a timely manner!

God The Caretaker

After their third month in Thailand, Nitho and her daughter Asese who was two years and eight months old had to travel out of Thailand to extend their visas. They flew to a neighbouring country but were prohibited from leaving the airport upon arrival. Instead, they were locked up for 24 hours there. They had planned to stay with a pastor's family, but they never got to meet them. Despite not being able to make contact, this family sent them food and a handwritten letter to encourage them. Their love and kindness made all the difference to an otherwise distressing situation. Nitho remained grateful for their love to this day.

Since they couldn't leave the airport, Nitho had wanted to call Khrieko in Thailand to inform him about their situation. She searched her purse for coins for the public phone, but she realised she didn't have any. A man in uniform happened to pass by and noticed her dilemma. He handed her some coins so she could make her call. As she did not use up all the coins, she turned to return him the balance but he had disappeared. She asked the staff working there if they had seen him. They said "no" and tried to help locate him but he could not be found. The Peseyies have kept the coins from this good Samaritan up to this day as a reminder of his generosity to a stranger in a foreign land.

On a separate occasion, a man lent the Peseyies his mobile so that they could communicate with whoever they wanted. The next day, Nitho returned him the phone and offered to pay him the phone charges they had incurred. To her surprise, he refused her offer and said instead that he was happy to share his blessings with them.

For the Peseyies, God's promise that He would never leave nor forsake His children is undeniable.

God The Saviour

When they first started serving, Khrieko and Nitho were excited about the church-planting ministry. But they soon realised that church-planting like any other ministry had its challenges. There were times when they were disappointed to see people confessing faith in Christ and then giving up along the way.

They recalled one very painful experience when a lady decided not to be baptised just a few days before the baptism service. Khrieko and Nitho had invested so much of their time and energy in her by having Bible study with her and her

family, taking them to church, and giving her English and music lessons. They were looking forward to seeing her being the first person to be baptised on their missionary journey.

They had also invested time and energy in another lady for almost a year. They would bring her food and study the Bible together with her. Khrieko would pick her up every Sunday for church but one day this lady decided to stop attending church. A lot of tears were shed and a lot of questions were asked, but they ultimately submitted to God's divine plan and purpose.

But it wasn't always heart-breaking news. In some cases, God led people to them unexpectedly. A man noted their phone number displayed on the church signboard and called them to ask what he should do to become a Christian. The Peseyies invited him to their home and led him to Christ.

Another man, after hearing the gospel at a Christmas evangelistic outreach in the village, accepted Jesus as His personal Saviour. They subsequently did Bible study at his place and through him, four more people were led to God.

A lady who came to church every Sunday with her husband and kids never thought that she would become a Christian. She attended church only because she wanted her children to learn some English, but after two years she came to faith in the Lord. The Peseyies learnt to keep serving the Lord faithfully even in challenging situations. He was with them every step of their journey.

When it was time for them to move on to a new ministry in another location, the Peseyies successfully handed the church that God had led them to plant to the local believers. For the Peseyies, seeing the church grow in the Lord brought them insurmountable joy.

God The Almighty

There are spirit houses in many homes in Thailand. One couple who had come to faith asked Khrieko and Nitho to remove the spirit house that was erected under a big tree in their compound. But, the man's mother who was an unbeliever objected to it. The Pesebies were happy with the couple's decision but they recognised that if they failed to deal with the issue wisely and carefully, their ministry might be jeopardized since removing spirit houses was highly sensitive. The Pesebies together with the church, prayed earnestly about it and decided to visit the couple's place on a Sunday after church service to have a look at the spirit house first. But the Saturday before the visit, a strong gust of wind snapped the big branch that was right above the spirit house, crushing it. Khrieko and Nitho didn't have to do anything to remove it. God had done the job for them. God certainly works in mysterious ways!

The Pesebies can certainly vouch for God's faithfulness. For them, Lamentations 3:22-23 (NIV) express precisely what's in their hearts, "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

A Blessing To Serve God

Sammy

Sammy is a veteran missionary, having served in Pakistan for 18 years and Thailand for two years. Sammy is from Hong Kong. He is 53, married and has two children, a daughter and a son.

We can stare at a blessing and not recognise it. But when blessings flow interminably, they are impossible to ignore. Matthew 6:33 (NIV) says, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” This is a promise from God Himself. In the years that I responded to God’s call to the mission field, my family and I experienced God’s innumerable blessings. You may ask, “How were you blessed?” Let me count the ways.

We were blessed with indescribable joy of serving the underprivileged, the poor, the sick, the widows, the orphans and the victims of natural disasters. Nothing can beat seeing children jumping up and down with joy when they receive second-hand coats in freezing winters. I recalled stuffing my room full of dusty coats as I trudged daily to the second-hand market during winter to buy up all the coats we could lay our hands on because of the huge number of poor women and children living in the villages. Each trip would take me a long time to scour for coats that were thick and of reasonably good quality. Our joy bubbled over when we saw the women folk and children covered in warm clothing.

We were blessed by the support of our overseas partners when they send doctors on short-term missions to serve alongside a local medical team in mobile clinics to care for the sick in the remote villages. Mobile medical clinics provide

free consultations, medicine and health training. I would choke up with emotion as I witnessed more than a thousand patients being attended to each time. I remembered a six-year-old boy who came, weak and unable to walk. The doctors prescribed him medicine and taught his father how to strengthen his son's legs. Within a few months, this little boy was able to take slow steps. Local pastors continued to minister to the physically ill once the overseas medical team flew home. Recently, we set up a small mobile local medical team to visit villages which we had not visited before.

We were blessed to have our faith strengthened when we saw God's power overcoming evil spirits. I met a helpless family whose son was possessed by an evil spirit. I knew that only God could win this battle. My sole weapon was my faith in Jesus Christ. I came together with some Christians and a local pastor in worship of God's power and prayer for the young man. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ordered the evil spirit to get out of the young man. The young man immediately regained consciousness from his semi-trance state. The local pastor visited the family the next day. The young man was completely well and normal. How great is our almighty God!

We were blessed to belong to God's universal family - His Church. Without a shadow of a doubt, my church and Christian friends would pray for my children. But they often went beyond the call of duty. While we were in the mission field, my church members often visited my parents and persistently shared the good news with them. With their encouragement and support, my parents started attending church and before long accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. Acts 16:31 (NIV) tells us to "... believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your

household.” In our second year in the mission field, my parents were baptised in church and continued to experience God’s love and the love of His church.

We were blessed to have God as my children’s caretaker. God took care of them intellectually and physically, endowing them with wisdom and good health. At the same time, God took care of their spiritual needs. He provided them with accommodation and education in a mission boarding school where they received biblical teachings from the teachers and house-parents daily. We could see their faith growing and strengthening day by day and step by step. Nothing relieves our anxiety more than to know that God cares for our children much more than He cares for the lilies in the field.

Since we are so blessed, how can we not give thanks to the Lord for calling us to the mission field? Ecclesiastes 2:10 (ESV) says, “...My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labour.” My awakening to His countless blessings helps me see missions not as a job or activity, but as a privileged commitment. Serving God as a missionary in the villages is a wonderful life. My family and I enjoy driving our vehicle to the remote villages to visit families, to worship God together and to teach the Bible in the Holy Spirit. We are filled with inexplicable joy as we see God changing the hearts and minds of people, and leading them to His kingdom. We delight in the presence of God in every moment and in every area of our lives.

It is a wonderful thing to find pleasure in our labour and to know that God’s blessings flow freely to His people.

Surprised By God

Benjamin

Benjamin pastored a church from 1980 to 2014 and has been involved in missions since 1987. He became a full-time travelling teacher after he developed a creative Bible study method that took him to many East Asian countries. He joined SIM East Asia in 2019 and is actively training leaders in the field. Benjamin is 66 years old and has two daughters.

In 1987, God graciously opened the door for me to a Creative Access Nation (CAN). It was my maiden mission trip to a country where Christian workers needed to be creative in order to access the unreached peoples because proselytisation of one's faith was prohibited. I was excited to meet Christians who had suffered severe persecution. When I got there, I was amazed at what God was doing and I felt the first stirring of a desire to be part of God's work in this CAN. I started praying for an opportunity to serve as a missionary there.

A Surprising New Direction

I was all ready to quit my pastoral duty and be a full-time missionary. To my dismay, God refused to open the door. My friends who shared the same burden were, however, able to take up secular jobs and used their free time to spread the Gospel and make disciples. Meanwhile, I could only make one or two trips per year to this CAN. To say I was envious of what my friends could do for God was an understatement. I continued to pray fervently for God's opening so that I could, like my friends, serve on a regular basis. Years passed but the door remained shut.

In frustration, I uttered an unreasonable prayer – that I would, on my one or two trips a year, yield similar if not more impact than my friends who were stationed all year round in this CAN. Naturally, I did not expect God to ever answer it. After all, I did sound like a sour grape. But strangely and unbelievably, He did. Just not the way I expected. I came to find that my friends who were tentmakers landed with jobs that were so demanding that they had little time for the ministry. In fact, one had absolutely no time. His wife was the one reaching out to the community. I realised then that their initial vision of the marketplace as opportunities for evangelism somehow got buried in the midst of their work commitments. I resolved to stop moaning about how my two trips a year presented limited opportunities for sharing the Gospel. Instead, I turned my attention to seeing how I could maximise opportunities that arose.

But God led me on a path I never would have envisaged for myself. The idea to train Bible College students in the CAN popped into my head. I gathered a small band of teachers to secretly conduct training for these students. My team-mates taught them a creative teaching approach for Sunday School and an effective layman’s interpretation of the Bible. Another sister taught them “How to Follow-up a New Believer”. I taught them Inductive Bible Study using a New Testament Bible character. They enthusiastically copied our notes late into the wee hours of the night. We spent only five days with this group and were encouraged to hear them say at the end that what they had learnt in five days surpassed what they had gleaned in their two years of training in Bible College.

Four of my team members subsequently decided to serve full-time in this CAN, while one pastor was so driven that he decided to make the annual trip alone to conduct the training by himself for about ten days.

One advantage I had over my friends who were stationed in the CAN was that we could sneak in a full load of resources because of the regularity of our trips. Miraculously, we always got through the customs. I felt blessed to witness the participants' exuberant joy when they got hold of the Study Bibles and the much-needed commentaries.

Hooray, God answered my first prayer, albeit in an unexpected way.

A Surprising New Ministry

While training the leaders and Bible College Students, I realised they all lacked resources. Over 90% did not have a high level of education, were poor and therefore unable to afford any theological books. Photocopying machines in the CAN were also considered as luxury items in the 1980s. Many participants sacrificed their sleep just to copy our notes. I said in my heart, "I don't have the money to buy them a mini library." So, I prayed that God would enable me to develop an effective Bible Study method that would require no resources. It seemed an unrealistic prayer because how could anyone possibly study the Bible seriously without consulting resource materials? Like my first prayer, I didn't expect God to answer. Surprisingly, He did, some years later. But in the interim, I had forgotten the prayer.

Ten years after I began my mission teaching in the CAN, God opened the door for me to pursue my Master's in Divinity in USA, Tennessee, Chattanooga. It was perfect timing as my participants were increasing in their knowledge of the Bible. Chattanooga is where the Precept Ministry has its headquarters. It was there that I learnt the world's best Bible colouring approach. I learnt how to use different colours and letters of the English alphabet for Bible characters, and different symbols for keywords. It makes gleaning the background information of the

characters so effective and easy. Repeated reading is no longer a chore, but interesting. At the Seminary, I learnt from Professor Dr James D. Price how to do a detailed outline for the books of the Bible and then transpose it into an expository outline. When I combined the Precept colouring approach and Dr Price's detailed outlining, I discovered it worked wonders. The two combined made it easier to identify the main theme.

I tested this new approach with the city preachers and the university graduates. They were able to identify the main theme with confidence. Not so, however, with the village preachers who loved to spiritualise the text. They became angry when I prodded them to think and meditate harder. Their stormy reaction, however, did not deter me. I became even more determined to help them. They formed my target audience, the ones I wanted to help the most. While I was pondering on how to develop an easy and yet dynamic approach that would help them identify the main theme of the text, God prompted me to use common sense as a tool. He showed me six common-sense ways of determining the main theme. The ideas just popped up, shedding light in the dark corners of my mind. These six ways eventually doubled as God helped me map out another six ways over the years.

One idea evolved while I was helping out as a parent volunteer in my daughter's school. I was introduced to Mind Mapping. I was intrigued and experimented with it to see if it could be used to outline the Bible. To my surprise, I found it to be extremely effective when I tested it in a Chinese Reformed Bible College in the mountainous city of Pyin Oo Lwin in Northern Myanmar. From it sprang an in-depth Inductive Bible Study approach that uses the left and the right brain without the need for any resources other than a set of colour pencils. It took

me 15 years of trial and error to produce the finished product which formed the basis of my Doctor of Ministry dissertation in the Singapore Bible College. My dissertation supervisor said, “You are filling a gap.” According to my professors at the college, this is an innovative and in-depth approach to studying the Bible. Nobody expects a Bible Study method that would be exciting, effective, in-depth and accurate, yet simple.

It was then that I recalled my prayer in 1988 asking God for an effective Bible Study approach without resources. God had helped me to formulate an effective Bible Study method to grow and groom His people. He had answered my prayer. I realised that God in His own time had been leading me each step of the way to this.

I call the method, *Creative Bible Exposition (CBE), Using the Left and the Right Brain*. It has four steps: (1) Gleaning the background using colours; (2) Identifying the main theme using common sense; (3) Designing a detailed, textual and thematic outline using mind maps; and (4) Transforming the thematic outline into an expository outline.

Participants were thrilled. Preachers who had difficulty identifying the main theme of a text were overjoyed. Bible College students were so excited that they were prepared to forego sleep just so they could mind map the Book of Philippians. After using different colours for different biblical characters, followed by different symbols for repeated keywords, they realised that while they were studying the text, the text was also staring at them. Village and tribal preachers could now identify the main theme with ease. Leading Bible Study became more interesting and engaging. Preachers could now easily spot the text while preaching.

One lady preacher in Myanmar said, “We used to have the Bible only, now we have the Bible and this method.” She had attended numerous seminars before

and could confidently vouch for it. Pastors in South Asia informed me that their congregations noticed an improvement in their preaching. A Chinese preacher who had several commentaries said that he often got lost in the abundant information. Now with the main theme and the thematic outline, everything fell into place for him. A senior pastor from Imphal, Manipur who has a Master's in Theology testified that he took the background, the main theme and the outline he had gleaned using the CBE training and counter-checked it against the commentaries. He found that his answers were all accurate. A few Bible colleges and one seminary included the CBE approach into their curriculum.

I was also invited to teach in three schools on how to use the right and the left brain. Students were thrilled to discover that they could memorise 30 words in two minutes and more easily recall numbers.

God not only answered my second prayer, but also led me out of my pastoral ministry in 2014 to be a travelling missionary, training church leaders on how to study the Bible using the left and the right brain. In 2019, my main supporter requested that I join SIM. I am now actively and passionately involved in training leaders in the developing world. When I first prayed for an open door to CAN as a full-time missionary, I did not think that God would have another plan for me.

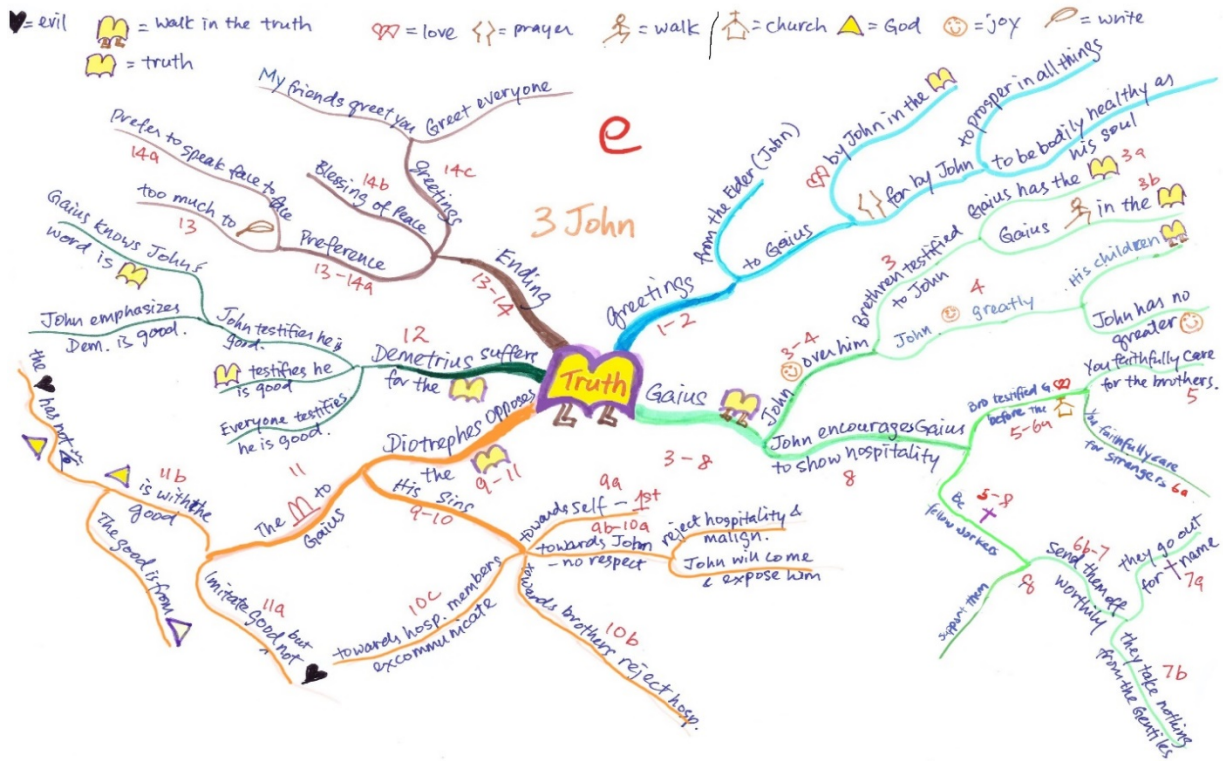
In His Time

I have learnt that God in His own time does great things through our prayers even if they appear crazy, unreasonable or unrealistic. He placed me in the right environment, prompted me to pray for a method using the Bible alone, then led me to places where I could hone my skills. The whole process stretched over 20 years. But through the years, He gave me wisdom on how to synthesise Dr James

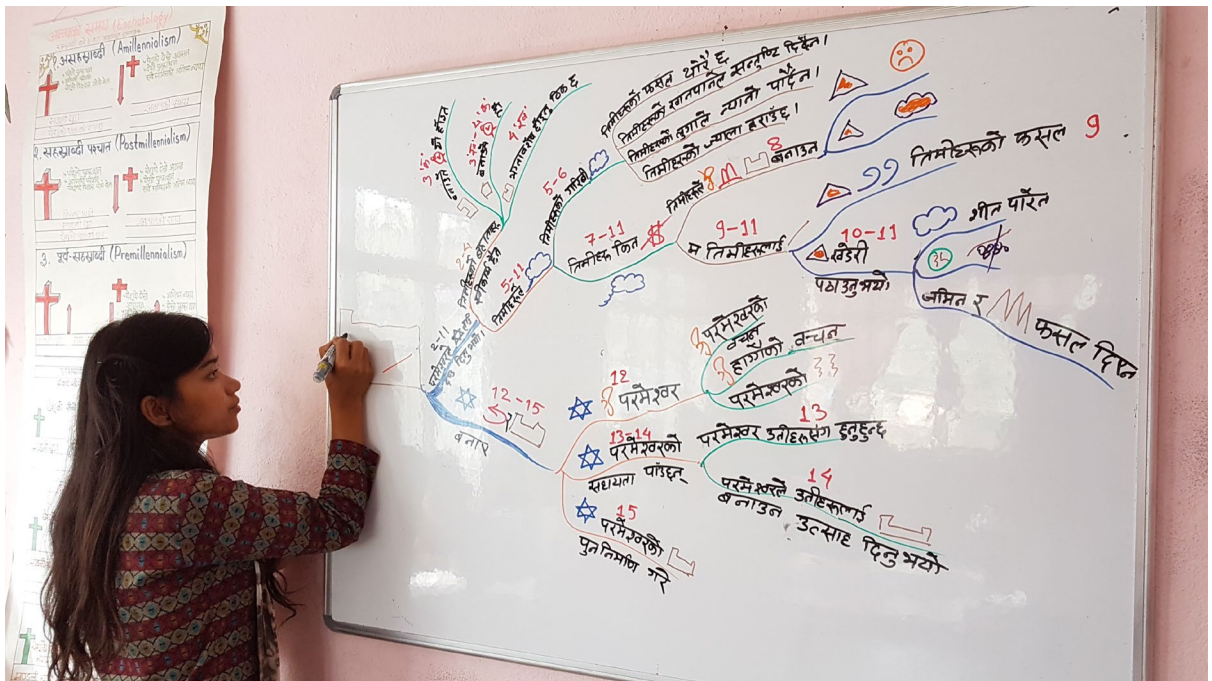
D. Price's detailed outlining, the Precept Ministry's colouring method and Tony Buzan's Mind Mapping to develop a Bible study approach to groom and grow His people. It had taken me 15 years of trial and error to devise a simple method to equip ordinary preachers. I never imagined that I could come up with such an effective right and left brain, in-depth Inductive Bible Study approach. God initiated and worked out the whole process. All glory be to God!

So go ahead and make big dreams and pray your unreasonable prayers. Ask God for the impossible. He loves that.

Mind Map of 3rd Epistle of John



A sister mind mapping 3rd Epistle of John in South Asia



God's Timely Provision

Ching Ngaihte

Ching and her husband Ginnei Thang Ngaihte were married in 1981 in a small village in North East India. Immediately after, they served together in cross-cultural ministry with OMF (Overseas Mission Fellowship) International. Their ministry took them from India to Thailand to the Philippines. When Thang turned 70 years old, they had altogether served 15 years in their church in India and 30 years with OMF. The couple is now serving with SIM East Asia and based in Guwahati, North East India. They have two children – a son and daughter. Their son, Khup, is also in ministry work with OMF International.

You will often hear fellow believers say “God will provide” as you take that first step of obedience to God’s call to cross-cultural ministry. But until you experience it first-hand, you may never fully understand the depth of His faithfulness. 1Thessalonians 5:24 (NIV) sums up my experience of a Provider God in all my years of service and is embedded in my heart: “The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.” From the moment I committed to serving God as a missionary, I have personally witnessed and experienced God’s provision every step of the way. Providing for our children’s education is just one of many examples of God’s overwhelming faithfulness as He journeyed with me and my husband to foreign lands.

A Co-worker's Donation

We had arrived in Bangkok, Thailand on 3 March, 1989 by train from Singapore. Our son Khup was five years old and our daughter Nem, three years old. Since Khup was ready for Chefoo School the following year, we knew that we had to prepare him for it since he spoke little English. Chefoo School is an OMF school that caters for missionaries' kids and is located at Cameron Highlands in Malaysia. We thought enrolling him in an English-speaking kindergarten in Thailand in the meantime was an ideal solution. Unfortunately, all the English kindergartens in Bangkok were privately-run and thus expensive. Government schools were more affordable but classes were conducted in Thai. We had no choice but to enrol him at a private school. We were told to pay the fees upfront to ensure him a place. Since our coffers were empty, we turned to God for help.

One afternoon, on our way to a prayer meeting at the Mission Home with Ron, our missionary friend from Canada, Thang was surprised when Ron suddenly asked, "Do you need money?" Thang answered, "Sure I need it because I need to admit my son to a kindergarten." When they arrived at the Mission Home, Ron pulled out some cash from his pocket and handed it to Thang. The amount was 5,000 baht which was exactly what was needed for Khup's admission to the kindergarten. Ron did not know how much we needed, but God had prepared him to give this amount for our son's schooling. Indeed, God who calls us is faithful.

A Stranger's Donation

The year after, it was Nem's turn for admission to the kindergarten. The lower admission fees of 4,000 baht were a discounted rate for a second child to the

same school. Needless to say, we were short of funds. We asked God to provide once again. One morning, Thang was at the Mission Home to collect mail. (In those days communication was by snail mail.) In an envelope addressed to us was a love gift of 4,000 baht from an unknown donor. It was again the exact sum we needed for our daughter's admission to the kindergarten. The One who called us met our need once more in a timely manner.

An Official's Help

In August, 1990, Khup was ready for boarding school in Malaysia. We took a train from Bangkok to get there. At the Thai border, some uniformed personnel boarded the train to explain that Indian citizens crossing the Thai border were required to pay US\$500. If we were to refuse, we would be barred from crossing the border despite our Malaysian visas. We did not have US\$500 on hand and prayed that God would help us resolve the matter. When we were asked to meet the official at the border office, we became anxious because the train was about to depart within a few minutes. Still, we reckoned we would be able to make it back on time if we were to hurry. But taking our two young children and luggage with us would definitely slow us down. Noticing our dilemma, two Buddhist priests who sat opposite us said, "You go meet the official. We will take care of your luggage and your kids." We thanked them before hurrying off and were relieved when the officer released us briskly without imposing any fines. God provided two Buddhist priests to take care of our kids and ensured that we crossed the Thai border safely without further incident.

Scholarships & Churches' Support

When our children were ready for college education, God opened the door for them to attend Biola University in the USA. Although we would have liked for them to enrol at Indian colleges, the different educational system they underwent in high school at the Faith Academy in the Philippines where we were serving made that impossible. But we did not have the means to support them for a tertiary education in the States. Yet God provided them both with college scholarships, jobs at the University library and love gifts from churches and individuals. Both finished their college degrees without the burden of hefty loans. People have often expressed surprise that we could afford their college education in the United States. Little did they know we were just as amazed at how God had provided and relieved us of any financial anxiety.

God who calls us is faithful in providing for our children's education. And not just their basic education. Our children also finished their MA Degrees in the USA. Indeed, our God is faithful. And His faithfulness is as steadfast today as it was in all those years that we spent in the field serving Him.





Not For Nought

Esha

Esha and her husband, Vijay, are involved in Church planting focusing on Children's ministry. They also teach English to children whose parents are unable to afford to put them through school. Both have been in the field for three years.

I was born into a Christian family of seven children. I grew up in Nagaland, India. My mother was a woman of prayer who never missed a single church prayer meeting. I remembered following her to the prayer meeting and learning about the importance of prayer.

At a young age, I had the desire to serve God. I remembered a retreat in June 1986 where I felt God was calling me to surrender my life to Him. The speaker had challenged us with a quote from Isaiah 6:8 (ESV), "And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here I am! Send me.'" After the retreat, I decided to get baptised and subsequently enrolled at a theological seminary to prepare myself for service.

Ten years later, after I completed my Bachelor of Arts, I went on to do my Bachelor of Divinity at Eastern Theological College, Jorhat, completing the course in 2000. In preparation for my missionary service, I did a six-month Children's Ministry course in 2009 with Union Biblical Seminary.

I thought my theological studies would launch me into ministry among the unreached people upon graduation. But God's timing was obviously different from mine. He led me instead to work in my church for six years and another ten years as the Education and Sunday School Secretary. My term of service in this role would

take me up to the end of 2016. I prayed that God would open the door for me to serve as a cross-cultural missionary thereafter.

In 2015, Vijay and I got married. We both had the same desire to serve as cross-cultural missionaries. To equip ourselves, we joined the Cross-Cultural Missionary training in NECTAR (North East Center for Training and Research) in Shillong for four months.

In 2016, we applied to join SIM and were accepted as missionaries through SIMNEI (SIM North East India). We waited for more than a year before God opened the door to Indonesia. On 20 October 2018, we landed on an offshore island. We stayed with an Indonesian lady for nearly eight months. We were learning the Indonesian language through skype. Our ministry was church-planting with a focus on children's ministry.

Adapting to a new culture, adjusting to new people and learning a new language at the same time were challenging. Arrangements were made for us to take extra language classes under a lady tutor who stayed with us. We learnt under her for several weeks until 16 June 2019 when we were reassigned to another Island called Salatiga where there was a language school. The people here were friendlier and so it was easier to develop friendships.

We continued to learn the Indonesian language and culture at the language school in Salatiga. After class, my husband and I would often make it a point to practise the language so we could establish relationships, especially with the people in our neighbourhood. We soon made friends with some families. A few of them accepted us like we were part of their own family. Though we could not share the Word directly with them, we continued to pray for them hoping that they would one day come to know the Lord as their Saviour.

A New Allegiance

One evening in November 2019, Vijay and I saw a man sweeping the compound of his house. We extended our greetings and when he lifted his eyes to Vijay, he immediately recognised him, “Were you the one I saw in the salon the other day?” “Yes,” Vijay replied. He invited us to his house for tea. We spent an hour chatting with him. We in turn invited him to our house and he promptly visited us the next day. From then onwards, he kept visiting and sharing with us his many problems, and expressing how unhappy he was with his life. We took the opportunity to share the Gospel with him. We told him true happiness could only be found in Jesus. We told him to trust in Him and He would open a way for him to find meaning and purpose in life.

One day he dropped by to tell us, “I don’t mind changing my religion.” We gave him the Word of God in Indonesian which he read diligently. Soon, he said he was ready to go to church with us. On 15 December 2019, he went with us to church for the very first time and was warmly welcomed by our pastor who also introduced him to our church members.

Conversion At Christmas

We witnessed God’s Hand at work on yet another occasion. On the Christmas evening of 2019, a Christian couple invited us and a new believer and his family to their place for Christmas. It was the first time the new believer celebrated Christmas with his wife and children. The following Sunday, his wife accepted Christ. All of their five children, except the second son, decided to follow Christ.

Praise God that through this Christian couple, their friend and wife came to know Christ. On May 10, 2020, these two couples were baptised. It was heartening to see them growing stronger in their faith as we gathered together to study the word every Tuesday and to pray together every Thursday.

Opportunity In The Midst Of Pandemic

Covid-19 hit Indonesia at the beginning of March, 2020. The restrictions imposed by the government made public gatherings difficult. But God in His perfect time opened a way for us to start teaching English to new believers' children along with eight other children from non-Christian homes. A family of new believers with two boys and two girls aged between 12 and 15 years old also caught our attention. The children were not schooling due to the family's financial difficulty. We were given the opportunity to teach them and as we encouraged them, they became interested in studying. God also gave us an opportunity to start a Sunday school for the children. The Children's Ministry course I attended in 2009 was now put to good use. Later, we connected them to a Christian School for formal education. All of them were admitted to the school but unfortunately, for some reasons, the family moved to another place.

A Homeless Man Found A Real Home

In April 2021, we met Budi, a homeless man, who later became a believer. He stayed with us for about a month. We would study the word of God together and pray for a roof over Budi's head. God answered our prayer because not long after that, Budi got a job and was able to rent a house. His daughter, who was cared for by his sister, was now able to stay with him. He is

now experiencing the love of God each day. He said, “I was like a blind man. Now when I look back at my past life, I feel ashamed of myself. Sleeping at the roadside and only thinking of how to tell lies and get money.” He added, “I have many friends who are exactly like me. I want to tell them about the good news one day.” Reading the Bible daily is now part of his regimen. He said, “The more I read the more interesting I find it. Sometimes, I would go on and on till it’s too late to sleep.”

There are now altogether eight families who have accepted Christ. They meet once a week to pray together. They are growing in their faith and are starting to share God’s love with their friends. We hope and pray that God will continue to use them to bring more friends to God.

God has put my seminary training to good use. By equipping me for His ministry, He has made it possible for His gospel to advance from family to family.



Teaching English to Children

Everything To God In Prayer

Brokal

Brokal has served in the mission field for 13 years. A father of three children, Brokal is 43. He is currently based in India.

“Everything to God in Prayer” – that’s our family motto, whether in work, school or ministry. We teach our children that if they want anything, to ask God first. God who is our provider will grant them their requests when He sees fit. Our children grew up clinging to this teaching. But our prayer for now is that one day they, too, will serve the Lord and be a blessing to others.

We are a family of five from North-East India, growing up in a Christian community and coming from a small town where we enjoy God’s creation in different ways. I got married in the year 2000 and am blessed with wonderful children, a boy (16 years old) and two girls (6 and 13 years old).

In 2006 my wife and I received God’s call and committed our life to missions. Our journey was filled with challenges, particularly as we did not know where to start and how to move forward. We kept praying for wisdom and discernment and asking God what He wanted of us. Finally, in 2009, the Lord opened a door for ministry with Muslims in South Asia. For obvious security reasons, we are unable to reveal the particular country that God called us to.

In the beginning, we had difficulty building relationships with the people. They were often suspicious of outsiders. Because we were different, they kept their distance. One night, we went on our knees to ask God to help us connect with the

people. Soon after, we heard someone at our door. When we opened it, we were surprised to see two ladies from our building standing there. They asked if they could visit us. This was the first miracle we experienced in the field. They became our good friends and over the years, we have been blessed by their friendship. In our eagerness, we sometimes pressure ourselves to deliver, but God has His own ways and plans for us. We only need to wait on Him for His instructions.

Our first term in the field was quite challenging. We had to adapt to a new culture, learn a new language, and on top of that, we had visa issues. But by the grace of God and the prayer of His saints we managed to thrive. Our first term was the hardest as we adjusted to life in a completely different environment but it was also the time when we experienced God the most and learnt to depend on Him. Our first term gave us enduring lessons that helped us persevere throughout our ministry!

As we looked back on our time in this country, we could see countless answers to prayer that gave us hope and increased our trust in the Lord. Answered prayers became one of our starting points when we shared with the locals about how we ended up in the Delta. We built relationships by telling our life stories, recounting all that God had done for us, and the ways He had provided for us and answered our prayers. When friends asked for loans, we would reply that we were unable to help financially but could pray for their needs in Jesus' name. We pointed them to God as the provider. We wanted them to know that God cares more about us than we can ever imagine.

With prayer as the foundation of our ministry, we saw our labour bearing fruit as God moved in our midst. Through our hospitality ministry, we built relationships as we opened our home to our neighbours and shared with them all

that God had done. We also prayed with them constantly. Our home became a refuge for people who were in unsafe situations. Many of the relationships we built with the people continue till today.

Brokal travelled all over the country for Bible training, seminars, workshops, and pastoral training. As he travelled, he shared the Word of God with all the people he encountered, some of whom still look to him for wise counsel to this day. A local pastor testified excitedly that after the training, the Word of God came alive as never before and he was able to see God's big picture. He is now more confident as he preaches the Word.

God has used us in diverse ways so beautifully. He keeps us going in good and bad times. The One who called us is faithful and He will finish his mission. What a privilege to be part of God's great mission. What a gift to be able to turn to God in prayer in all circumstances.



He Changes Lives



The Migrant Story

Rosemary

Rosemary served in the Middle East from 2014 until her ministry was disrupted by Covid-19. She had no choice but to return home. Her main ministry was with the children, and walking alongside refugees or new female believers in a local church. She shared that two Bible verses underscored her ministry, particularly the children's ministry: from Luke 18:16 – 17(ESV), "But Jesus called them to him, saying, 'Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.'" And James 1:27(ESV), "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."

For those of us who have grown up in a stable political environment and a home sheltered from life's storms, we may never fully understand the desolation and insecurity experienced by those deprived of them. I serve in a church attended by many refugee families displaced from their homeland because of the ravages of war and political devastation. They had lost everything and had fled to a foreign land to piece their lives together. As I heard their stories, my heart was stirred to compassion. Their story is one of loss and despair. But it is also a story of God's mercy and compassion as He turned their mourning into joy.

One wintry day in my second year in the country that I served (I'm unable to reveal the country for reasons of security), I was asked if I would like to visit some of the refugee families with a pastor and his family. I said "yes" without any hesitation. I wanted to grab at the chance to minister to them in their world of suffering and misery. I saw it as an opportunity of a lifetime. I excitedly wrote home

about this impending visit and my home supporters were equally thrilled by it. They immediately contributed funds that allowed me to buy heaters, carpets and food items for the families.

We visited one church which was attended by many Iraqi refugees who were living near it. We saw their appalling lack of necessities and offered the refugee families basic essentials to help them tide over winter. And we prayed for them during the visits. We also visited other families with large households who were crammed into small flats. I could sense their anguish and the ordeal they had to endure just to survive. It was heart-breaking for me to see them trying to accommodate one another in the little space they had. I resolved to pray unceasingly for them. Every family, especially Muslim families, was grateful for the churches' care and help.

A local church with which I had built a relationship received some overseas financial donations and used the funds to distribute food packages to the various refugee families. Occasionally, the local church would announce a collection day where church members and friends were invited to donate clothes and useful items for new refugee families. No gesture was too small because we knew that whatever were collected would go a long way to meeting the refugee families' needs. I played my part by contributing some clothes and stationery to the church. To ensure that the refugees could collect the donated items easily, an Open Day was organised on either a Friday or Saturday. We were delighted to see so many refugee families, mostly Muslims, coming to the church. We greeted them, welcomed them and blessed them.

Almost every year, the local church would also host a Medical Open Day. On this day, a volunteer medical team from the United States would offer medical help

and consultations. The church would invite foreign students to help out. I had the opportunity to help twice. As a first-time volunteer, I was amazed to see so many Muslim families suffering from physical and emotional trauma coming to seek medical help. I was thankful for the opportunity to serve and bless them, and did everything possible to offer the children or the families the best help.

The refugees suffered from a variety of sicknesses and had a whole range of medical needs. The medical team checked them diligently and dispensed medicine without charging any fee. The pastor's wife together with the church members provided emotional and spiritual care, and offered prayers for those who were willing to receive them. I gave thanks for every prayer uttered before God for these refugees. I was confident their dire circumstances would not go unheeded by our compassionate God.

In my third and fourth year in this country, I became involved with the Kids' Program at the church. Every Saturday, I would be there to lead them in songs and various activities. Some of the refugee children who had come from the neighboring countries also attended the program. When I first served in the Kids' Program, I could see how disorientated the refugee children were. I also saw fear and uncertainty reflected in their eyes. They were obviously traumatized and scarred by their war experience. They sat quietly on their chairs, hardly daring to make a sound. Later, I realised that some of them had lost their parents and had fled with their relatives to this country. Thankfully, in their culture, relatives would step in as guardians of the children whose parents were lost. I had the opportunity to visit a local orphanage and realised that this cultural practice actually resulted in fewer orphans under its roof.

At the Kids' Program, we taught the children about God through songs, stories, games, crafts and prayers. They were happy to sing along, play along, listen to the stories, pray and learn new crafts. Every Saturday, the church would send a bus to pick them up. We also took them to the local park or zoo during the school holidays or after their final exams. They loved every outing and felt blessed to be able to participate in the activities. I felt tremendous joy just seeing their faces lit up with excitement.

After a few weeks and months of working among them, I started to see some changes in the children. They were smiling and laughing a lot more. Any traces of fear or trauma seemed to be wiped off from their faces. They were slowly coming back to life. I was moved and delighted at the same time as they smilingly replied to questions I asked in their local language, "Where did you come from? Do you have other siblings?" Sometimes, we would see refugee children standing up when we asked, "Who among you need prayer? Please stand up and come forward." They would march slowly to the front of the class. The teachers would ask about their needs and we would pray for them. You should see their happy contented faces after receiving the prayers.

There were other changes. Whenever I came across the refugee children in the streets or shops, they would greet me with beaming faces. This had never happened before. Now they were initiating contact! I thanked our Heavenly Father for listening to our prayers and healing the trauma and hurt experienced by the children. Sometimes the children would attend Sunday evening service with their parents. When they saw me with other teachers, they would offer us broad smiles. I was thrilled to see the joy reflected on their faces. Their hearts were being

transformed by the love of God through the Kids' Program. God was slowly removing the scars in their lives.

Most of them eventually migrated to other countries with their parents. We reluctantly said goodbye. I was, however, thankful that those who had moved to other countries had settled down well. I am thankful to our Heavenly Father for His healing Hand on families, especially those affected by the trauma of war. As I reflect on my ministry among the kids, I am thankful for the opportunity to work with other teachers who faithfully serve God in the kids' ministry in the local churches.

I also thank God for the women's ministry in my six or seven years there. Every Saturday I would join the women's group at the church or at my landlady's house. There were Koreans involved in this group, too. We would sing praises, study the Bible and pray for each other. Occasionally we visited those who were ill. The women were key to the church because of their strong support and constant prayer for each other and for the church.

A few of the women refugees or ladies who attended church were unbelievers. I would visit them to encourage them to take the step of faith. They all had different needs – health, finance, family. They would seek us out and invite us to their homes. Some eventually came to faith as they personally encountered Jesus. We witnessed one particular refugee family whose family members came to faith one by one despite their mother not knowing how to read. She had accepted Christ from the good news being preached on TV!

In 2020, Covid-19 hit a critical stage. A five-month lockdown was announced and I left the country for home. But my heart lingers in the country, for those refugee families, for the women's ministry. I still pray for the refugee families and

their children as I seek our Heavenly Father for His protection and blessing over them.

True Peace

Tan & Izumi

Tan & Izumi Shimizu from Japan served in Tanzania for 20 years. Their ministry involved outreach and discipleship-making. The couple attended a Bible seminary in Tokyo before going in the field. They have three children and are now pastoring a church in Japan.

Ali, an elderly man, lives in a village in the South Coast of Tanzania. This area deep in the forest has been known to produce liquor from tropical fruits. The liquor is made of coconuts and is called “tembo” signifying “elephant” in Swahili. This locally produced liquor has a high alcohol content that causes health damage which can result in death. It is, therefore, banned by the government. Despite police crackdown on the producers and penalty from time to time, the popular demand keeps the market alive. Ali was addicted to “tembo.”

We were involved in the new outreach ministry in Ali’s village. After some months of house visit, a family in the village accepted the Lord and we started to have weekly Bible reading with them and their friends.

Ali Came To Our Bible Reading Session

One Friday afternoon, Ali joined our Bible reading session. He said, “I’m new. Can I join this gathering?” We replied, “Of course! This meeting is open to all. You are most welcome!” And he did come. Whenever Ali came, he would listen to the Word of God very closely. But there were times he came drunk and became incoherent in his speech. On other occasions he would lie down on

a straw mat and fall asleep. But we noticed that as he absorbed the Word of God, he started to reduce his intake of “tembo.”

Conversion Of Ali

A year after joining us, Ali accepted Christ as his saviour. He started attending baptism classes to prepare himself for baptism on Christmas day. The members in the village and the town church were very excited by this.

But Ali did not attend the final baptism class on the Friday three days prior to Christmas. Neither did he turn up for baptism. He also stopped coming to the Bible reading meeting. He had just disappeared. We prayed for him and visited his house several times, but could not find him.

After three months, he suddenly appeared at the gathering. He was totally drunk. Some in the gathering were upset by his attitude and said, “He is useless. He betrayed us. Now he has slipped back into his old habits. We have no reason to bother about him anymore.” But I encouraged them saying, “Let’s thank the Lord that he came here today! We had no idea where he was. I was afraid that he might have passed away. But now, although he is drunk, he is here! Please do not give up on him.” We, like Ali, were all lost. Jesus had patiently sought us out and saved each one of us. I was not ready to give up on Ali.

The following Friday, Ali came to the meeting again without a drop of alcohol. He was sober. He quietly and slowly shared with us why he didn’t appear on the day of baptism. He said he was afraid of the threats issued by his family and friends. They had warned him, “If you get baptised, we will cut off our relationship with you. When you die, we won’t bury you but throw your body into a bush. We will treat

you like a dog.” I encouraged him, “Thank you for sharing. We are glad you came back. The Lord is good. Don’t worry. In case of death, the church will bury you.”

From Ali To Immanuel

Ali started attending the weekly Bible reading sessions again. After some months, he was finally baptised. He insisted on changing his name from Ali to Immanuel. He loved the truth of Jesus, reminding us that “The Lord is with us.” He was growing in faith day by day. As he grew, his need for alcohol slowly faded away. Jesus had completely changed his life.

One of the church members had to move to her hometown in Mozambique. After several months, we called her to check on her. She sounded weak on the phone and complained that she had no friends nor a church that she could go to. When Immanuel got a chance to talk to her, he encouraged her by saying, “Please cheer up! Isn’t there Jesus in Mozambique? Jesus should be there. We have Jesus here and you have Jesus there, I know. Jesus never leaves you!”

Hearing his words, all of us were very encouraged. Indeed, the Lord is always with us wherever we are! When Immanuel was weak, the Lord had encouraged him through this lady, and now He was using Immanuel to encourage her in return.

Returning Home

On September 5th, 2016, Immanuel passed away suddenly. He had attended the church on Sunday, a day before his death, but his aged body was afflicted by some sudden illnesses. He never woke up the next morning. It was a big shock for all of us. Unfortunately, that very week, the pastor and the evangelist were

attending a seminar in a different region. The town church decided to send the elders and me to help the village church make arrangements for Immanuel's funeral.

When we arrived at the village, the villagers were already preparing for his funeral. We approached the elders of the village and told them that we had come as a church to conduct a Christian funeral. Immanuel's family insisted on their religious rites. After some discussion, the church conceded the funeral rites to them but decided to hold a memorial service later. However, to our surprise, the religious leader said, "Let's respect the faith of the deceased person. Immanuel claimed to be a Christian so let him be buried in the Christian way."

The Lord had paved the way for us! With the village elder's approval, I was given the honour to conduct Christian funeral rites. As I led the funeral, I preached the Word of God from Matthew 5:3-9 (ESV) in remembrance of Immanuel's life with Christ:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (v. 3)

He knew that he was poor in spirit, needing salvation. He had a religion and yet he was not satisfied with his life. He came to seek salvation and received it through Christ. Now, he is with the Lord in heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." (v. 4)

His life was not easy but he was comforted by the Lord.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (v. 9)

Indeed, he was seeking peace among the people. On one occasion, there was a conflict among members of the village church. He bravely stood up and calmed them down saying, "Where I grew up, there were conflicts and hatred every day. I came here seeking peace. And I found the peace in Jesus.

But now you are ruining it.” He quietly calmed the conflict, and the church regained the peace in Christ.

Many villagers attended the funeral and heard the word of God. I remembered a promise we made to Immanuel that the church would bury him upon his death. We were thankful we were able to fulfil the promise.

A week later, when the pastor and the evangelist returned from the seminar, we held a memorial service for Immanuel in his daughter’s home. We praised the Lord because the family, which had tearfully insisted on their own religious rites, now invited us to have the memorial service at their home. It was an amazingly peaceful service. We set aside time to pray for Immanuel's family and also witnessed their smiles.

When Jesus performed his first miracle in Cana of Galilee, those who saw and experienced Jesus’s miracle were the servants who had followed His instruction to fill the jars with water. The master of the banquet did not know where the new wine had come from “though the servants who had drawn the water knew” (John 2:9b, NIV). They knew for sure it was water when they drew it but they clearly saw that when they brought it to the master, it had been turned into wine.

It is our privilege as God’s servants that we are able to see the Lord’s work close up. We knew how Ali lived before he met Jesus. We saw how he was changed by the Lord’s hand. Those who only knew him as Immanuel appreciated his presence and enjoyed fellowship with him. But we were given this privilege to know him as Ali and then as Immanuel and personally witnessed how the Lord changed him with His Word.

For those of us who are sceptical of God's power to transform lives, Immanuel is an example of a prodigal child made good. For those of us who never doubted God's transforming power, Immanuel's life confirms nothing is impossible with God. We can surely give thanks to the Lord for the privilege of witnessing His mighty Hand at work both to save and to transform lives.

Pure Joy

Rina

Rina is an ordained pastor from North East India. He has been involved in church planting in Thailand for ten years. He is married to Puii and has three children. Rina is in his mid-forties.

Mother Nuthiap came across as a proud yet elegant lady when we first met her. Her friend who was a member of our church took us to her house to share with her the gospel. She stopped us midway in our conversation saying, “I know what you have come to tell me. You are Christians and you are trying to make me become a Christian. I am happy the way I am. I have everything I need, and I don’t need anything new in my life. Years ago, when I was in another province, Christian missionaries came to my house and already told me everything you want to tell me now. I already have a religion. When I was younger, I went to the temple every day to pray and earn merits. Now that I am older, I pray from my house looking towards the temple and that is enough for me.”

In response, one of the missionaries said, “Mother Nuthiap, God must love you very much. Years ago, He sent people to tell you about His love for you. While you rejected Him, He has not given up on you and today He has, once again, brought us to tell you of the love He has for you.” She kept quiet for a while and then to our surprise, she started crying and said, “You are right, your God must love me very much.” We told her about our church services on Sunday mornings and invited her to come. She replied she would.



True to her word, she came to church the next two Sunday mornings on her bicycle. She enjoyed the fellowship and the care that the brothers and sisters in church had for each other. Not long after, she decided to follow Jesus and be baptised. She began reading the Bible regularly and listening to sermons and gospel songs on an MP3 player that we gave her. Every Wednesday, the church organises an outreach event where church members go to different villages with the gospel. If Mother

Nuthiap is well, she never misses this event. She is one of the few persons who is always introducing someone new to the church outreach team. Because of her, many people have heard of the gospel and some have even turned to the Lord because of her.

Her grandfather had been an influential man in the society. He had donated a lot of money towards the building of a temple. And because of this, they had allotted special places of burial in the temple premises for all the members of his family, including Mother Nuthiap. In Thai society, many people would be envious of this as it is a great honour to have special burial sites in the temple. Mother Nuthiap told us that it did not mean anything to her anymore and that she would let someone else take her place. She said that when she dies, she will be with the

Lord Jesus. She no longer wants anyone to go to the temple to earn merit on her behalf or to feed her spirit.

Mother Nuthiap is now in her mid-70s and her health is slowly failing, but it is wonderful to see her so much at peace with her future. Her major concern is that her only son and his family are not believers yet. We hope that one day they, too, will place their trust in their mother's



God. His unfailing love sought her out and changed her forever for the better.

Covering The Wounded

Yukiko

Yukiko has been a missionary since 2017. She is serving in a land filled with challenges especially for a single lady. Now on home assignment, she is hoping to return to the field soon to resume her ministry among a neglected group of people.

I became a Christian while undergoing training to be a nurse in New York, USA. There, I came to know many missionaries. I felt God calling me to be a missionary one day. I was certain my nursing skills would come in handy in the field.

When I was about to take my final nursing examination, I received news from home that my eldest sister in Japan was diagnosed with a rare incurable disease. Only one other case was known in the world at that time. I had to abandon my American dream to qualify as a nurse as I made plans to return to Japan, my home country, to help take care of my sister and her family.

Care For My Sister

My eldest sister, Hina, has three sons. Her youngest son, Akio, was only two and a half years old. She said to me, "I want you to help me send the little one to the nursery school and pick him up."

Her health had deteriorated so quickly soon after contracting the disease that she could not walk or stand. She couldn't sleep at night because of the intense pain. One day, she sent me 27 texts with the message, "Kill me. I can't bear this anymore." I was helpless. I couldn't do anything except to pray.

The X-ray and CT scan that followed showed that her skull and pelvic bones were slowly dissolving. Her eyes' optic nerve was damaged and her vision was diminishing. On one hospital visit, Akio behaved well and put on a brave smile to encourage her mother. He didn't, as was his habit, insist on a hug knowing she was in pain. But when we left the hospital and got into the car, he would cry uncontrollably. I just hugged him and let him cry until he felt better.

Hina's second son, Akira, who was six years old learned to cook. He could not reach the kitchen stove, so he had to stand on a stool to do the cooking. All those time that he spent preparing meals for his family must have led him to discover his interest in cooking. Today, he works as a chef in a hotel.

Hina's symptoms continued to worsen rapidly. Her pain was so intense that even morphine had no analgesic effect on her. I even took her by plane to a hospital where a medical specialist was working on the disease that she was suffering from. Hina had always wanted to be a pilot since she was little. But her dream was dashed when in elementary school, she fell down a flight of stairs and injured her left eye that resulted in weakened eyesight. So, she was very glad that she was able to fly on a plane despite her medical condition. I still remember how happy I was to see her smiling for the first time since she was diagnosed with the disease. Unfortunately, our trip to the hospital was to no avail. Up till today, no one knows the cause of the disease. There is no treatment available.

A Missionary's Help

I continued to share about my sister's health condition with my missionary friends in the United States and requested their prayer. A few months later, Richard,

one of my missionary friends from New York flew to Japan to see my sister. He had been praying for her recovery.

When Richard visited my sister at the hospital, he said to her, "I will pray in the name of Jesus for you. What is your wish? Please tell me." She replied, "I want to live with my children and my husband again. I want to see my eldest son turn 20 years old." He prayed in Jesus' name to fulfil her wish. In the following days, my sister's pain began to ease gradually. The progression of the disease slowed down as she had so wished. She left the hospital less than a month after Richard had prayed for her.

My sister is still alive today, 14 years since she was diagnosed with the disease. Amazingly, even though she is still bed ridden, her mental faculty is unaffected, and she now lives with her family under one roof.

My sister's eldest son vividly remembers the time when his mother was unable to stand or walk. Her two younger sons tell me, "From when we were very small, our mother was like this – unable to walk and stand." These three nephews of mine grew to be gentle and caring towards their mother. My sister says, "Just being with my family makes me so happy!" By the way, Akio, is now 17 years old and studies hard. He is also a badminton player.

When my missionary friend, Richard, came to Japan to visit my sister, he left something irreplaceable in our hearts. When he was here, he took time to meet my dad. As soon as my dad saw him, he started crying like a child. Richard gently hugged my father who had been overcome with worry because of my sister's illness. My dad's heart was touched by the love of my missionary friend who had come all the way from the United States to see us.

The deeds of my missionary friend still shine in my heart. I have learnt that love and friendship will cover someone's wound and help heal the pain. As a result, lives will be touched and ushered into the Kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul encourages us to “carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2, NIV).

As I reflect on my experience, I am reminded of a stanza in a song written by a famous Japanese singer:

*You are like a vertically-sown thread
I am like a horizontal one
And we weave a tapestry
One whose destiny could be
To cover up somebody’s wound, helping it heal*

My sister’s improved health condition after Richard prayed for her reminded me that we need to always remember what God has done in our lives and then to give thanks to Him and help cover up someone’s wound. The Bible says, “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:16, NIV).

A Burning Pot

Naomi

Naomi hails from North East India and served in Southern Africa from 2008 to 2018. Covid-19 gave her an extended time of rest and renewal, and she now serves in evangelism and discipleship ministries to the majority community.

In October 2008, a caravan plane landed in a tiny village in Southern Africa. “Here we are,” said the pilot as we landed on bumpy red soil. When he opened the door, we were welcomed by a strong hot wind. As I climbed down those tiny stairs, all I could feel was the heat on my face. It felt strange that the airport had no asphalt runways, no buildings, no check-in terminals, no houses, no people and no cars except a Caucasian man (our team leader) with his red quad bike, and a few armed soldiers. We collected our luggage and loaded them on a quad bike.

We had to walk for a few kilometres to a truck that was waiting for us in the bush. We trudged through muddy paths, sweating under the scorching sun with a local guide leading the way and soldiers guarding our backs and sides. Finally, we spotted the truck, climbed onto it, assuming that it would take us to our final destination. Instead, we were dropped off along the banks of the Blue Nile River. As it was high tide because of the rainy season, we had to transfer to a small boat built by the missionaries. There were many people by the river – women washing clothes, children playing and swimming. For the first time, I shook Africans hands – those black coarse hands – and returned their big warm smiles. After crossing the river, we found another car waiting for us that finally took us to our station – the

missionary compound. Our teammates welcomed us joyfully. It felt like a fun adventurous trip at the time, but challenging days lay ahead of me.

And so began my real life in Southern Africa, a country full of bloodshed and violence, a place hardly anyone would visit. '*Suud*' means 'black' in Arabic. The Africans are known as the blackest people in the world. The people knew nothing but war. I fell in love with the people, and South Africa with all their quirks, dangers, and risks became my home for the next ten years.

I lived in Southern Africa during the most uncertain times where there were constant outbreaks of war between the north and the south, and among the different political parties and the ethnic groups. Against all odds of risks and dangers, the Lord protected me and our team. We were imbued with uninhibited joy as we served the people. The Africans are an amazing people, very relational and open-minded. They taught me many things – live for the moment, enjoy life to the fullest, laugh and let go, be thankful for each day even if that meant having only tea or coffee and one meal a day. The beautiful community life and warm hospitality, the generous heart of giving in poverty, the enduring courage and strength in every circumstance changed my life forever.

The people's outward optimism, however, could not disguise or obliterate the effects of war – the lingering pain, grief, hopelessness, despair, hatred, and anger. Suffering lined their faces despite their broad smiles. Hunger and starvation were daily battles. They were also fighting a spiritual battle. The Evil One reigned in their hearts for many years. The Gospel took a long time to make inroads into the communities. When it finally did, we saw many people turning to the Lord, and breaking free from their traditional beliefs, practices, and demonic oppression.

Here is a story of a sister who encountered Jesus in a wonderful and miraculous way. Jemima had been part of our women's group. She appeared to be quite sincere and seemed hungry for the word of God. Yet she was overcome by doubt and frustration. Something in her rebelled against the truth.

One day, I found Jemima sitting on the ground in shaggy clothes looking pale and sick. Her eyes were sunken, her lips parched from dehydration. A small crowd had gathered around her. Suspecting something was wrong, I asked if everyone was doing well. Some nodded their heads; others kept silent while their eyes remained fixed on Jemima who looked traumatised. Jemima began to speak, "You have been coming to teach us the Word of God these past months. You care for us and you teach us good things about God but I have failed to obey your words. I am sorry to have disappointed you." She continued, "I nearly died last week. I could have been killed and even if that happened, I deserved to die because I disobeyed God, but God saved my life." She went on to narrate the incident that had caused her to reconsider her life.

As was her routine, Jemima was preparing her cooking pot outside her *tukul* (a traditional African house made of mud and straw), to brew alcohol. After building a big fire, she set the pot over it. As the alcohol brewed, it suddenly caught fire. Flames leapt from the pot. Jemima struggled to fight the fire, her eyes transfixed on the burning pot. Without the intervention of her neighbours, her *tukul* would have been burnt down. The pot was completely charred but Jemima surprisingly suffered only singed eyebrows.

"This must be the act of God because no such thing had ever happened in my life before," she recalled in a trembling voice revealing the extent of her trauma. Jemima had been making alcohol for many years as there seemed to be no other

means to earn a living to feed her family in the refugee camps. From her years of experience in making alcohol, she knew it wasn't normal for the fire to consume the pot instantly with such great force and fury. She confessed, "After every Bible study, you would go home, and I would start making alcohol. This had been going on for months. You knew nothing about this. But God knows everything and because of my disobedience, He sent fire to teach me."

I was speechless as I sat there listening to her. There was no anger or judgment in my heart; instead I was filled with compassion and joy. This woman was convicted of her sins and had seen the power of God in the form of a blazing fire. She was choking on her tears rendering speech impossible. So, she pointed at her *tukul* to indicate that she wished to spend some private time with me alone.

In her little *tukul*, Jemima surrendered everything to God and gave her life to Jesus. It was a most beautiful moment as we wept together and rejoiced over what God had done in her life. From that day onwards, her life was never the same. She put her faith in God and promised never to make or drink alcohol again.

Many like Jemima suffered a great upheaval in 2011 when South Sudan became independent, sparking a refugee crisis as the Africans regime sought to prevent the southern states from declaring nationhood. Many fled to neighbouring states and countries to seek refuge and many others lost loved ones in the war. The years of hardship and suffering made even young women look old before their time. But while they had survived the ravages of war, they continued to wrestle with the evil forces of darkness. At times, they yielded to their fleshly desires and bought into the evil one's lies – raising false hopes with promises of wealth and health. Jemima succumbed to such a lie, believing that making alcohol was the only way for her to make money and feed her children. She experienced forgiveness and

release at the feet of our Lord when she found the true bread of life. No matter how fierce their battle, the Lord fought it for them and set them free, “...For the battle is not yours but God’s” (2Chronicles 20:15b, NIV).

What a privilege I have been given, to be able to witness God’s love and acts of mercy and compassion for those living in darkness as He brings them into His light.

Beyond Our Plan

Eva Chuang

Eva and her husband Eugene have been serving among the Zulu people in South Africa since 2010.

We returned to South Africa after our first Home Assignment with a renewed sense of purpose and vision to reach the children and young people of the community. But we reckoned it would be a challenge to switch gears because traditionally, the main ministry focus of the Zulu church had always been on adults and older people. What took place in the following years truly demonstrated to us that not only are God's ways and plans higher than ours, but His strength is surely made perfect in our weakness.

The Asikhanyise Project

In 2015, we started to think about the possibility of setting up a children and youth training centre. This came to us after we had spent our first term learning the Zulu culture and language and living among the community. The Zulu people had spiritual needs that needed to be met but we had been too focused on meeting their physical needs.

Most Zulu pastors are proficient in holding evangelistic rallies and bringing people to Christ in open-air conventions and conferences. Churches, too, are adept at holding special services to attract people to church. However, while these help draw people to God, they do not help to retain church membership because the

follow-up is weak. We, among others, led Bible study classes but the Zulu people do not generally like to read or study. And so, attending Bible classes was unappealing. Even the possession of a Zulu Bible would not really sustain a Zulu's attendance in church.

As expatriate workers, we did not want to duplicate what the Zulu pastors were good at. We desired instead to help them with follow-up ministry. As we explored how we could do this, God spoke to us through Proverbs 22:6 (ESV), "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." He gave us a vision to set up a children and youth training centre.

We had seen how Sunday School and Youth Group meetings did not give us enough time to grow the children spiritually. The resources allocated to these ministries were insignificant compared to what the church was prepared to spend on ministry to adults. Our Sunday School was held in a neighbour's garage, an open field, and another neighbour's house.

The children and youth training centre would provide a venue for us to meet with the children and help them develop reading habits and skills through the provision of a library. It would also offer them a place to do their homework and enable us to grow them spiritually. They would have the opportunity to see how we and our children live as they spend time with us. We envisioned the children and youth training centre which we called the *Asikhanyise* ('Let Us Shine') Project as being committed to changing young people's lives and leading them to become disciples of Jesus with the collaboration of the local church.

My Visa Application

However, our initial excitement turned to dismay when I was denied a visa to extend my stay in South Africa. I questioned if God had really given us the vision for the Asikhanyise Project since it now appeared that I was not going to be around to carry it out. Undaunted, I submitted an appeal, only to be rejected again. What followed was a period of uncertainty as we waited for a favourable reply from the authorities. Weeks turned to months, and months turned to years. We found ourselves wondering if we could go ahead with the ministry without official approval or if we should hand the ministry to others. When the time came for us to go on Home Assignment, we asked ourselves, “Was it now time for us to leave South Africa?” Without a visa, I was unable to return to the country. We knew that many around East Asia were praying for a breakthrough for us to be able to proceed with the Asikhanyise Project after our Home Assignment. Then Covid-19 struck.

Hope In The Midst of Covid-19

On 27 March 2020, South Africa announced a country-wide lockdown. The lockdown brought great hardship to many, especially the poor. The poor depended mainly on daily-rated jobs in the informal economy which practically evaporated when the lockdown took effect. Without work, there was no income. The unemployment rate reached 30.1% in the first quarter and by the end of the year it reached 46.2%. Families came under great strain when one or both parents lost their jobs. Domestic violence increased, as did child abuse. These problems were exacerbated by an increase in alcohol consumption. Depression set in as people

worried about what the future now held for them. We were rendered powerless as we were also subjected to the lockdown.

With the lockdown in place, only essential workers such as doctors, nurses and pharmacists were allowed to report for work. Most people, ourselves included, could only step out to buy food and daily necessities. Some companies and schools adjusted by using 'zoom' – an online communication platform. Online meetings became ubiquitous in the lives of working adults and students. Even Eugene used WhatsApp to conduct a Bible study with three brothers. We were encouraged that while we were hard pressed on every side, the Gospel work could still carry on. Yet at our weakest, God showed His strength.

Two weeks into lockdown, a member from the church called us for help. Her family had run out of money, and she had seven family members to feed. We realised that we were in a position to help and so we immediately arranged for this family and three other families to receive supermarket vouchers for groceries. With the lockdown being extended, we shared the situation in South Africa with our home church in Taiwan and our prayer partners. We were amazed to witness the blessing that poured into our community as many hearts were moved. It led to SIM Taiwan starting what we named the *Umsizi* ('helper' in Zulu) project. In a short time, the project's needs were fully met. Working with some Zulu pastors and friends, we identified 120 of the most needy and vulnerable families in the community and supplied them with food parcels, including maize meal, cake flour, rice, sugar, cooking oil, beans, washing powder, soap, etc. While we delivered this first tranche of relief, we discovered another group of needy people and arranged for another 60 families to receive the same relief.

We thanked God for giving us this ministry of feeding the hungry and showing them His love. The people were reminded of how God had not forgotten them. Some cried tears of joy when we brought them the food packages. Inspired by what we had witnessed, we praised God for bringing hope to His people who had suffered so much in this most challenging time. We thanked Him also for showing us that His ways were higher than ours, and that He still had a purpose for us in South Africa, even if we would not be running the Asikhanyise Project.

A Breakthrough

Towards the end of 2021, the Covid situation in South Africa seemed to ease. One day, while I was having my quiet time, I heard God speaking to me that I was not to lose hope of getting my visa even though I had been waiting for four years, “May God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Romans 15:13, ESV).

I believed then that God was telling us to plan for the Asikhanyise Project, even though my visa had not yet been approved. We set about planning and obtaining more information so we could discuss with our Zulu church on how we would set up our facility and agree on what and when it should be done. We also discussed with our home church in Taiwan and our sending office on our planned ministry.

By faith, we stepped forward, as Moses did when God parted the Red Sea. A breakthrough came in January 2022 when my visa was finally approved. I was overwhelmed with joy and relief, knowing then that we could finally go on our Home Assignment, safe in the knowledge that we would be back in South Africa in

His good time to start the Asikhanyise Project with the children and youth of the Zulu community.

I hope that this testimony will encourage you to press on in your walk with God and may He lead you to your own Asikhanyise moment, so you can shine brightly for Him!

Lost & Found

Seiko Tomida

Seiko Tomida, a Japanese, was born into a Christian family. His mother played a key role in his Christian upbringing, taking him to church during his childhood. But he grew up despising his background and did not think that being a follower of Christ was at all chic. Today, he is serving God as a tentmaker in South Asia. He is married and is blessed with five children.

I was completely lost as a teenager. I never cared about God and never respected Him just as I did not respect my Christian parents who served God and His people eagerly.

After I left high school, I wanted to fulfil my long-cherished desire to be a rock musician. But I needed to earn a livelihood first. I was 16 years old when I worked as a car mechanic. When I turned 18, I lived away from my parents and began yearning for material success and wealth.

I had my few friends, a decent-paying job, a place to stay, my own favourite custom-made car and I belonged to a rock-band. Yet, I felt an aching loneliness. Emptiness mingled with jealousy and desire for more fulfilment. I hated the world; I hated people who lived life without thinking deeply about its meaning. I despised their shallowness. I thought of myself as a seeker of truth. I was trying to find the true value of life which I thought was hidden somewhere in the world through rock music. But in fact, my life was just as senseless, empty and hopeless.

When I was about 20 years old, the things which I treasured most were taken away from me. I lost everything within a short period of time. I lost my beloved car,

I lost my friends, I lost my job, I lost my physical and mental health, I lost my dream which had kept me going all these years. I was no longer able to live because I had lost everything. The only thing that I had left were fear and extreme anxiety.

So, I decided to return home to my parents. All through that period of time, my mother had been agonising over me. She and another woman had been constantly praying for me in church. This other woman also had a son who was hopelessly drifting away from God.

Returning home, I should have felt better. Yet, I felt I was in a dark bottomless pit. I could not eat or sleep for weeks. I felt tormented by a sense of guilt and shame. I was feeling like I was already in hellfire and that was exactly where I was destined to go. It became slowly obvious to me that the intense turmoil in my heart was a result of my decision to choose the path of disobedience to God.

I started to read the bible which I had put away many years ago. At the same time, I beseeched God to save my life. I confessed every sin which I had committed in my life, including the sins which I had committed as a little boy that I could still remember so clearly. I cried out to God and I cried in front of my parents, too.

One day, I got to hear the testimony of a young man who had recently returned to Jesus. I was touched and encouraged by it. It led me to believe that hope lay in Jesus. This young man's mother was the one who had been praying with my mother in church for our salvation.

I prayed and confessed to the Lord Jesus, "Please forgive me, Jesus. I left you when I was a young child because I was ashamed of you among my circle of friends. I need you now. Please walk alongside with me." It was the first desperate prayer I uttered in years. After this confession and prayer of surrender to God, I began to

witness a gradual change in my heart. I resolved to live for God for the rest of my life.

A few years later, I was admitted to a Christian University. At the university, I met a lovely lady who later became my wife. In my final year, I visited a country in South Asia. During that visit, God gave me a vision in a dream to serve Him there in the future. Today, I am serving God together with my family in South Asia. The Lord had given me a new direction in life. There is no greater fulfilment than serving Him.

"But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong"(1 Corinthians 1:27, ESV).

They are SIM's unsung heroes and heroines – ordinary men and women who heard the call and responded in courage by stepping out of their comfort zone and striding in faith to foreign lands and foreign cultures. *Candle in the Dark* is the voice of 29 missionaries recalling the story of their struggles, conflicts and fears that finally led them to an epiphanic reckoning of what it means to obey and surrender to their Master's call. At the heart of their personal story is the story of a remarkable God who journeyed with them through difficult, threatening and dangerous environments. Often their lives were at risk and their faith put to the test. But each of them testified that the God who called them was faithful to the end. His divine guidance and miraculous interventions opened doors and enabled them to continue working in their various ministries as they touched the lives of the people who were led to them by God. *Candle in the Dark* is our missionaries' song of tribute to a God who never fails or forsakes His people.

“ This book has modern-day real-life stories of ‘five loaves and two fishes’ – of Christians from diverse backgrounds and nations giving their lives and hearts to serve our Lord Jesus Christ. I am humbled to read about brothers and sisters who give from their ‘widow's mite’ lovingly, joyfully and in full assurance that the LORD provides and will use each of us when we serve humbly and with the courage He gives.”

Dr Tan Lai Yong

Associate Professor, National University of Singapore (NUS)

Received "Friend of China" Foreign Expert Award at

China National Day ceremonies for his work of

training village doctors in Yunnan (1996 to 2010)

“ *Candle in the Dark* presents realistic accounts of cross-cultural workers at various stages of their call. An engaging read for all who aspire to cross cultures for the Kingdom and for leaders or missions policy makers who would want an inside glimpse of what goes on in the psyche of a called-out servant of God in cross-cultural missions. ”

Christy Lim

National Director, Interserve Singapore

“ *Candle in the Dark* is a collection of men and women of faith who have heard and obeyed. As you read the stories, you will find the common threads of receiving a call from God, the wrestling and counting the cost, step of faith into the unknown, navigating the field mission challenges and the reward of their obedience. This book is a worship to God. ”

Joe Chean

Chairman, Fellowship of Missional Organisations of Singapore (FOMOS)

National Director, Youth With a Vision, Singapore