

Testimony for RHC – March 2015

(by Su Li Tan)

When I was asked to share my testimony, I thought ‘what do I have to share??’ Once the panic wore off, I realized that that thought was equivalent to me saying to my parents, ‘You haven’t done anything for me.’ What an insult to God! And how hurtful it must have been. So here’s my story...

I grew up in a stable, Christian home with parents who were wonderful examples of what pursuing God is like. God was, and still is, very real in the lives of every member of my family.

My appreciation of the gospel developed over the years. My idea of sin began as wrongdoings when I was much younger, and I was only too familiar with consequences, as I had required much disciplining then. I tried to be as good as I could all the time so as not to disappoint, but of course I failed. I gradually learned that sin was a deeper heart condition of rebelliousness toward God. By the time I was in my teens, I was well aware that I could never meet God’s standard by my own efforts and that I had to fully trust that Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross had saved me from eternal death. What was head knowledge now began to sit in my heart and I wanted to live in a way that glorified Jesus.

But in my heart was also stubbornness. It continued to lure me back to my fleshly need to please others, to work for acceptance, and it did so subtly. I eventually went through cycles of walking closely with God and being distracted from Him. Thankfully, with each cycle, God graciously opened my heart to understand more about what He has done through Jesus.

One such cycle was in 2008, after I was assigned to be the Form Tutor of a class that was traditionally the best in the school. I immediately felt pressurized to produce exemplary, high caliber students (as if I had control over the matter). I felt that I had to prove that placing me with the class was not a mistake. Ironically, I thought I was doing it for God: I thought that if my class did poorly, then I hadn’t worked hard enough, and that would reflect a poor work attitude that a Christian shouldn’t have. You can see how convoluted my thinking was.

For two years, the harder I tried to be the great teacher I thought I should be, the more I felt that I wasn’t good enough. It was a downward spiral and I got stuck in the rut. As if to add salt to the wound, I had a difficult exit from a relationship as well. By the end of 2009, I felt completely useless and unworthy of anything good.

Thankfully, in 2010, I had some time away from Singapore, during which I knew I had no choice but to focus on God again. He enabled me to see my deep-rooted sin of pride, which had been masked by layers of self-justification. God lovingly assured me of my worth through timely words from friends, various verses and songs. He reminded me again and again that He loves me greatly, just as I am, flaws and all...so much so that He sent His Son to die for my sins, so that I would be accepted and become His.

I realized that I had to return my gaze to the cross and on what God has done. I had to resume what was more important – building my relationship with God and finding my fulfilment in Him. It was liberating to have a fresh appreciation of Jesus' saving act and God's faithfulness.

The cycle continues (hopefully it's becoming less frequent). I am a work in progress who is looking to God with hope. God is in the big and small things of our lives. God is in both the exciting and the mundane. I pray that God will enable me to see Him in everything and to keep my eyes on Him. As the lyrics of an old song goes:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus.
Look full in His wonderful face.
And the things of the earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.