

# Testimony – Kamal Sidhu

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My family comes from a Punjabi Sikh background.

But my mother and father became Christians before I was born, so strictly speaking I grew up in a Christian household.

However, I do not remember us ever having a very active life of faith—church attendance was irregular; we had few practices of spiritual disciplines at home, etc.

But our faith was still a transparent part of our identity, and as a family we did talk about our Christian faith quite frequently and how it was different from what our Sikh relatives believed.

I can remember from a young age hearing from my parents about basic concepts such as the idea of God as holy but good, heaven and hell, and Jesus as God and someone who saved us.

The only discipline that I do remember practicing with any regularity was my mother praying with and for me and my brother almost every night before going to sleep and every morning before going to school.

And I remember reading/being read a few Christian children's books.

God also used my mother as an example of what a devout Christian life should look like externally, at least: regular times of prayer, of reading the Bible and of joining other Christians for Bible study.

When I look back on this phase of my adolescence, I can now see God's gracious and guiding hand in those formative years: though I can barely say that I truly knew God then and my need of Christ, I can see that he was laying very important seeds for a transformation that was just around the corner.

That corner was turned when I was 18 and began my national service in Singapore.

It was a time of great personal suffering for me.

I was miserable within my first few days of Basic Military Training—in fact, I would say that I was probably close to clinical depression and had thoughts of harming myself.

On one of my first few weekends back home, my mother told me that the best help I needed for my state was Jesus and the Bible.

She told me to take my NIV Student Bible—which I still have—to camp with me and start reading it for the first time.

She gave me a few Psalms to start with (I can't remember which ones anymore).

Grasping for straws at that point, I humbly agreed to do as she said.

Thus began my reading of the Bible from cover to cover (it took me a few years).

More importantly, this also prompted the most earnest crying out to God I had ever done.

At that point, I was not really repenting of my sins and accepting Jesus as my Lord and savior—I was just asking the God of the Bible to somehow rescue me from great anguish and praying this “in Jesus name.”

Looking back later, I think I was also crying out for God to cover the shame I felt at not being much of a man for so poorly dealing with an experience—national service—that everyone around me seemed to be taking in his stride.

Although I may not have been saying the sinner’s prayer at that point, it is still the case that “whoever draws near to God must believe he exists” (Heb. 11:6).

And I earnestly believed like I never had before at that point that the God of the Bible existed, that all the things my mother said and prayed about Jesus caring more for me than anyone else were true, and that he was a true friend and could help me in some way.

God rescued me.

Two things began to change quite rapidly that even at that time I knew were proof of this: one circumstantial, the other internal and in my heart.

In terms of circumstances, I was transferred out of initial boot camp to a camp and unit where I got to come home everyday—something I desperately needed at that time to assuage some of my misery.

Within the particular platoon of that particular company that I was placed in, I met a civilian contractor who I quickly found out was a very devout Christian.

This fateful encounter happened within a week or two of my new posting when he approached me and started making friendly banter with me (he later told me that he approached me out of pity because I looked like an emotional wreck!).

Then quite nonchalantly, he ended the conversation with a non sequitur: “A few of us guys around here meet on the roof every Friday for a time of Christian worship and prayer. Do you want to come?”

I did and I enjoyed it—mainly the songs but also just being among men who seemed kind and caring and okay with me being weak.

A few weeks of doing that and I started following this man to his church (City Missions Fellowship).

That became my church for the remainder of my time in national service and Singapore.

The first or second Sunday I was there, I remember responding to an alter call by a visiting preacher from South India.

I wanted to know this Jesus he was talking about—to really know him and not sort of know him in the way I did growing up.

And that was when I remember understanding in some vague way that I actually needed saving, that Jesus could do it and that the cross was proof that God accepted me as his own even if I was a shameful weakling.

I believe that this was the beginning of my heart responding to the gospel.

I joined a youth group and went to regular Bible studies.

I got baptized a few months later.

My parents started regularly coming to this church with me and I could see a revival in their faith life that has only been on a one-way street toward greater intimacy with God ever since (they are members of that church to this day).

The second change that happened very shortly after I first started going to church was internal.

My anxiety levels, which since my teenage years were probably dangerously high, almost miraculously moderated.

I started to experience the peace that I believe Jesus refers to in John 14; 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you....Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.'

And all the knowledge of the Christian faith and the Bible that I had been exposed to and fed in dribs and drabs over the first 18 years of my life—which I thought was just going in one ear and out the other—was suddenly “activated”:

I actually began to remember a lot of what I had heard from my parents, from the few sessions of Sunday school I had been to, from the handful of sermons I sat through, and from the various Bible passages and stories that had been read to me.

In fact, I was surprised at how much of the Bible suddenly made sense to me when I read it.

The Holy Spirit had truly made the scales drop from my eyes.

This was God rescuing me not because of what I had done but in spite of everything I had done and was.

Since, my understanding of my sinfulness on the one hand, and God’s great mercy and grace on the other, slowly and continually increased through different seasons of my life—as it continues to now, all to God’s glory and my great and unmerited benefit.