

MY TESTIMONY – Manwin SIDHU

Although my brother, Kamal and I were born into a Christian family, we didn't have an active faith life growing up and we attended church irregularly. However, like Kamal, I also vividly remember our mother praying for us every evening before bedtime and every morning before school.

My walk with God from my teenage years right through my 30s has been like a yo-yo. I had sought God in times of stress and difficulty, and wandered away from Him (and sometimes totally forgotten him) when things were going well in my life, choosing instead to lean on my own abilities and giving myself a pat on the back for things gone right.

Throughout school and my national service days, I was very preoccupied with wanting to be accepted and was sensitive about what people thought of me. By the time I got to university in the US, there was absolutely no place for God in my life. I was a popular guy, full of confidence and literally felt like I was indestructible. I struggled with lust during my first year, and I partied and drank excessively throughout the 4 years in college. My studies took a back seat and what mattered most to me was my reputation and being perceived as one of the cool guys on campus; at times by making myself feel good at the expense of others in judging them and putting them down.

Afterwards, when I finished university and entered the work force, things didn't really change. I took on a career in finance because of the prestige involved and the promise of great riches. This career would take me from New York, to Tokyo and finally home to Singapore. I was successful at my job; I felt on top of the world and I let the pride and arrogance in me dictate my life. I was hooked on making money but what I had was never enough; I kept wanting to make more and more and out-do my friends. I was leading a life defined by material possessions, partying, alcohol, and I was still very much bent on needing approval from the people around me to feel like I was worth anything.

With the pressures of being a bond trader on Wall Street during volatile financial markets, there was even a brief period of around 6 months that I started attending Times Square Church in New York, but I was really just going through the motions with no real change in heart. One spiritual discipline that stayed with me throughout the ups and downs was intermittent prayer, but I would say that a lot of that prayer was very empty, Scripture-less and lacked any "heart." When I look back, even during the tough times in my life when I needed God, I didn't really love God and honor Him for who He is; I never looked to the Bible for spiritual nourishment, and I didn't really know Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

After marriage, having kids and moving to Singapore, the pressure and anxiety of work and life was starting to eat away at me. I recognized that my lifestyle was leaving me unsatisfied and anxious. I knew that I needed change in my life, but wasn't sure how to go about it.

About 2 years ago, a friend of mine (John Kim) invited me to RHC. Around the same time, my brother told me that he and his family were moving to Singapore and he also mentioned RHC as a church that I should check out. So, consistent with the repetitive behavior of needing God during times of stress, I thought "why not...let me go check out this church."

When I started attending regularly, God was working in my life and I felt my heart slowly softening towards Him. I wanted to know Him more. I started reading my Bible regularly. I began attending monthly book studies with men from the 1st congregation, the weekly Tuesday morning men's group, as well as Alex and Keri's CG. I felt an incredible sense of belonging with and love from all these brothers and sisters that God was placing into my life.

God's Word started to come alive to me. I wanted to know more about Jesus and so I dove into the books of Matthew and John. As I read through these gospels, I felt my love for Jesus growing as I began to comprehend what He had done on the cross.

One morning when reading Romans 8 at a coffee spot near my office, I was unable to hold in my emotions. I went back to my car and began to cry uncontrollably. I saw how sinful a life I had been living and was overcome by the fact that Jesus had suffered and had been nailed to the cross for MY sins. Jesus had taken the punishment that I deserved. And all because of God's immeasurable love and mercy. The Gospel became so real to me that morning that I cried out in repentance; saying sorry to God for falling away from Him, sinning against Him, and asking Him for forgiveness. I couldn't stop crying and God's love for me became so real that morning that I felt like a mountain of pressure and anxiety was being lifted off of me.

Instead of me seeking God during troubled times, here was Jesus coming after me and bringing me back into His fold. As I put my trust in Jesus, I felt my heart's desires changing as well. I was no longer living to seek anyone's approval nor looking to material things to satisfy me. Instead, I found myself wanting to respond to God's grace in my life by living for, loving and serving Jesus who laid his life down for me and rose again victorious. My heart is constantly stirred by Jesus's words in John 15 where He encourages us to keep His commandments and abide in His love, so that His joy may be in us and that joy may be full. Today, my identity and acceptance is now built on Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

My joy and satisfaction is now found in lovingly serving and encouraging the people in my life. I am so humbled and thankful to God that He has placed me into this church body and I am so incredibly grateful for the relationships that I have built here at RHC. I became a member of RHC about a year and a half ago and I find so much joy in serving this church.

I continue to be humbled and amazed that God chose to bestow his saving grace on an underserving sinner like me. Throughout my wanderings to and from God, I really do believe that God was always faithful in His love and promises, and never let me wander away too far. He patiently and lovingly brought me back and I now dwell secure in Him. I think Romans 8:35-39 best describe God's work in my life.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ... 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."

Thank you for reading. All praise and glory to God for what He has done in my life in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.