

## **Ella Choi's testimony**

I was a free-thinker for 17 years before I became a Christian. That means that for 17 years of my life, I led a life that revolved solely around my ambitions, my needs and my own wants.

For 17 years, I learnt to trust in myself, protect myself, and guard my heart jealously. One of the first things I learnt from going to the church was to support and receive support from fellow Christians. However, despite spending large amounts of time hanging out with them, it was difficult to form meaningful friendships. I continued to guard my heart jealously and was stubborn about not opening up my life to anyone. I wanted to experience the blessings of the Christian God, yet wasn't willing to get into the messy act of acknowledging my weakness before Him. During cell groups, I would share the bare minimum of my "personal problems" with fellow Christians, but I would never let myself get carried away emotionally. I think it came down to this. Even with God, I felt certain that I was tougher, stronger, and could handle my life just fine.

Deep down, a part of me knew that I craved for the intimacy of being truly known. God, in His mercy, showed me my need for intimacy when He both provided, and took away friendships that were dear to me. It brought me great joy when I finally found someone I could love and be open with, and I was left broken when an act of selfishness caused the friendship to end. It was through my period of sheer helplessness that I understood that pure willpower and self-control took me nowhere. Through painful life lessons, God taught me to be vulnerable, and to admit to God and man that I am so broken and in need of His grace. It was through God that I found within me the capacity to forgive, and to love vulnerably again.

In Matthew 18, Jesus likens Himself to a man who leaves behind 99 sheep to search for that 1 lost sheep that wandered away. The man rejoiced more over that 1 sheep than the 99 sheep that never went astray. As an economics student, I've always found that very silly and irrational. But that's the radical, radical gift of God's love. And that's what being a Christian is to me, to be silly enough to let down your guard and love others even if it puts us in the risky position of being disappointed. To forgive others even if it sometimes means swallowing the consequences of other's actions. God first loved me, and in Christ's death at the cross, He first forgave me and promises us grace to do the same. This has given me the courage to acknowledge my brokenness in front of others, because in my weakness I learn to find new strength in God.

I've been a professed Christian for 7 years, but I was only baptised last week. To be honest, commitment is scary thing for me. But God has been reminding me that it's a true privilege and a joy to be His follower, to be in tune with His heartbeat, and a part of the body that goes forth to serve and love others.