

RHC

Easter Testimony – Dan Pek

Since becoming a Christian at age 17, I always thought I knew and loved Jesus. In fact, I even thought I was a model Christian. I grew up believing that God's will for me was to be a morally good person, to serve actively in church and to be successful in my career so I could generously give money to his church.

And in my eyes, I ticked all the boxes.

I was a worship leader who sang at the English service and was head of the worship ministry; I also held a respectable finance/banking job as an analyst, donated money regularly and apart from the occasional sin, I was generally a good person. Basically, I was your Mr Nice Guy, the safest person you could bring home to meet your parents, according to my fiancée.

As a teenager, I loved God and so fervent was my faith in him that I once told my parents 15 years ago that I wanted to become a pastor. They said "no" and told me to earn a secular degree first. And as a good Singaporean son, I honored them. I went to university to study business and got a good banking job despite having little interest for the industry. I simply did what was "practical" for my career.

However despite doing all the right things, I was miserable. I struggled with the long-term significance of my job and began to place my identity and security in my salary.

Although I found banking meaningless, I pressed on because I did not want to disappoint my parents. It also helped that the money was good.

I lived for my parents' approval as my relationship with money shifted from a means to support myself to a measure of my self-worth. I found myself comparing how much I earned against my peers and often fought bouts of extreme stress whenever my boss was unhappy. I even worked beyond working hours to "show face". But this was all worth it. My parents were proud of me, I had a great salary and I could brag to friends and new acquaintances that I was a banker.

I often wondered if God was pleased with my life. Although things looked good on the surface, I struggled with the purpose of my vocation as I could not see how my job, where I spent most of my waking hours, contributed to God's kingdom in a tangible way.

Did living for God mean working very hard to get ahead in my career so that I could declare that God blessed me? I did that but struggled to build relationships with colleagues, let alone share my faith with them. Everyone in my office worked extremely hard and you'd be fortunate to have even 5 minutes a week to talk about life outside of work. Everyone just wanted to get the job done and go home.

Or did living for God mean spending all my free time in church, running activities week after week? I did that for many years but wondered whether it really mattered. My time was all spent keeping the ministry running - recruiting people, training them, administration – so much so that I had no time to know and love the people under my charge. People regularly left for personal issues or from burning out – but my first response always was to find a replacement instead of caring for their needs or relationship with God.

Was this how Jesus wanted me to live? Why did following Jesus seem so vague and unfulfilling?

And so last August as I approached my 5-year work anniversary, I cried out to God to show me how he wanted me to live. And you know what, he told me.

I still remember sitting in a class studying the Gospel of Mark. In Mark's Gospel, there are 3 groups of people that follow Jesus around, who see his miracles and hear his teaching, but don't really know what is going on. They are the disciples, the crowds and the religious leaders.

This goes on for much of the first 7 chapters, but in chapter 8 a shift happens when Jesus asks his disciples – "Who do people say that I am?" And Peter answers "You are the Christ."

And after that, the entire narrative shifts and it becomes increasingly clear that Jesus has to go to the cross and die for sinners.

As I sat in class, I heard God quietly ask me, "Dan, who do you say I am?" And I said, "Lord, you are God." And what does Jesus say in Mark 8?

Mark 8:34-38

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

*For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever **loses his life for my sake and the gospel's** will save it.*

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

For what can a man give in return for his soul?

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

I realized then that I was following Jesus for all the wrong reasons. I was like the disciples who followed Jesus in order to have a high position in his new kingdom. Serving in church for the hope of having a good position in heaven. I was also like the crowds who followed Jesus because he satisfied their needs. God had blessed me with a good job and a comfortable life and as long as I followed him, I expected this to continue.

But that night, my heart was cut.

It became crystal clear that Jesus did not want my moral character, my serving in church or even my monetary giving if I did all these only for my own benefit. Jesus wanted me to give up my life and to spend it on him and for the gospel. Jesus was calling me out of my old way of life of serving myself to a new one following him and depending on him for all my needs.

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I chose to follow Jesus that night.

The outward expression of my inward choice was to revisit the call to full-time ministry I first heard 15 years ago. And that's basically why I'm pursuing a full-time internship with RHC this year. I'm really looking forward to it!

I'm actually quite new and have only been attending RHC since last August but in my short-time here, I've found RHC to be absolutely focused on the gospel and committed to making disciples of Jesus Christ – the two visions God reignited in my heart last year.

The RHC community has shown me so much kindness and support, especially Jeremy who has faithfully followed up with me since we first met last August.

I was first introduced to him by Galvin (a member of the community group (CG) I now attend) and I cheekily told this pastor that I was interested in full-time ministry – big mistake. Unfazed, Jeremy looked me in the eye and said, "RHC has a full-time internship and would you be interested?"

I was taken aback – I had just met the guy and now here he was trying to recruit me!

But jokes aside, I thank God for leading to me a church that is committed to living out the Great Commission. Ever since I indicated my interest, the RHC leadership has been proactively walking alongside me as I deliberated taking the plunge to quit my job for full-time church work.

I have been given training opportunities as a CG leader and have met with many of the elders who candidly share their RHC experiences and lives. Leaders like Simon, Jacob, Jeremy, Eugene, Lian Arn, Darrell and Steve have been super generous of their time with me and what I took away from all those meetings has been their overflowing love for God, for his people and a steadfast conviction of the gospel.

I was especially touched when Jeremy and his wife invited my fiancée and me out for lunch to address concerns we had on full-time ministry and marriage.

My community group (Lincoln and Daphne's) was also instrumental in my decision. In my short time at RHC, they have welcomed me with open arms and have dispelled my doubts of serving a church I had just come to know 8 months ago.

Now, I'm not saying that everyone must quit their jobs to work for the church but for me, staying in my banking/finance job was a means to "save" my life.

My desire to commit more time for gospel work has never left and I believe that God has used my 5 years in the marketplace to teach me perseverance, faith in God and the importance of finding my joy in him despite difficult work situations. My decision to pursue a full-time internship with RHC was an act of worship and obedience to Jesus' call on my life.

I don't know what the future holds, but ever since I tendered my resignation, I have experienced a joy that money cannot buy. My security and hope now rests not in the money I earn but in the God who loves me and is faithful to his word. Better yet, for the first time in my working life, I am actually excited to explore a vocation that is closer to what I believe Jesus is calling me to do.

Jesus promised me that if I sought to save my life, I would definitely lose it, but if I lost my life for his sake and the gospel, I would definitely find it. Today, I'm banking my life on this promise.