

# GOD *With* JACOB

## Who Does God Say We Are

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### Read Genesis 32:22-32

Like many of us, Jacob knew what it was like to struggle. Even while he was in his mother's womb, he had a struggle with his brother, Esau (Genesis 25:19-26). As a young man, Jacob stole Esau's blessings by tricking their father (Genesis 27). Later he struggled with Laban, his father-in-law, for Rachel's hand in marriage (Genesis 29:15-30).

For a good part of his life, Jacob lied and schemed to get what he wanted. He would take advantage of others to achieve his goals. No wonder his name sounded like the Hebrew word for "deceiver".

Some of us may be able to identify with Jacob. We strive to get to the top of our game at school and in our careers, sometimes to the point of being unethical. We fight for the affections and approval of our parents and friends, jealous of those who seem to have it all. We may even blame God for not blessing us with what we desire.

The moment when Jacob wrestled with a mysterious man marked the climax of his story. In the midst of the tussle, the man asked Jacob for his name, effectively getting Jacob to admit his deceptive lifestyle (Genesis 32:27).

The man also gave Jacob a new name and identity, "Israel", meaning "God fights" (Genesis 32:28). Jacob would later acknowledge this dramatic encounter as one where he had "seen God face to face" (Genesis 32:30).

The new name "Israel" holds a new identity and promises of blessings for Jacob and his descendants. Similarly, God has given Christ-followers today a new identity as His children. He has also promised to bless His children. No longer will we have to live in insecurity and fear about losing out in life. God will provide for us. He will fight for us when we face troubles and trials. He will ensure that we have all that we need for a fulfilling life in Him.

Just as Jacob was called to turn away from his old life of self-reliance and deception, we as children of God are also free from the bonds of our old, sinful attitudes and practices. We can rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to turn away from sin and live righteously for God (Romans 8:5-14).

Temptations will always be around us, but we have Christ our High Priest who understands our struggles and is always available to help us when we need help the most (Hebrews 4:14-16).



# GOD *With* PETER

## Who Do We Say Jesus Is

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### 🔗 Read Mark 8:27-38

When we think of Jesus Christ, who do we say He is? Do we see Him as the all-powerful victor or the solver of problems? These perceptions, while not wrong, do not provide the complete picture of who Jesus is and what He set out to do.

Throughout the Old Testament, God had been preparing His people to recognise the arrival of Jesus Christ, the Anointed One or Chosen Messiah. Though Peter correctly identified Jesus as the Messiah (Mark 8:29), he could (or would) not accept that, as the Messiah, Jesus had to suffer and die.

Jesus was upfront about the painful fate that awaited Him – He would have to go through suffering and rejection from His countrymen, be killed and rise again after three days (Mark 8:31). Jesus was willing to endure all these in obedience to God His Father. Those who wanted to be Jesus' true disciples must submit wholeheartedly to God's will, as Jesus did (Mark 8:34).

The question for believers today is, do we only accept the parts of Jesus' identity that we prefer? For instance, some believers may only want to acknowledge Jesus as their Saviour but are unwilling to accept Him as their Lord. Probably because the latter involves making radical, often difficult, changes in order to follow Jesus.

Knowing Christ must come with action. And very often, the action brings discomfort, inconvenience and sacrifice.

Peter, for one, became a martyr for the Gospel. What a drastic transformation he went through! Once, he could not accept the suffering Messiah. But near the end of his life, he encouraged Christians to embrace with joy the honour of becoming "partners with Christ in his suffering" (1 Peter 4:12-13).

Peter was right. In the midst of difficulties that we go through for Christ, we have every reason to do so with joy. We ought to celebrate that Christ has made us right with the Father (Romans 5:1-11). We should recognise the huge privilege of being part of God's spiritual family and holy temple (Ephesians 2:19-22). We ought to look forward to the day when Christ will return in glory (Mark 8:38) and put right all that is wrong with the world today.



# GOD *With* HABAKKUK

## From Confusion To Confidence

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### Read Habakkuk 3

Sometimes our life reads like a depressing report card and we don't understand why. It can be confusing to receive bad results despite working so hard at work or at school. It can be bewildering to witness a relationship we invested so much in coming apart.

Or if we work in a toxic company culture where backstabbing and politics are common, we may wonder, "Why are my colleagues, who are involved in such unethical practices, getting promoted but I'm still at the same position after so many years?"

The prophet Habakkuk experienced a far more perplexing puzzle. When God said that He would send the cruel Babylonians to punish Judah for her sins, Habakkuk was shocked. Judah deserved punishment, but certainly not at the hands of a nation more evil than her? Habakkuk could have been wondering, "What was God thinking?!"

Yet, despite his initial confusion, Habakkuk could eventually praise God. How did he do it? Habakkuk found assurance in knowing that God was in control of history (Habakkuk 3:1-15), and he trusted that God would hold Babylon accountable for her sins when the time was right (Habakkuk 2:2-20).

Focusing on the certainty of God's character and His word, rather than on the uncertainty of the circumstances, Habakkuk regained confidence in God. Although God did not act according to how Habakkuk expected, Habakkuk trusted in God's sovereign plan.

Though we may not understand why things happen in a certain way, God will be our strength. He enables us to be like the deer that climbs over rocks, strides through jagged edges and stands on high places – it's more agile than any human on hiking shoes! God knows the challenging terrain we are going through. He will enable us to joyfully scale the heights of the mountains we face.

The story of Habakkuk challenges us to place our faith in God alone and not in our circumstances. We need not completely understand the why's of our situation, but we can confidently trust in the Who – the God who strengthens us and who is in complete control.



# GOD *With* JOSEPH

## Beyond Betrayal and Hurts

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 **Read** [Genesis 50:14-21](#)

If you have ever been betrayed or hurt by someone, and are in so much anger and pain till you can't see beyond your suffering, consider the story of Joseph. May this story of God's sovereignty, forgiveness and grace encourage you.

Being one of the youngest and most favoured of Jacob's twelve sons, Joseph was envied and despised by the rest of his brothers. They betrayed him by selling him into slavery in Egypt. They also led their father to believe that Joseph had been devoured by a ferocious animal.

In the midst of Joseph's troubles, God was with him and caused him to prosper and find favour wherever he went. As a slave to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard in Egypt, Joseph was put in charge of Potiphar's entire household. Later, when Joseph was thrown into prison for a crime he did not commit, he was again put in charge of all the other prisoners.

Joseph spent at least two years in prison. It was during this time that God gave him the life-changing opportunity to interpret the dreams of the king. As a result, the king appointed him as his second in command over the entire land of Egypt.

At the peak of Joseph's power and influence, he met his brothers again for the first time since their betrayal. He had the power and a golden opportunity to make his brothers suffer for what they had done to him. Instead, he chose to reconnect with his family and dispense the forgiveness and grace of God. He used his authority and influence to save not just his loved ones, but also the lives of countless others.

Recognising God's sovereignty, Joseph said to his brothers: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." (Genesis 50:20-21)

The life of Joseph is a powerful testimony that God can turn our most painful trials into powerful displays of His mercy for others. Even though we may not know what God is doing during our suffering, we can obey His lead.

Through Joseph, his entire family was blessed as they witnessed God's mercy in their lives. God can do great things for our loved ones through us too – if we learn to trust Him in the midst of suffering.



# GOD *With* PAUL A Servant By Grace

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## 🔗 Read 1 Timothy 1:12-17

If you're serving God today, ask yourself: "Why am I serving?" Your answer will shape the way you serve. Let's look at how a well-known servant of God could have answered the question.

Paul, once known as Saul of Tarsus, started out by hating the name of Jesus. He opposed Christians to the point of persecuting them. He even gave his approval for a group of people to hurl stones at Stephen, a Christ-follower, to death.

Saul might have rejected Jesus at first, but Jesus had not given up on him. When Saul was on the road to Damascus, Jesus stopped him in his tracks with bright lights and a piercing question, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" This was a life-changing moment. All along, Saul had thought that he was doing God's will. He wondered who this "Me" was and the answer struck him deeply, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5).

Instead of punishment for persecuting the church, Paul received a pardon. Instead of condemnation, he was chosen for the ministry of bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles. Awestruck by God's grace, Paul counted his life worth nothing unless it was used to share with others the good news (Acts 20:24).

Paul didn't take pride in his high education or impressive credentials, though he had plenty of reason to do so. By the time he was 13, he was well versed in Jewish history, literature and psalms. Under the highly respected Pharisee Gamaliel, Saul learnt to preach and debate like a lawyer.

Instead, as Paul grew older and experienced God's grace, he recognised the wickedness of his violent past even more. Near the end of his life, Paul saw himself as the worst of sinners. His life is an extreme example of how patient God is toward those who place their trust in Him.

We need to remember how gracious God has been to us. We must not forget that God has saved us from our sins. In response, we can only humbly and gratefully give our lives to God. Serving God then, even in times of trouble, remains a privilege.

So let us not fool ourselves by thinking that we are serving God because of our education, credentials, or even our moral qualities or abilities. We are serving God purely by His grace.



# GOD *With* JAMES AND JOHN Greatness Redefined

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## 🔗 Read Mark 10:35-45

An aura of confidence and power exudes from the man at the podium addressing an assembly of world leaders. His intention: to sway them towards a new era of peace and cooperation. He has a mission that if achieved, will set the world on course towards greater unity. He is surely a great man with vision.

An elderly woman huddles over the stove, slowly stirring a pot of porridge. Her intention: to make sure her sickly neighbour has her lunch. She has a kind heart. However, to call her a great woman sounds like an overstatement. After all, isn't greatness associated with power, status and influence? That may be so from the world's point of view.

But the kingdom of God is full of paradoxes. Jesus taught that the great shall be a servant (Mark 10:43) and "the slave of all" (Mark 10:44). To the disciples bickering over greatness, He turned the idea of greatness on its head.

Jesus and the disciples lived during the rule of the Roman empire. The Romans thought of greatness as having the power and authority over those of a lower status. The disciples equated greatness with rank and recognition of one's importance. Understandably, they were thrown off when Jesus defined greatness as humbling oneself in service to others.

Jesus put His words into action when He washed the feet of His disciples as an example of humble service (John 13:3-5). Jesus, "who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant" (Philippians 2:6-7).

As the Son of God, Jesus has absolute power and authority to rule and reign. Yet as the Son of Man, He chose to serve us in love and humility. Jesus was determined to obey God's will to serve and suffer for others, even to the point of giving his life.

We are called to follow Jesus' lead in serving others. If we see a need, we meet the need, regardless of the size of the need or the status of the person with that need. Serve without prejudice but with every intention of demonstrating God's love. Such loving acts of service will draw people to Him.



# GOD *With* JONAH Mind-Blowing Mercy

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## 🔗 Read Jonah 4

Have you ever thought of some people as hopeless and beyond saving by God? They can be people who have done great evil, like murderers, rapists and paedophiles. They can also be friends or loved ones who have hurt you deeply.

We may have had such an offensive thought before and repented of it. The book of Jonah challenges us to go a step further by sharing the Gospel to our 'enemies' and genuinely praying for their salvation.

Try to imagine how Jonah first felt when God tasked him to warn the people of Nineveh about His coming judgment if they didn't repent. Nineveh was a city in Assyria, a great enemy of Israel known for its violent and idolatrous ways.

If we are honest, we might have shared Jonah's sentiments that "No, God, they are not worth saving! They do not deserve a second chance!" And perhaps, knowing that our compassionate God would pay no mind to our selfish pleas, we might have run away, like Jonah did, from our assignment to give our enemies a chance to repent (Jonah 1:3).

God, however, would not let Jonah go, and went on to display the depth of His love and grace for the lost by sending Jonah to Nineveh. Against Jonah's hopes, the people of Nineveh repented after his warning. Against Jonah's sense of justice and righteousness, God relented from destroying them (Jonah 3:10).

Jonah was indignant at God's mercy, and even asked God to take away his life. But God responded, "Is it right for you to be angry... Should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left...?" (Jonah 4:3, 11). God could have sent anyone else to Nineveh. But maybe God chose Jonah for this task not only to bring a message to Nineveh, but also to send a message to Jonah – God is eager to show compassion to all those who are far from him because He loves them all.

If even Nineveh, an evil city, could be saved, then surely there is no one beyond God's salvation. It is God Himself who judges and forgives, and it is God who turns the coldest hearts towards Himself.

We do not know whether Jonah came to understand God's heart of compassion for the lost. But we know that we, like Jonah and the people of Nineveh, have received God's mercy even though we don't deserve it.

Since we have been so loved by God, should we not put on His lens of love and help others to experience His compassion too?



# GOD *With* MOSES

## Embracing Discomfort

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🔗 Read Exodus 3:1 – 4:17

"What in the world was I thinking? I wish I had not agreed to do it," sighed Celine, her shoulders drooping with discouragement. What was meant to be an act of obedience was now cause for anxiety.

As a new Life Group Leader, she felt incompetent leading weekly meetings. Spurring members to grow spiritually was a daunting responsibility she had to undertake. Without prior experience, Celine felt helpless and out of her depth.

Whether it is stepping up as a leader or attempting new things for God, many of us will agree that it is tough taking on a role that we have little confidence in doing well in. Filled with feelings of inadequacy and stress, the natural tendency will be to reject the role.

That was exactly what Moses tried to do.

Moses wanted to back out of the mission God had for him by citing his doubts and fears. Perhaps Moses thought that would make God reconsider His decision to appoint him for the task.

Instead, God told Moses time and again that He would be there for him. God promised to perform powerful signs through Moses so that people would know God had sent Moses to deliver the Israelites (Exodus 4:1-9). God reminded Moses that He had control over the abilities of man (Exodus 4:11). He also sent Aaron, who was good with words, to be Moses' spokesman (Exodus 4:14-16).

God got angry when Moses kept coming up with excuses to reject his role. Eventually, Moses obeyed and God used him to deliver the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and lead them for 40 years in the desert – both of which were no mean feat!

God understands our fear when the safety net of familiarity is pulled out from under us. We are left to cling only to God for help. He promises us His presence, and He will equip us and provide the direction and resources to do His work. God desires to show His awesome power through you. You may not think you're the right person for the job, but God sees potential in you and will strengthen you for His work. You can accomplish great things for God when you trust Him.

It is easier to remain status quo. But it is infinitely more fulfilling to be in the will of God, serving His people and testifying to God's partnership in your ministry.

When you are tempted to reject a difficult role or avoid an unfamiliar ministry, take a pause and listen to what the voice of God says. Perhaps it is time to trust God, take a step of faith, and move out of your comfort zone.



# GOD *With* ELIJAH Never Alone

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## 🔗 Read 1 Kings 19:1-18

In our journey with God, we go through seasons of mountain highs and valley lows. Elijah was no different.

After triumphing over Baal's prophets with signs and wonders from God, Elijah realised his life was in danger. Queen Jezebel, the ruthless wife of King Ahab of Israel, wanted to dispose of the Lord's prophets (1 Kings 18:4, 13). Now, she had her sights set on eliminating Elijah. Fearing for his life, Elijah fled.

Elijah had seen God's miraculous provision (1 Kings 17:14-16), a dead child resurrected back to life (1 Kings 17:22), and God's mighty acts against Baal's prophets (1 Kings 18: 1-40). But all these didn't seem to matter when Elijah heard of Jezebel's threats. Shaken and terrified, Elijah seemed to have forgotten that the almighty God was with him.

At our lowest points, we can be vulnerable to an array of negative emotions. Do you feel discouraged in what you are doing for God? Are you overwhelmed by opposition as you give your best for God? Or do you feel lonely, as if you're the only one loyal to God and no one understands what you're going through?

Sometimes our despondence can distort our sense of reality. Elijah insisted that he was the only one devoted to God. He seemed to have forgotten that there was another devout follower of God called Obadiah, who had boldly gone against Jezebel's orders and hidden 100 of the Lord's prophets from her (1 Kings 18:4, 12b-13). God had also set apart 'seven thousand in Israel' who were loyal to Him (1 Kings 19:18).

So hold onto this truth from Elijah's story – no matter how embattled and lonely we feel in our service to God, we are never alone. God has given us His community – the church. When we gather together as a community, we are reminded that through the seasons of valley lows, God has not left us alone. He will either assure us with His presence or send His people to spur us on.

God repeatedly reached out to Elijah. But Elijah appeared unmoved and gave the same depressed answer to God (1 Kings 19: 10, 14). When we go through the valleys, will we take comfort and courage from God and His people, or choose to dwell in our disbelief and discouragement?



# GOD *With* STEPHEN Stay The Course

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## 🔗 Read Acts 6:8-7:60

The story of Stephen may baffle some of us. How could a man like Stephen, who was unwavering in his faith, suffer such a tragic and unjust ending?

Stephen was the first martyr recorded in the New Testament. He was bold and faithful in preaching Christ to the Greek-speaking synagogues in Jerusalem. Jews who were offended by his preaching falsely accused him of blasphemy and stoned him to death (Acts 7:54-60).

In today's context, Stephen's ministry is equivalent to sharing the Gospel in a nation that does not allow religious freedom. Sometimes being a witness to the Gospel involves confronting those who are intolerant of the Christian faith.

Many of us may not be in physical danger as Stephen was. But we will face situations at our homes, workplaces or schools where we have to make a tough choice – stay faithful to God or shrink back at the first sign of inconvenience, discomfort or danger.

Stephen stayed true to ministering the Word even when situations were unfavourable. He was unfazed in the face of wrongful accusations from others. He kept his focus on preaching the truth and refused to be distracted in his mission. Eventually, he gave up his life because he chose to be faithful.

Stephen's example is far from easy to follow. His experience is hardly comforting and uplifting for those who are looking for 'happy endings' in the present. In fact, Stephen's story shows that staying the course for Christ can cost us everything we have.

We've seen and read in the news about people who achieved success because they persevered in their passions. Whether it's a student, an athlete or an entrepreneur, they didn't just have talent or dreams – they had grit and persistence. They were focused and they finished what they started.

What is your passion and how much are you willing to persevere for it? For Stephen, his passion was Christ and he persevered to make the Gospel known no matter what it took. What about you?



Speak, God. I'm listening.

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# GOD *With* PASTOR CLAUDIA Take Courage, Do a New Thing!

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## 📖 Read Joshua 1:6-9

In the second half of 2014, God called me to partner Him in transforming Singapore to a nation full of thriving communities. Communities that are salt and light, filled with strong families and people who genuinely care for one another.

I was struck by this, wondering how I could do it. Soon after, God led me to look into regionalisation – building these thriving communities in neighbourhoods. This was a fresh perspective and caused me to relook at how the church was organised.

Initially, I was hesitant. Regionalisation meant that people were organised by their neighbourhoods and workplaces. Thousands of adults in our services were already comfortable in their existing groups and the leaders were worried that they would be resistant to moving. Pastor Jeff and I had to think of how to regionalise. Administratively, it would be a tedious, long drawn out process. Yet, we were convinced that it was what God had called us to do.

God led us to see that with Life Group members in closer proximity, it was easier for them to care for and disciple one another. And it was easier for them to outreach to people living and working in the areas around their groups. With this conviction, we forged ahead and the people supported the move! They were convinced of the purposes behind regionalisation. God had prepared their hearts. By His grace, we were able to pioneer the North East Centre in 2016.

Through regionalisation, God reminded me that His purpose would prevail despite the seeming obstacles. I did get tired and was tempted to not focus on God's call and mission. In those times, I spent time with God and meditated on His Word, remembering His grace. The reminders of how God brought me to Him and how He gave me my life strengthened me to give my best to Him.

Specifically, God spoke through Joshua 1:6-9. We should be strong and courageous when God calls. He has brought us through this initial regionalisation period and He continues to be with us, bringing us through today and whatever lies ahead.

It is a privilege to partner our mighty God. How has He called you to partner Him today? Focus on our mighty God and how He has equipped you to do His work. Take courage, respond, persevere!

*Pastor Claudia Chong assists her husband, Senior Pastor Jeffrey Chong, in leading the Adult congregation.*



# GOD *With* PASTOR JASMINE Bringing Hope to the North East

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## 🔗 Read Genesis 39

Starting a full broadcast service from a remote location was a brand new thing for Hope Church Singapore. In the first quarter of 2016, the pastors were excited as we felt it was God's leading and right timing to bring light into darkness – bringing the church to the North East community in Singapore.

Yet I was nervous as it would be our first time venturing out. I didn't know how many Life Groups in the North and North East regions would accept this new idea and pioneer the broadcast service with me. I met the Zone Leaders and Life Group Leaders. After one to two rounds of Q&A, prayer and envisioning, most of them decided they would join the pioneering. This was truly a God thing!

Before June 2016, I felt I was prepared for this role, as I had many years of experience in pioneering ministries in schools, polytechnic faculties and cities in China. However, as we made preparations for the North East Centre launch, I realised that the more we tried to prepare, the more there were new things that I did not know how to solve. It was like learning pioneering all over again.

The story of Joseph in Egypt (Genesis 39) greatly encouraged me in this season. Joseph walked with the Lord in the ups and downs, in his success and failures, in his different tasks and roles. In Genesis 39:2, "the Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered" and in verse 21, while Joseph was in the prison, "the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the prison warden."

God strengthened me deeply through this chapter that HE IS WITH ME in my weakness, inadequacy and lack. I don't have to be stressed, I don't have to fear, and I don't have to worry. HE IS WITH ME and He will provide all that I need. He is the source and I am the channel. So far, we have witnessed 20 salvations at the North East Centre! There are 55 new adults and 25 new kids connected to the Life Groups. We saw 7 new Life Groups pioneered in the North and North East of Singapore. Light in darkness indeed!

When it comes to starting something new, there will be many unknowns and things that need to be solved. We need to acknowledge that we do not have all the answers, and learn to solve problems together as a team and ask God for wisdom. We must communicate the vision and mission as often as we can to keep everyone focused.

So do not ask to get out of mountain-size assignments but ask for God's presence and walk with God to face the enormous tasks. God is with you!

*Pastor Jasmine Poon is the pastor of North East Centre and oversees the Events Ops team in the church office.*



# GOD *With* PASTOR DANIEL Remembering The Forgotten

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## 🔗 Read Matthew 9:36-38

Three years ago, I received a phone call from a Hope Centre staff asking for help to make funeral arrangements for Mdm Koh. Before she passed away, Mdm Koh was staying all by herself in a rented flat in Kampong Glam. She was immobile and participated in the REACH Seniors programme run by Hope Centre. The programme assigns volunteers to care for and make weekly visits to the homebound elderly living around Kampong Glam.

One day, when a volunteer paid Mdm Koh a visit, Mdm Koh did not open the door even after a long time. The volunteer contacted the police and when they broke open the door, they discovered that Mdm Koh had passed away in her flat.

Mdm Koh did not have any next-of-kin in Singapore. So, together with the Hope Centre staff, I collected Mdm Koh's body from the mortuary, contacted an undertaker, and booked a slot at the Mandai crematorium. We then scattered Mdm Koh's ashes into the sea.

Although we were sad about her passing, we were comforted that we would see her one day in heaven. Mdm Koh had always been a believer but her immobility prevented her from attending services. That changed when Hope Church started our dialect service and volunteers would take Mdm Koh to the service.

Many people, like Mdm Koh, are old, poor and weak. Having worked hard during their younger days, many of them are now forgotten by their families and society. Often, they are living aimlessly and waiting for their time on earth to come to an end.

As a church, we are called to show our love and care to them. But some of us may have the wrong mindset that they just want financial help. We may also be deterred by the language barrier. In fact, a lot of them need love and acceptance more than financial help. And we can communicate our love to them even when we do not speak a common language. They just need to know that there is someone in this world who cares enough to try to talk to them.

In Matthew 9:36-38, Jesus sees a multitude of lost people as sheep without a shepherd. There are many lost and forgotten people in our society. They need to hear the Gospel and experience the love of Jesus through the church. Do we see the old, the poor and the weak around us with the compassion of Jesus?

I hope that we will be the workers God sends to His harvest field, to touch the many lives whom society has forgotten but whom Jesus remembers and loves.

*Pastor Daniel Tan leads the Family Life ministry and dialect service.*



# GOD *With* PASTOR DENNIS

## Becoming All Things To All People

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### 🔗 Read 1 Corinthians 9:20-23

It all started in a leaders' meeting when Pastor Jeff threw out an idea about reaching out to the lost in India. I had the idea of bringing a team of leaders to start Life Groups in India.

Till now, I don't know why I had that idea. Usually people go on missions because they are driven by compassion. But not for me. I was driven by a desire to obey God. I saw this as an opportunity for my leaders and myself to experience God moving. Still, it was a serious challenge for me as I grew up against a background that was prejudiced against other races.

It was tough at first to accept the cultural differences. I was uncomfortable with the Indians' physical expressiveness as they would hold and lean onto me. Because of their background, they were also quite resistant to the idea of I, their leader, serving them. But I continued to share the Word with them, care for them and spend time with them doing the things they liked to do.

I also took time to adjust to the living conditions. In India, my team and I stayed with the people in their homes. That was when I realised I had been too used to the daily convenience and comfort I had back home – toilet paper, air conditioning and clean bed sheets. We slept very little and struggled to navigate the place.

Despite the differences and inconveniences, I wanted to know the locals, relate to them and be with them. I wanted the locals to see me as family. The more time I spent with them, the more I realised how lost they were. Many grew up in broken families with the wrong idea of love and relationships. I witnessed how God filled their hearts with love in ways they had never experienced.

There was this guy Tom, who once had trouble taking care of himself and expressing love to people around him. Over time, as he was touched by the love of Jesus, he learnt to care for himself and became more affirmative of people - he would even rally people to show care and concern for others!

It is amazing to see how God has transformed the church in India. In over two years, nine Life Groups have sprouted in Chennai, Bangalore, and Pune as of June 2017. The locals are taking ownership of their church and spiritual growth.

When I see what God has been doing in their hearts, I realise how similar the Indians and I are – we all need God. That's why I believe in 1 Corinthians 9:22, to be all things to all men in order to win some of them to Christ.

*Besides leading India missions, Assistant Pastor Dennis Loh is our youth pastor.*



# GOD *With* PASTOR CHRISTIE A Life Worth Living

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🔗 Read Matthew 16:24-28

I had a friend called Arcie who worked as a nurse in Singapore for 17 years. Though she had ovarian cancer for more than 10 years, she never sought treatment. She wanted to save the money for her family.

Two years ago, the cancer spread to Arcie's lungs. They collapsed and she had to be treated at the Intensive Care Unit. As a church leader, Arcie had touched so many lives that her friends acted as ushers to manage the many visitors who came to see her at the hospital.

I visited her while she was in palliative care and prayed for her. God revived her lungs, and she was strong enough to breathe without the ventilator and travel back to the Philippines to spend her last days with her family.

I told her, before sending her off, that we were in the same position. Whether we had one more day or one more month or one more year to live, we would live for the Lord. Arcie passed away on 17 November 2016. She had lived a life of sacrificial love. She had lived a life worth living.

Jesus says in Matthew 16:24-27 that anyone who wants to follow Him must be willing to lose his life for Christ's sake. And when he does so, he will gain life. The way to have an abundant life, a meaningful life, a purposeful life, is not to save it but to give it away.

Following Jesus means going beyond the limits of our comfort and safety to fulfil God's will and serve others. One temptation the devil offers is an easier and safer alternative to doing God's will. Reaching out to our neighbours, travelling to another city to start a Life Group, and raising our children well are not easy. But we must be willing to pay the price now and be rewarded later.

After all the inconveniences, troubles, hardships and even death, there is life to the full. Don't let the fear of difficulties throw you off-track or keep you from sticking your neck out and taking risks that make life worth living. If you desire to experience a life with God that is full of purpose, pour out your life for others.

With God, your mess can become a powerful message about His love. With God, your obstacle can become an opportunity to touch more lives. With God, you can live a life worth living.

*Pastor Christie Ong is the pastor of the Filipino congregation.*

