

# EASTER SUNDAY 2019



# TESTIMONIES

# Joanna

## Zhang

I am a typical church kid. I went to Sunday School every week to learn about the amazing miracles and stories of the Bible and about Jesus' life; I always grew up knowing that there was some sort of heavenly entity who was looking down upon us. Although my Christian journey is not as clearly divided into two distinct periods as others, I think that high school, in particular Year 11 and 12, was the turning

point for me because I became much more reflective and started to wonder why we prayed before eating a meal, why my parents had been so fervent in explaining the Bible to me, and why I had been giving up my Sunday mornings to church

service. I didn't want to be using my time to do these things if I didn't really understand why I was doing it. SaLT, the teens ministry here at SLE, was a very eye-opening experience for me to have fellowship with others of my age. I found that the leaders would ask us a lot of thoughtful-provoking questions that were very encouraging and highlighted the importance of why the world needs Jesus' death and resurrection.

In the past few months, I've also been faced by reality that our world is currently in, filled with sin, anger and grief, as we see in the news every day. This was another factor that pushed me to wonder why a perfect God would make

such a broken world, but it is only because of our human sin that the world has become this way. Therefore, it would be impossible for us to be in relationship with God if Jesus had not come to save us.

Naturally, the best thing about coming to know and trust in Jesus for me has been that I know that I have been given the free gift of eternal

life by our Lord and Saviour's grace and mercy. This may be what many people say, but it really is the truth. Having learnt about the Old Testament and the ways of repentance that the Israelites relied on, I can see that it would not be

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possible to earn our way to heaven by following a set of rules and laws. We are all human, utterly flawed and weak. However, Jesus, God the Son who was completely perfect, came down from heaven to be nailed to a cross and resurrected on the third day so that those who hear and believe may be saved. This is truly the amazing grace that He has given us. Trusting in Jesus has made me realise that nothing I do can ever be good enough for God's standards, but I will be able to reunite in relationship with Him because of Jesus. As I declare my faith now publicly, I am very excited to learn and mature in my Christian life in the coming future.

# Vanessa

## Ling

Growing up in a Christian family has been such a blessing. I grew up knowing that God was the creator of everything, that Jesus died for my sins and that if I believed in him I could have eternal life. All these were things I knew but still Jesus was not the Lord and savior of my life. I attended church every Sunday and went for all the church camps and youth camps. To everyone, myself included, I was the good Christian girl.

When I left home, I met some people who also called themselves Christians but seemed to live very different lives from me. They were so passionate about the gospel and seemed to want to live every moment for Jesus. That was when I started to realize that maybe I was not really a Christian. Another turning point for me was when I realized that being a Christian meant having a personal relationship with God. I didn't have strong emotions for God, didn't talk to God and didn't know who He really was. The times I spoke of Him, He was a distant idea and maybe someone that I thank for my food. It was then I realized that I did not have a real relationship with God.

For my whole life I always knew that Jesus died for my sins, but never took it seriously because I never thought I was truly sinful. The thought, "Jesus will forgive me" was always at the back of my mind and I kept rejecting him, but he didn't give up on me. One night, God finally convicted me of my utter and complete sinfulness. He showed me how hopeless I was on my own, how much I needed Him and how much I needed to be in a relationship with Him.

Praise be to God for loving us in spite of our sins and rebellion against Him.

There were times of doubt, but God in his perfect timing always sent me reminders of His love. Romans 5:8 "but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

**God spoke to me through that verse at a YF session at the end of a week of struggling with feeling like I was failing at the Christian life and that I couldn't be sure about salvation. He reminded me that salvation wasn't based on who I was but what Christ did for us when we were at our worst. He keeps showing me new heights and depths of His love for us in Jesus and showing me that He is a personal God.**

I know this is just the beginning of a long journey ahead, but I am certain that God will help me to continue in Christ, that He will help me to continue to fight sin and that one day I will see Him face to face. He has provided me with such a supportive church family to help and guide me in this journey and as Paul prayed, it is my prayer that we can all "grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Ephesians 3:18).

# Jethro

## Siao

Before knowing the immensity of what Christ Jesus has saved us from, I was a truly lost. I felt that life literally had no purpose. I woke up every morning, going through my day and thought of nothing but the next thing that would make me happy. I prioritise my grades, my exercise, and my social standing. Even when I seemingly “cared” for others, I knew on the inside I just wanted to be known as a really nice and thoughtful person. I followed no authority, but mine, and I was just living for my own. Even more so, I was embarrassed to say that I demanded God to show me “a sign” that He was real and worth living for.

When I was living with Shaun, Daniel, and Bryan, the topic of Christianity often arose. I causally heard with my ears, but I never actually listen. But slowly I was surprised at the conviction that Shaun had for the Word and I was honestly perplexed. How can someone live their life for this immaterial being? I wanted to know more.

I started off by attending SLE irregularly and YF once. The sermons meant nothing then, and I

thought YF was a help group for struggling Christians. It was not until the sermon on Romans that left me thinking about the sin we were all born with; my sin of constantly turning away from God and living the way I wanted to live. I was oddly captivated. I started reading the gospels on my own, we had a small bible study at our house and I attended church as regularly as I could. The more I heard, the more

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undeniable the truth and soon after I knew I could not reject God’s grace anymore.

I sincerely thank God so much for his patience towards me, his Son Jesus who is our Christ the redeemer. I am so thankful that He has

no forgotten us, for without him I would still be lost. I thank God so much for all my brothers and sisters in Christ who have prayed for me and ministered to me. I pray that I remain zealous in my faith and a blessing to others so that they may come to believe.

# Naomi

## ZHANG

I am so blessed and thankful that the gospel was in my life from the very beginning. Born into a Christian family, I had always heard bible stories from my parents and their prayers before meals. Each week, I would attend Sunday School and learn new things about Jesus. But as a child, these things were never clear to me and I just thought that being a good child would make God happy. However, over my high schooling years, I have thought a lot about the Christian faith, upon going to SaLT, and I have also faced many struggles in day-to-day life. At school, fitting in with my non-Christian friends; their conversations, and even their actions and ways of thinking. Missing SaLT came so naturally because it was so easy to put it off, to have a rest and relax after a long week at school. And simply pursuing worldly possessions and pleasures all the time was constantly pulling me away from putting Jesus at the centre of my life.

After hearing the sermon of Peter's denial of Jesus, I realised that my repetitive, sinful ways completely mirrored this and that I was also, continuously disowning and denying Jesus. It was only when I started going to SaLT, my youth group, that salvation, faith and the importance of Jesus became clear to me. That simply being a "good" person and doing good things could not save me. I actually remember the night, at SaLT, when I learnt how it's only by faith and the grace of God alone, that one

can be saved from death and have eternal life.

**It made me realise how great God's love and mercy for us is; how He is ever so forgiving of our sins when we repent. It's really moving for me because sometimes I can't believe how much Jesus loves us; that he died on the cross to save us.**

Knowing Jesus has been the best part of my life. His kindness, patience, faithfulness, forgiveness towards people who constantly turn away from him is amazing. Just knowing that Jesus is always there to listen to me no matter what and that he will always forgive me when I repent, is so comforting and reassuring. He gives me hope when I feel like I've lost all of it. And most incredibly, he has saved me from death and has promised me eternal life with him.

# Gloria

## Choi

Growing up in a Christian family, I was the classic 'Christian kid', going to church and Sunday School. Being an Asian also meant I always did my homework – memorised every weekly bible verse, knew all the books of the bible and the list could go on. It's safe to say that Christianity was well and truly ingrained into my upbringing, never really giving it any second thought. As high school rolled around, I was faced with new situations that well and truly challenged my faith. I searched for acceptance and I wanted to fit in – even if

that meant compromising my values and beliefs. I prided myself on my achievements – whether that be good grades, being in the top sports team, fitting in with the 'coolest' group of friends or being awarded leadership positions. I thrived on one achievement, followed by another and another. I

thought I was a Christian, but in reality, I was really only a 'Christian' on Sunday, Monday and maybe Tuesday, but this façade soon faded as the week went on.

Come mid-high school, I started to question the way I was living. I had a family friend that was Christian and I was a so-called 'Christian'. Staying with them for a holiday made me realise that there was a big inconsistency in the way that we both lived, especially if we were both supposedly 'Christian'. At that point, I started question everything: What was so different about both our lives? What did I value and prioritise in life? What was I really living for?

Up to that point in my life, I knew the gospel. I knew what Jesus had done on the cross for me, but that was as far as it got. It didn't truly impact me enough for me to change the way I lived. I had prided myself on the things I thought I'd earned and deserved. I kept looking for satisfaction in the things I did and from the people around me, only to just find a never-ending longing for more and more. It wasn't until that point that I sat down,

read the Gospel of Mark and talked with various mentors that I truly understood the gospel for the first time. God, in his grace and mercy, sent his Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for me – a perfect being without blemish, sacrificing himself for a heavily flawed, rebellious and undeserving human being like me. This act, the ultimate act of love, made me realise how undeserving I was of my life and all the things I had once thought were entitled to me. Jesus' death and resurrection gave me a greater purpose to live my life – no longer striving to live for the fleeting,

materialistic things of this world, but ultimately living for God and in light of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for me. A change in how I lived was only the very beginning of my response to what Jesus has done for me.

Fast forward a few more years to now, it's been a

challenging but comforting journey knowing that my value and identity is now wrapped up in Jesus – not in how well I performed or how many good things I did or who accepted me. By no means has it been an easy journey and being an imperfect and rebellious human, I know I will always struggle with sin and my weaknesses on my own. But with Jesus as my Lord and Saviour, I know I can rely on Him for the guidance and strength to sustain me, coming to him in humble prayer and letting his Word in the Bible manifest in my life. As I finish up, I want to share one verse with you that as resonated and comforted me through times of weakness and hardship.

**2 Corinthians 12:9** "But he said to me,

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

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# Triynka

## ANANDA

Growing up in a Hindu family, I went to the temple weekly, was vegetarian on some days, and observed various Hindu festivals. Although I looked like a religious person externally, I did not have a personal relationship with God. I felt God was distant, and my dealings with Him were purely transactional. I found ultimate security in life through academic and relational success, and assumed Jesus to be no different from other religious figures who taught people good morals.

I first heard the gospel 3 years ago through UQ Evangelical Students, a Christian group on campus. Through various Bible passages I realised I could never meet God's standards of righteousness on my own, and that Jesus came to take the punishment I deserved for not living God's way. I wondered... "Why would God do that for me, when I had done nothing to deserve it?"

**The answer came in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life". This helped me clearly see that love undergirded God's actions, which blew my mind, and I eagerly accepted the gift of salvation Jesus offered me.**

Since then, God has continued to deepen my understanding and appreciation of His gospel, especially in the last year when I completely stopped praying, and bible reading for a few months, and withdrew significantly from the Christian community as I felt the need for space to thoroughly question my Christian beliefs. God helped me see His faithful and steadfast love for undeserving sinners like me through revealing how biased my heart was when looking at the

evidence. My love for man's acceptance had crept in and turned my love for God into hate. This really humbled me to see how hopelessly deceitful my heart was, and how cold my love for God had consequently turned. For the first time, it was clear to me that what motivated my seemingly innocent search was a ruthless desire to dethrone Jesus as the King of my life. I saw how blind I indeed was without Jesus, and that it was time to stop turning away from God.

The book of Isaiah the following semester helped me see that this sinful rebellion against our creator is a universal disease that has infected all of humankind. I knew if I wanted to get back into a relationship with God, only God could change my heart as it strayed so far away from God. I am so thankful for many people who have walked alongside me during this painful journey, speaking the truth I needed hear even when it hurt, and for showing me the patient love of our Heavenly Father.

The best thing about coming to know and trust Jesus is I have found real life. Jesus said in Matthew 16:24-25 "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 will find it" I tried to save my life by living my way. Far from self-actualisation, this led to my self-destruction, because I ended up dying to the very things I thought would bring me life. Through trusting in Jesus, I've received eternal life that comes from being in a restored relationship with God.



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83 Ryans Road, St Lucia Qld 4067, Australia