

..... A PERSONAL JOURNEY .....

# LIGHT OF THE WORLD

..... FROM DARKNESS INTO THE LIGHT OF CHRIST .....

JENNIFER SUM

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A personal journey of shifting from  
darkness into the Light of Christ

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## ABOUT THIS BOOK

*Matthew 4:16 ESV the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.”*

Do you ever think about the light that gently brushes across your face in the morning? Or the immense explosion of light at Creation? Or the fact that no life would exist without light? Or why Jesus referred to Himself as the Light of the World? Light is easy to take for granted, but we cannot underestimate its illuminating and life-giving power.

I had been faithfully following Jesus for 17 years without realising that I was living most of it shrouded in spiritual darkness until a fateful encounter in 2013, when I asked the Light of the World one simple question. It turned out to be a truly pivotal moment when God shed His Light on the spiritual realm, revealed His omnipresence, power and authority, and healed my broken heart all at once. He bound up my wounds, released me from darkness, and filled me with joy – everything that the prophet Isaiah proclaimed that Jesus would do (Isaiah 61).

## THE FIRST 17 YEARS

In my early years as a Christian, reading the Bible opened my eyes to the proud and anxious nature of my heart and my deep need for Jesus. God tenderly led me on a journey of repenting of my stubborn ways, forgiving those whom I felt betrayed by, reconciling with family members, and experiencing His life-giving truths in many other ways. My world changed radically. He also gradually opened several doors for me

to serve, teach and mentor others at church.

As I settled into a comfortable rhythm of “doing” Christianity, I thought that I was as enlightened I could be. Oh how ignorant and blind-sided I was. Thankfully, my pre-eminent Father in heaven continued to tenderly discipline and refine me.

My life transformed a second time with my spiritual awakening in 2013. The five years following that were nothing like the first seventeen. It has been more joyful, more empowered, and more purposeful, but it has also been quite painful and at times, simply alarming.

## THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

What I have witnessed and experienced after my spiritual awakening has radically altered my worldview. This has come through much angst-filled soul-searching, diligent Bible research, and the shattering of many of my own presumptions.

One of the hardest lessons from all this has been humility; to keep dying to my pride and admitting over and over again that I’m not that wise, and that I too have fallen for many half-truths, muddled scriptural teachings, and spiritual deceptions. The more I discover, the more I realise how truly little I know.

It is with humility that I share the journey of my second awakening with you. For years, I have been afraid to talk openly about what I have experienced and seen because I didn’t want to invite derision and criticism. I have been intimidated by the risks that come with full disclosure. But like Ephesians 5:11 says, I had to decide if I would expose what I have discovered to be the “worthless deeds of evil and darkness” of this world or remain silent. Would I have the humility to consider you above myself (Philippians 2:3<sup>i</sup>) and love you enough to share what I have learnt (Ephesians 4:15-16<sup>ii</sup>)?

To be honest, it has been a struggle. What finally convicted me is the knowledge that on Judgment Day, my Heavenly Father will ask me what I have done with what I have received from Him (Matthew 25:17,24-30<sup>iii</sup>). I know I have to fear God more than I fear people (Proverbs 29:25<sup>iv</sup>).

## FAIR WARNING

Just as this journey has not always been easy for me, the lessons covered here may not always be comfortable for you to read. Your views and opinions are likely to be based on what you have been exposed to and taught to believe. Like me, you will probably have to wrestle with what you believe to be “true” and “okay.”

Jesus, the Light of the World, promises us that we will not walk in darkness when we follow Him, and Him alone (John 8:12<sup>v</sup>).

I pray that you will search the Bible for yourself and invite the Light of the World to answer your questions directly. May His Spirit guide you and enlighten you on what this book means for you in relation to God’s Commandments (John 16:13<sup>vi</sup>).

*Ephesians 1:16-19 ESV I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might*

May you fall deeper in love with the one and only true God, who calls all of us out of the darkness into His marvelous Light (1 Peter 2:9<sup>vii</sup>). All blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God forever and ever (Revelation 7:12<sup>viii</sup>). Amen.

Note: All the Bible verses mentioned in this book are listed on page 126.

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## CHAPTER 1

# WASHING THE DISHES

*Psalm 34:4-6 ESV I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles*

My husband, Andrew, and I were having spaghetti for dinner after returning home from church. There is a running joke in our family that I have a strong abhorrence towards washing the dishes and housework in general. Having just discussed the importance of overcoming our ungodly patterns with our church group, I decided to step up and do the dishes that night.

As I picked up the leftover food and cleared the dishes, a dull simmering emotion began to well up inside my chest. It was a distant yet familiar feeling; a mixture of anger, grief, frustration and injustice. I whined softly as those emotions whirled inside me.

Picking up on my resistance, Andrew suggested I might be feeling the effects of some unresolved emotional issues. Would I like to talk about it? As silly and irrelevant as it seemed, I knew that I needed to confess how I truly felt about my bitter childhood experiences with housework decades earlier.

After a tumultuous six years of marriage, my mother left my

father and took me along with her. We could only afford to rent small rooms in other families' homes for many years and the moving was constant. I felt like a travelling burden on my mother – as well as her domestic maid. When she was out at work, I had to do the housework to exacting standards. When she was back at night, she would check if I had done my chores. We discussed little else, let alone how my day went or what my aspirations were. I remember listening to her stories about work and saying little. I don't recall having a voice of my own.

With Andrew by my side some forty years later, I gasped for air as I confessed how sad I was that my parents fought so much and I had only one happy memory of family time. Otherwise, I just remembered constantly feeling trapped and helpless. As a “latchkey kid” confined to small rented rooms, all I could do was to watch helplessly as other kids played outside. No one knew that I existed. With my mother coming home exhausted from work, I had no choice but to silence my own emotions and numb myself to my existence. All I knew was schoolwork and housework. There were no adults around to teach me proper life skills. I recalled being mocked by another tenant as I fumbled to fry a fish and burnt myself. I was just a hungry child and no one in the shared flat cared enough to help me make lunch.

To cope, I pretended that I wasn't really there, as if I was watching a movie. Eventually, I would learn to joke about what happened and sweep it all aside without admitting how painful it was, because my tender heart would not have been able to cope. My heart became hard on the outside but numb and lifeless on the inside. It was safer to “do things” rather than to “feel things”.

As the shutters to my suppressed childhood pain and grief were finally allowed to be opened that night, I sobbed and wept for what felt like half an hour. Forty years of heartache came pouring out.

The pain I felt in my chest was physical. My head became dizzy. Talking was a real effort. My body grew so heavy that I had to sit down. It was deeply emotional and exhausting.

As my sobbing subsided, I prayed out loud. “Jesus, thank you for my past. It hurt so much but You allowed it to happen for a reason. I can see that You have used my experiences to bring comfort to others.

Thank you for being the Saviour who never forsakes any one of us. Please shine Your Light into the darkness of my subconscious thoughts and set me free from any remaining chains around my heart. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen!"

Immediately, I felt a new level of lightness in my being. Just as my confession felt painful and heavy, my prayer to Jesus was freeing and light. I would describe the physical sensation as having an empty rib cage and it felt so good!

## I WAS WITH YOU

This was not the first time I had experienced God's power to reveal, heal and redeem. My journey in spiritual renewal actually began five years prior to that night. I had already been experiencing greater spiritual freedom and vitality through various instances of confessions, repentance and prayers. Each time, I thought I had finally been set free. God in His perfect wisdom and tenderness, knew that there was still that grieving little girl whom I had silenced and locked up. She needed to regain her voice.

I have no doubt that God has always been with me throughout the warm highs and dark, bitter and shame-filled lows of my life. He has been there for me even when I didn't know His name. He said so Himself two years before that weepy spaghetti dinner.

One afternoon, I was sitting on the floor in our living room patting my favourite cat, Pepper. As usual, she was relaxing contentedly in my arms, purring. Then the Holy Spirit suddenly impressed a quiet loving message on my spirit. "Do you remember hugging a particular grey-coloured teddy bear every weekend as a little girl? I want you to know that I was with you and that Pepper is my gift. She is your living teddy bear."

Totally stunned, I stared into the moist yellow eyes of my adoring little exotic shorthair cat, and realised that she did look like a little grey teddy bear! I had completely forgotten about those times when in silent desperation, I would make a detour to the department store by myself

whenever my mum and I went to town and hijack a plush toy that was not mine. I would silently hold it until I felt some comfort. Never mind the awkward looks from the store assistant each week. Those hugs were too important to miss. I had nowhere else to turn for comfort. After my teddy bear therapy, I would run off and return to mummy.

Wearing clothes and spectacles past their best days, I knew we couldn't afford this fancy plush teddy bear. So the next best thing was to borrow hugs from a toy that I could not afford to take home. It was my secret weekly getaway and private relief. My mother did not know about the little teddy bear, but of course, my Heavenly Father did. He noticed and never forgot – even when I hadn't accepted Jesus as my personal Saviour yet. I am constantly in awe of and touched by His attention to all the smallest details in our lives, even when we are unaware of His presence and when they have been locked up, long forgotten in our memories.

God continues to astound me by what He reveals to me about my deep need for Him. I cannot help but love and adore Him more and more. In His perfect timing, He meets all our needs, even those that are unspoken or unnoticed. This has inspired me to write about my journey with our amazing Heavenly Father.

## CHAPTER 2



# COME DOWN TO EARTH

*Romans 12:2 ESV Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Some time ago, I heard about some factory outlets that sold fashion-forward clothes. When a church friend suggested that we go look at some of them, I jumped at the opportunity. Over lunch, I was relating to her about the pushback I had been experiencing from family and friends whenever I tried to talk about the spiritual realities I had been discovering. “Jennifer, you need to come down to earth and live in reality,” she said as kindly as she could, “You can’t be so focused on Jesus or you’ll scare people away.”

Her comment was meant to encourage me to fit in. After all, the pressures of living and working in the city were stressful enough. Yet it only reminded me of John 17:14-15<sup>2</sup> where Jesus described His disciples as being in this world but not part of this world. I sat there gazing at my fish and chips, not quite knowing how to respond to her.

In recent years, I have been accused of many things amongst my church community; most of it related to being “too spiritual”, “too intense”, “too pure” or “too deep.” How ironic and discouraging it is to

receive ridicule, instead of encouragement, from Christians for desiring to obey God's every word. There have been times I have been seriously tempted to doubt and condemn myself as well. One of the things that has kept me going is the knowledge that each time I have chosen to follow God's Word in spite of my self-doubt, the more God reveals of His great love, power and self-control for us all (2 Timothy 1:7<sup>3</sup>).

After my own spiritual awakening five years ago, I simply cannot go back to a comfy lukewarm Christian lifestyle. For 17 years, I had sincerely believed I had been a good Christian. I truly did! I had been actively leading several ministries at church and exercised my spiritual gifts, including prophesying and speaking in tongues. I was getting quite good at performing Christian tasks and "doing" church. I could see God's hand at work all around me. It seemed like the model Christian life.

Little did I know that I was handicapped by spiritual pride, bias and ignorance. God was about to show me what it is like to personally know Him and what it takes to be a disciple of Jesus who turns away from the world, rather than continuing as a disciple of systems of the world.

## **SHALL WE ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT?**

That turning point came with one simple but profound question. A young (and rather observant) believer whom I had been mentoring for a year came over to our home for dinner. Forever bubbly and earnest, she went everywhere with a spring in her step. Her endless joy puzzled and frankly, unsettled me. I gave her the nickname, Bouncy.

After ice cream and desserts, Bouncy asked me, "Jennifer, you serve actively in church but why are you not more joyful in doing so?" I will admit I was quite taken aback by her forthrightness. I had always been solemn since I was a child and there is no doubt that I loved God. Who was she to challenge me? Besides, Bouncy was nearly half my age.

Collecting myself, I told Bouncy, "I don't know." When she suggested that we pray and ask the Holy Spirit for the answer, I felt that I had no choice but to agree, even though all I wanted to do was to show Bouncy the door and say good night.

I had always known that God is a good Father. I had experienced His blessings, read His promises in the Bible, and witnessed miracles firsthand. Yet I was consistently told that there was some sadness in me. Smiling did not come naturally for me and I accepted it as a natural consequence of a difficult and sometimes traumatic childhood. I was taught that only in Heaven would I experience complete joy and peace. Earth is a messy place, so just accept it. Experiencing an abundant life now as Jesus promised? Impossible. Living the life that Jesus modelled for me to follow? Outrageous.

Bouncy and I headed to my study where I knelt down on the carpet to pray. As I closed my eyes, I asked with some trepidation, “Holy Spirit, please show me why I don’t have joy.”

Suddenly, I recalled a childhood incident where I felt violated by my father, Papa. In that instant, I was five years old all over again, standing alone with him in our family dining room, overwhelmed by shock and outrage after it occurred. Somehow, I found the courage to spin around and confront this towering man. “Papa, you can’t do that!” I protested. Papa’s unfathomable reply rocked my little world. The violation was completely unprovoked but Papa calmly retorted, “Well, you asked for it.”

As that memory got pulled out of my mental hard drive, I lost all composure and wept bitterly. Yes, that’s right, Papa, whom I had trusted and looked up to, did something that made me feel like a dirty little girl and then blamed me for it.

My family dynamics could have been fodder for a Netflix drama. Papa had his “girlfriends” and would sometimes come home drunk, reeking of alcohol and displaying lipstick stains. My parents had such loud and violent matches that police officers would turn up regularly at our front door. I learnt as a child that when big people in uniform show up at your front door, the fighting and shouting will stop but only temporarily. Sometimes, mummy had to go to hospital for her injuries. As disconcerting as everything was, all that family drama didn’t touch me personally - until that moment in our dining room.

One question, however, always haunted me. If God loves and protects His little ones, where was He when that happened? God



must have responded to my thoughts because Bouncy's gentle voice interrupted my frazzled thoughts. "Shall we ask the Holy Spirit what God was doing?" My eyes still closed, I faintheartedly said, "Okay".

Vaguely at first and then more clearly, I saw Jesus in the same room with me, holding back two creatures. It was a weird sensation but I instantly knew in my spirit that my Saviour had protected me from two evil spirits assigned to destroy our family. I had been too overwhelmed by the pain and shame all these years to notice or believe that Jesus was there. It only dawned on me then that that sort of incident never occurred again with my father.

Jesus was there! For the first time in my life, I felt relieved and watched over, not abandoned. That night, I was able to forgive Papa unreservedly and bless him with good health. As I did so, I was overcome by an incredible sense of relief.

My ears then heard jubilant laughter come out of my mouth. It was such a strange sound that my brain struggled to catch up with what was happening to me spiritually. What's going on? Joy just flooded into my soul like a cool spring gushing across an arid desert.

So much of what I had read in the Bible suddenly made sense. This was what Jesus meant when He promised to quench the thirst of anyone who goes to Him for a drink (John 4:13-14<sup>4</sup>). This is why God's Word tells us to confess to anyone who loves Jesus Christ and pray for one another, so that we may be healed (James 5:16<sup>5</sup>). He tells us to forgive our offenders so that we are set free from their offences (Mark 11:25<sup>6</sup>). When God promised to save us and never forsake us, it is really true! (Deuteronomy 31:6<sup>7</sup>). He showed me how He works in the unseen for the good of His beloved children (Romans 8:28<sup>8</sup>). Our faith is not based on what we can see with our eyes, but in the unseen, and our troubles are truly only temporary (2 Corinthians 4:17-18<sup>9</sup>).

That day, God became my Heavenly Father, not just the Heavenly Father for the whole world. (Years later, I would go on to use this story of forgiving my dad to help another lady to forgive her brother who did something similar to her. She too experienced healing from Jesus and important spiritual breakthroughs.)

My thoughts then took a turn. "Wait a minute, why didn't anyone

tell me about this incredible deep spiritual healing from Jesus earlier? I have been a Christian for 17 years and suffered silently for so long! How many other followers of Jesus are stuck and suffering needlessly when spiritual restoration is so easily available through Jesus Christ? How do I learn more about all this!”

I felt shaken, enlightened, celebratory, wrongfully deceived and angry all at once. It was at that point that I decided that I needed to find some answers for myself.

## THE FATHER WOUND

I later learnt from attending a talk at church that there was a term for what I had endured. It is called a father wound.

The father wound is a subconscious but sore point in our souls that afflicts our relationships with other people who are close to us, predominantly our spouses and children. My father wound meant that I found it hard to trust Andrew in the early years of our marriage. We have an ongoing understanding that he must never raise his voice at me because it would trigger uncontrollable (and unrelated) emotions in me that stem from witnessing my father’s violence towards my mother.

Our relationships with our parents form the starting point for all our other intimate relationships later on in life. As toddlers, our parents were the heroes who met all our needs and desires – or the counter-heroes who did not. The father wound does not only arise when our parents hurt or violate us, it can also result from the lack of good role modelling. Dads who are physically present in their children’s lives but who are indifferent, insensitive, self-absorbed, controlling or over-demanding can also cause a lot of damage. In my case, the effect was a lot of sadness. Others may experience it as anger, anxiety, mistrust, resentment, low self-esteem or people-pleasing. All this changes when we acknowledge our parent wounds, go before God to forgive our fathers or mothers for their mistakes and welcome God as our one and only Father. When teaching the crowds the importance of trusting in God alone, Jesus pointedly said in Mathew 23:9 to “*call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who*

*is in heaven.”*

God is Spirit and invisible to our eyes. We are often unaware that our primary and eternal parent-child relationship is with God. It is amazing that God calls Himself our Heavenly Father. He could command us to refer to Him as our Ruler, Judge, King or Majesty. Yet, He reminds us that He reserves His most affectionate relationship for us. God is the only true perfect Parent for every human being.

The earthly father wound or its counterpart, the mother wound, comes up often during prayers and confessions. Here are a few real-life examples. (In every example and testimony given throughout this book, all names and many key details have been changed in order to protect the privacy of those whose stories are included here.)

Jack’s father was a dedicated and easy-going parent who was only very strict when it came to sports. During Jack’s school tournaments, his dad would berate him loudly in front of the other children and their parents for his sporting errors. This hurt Jack deeply as a child. Jack eventually grew into a man whose inner voice convinced him that he would never be good enough. As a result, Jack would explode in anger whenever his wife made a passing comment which he mis-interpreted as her challenging his abilities.

Nancy’s father was a very traditional Chinese man who preferred sons over daughters. It seemed as if nothing she could do as a child would ever gain his favour. Nancy developed an obsession with pleasing her father, which was never fulfilled. This spilled over into her relationship with God. Nancy served in church but would then complain that people were ungrateful towards her for her love. Subconsciously, she was disappointed that people’s responses did not soothe the deep heartache she felt for her biological father’s love.

Melanie’s father was the youngest and only son in a large family. All his sisters dropped out of school to work so that he could attend school. As a result, her dad placed a lot of emphasis on academic excellence. When Melanie was a child, he would punish her harshly whenever she did not achieve straight A’s at school. Melanie grew up under a lot of stress and resentment. She loved and respected her father, but hated him at the same time. Over time, Melanie slipped into depression and contemplated

suicide as a means to escape from her conflicted heart.

Adam had a very violent father, who would beat him for the smallest offences. Everyone in the family was terrified of his father's unpredictable outbursts. His mother asked Adam to quietly accept his father's lashings so that she wouldn't be beaten too. Adam felt deeply rejected and unloved by both of his parents. This childhood trauma greatly affected Adam's ability to see God as a loving Father and to trust women in general. Eventually, Adam turned to the comfort of other men through homosexual relationships.

People with parent wounds will tell you that they struggle to feel God's love or hear His voice. It is only when they are able to accept and forgive their parents for their shortcomings and mistakes, that the barriers to God, their ultimate Father, come crashing down. During prayer, many have seen visions of God personally comforting them. Jack saw God hold him like a baby in His arms, Nancy saw Jesus consoling her as she confessed her pain, Melanie saw Jesus protecting her from harm and Adam saw Jesus weeping with him as he talked about his father's cruel lashing. Each one of us has walked out of our prayer time with our crushed spirits healed and restored.

How wonderful are the promises in Psalm 34:17-19 which say that, *"When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all."*

Experiencing freedom from my father wound was just the first small step in a new spiritual adventure.

## THE ICE BUCKET CHALLENGE

Not long after my prayer with Bouncy, I had an opportunity to pray for a family member. Let's call my relative, Aunty. This time, I didn't see evil spirits in a vision, I actually experienced them physically.

I used to believe that only pastors and those who have gone through Bible school could practise authority over demons, possibly because of all the fictional horror movies I had watched, particularly

“The Exorcist”. If I hadn’t witnessed other people around me setting people free from evil spirits or healing the sick, then I inferred that neither could I. My benchmarks were based on people, rather than the promises found in the Bible. In my mind at that time, evil spirits were scary and powerful and I was weak and helpless. I am so thankful that by the time I went to see Auntie, I had read several books on spiritual warfare by authors such as Derek Prince and Neil Andersen, researched the Bible for myself and learnt quite a lot about my God-endowed authority over Satan and other evil spirits. I felt ready to follow Jesus faithfully. It was no longer about other people’s words but God’s Word, which is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12<sup>10</sup>).

All evil spirits are fallen angels who have rebelled against God. Records in the Bible show that wherever Jesus went, demons always recognised Him as God and were terrified of Him (James 2:19<sup>11</sup>, Luke 8:28<sup>12</sup>, Mark 5:6-7<sup>13</sup>). They all knew that God would utterly destroy them one day and begged Him not to torture them before their time was up (Matthew 8:29<sup>14</sup>). Demons grovel in fear before God. And they will flee from us too when we submit to God (James 4:7<sup>15</sup>).

God did not create people to be afflicted by evil spirits. In fact, He created Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, to rule over the earth. But then Satan cunningly deceived them into turning against God and following him instead, thereby making himself the de facto ruler. It was the world’s first scam and spiritual coup. Satan continues to scam mankind with false teachings, false idols, false comforts, false power and false signs, but he does not have ultimate authority over us. When Jesus died for our sins on the cross and rose again from death, He utterly disarmed all spiritual powers against mankind (Colossians 2:15<sup>16</sup>). He gave us full authority to drive evil spirits away in His name (Luke 10:17-20<sup>17</sup>). Jesus has told us that He has given His disciples authority over all the power of the enemy and nothing will hurt us.

This powerful authority is not based on how good we are, how much faith we have, or how strong we are. It is based purely on Jesus’s work on the cross. A child could command demons to leave in Jesus’ name and they would have to obey, because at the name of Jesus, every knee in Heaven and on earth and under the earth must bow (Philippians 2:9-11<sup>18</sup>).

This truth really hit home for me when I heard the testimony of a young man who used to invite demonic spirits to enter him so that he could perform incredible acts of strength. One particular time, he was unable to get a demon to leave. It started to throw him around violently. Fearful for his own life, the man desperately called upon different spirits and deities to help him but with no result. Finally, the young man simply cried out to Jesus Christ. The demon left him immediately. Obviously, the man had never attended Bible studies, let alone Bible seminary. He just knew the name of Jesus Christ and that was all he needed. This and other stories like it gave me great confidence to pray for Auntie.

Auntie isolated herself from the rest of the family. Conversations would almost always end up with her hurling off-beat accusations and admonishments our way. She lived alone in a quiet apartment surrounded by lush greenery but would hear thudding noises throughout the night. She was convinced her phone was wiretapped, she was being watched by “them” and that “they” were out to bother her.

Some people might call her paranoid but I always suspected that there could be something more to her behaviour. Bolstered by my renewed faith in God’s powerful presence and recent insight into the unseen, I offered to stop by and pray for her sometime.

When the day came around, we sat down in her bedroom with the door closed because Auntie did not want “them” to listen in. Since I was new to praying specifically about the unseen, I started by submitting my own preconceptions to God and asked the Holy Spirit to intervene and pray through me (Romans 8:26<sup>19</sup>). I then explained to Auntie that she needed to trust that God would free her from her disturbances, if we asked for His help in Jesus’ name (Psalm 91:1-16<sup>20</sup>). Together, I led Auntie in prayer and confessed many things that had plagued our extended family for generations.

Led by the Holy Spirit, we commanded spirits of accusation, bitterness, division, lying, sorrow, and so forth to leave her home. In the midst of that mass spiritual eviction, I experienced what felt like an ice bucket challenge. An invisible freezing sensation gushed from my head to my feet. It lasted for just a few seconds but was enough to startle me. It was as if the evil spirits were challenging me back.

Knowing that God was by my side, I calmly brushed aside this silly scare tactic. I thought, “Ha! You’re just desperate to stop me. You’ve tried to destroy my family in the past but I won’t let you get away with this one!” Seeing that the tactic didn’t work on me, the unseen spirits resorted to scaring Aunty instead.

The quiet peace of the flat was suddenly disrupted by loud and furious banging on her bedroom door. This continued for a few seconds before the doorknob started shaking violently as well. Aunty’s face turned pale white. There was no one else in the flat. Well, at least there were no other human beings. Her eyes grew so wide that they looked like they were about to pop out of her eye sockets. This time I thought, “Woah, this is not quite what I expected. Stay calm! Stay calm! Focus on Aunty.”

To draw her attention away from the noisy thumping door, I gently took Aunty’s hand and said as coolly as I could, “Aunty, there are evidently things in this home that shouldn’t be here. Shall we command them to leave in Jesus’ name?” Seeing that I was not panicked, Aunty calmed down and replied with a firm “Yes!” We then united in prayer and commanded the spirits to stop manifesting and to leave in the name of Jesus Christ. The door stopped its manic rattling immediately.

We then prayed to clean out her entire flat and invited Jesus to be the Lord of her home. We also removed some furniture and fittings with paintings of dragons and other mythical images, since they would have simply provided idolatrous footholds for the spirits to come back. After we finished with her home, Aunty took the initiative to pray for the area outside her flat, just for good measure. The entire place felt brighter, airier and less oppressive.

With her eyes literally opened to the spiritual realities around her, I naively expected Aunty to turn her life to Jesus Christ and follow Him with all her heart. Sadly, Aunty was happy that Jesus helped her clean out her flat but still continued to read horoscopes, consult fortune tellers and worship idols afterwards. She refused to forgive her family for perceived injustices in the past and preferred to cling to the idea that “they” were still out there. Like those who witnessed Jesus’ miracles in person and yet still rejected Him (John 6:66<sup>21</sup>), Aunty’s heart spurned Jesus despite the vivid demonstrations of His powerful presence in her own home.



Later, I would learn that casting out evil spirits in Jesus' name was just one part of the work, we also need to invite Him to heal our emotional wounds for us to be truly set free. Auntie had been deeply traumatised by past events in her life, hence she had been plagued by demonic spirits of accusation, bitterness, division, lying and sorrow, that the Holy Spirit had led me to evict in Jesus' name. This, together with her deep mistrust of others, kept her away from the godly community and counselling she needed to experience spiritual rehabilitation and restoration through Jesus Christ. Sadly, Auntie quickly went back to living in a state of bitter mistrust and paranoia.

## THE CHOICE

After my out-of-this-world experience at Auntie's place, I couldn't wait to share about what happened with church leaders and friends.

Auntie's story was met with two types of reactions. The first was a general openness and jubilation. People would be in awe of God's work and His authority through us mere human beings.

The second would be an awe of the evil spirits. There would be dread and plain refusals to acknowledge them. I was repeatedly told, "You shouldn't be dealing with evil spirits. Don't bother spirits and they won't bother you," as if 1 Peter 5:8-9<sup>22</sup>, 1 John 4:4<sup>23</sup> and James 4:7<sup>24</sup> had been mysteriously wiped out of the Bible. God's Word tells us to be alert and watch out for the work of evil spirits so that we may stand firm against them. We are to be strong in our faith (1 Peter 5:8-9<sup>22</sup>). This is because the Spirit who lives in us is much greater than the spirits in this world (1 John 4:4<sup>23</sup>) All we need to do is to submit ourselves to God and resist them, then they would have to flee from us (James 4:7<sup>24</sup>). These Christians were advising me to flee from the spirits instead!

This left me very conflicted and confused. It only dawned on me much later that these views were derived from horror stories that are packed with lies from Satan. Before my own Bible-based research, I too had placed greater faith in ungodly secular movies, "real life" ghost stories, and books on the paranormal than in God's Word.

I realised I knew so little. I struggled to answer some basic questions. What can evil spirits (also known as demons) do and what can they not do? How do we avoid their traps? What struggles in our Christian life are due to evil spirits and which are due to our own sinful, rebellious nature? How do we pray more effectively with Jesus' spiritual authority? Can we completely overcome sin? Why do negative emotions create such strong barricades to our relationship with God?

The more I searched for answers, the more I found that different Christian denominations have different views on spiritual matters. I know about this firsthand because I was born into a Catholic family, grew up in Presbyterian and Baptist church communities, attended Methodist churches, rededicated my life to Jesus at a Pentecostal church and worshipped in Evangelical and Non-denominational churches.

Certainly evil spirits aren't that picky. They would bother believers in Catholic and Presbyterian churches as much as they would those in Pentecostal and Evangelical ones. Yet there are hardly any teachings about such topics in most churches today, even though the apostle Paul warned us to stay on the alert for Satan's schemes. How could I stay alert to an invisible enemy when I had no idea what his crooked schemes looked like?

I had to make a choice. Would I continue to place my faith in the media or other people's doctrines and traditions, or would I take the time to pursue God and test everything according to His Word? Would I choose to only follow whatever suited my own beliefs and comfort levels, or would I allow myself to be challenged? Would I welcome encouragement, correction and even rebuke through the preaching of God's Word, no matter how painful it might be? Or would I continue to "accumulate for myself teachers to suit my own passions" (2 Timothy 4:1-4<sup>25</sup>)? That decision five years ago changed my life.

Determined to find some answers for myself, I began to conduct my own research. I ploughed through the Bible, interviewed people, read heaps of books and simply started mimicking Jesus' disciples by praying for friends and family like they did. And I asked lots of questions, even if they made me feel uncomfortable or outright embarrassed. I learnt to chew on whatever I was hearing or discovering on my own

before swallowing and digesting anything. If something tasted foreign, unpalatable or too good to be true, I knew I had to go back to the Bible and ask God to show me the truth. Where I was slow to learn or still had my doubts, the Lord began to teach and correct me through real-life testimonies and experiences.

What I have learnt has both encouraged and dismayed me, so please be prepared to have some of your own views challenged. As of today, some of my most treasured Christian beliefs have been demolished. I had to learn to practise 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, which says *“For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”*

## WINDFALL INHERITANCE

I will admit that the journey has not always been easy. There have been numerous miracles, wondrous victories and joyous healing, as well as ridicule, pain and sorrow. With each experience, I have learnt something new and grown in my faith. The Holy Spirit has always been faithful. He always provides the necessary answers, warnings, insights and comfort at the right time. It has truly been a very eye-opening adventure. The last five years have far superseded the first 17 years where I followed people's opinions more than God's.

In this book, I give an account of my experiences from between 2013 and 2018, plus a few stories from prior years. These are not in chronological order, but are told according to the lessons I have learnt. As I give my testimony, I encourage you to also conduct your own research on what I share here. Test it against the Bible and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to the truth. Invite God Himself to reveal Himself to you as you go on this journey along with me. The time you spend to investigate things for yourself will be worth it. Unlike high-risk investments that don't guarantee financial returns, going out on a limb for God reaps astonishing rewards beyond imagination (Hebrews 11:6<sup>26</sup>). I used to

chase mirages of the abundant life in things with short expiry dates; status, influence and money. I now look at those days as foolish and futile. Nothing beats the abundance that Jesus gives us in His name. It is as if I was entitled to an inheritance all this while that I hadn't cashed in - until now (Ephesians 1:11-12<sup>27</sup>). That spiritual inheritance has been a windfall.

*Philippians 3:8-12 ESV* Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

## CHAPTER 3



# THE QUEST BEGINS

*Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

“Stop asking me so many questions!” Early in our marriage, I used to drive Andrew crazy with random questions almost every day. Why do you think they placed this signpost on this side of the road instead of the opposite side? Why do you think our friend, Winston, chose to date Daphne instead of April? What is the point of mosquitos and jellyfish?

Looking back, I feel bad for the stress my questions must have placed on my husband. At the beginning, he valiantly tried to answer my ridiculous questions but after a while, he wisely gave up trying just as I wisely stopped asking him. Instead, I started to direct my questions towards God Himself.

“Father, why do You love the unlovely? What was it like before creation; was it dull for You? How did it feel when Adam and Eve disobeyed You? What do You wish to teach me from the Bible chapter that I just read? Were You blessed by the worship at church today? Are the things that this church teacher is saying are okay really okay to You, Father? How do You view Halloween? Why do I feel this strange foggiess in my head as I pray for this person? What did my

strange dream last night mean? Why does my friend tear up so often, even when she receives compliments? Can You please show Andrew and me if we should spend Your money in this way or not? Should Andrew take on the job offer? Lord, do I respond to this person's request or just wait? Can You please give me the inspiration and energy to write this book? And oh, why on earth did You create mosquitos and jellyfish, Father?"

I can't say He always answers all my questions instantly but He certainly does provide enough understanding to address the important ones. This has been particularly vital as I set out on a quest to follow Jesus' footsteps to set other spiritual captives like me free.

At the beginning, I approached numerous professionals as well as ministry workers about the training I evidently needed in counselling, spiritual warfare and Bible study. Each one told me that I needed years of preparation before I could start helping others. Every school or programme had its own methodology and focus. Some school fees were beyond my threshold. Others required me to give up work and study full time. Teaching materials were copyrighted and knowledge was tightly guarded. After turning to Father and asking numerous times, "Shall I apply here?" and not feeling any peace about the options, I began to get a bit frustrated. I was surrounded by other believers who were stuck in spiritual bondages; fear, anger, sorrow, self-harm, shame, addictions and what not. People needed help now!

So what I did next was to complain to God.

## TIME TO BE FOOLISH

God's answer came through the Bible. I always assumed Jesus was referring to money when He said, "*Freely you have received; freely give.*" But as I studied Matthew 10, I realised that what He actually said was, "*Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give. (NIV)*" He was referring to His authority and power that He had given us to set people free from their physical and spiritual infirmities! This amazing gift is to be given away freely, not

locked up behind man-made copyrights or merchandised for personal profit (2 Corinthians 2:17<sup>28</sup>). Whatever spiritual blessings and revelations I freely received from Father, I am expected to freely give away too. But wait, isn't it necessary for someone to go through seminary before starting to serve others? After all, He had sent some of my close friends to Bible school, why not me? I felt bewildered and conflicted, but little did I know that He was about to stretch my faith and throw me right into the deep end!

In the midst of all my complaining, God gave me the quiet assurance to begin my quest with Him as my personal Instructor and Trainer. Just as I had been released from decades-old bondage simply by asking the Holy Spirit *one* key question, I was confident that God would keep answering my questions if I asked Him on behalf of other people. It also comforted me to know that Jesus proclaimed in Matthew 23:10 that, *"Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ (ESV)"* If He closed the doors to other instructors at the ministries and programmes I had inquired at, I could always rely on Him, the ultimate Authority on all things. He always has the final Word and He promises to answer us, no matter how foolish our needs and questions may appear to be, as long as we desire to glorify Him (John 14:13-14<sup>29</sup>).

"Lord, I have to admit I'm nervous. All training programmes run by people have fixed curriculum. Yours does not. I'm not sure what I am signing up for! Asking about Your full training plan scares me too much, so this is one question I rather not think about. I'm ready for the journey as long as You are with me." It was one of those rare occasions I chose not ask Father any question at all. So that's how my personal journey into greater spiritual revelation officially kicked off.

Looking back, I am thankful that God closed all the doors to those schools and courses because my mind has been free to ask very uncomfortable questions, without the fear of offending my fellow human beings, as a result of asking God directly. As I waited for His inspired answers and cross-referenced them with Scripture, I found myself examining established presumptions more clearly and objectively than I would have otherwise. It was His way of protecting me from my anxieties of offending people. Along the way, He showed His promise



in James 1:5<sup>30</sup> to be true. He is always generous in providing us with the wisdom we need at the right time and place. He does not rebuke us for asking what may appear to be absurd or shocking questions to people.

Most critically, I had to learn how to set aside my own accumulated wisdom and become foolish again (1 Corinthians 3:18-23<sup>31</sup>). It was the only way my heart could be childlike (Luke 18:17<sup>32</sup>) enough to humbly receive many painful truths without (too much) resistance. I revisited many of the foundational truths that we build our lives on and had to learn to be unafraid to face up to the parts that have been twisted, misguided or based on outright lies. It was painful to discover that I had blindly followed many false teachings (2 Timothy 4:3-4<sup>33</sup>) from this world, much more than I care to admit.

I used to wonder why God says He corrects and disciplines us because He loves us (Proverbs 3:11-12<sup>34</sup>). In fact, I found the whole idea rather offensive. Isn't He supposed to be full of grace and acceptance? Surely, He would be lenient and bend His rules just for me. Now I can see why I needed disciplining. Praise God that in spite of my slowness in grasping the truth and my stubborn pride, the Holy Spirit was always gentle, patient and persistent in His counsel, revelations, warnings, and scoldings. I sure needed it.

Once the Holy Spirit worked on my heart, He then opened my mind in ways that blew me away.

## APPLES AND CUCKOOS

After my Holy Spirit moment with Bouncy, I found that random images and words would pop up in my mind more and more as I talked or prayed with people. I can only describe it as a soft conviction, inner knowing or prompting from the Holy Spirit. It's like messages just get deposited into my spirit. Sometimes they are so random that I have felt profoundly stupid confessing them to people.

I hadn't seen a girlfriend for about a year and was visiting her home one sunny afternoon. Let's call her Pamela. As we sat on her generous grey sofa, catching up on her love life, an indistinct image

started to emerge before my eyes. It was as faint and as annoying as a big oily smudge on your eyeballs. The more she spoke about Alfred, her new boyfriend, the clearer the vision became. I tried my best to discretely blink it away but that “smudge” wouldn’t go away. Finally, I plucked up the courage and told Pamela.

“Pam, I don’t know anything about Alfred and I don’t know why I keep getting this image as you talk about him. It doesn’t make any sense to me but I see a red apple with worms burrowing in and out of it. I have already asked the Holy Spirit a few times about this and feel convicted that I should tell you about it. Do decide if it is worth sharing with Alfred. I’ll leave it to you.”

Secretly, I was hoping she would forget the revelation and go no further with it. I was terrified that the message meant that Pamela’s new relationship was rotten, or even worse, that Alfred was rotten! I did not want to be the messenger of bad news. What if it offended Alfred and Pam stopped being my friend? I wanted them to like me!

That evening, I received a text message from Pamela thanking me on behalf of Alfred. It seems he knew exactly what that vision was pointing to, because he had felt God warning him to drive carefully on the road. Having some heavy family matters on his mind at the time, he was often distracted while driving and even had a couple of near road accidents. He said that his brain had felt exactly like that apple, with thoughts burrowing in and out of his mind, and that he would take God’s warning more seriously the next time he got behind the wheel.

Relieved, I could only thank God for His loving message for Alfred. At the same time, I realised Father might keep asking me to speak out in faith, even if His messages risked my personal relationships and reputation. If I were to truly follow Jesus 100%, I would no longer be the one who decided what is safe or not to say or do. The comfortable, risk-free life that I had loved and idolised was about to be tossed out the window (Luke 9:23-26<sup>35</sup>). Otherwise, I risked causing Jesus to stand ashamed of me before God the Father, whenever I was ashamed of Him and His messages. Before long, I found myself being nudged out of my comfort zone and squirming in my shoes more regularly. I thought to myself, “What did I sign up for?”

Another classic example was when I saw a cuckoo bird as I was praying for a lady I had just met at a ladies' prayer meeting. Let's call her Amy. I resisted, "Lord, why this cuckoo? It makes no sense to me at all. She will think I'm cuckoo if I tell her I see a cuckoo! Really? Do I really have to talk about this?" But since I promised to obey my Instructor, I said, "Sorry, Amy, but I seem to see a cuckoo as I pray for you. Does it make any sense to you?"

Amy's good friend was intrigued by the vision and asked me what a cuckoo was. As we chatted about bird matters, we hadn't notice that Amy was crying until she started sobbing loudly. I thought, "Oh no, what have I done? I made someone cry!"

We were all shocked by what Amy confessed next. Amy told us that she had been happily married before, but had an affair out of revenge over an inconsequential quarrel. Her ex-husband was devastated when he found out. In spite of all her desperate efforts to salvage the marriage, he couldn't recover from her betrayal and they officially divorced ten years ago. She had not been able to forgive herself ever since and suffered from regret, humiliation and shame on a daily basis. No one knew about this part of her history, except for her family, and they often reminded her that she had broken up a perfectly good marriage. And oh, her ex-husband's nickname was Cuckoo.

Amy's good friend was dumbfounded by the confession about this secret. So was I, except for a different reason. Soft spoken and sweet, Amy looked like she could not have been more than twenty-five, but I just heard her say that she was forty! Gosh, how did she manage to look so youthful? As my thoughts started to wander away, the Holy Spirit pulled my attention back to His distressed daughter. She needed our empathy, comfort and prayers. God in His infinite goodness, showed us that He wanted to shine His light into the painful infections of Amy's heart and heal her from her shame and regrets. He loved her deeply and did not condemn her, He wanted to redeem her (John 3:17<sup>36</sup>).

A few months after Amy's confession, I had the opportunity to join another friend for a private confessional prayer session for her. We found out more surprising details that explained why she was being tormented by accusing thoughts every day.

The Holy Spirit wouldn't give us the peace to end the prayer session until she finally confessed an even darker secret. After she agreed to let that go to Jesus, Amy saw a vision of herself leaving her past behind and dancing with God in a field of brightly coloured flowers. She later told us that she had always wanted to learn ballroom dancing but never got around to it because she couldn't find herself a dance partner.

That day, God showed her that He is her perfect Partner, plus her Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6<sup>37</sup>). How attentive is our precious Heavenly Father to the desires of our hearts.

## THE PHYSIOTHERAPIST

I'll make a confession of my own here. After my cuckoo experience, I began to carry two packets of tissue paper wherever I go, just in case someone else needs it. You'll never know when the Holy Spirit will use your words to bring comfort, revelation, conviction and healing. Most times, people's eyes will either light up brightly or became very wet. And I can never predict which one it will be. It can even happen in the most improbable places and situations, so I try my best to be prepared.

My back had been bothering me and I was referred to a popular physiotherapist. We will call him Greg. It was fun walking into Greg's clinic for the first time because there were all these colourful massage therapy tools to check out. A stout man with a warm smile walked up to me. "Are you Jennifer? Please come into my office."

You can tell a physiotherapist genuinely cares for his patients when he spends the time to understand your pain. I warmed up to Greg quite quickly. We chatted as he worked on my body, manoeuvring my limbs like disjointed chopsticks. I was thoroughly enjoying my physio session when I heard Father speak. "Tell Greg that I miss him."

What! No way, that was asking too much. I was in a professional secular setting and had no idea of Greg's views of Jesus or Christians. I had just met the man 20 minutes ago! And I didn't want to be that creepy client whom no one wants to see again. "Sorry madam, no more

bookings available for you until 2050.” Moreover, he made it very clear that he was homosexual and was looking forward to spending more time with his boyfriend. What if he was offended by what I said, screamed at me, spat in my face, and threw me out the door? He certainly had the muscles to lift me and chuck me out.

So I told Father, “If You really want me to say anything, You will need to repeat Your instruction two more times please.” When God speaks, you can’t close your ears to shut out His words because they are literally resonating in your spirit. Patiently, God repeated His gentle instruction twice. I couldn’t possibly disobey my Creator after He told me something three times. Gulp, here goes.

“Greg, I noticed you have many calming posters in your office. Are you a spiritual type of person?” I wasn’t really listening to Greg’s reply, to be honest, because I was frantically thinking about what to say next. I decided to jump right in. “Greg, I am a Christian and I don’t know what your views of Jesus are. I am sure there are people who invite you to go to church. But what I am about to say is not related to that. I feel like God wants to let you know that He misses you very much.” I waited for the screaming, spitting and chucking.

Quietly, Greg’s hands continued to work on my body but I could see that his eyes became a bit misty as he gazed into a faraway memory. Greg did indeed know Jesus and had even considered going to Bible school at one point, but a few family tragedies changed the course of his life forever. His father passed away, and so did his closest brother. He hadn’t talked to God for a long time and remembers the closeness he used to have with Him. I took the opportunity to gently and respectfully let him know that His Father in Heaven had great compassion for his pain and is able to heal him. Father was calling him back into the relationship they used to enjoy together.

I only got to see Greg one more time afterwards. It’s not because they refused to give me any more appointments. Somehow, one thing led to another and I ended up not going back. I do sometimes wonder where Greg is now with his relationship with his Father in Heaven. I pray that they have been reunited.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

I was awestruck the first time I walked into a cathedral, particularly by its colourful Christian iconography. Man has tried to depict God through art over the centuries and failed miserably. How can a fallen creation ever re-create its invisible, supreme, infinite, and Holy Creator adequately? The one iconography that is etched in my mind is Michelangelo's fresco painting called the Creation of Adam, where God's and Adam's fingers touch in mid-air. It always made me wonder what God looks like. This was before I read John 4:24 where it says that *"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."* God is Spirit. When God made us in His image (Genesis 1:27<sup>38</sup>), He made us in His spiritual image. Instead, man has a tendency to re-create God in our own physical image. Ouch.

It took me a long time to grasp that God looks nothing like us, behaves nothing like us, and is nothing like us. God is Spirit, He connects with us spiritually.

When I listen out for the Holy Spirit, it is not a messenger I wait for, it is God Himself. He can but will seldom communicate in an audible voice. Instead, His "voice" will often feel like a gentle knock on the door of our hearts (1 Kings 19:11-13<sup>39</sup>) or a "knowing" in our spirits. He provides a peaceful assurance and quiet confidence (Isaiah 32:17<sup>41</sup>). He will always convey things that are in line with God's Word and His will (1 Corinthians 2:11-16<sup>42</sup>). It is not in God's nature to glorify people or create idols.

It may not always be comfortable hearing from the Holy Spirit because sometimes, He will spotlight influences in our lives that feel tantalisingly desirable but that will corrupt us.

God's wisdom is so immense and profound that I can't stretch my tiny brain to understand even a small speck of it, so I no longer seek to know everything. I just ask for the things I know I will need. Anything more can become a distraction. The Holy Spirit always provides and points us to God's higher ways. By doing so, He brings us great hope, joy and peace (Romans 15:13<sup>43</sup>). I am no longer hesitant to hear from God because each encounter has shown this to be true.

Yet our human logic struggles to settle for a quiet day-to-day existence with Father. Mankind suffers from a compulsion to add some showy extras; religious-looking gestures, objects, and rituals, in the hope that these connect us more closely to God, even though His Spirit is already inside us.

Once my relationship with the Holy Spirit got ignited, ritualised forms of prayer like mind-numbing chanting, liturgies and mindless trances became very disconcerting. When you speak with a loved one, conversation flows naturally, without restriction. There are no meaningless repetitions or mindless formulas. There is no straining to hear from God, you just do. Prayer beads, holy water, crosses and the such became obstacles to prayer, rather than tools. If Jesus never used any of these, I decided that neither should I.

One particular church I attended, however, forbade people from praying in tongues. Because its pastors didn't pray in tongues, they decided that neither should their church attendees. Out of respect, I obeyed. I am so glad that it wasn't too long before God sent an intervention along my way.

## **DO YOU SING?**

“Happy birthday!” A friend was celebrating his birthday out at sea on a boat. It's one of those parties you can't escape from midway. The group of friends was getting rowdier when I noticed a couple whom I had never seen before sitting quietly on their own. Intrigued, I went over to say hello and invite them to join us. It turned out that they were good friends with the birthday boy; missionaries passing through on their way to Thailand. Let's call them Nina and Prem. Out of courtesy, I asked them what sort of mission work they did. What I heard next was so exciting that I forgot about the birthday party.

Nina and Prem are roaming missionaries who wait on God every day to give them directions for their next mission. God might give them a specific location and name, for instance. So they would go to that place on that very day and ask around for anyone with that name. Once they find that person, they will offer to pray and pass on a message from Father.



Wow, I had just met secret agents of God! I had never met anyone with such bold faith and obedience before. Excited, I instinctively unleashed lots of questions on them.

Several amazing testimonies later, Nina turned to look directly but tenderly into my eyes and ask, “Do you sing, Jennifer?” Shocked and nervous, I blurted out a lame reply, “No, I sing very poorly, hahaha. Everyone will jump off this boat if I start to sing, hahaha.”

Nina persisted, her eyes now moist with tears. “Jennifer, God misses you singing.” Exposed, with nowhere to run, I felt convicted, relieved and comforted all at the same time. I couldn’t hide my secret any longer. “I miss Him so much too!” I exclaimed.

This is something that only Andrew knew about me (... well, besides God). Whenever I am deep in prayer and worship on my own at home, I will start to sing loudly to Father in tongues. Because of the order from church, I had stopped praying in tongues and also singing in tongues. It was stifling my worship and quenching my spirit. Through the recent months, I felt spiritually suppressed, sad, and easily agitated. It felt like a form of grief (Ephesians 4:30<sup>44</sup>).

Tears streaming down my face, I grabbed Nina’s hand and thanked her from the bottom of my heart. If I hadn’t met her just thirty minutes earlier, I would have also planted a big fat kiss on her face too. Then I hurried over to Andrew and said to his amazement, “I got to go home and pray, honey. God misses my singing! I want to go home now. I miss singing to Him too!” Thrown off guard, Andrew replied, “Honey, we are on a boat, remember? We need to head back to land first. Can you please wait another two hours?”

The topic of tongues can create quite a stir in some Christian circles; perhaps because there has been a good amount of misunderstanding and abuse. People have misused it to elevate themselves and glorify people.

Tongues is a prayer language that is inspired by the Holy Spirit. It can be spoken or sung (1 Corinthians 14:15<sup>45</sup>). Each person will be given different languages so we won’t necessarily sound alike (Acts 2:6-11<sup>46</sup>). We may not understand what the words mean but this is not the point. It is a spiritual language that God gives us to communicate with Him through our spirits, not our minds, so it is outside our human limits or

understanding (1 Corinthians 14:2<sup>47</sup>). Tongues strengthens and builds us up spiritually (1 Corinthians 14:4<sup>48</sup>).

True tongues will not sound like gibberish, it is a fully developed language. Neither will it burst out of our mouths against our will. It is a spiritual gift that is to be used respectfully and with much tenderness and love (1 Corinthians 13:1<sup>49</sup>), not in loud, chaotic, babbling displays (Matthew 6:5,7<sup>50</sup>). Such displays are not from the Holy Spirit, who only brings love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23<sup>51</sup>).

On numerous occasions, I have witnessed how prayers in tongues inspired by the Holy Spirit have ministered to and brought people deep encouragement and comfort, like no ordinary, humanly inspired prayer can.

The trouble is that we human beings are so enslaved to our physical world that anything “spiritual” is automatically superior, fascinating or dangerous. Some people have chased after the gift of tongues and even pretended to speak it, while others have mocked or rejected it.

In giving the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-18) to all believers for all time, Jesus pointed out that whoever believes in Him will receive the gift of tongues.

*Mark 16:15-18 ESV And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”*

Many sermons on the Great Commission focus on the first part of Jesus’ promises and teach very little on tongues, the casting out of demons, or healing. The gift of tongues is available to anyone who has set aside their unbelief, past idol worship and wrong motives (Matthew 21:22<sup>52</sup>, Ezekiel 14:7-8<sup>53</sup>, James 4:3<sup>54</sup>). The “how, when and if” we receive the gift of tongues will be determined by the Holy Spirit. He

is the One who distributes God's spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4<sup>55</sup>).

That day on the boat, I learnt that tongues is also a way to delight my Father, who is Spirit and speaks an unlimited number of spiritual languages. He is the supreme Multi-linguist.

## THE ANGEL WORKSHOP

The email subject read, "Invitation to angelic revelation workshop". It was an invitation from Bouncy to attend a workshop hosted by someone whom she recently met at a Christian conference. Bouncy's new friend claimed to have direct access to God's angels.

Even before our prayer together, Bouncy had been investigating all things related to the Holy Spirit. She devoured the entire Bible and numerous books written by various Christian authors, several of which talked about experiencing God supernaturally. She had started attending free-spirited Christian events, where participants would report of witnessing gold dust, miraculous healings and prophecies.

It appeared that Bouncy was ascending spiritual ladders to Heaven that I had no handle on. Why were some people able to ascend into the sensational and mystical while I was stuck at the bottom of the ladder named "ordinary and well worn"? It made me question my faith. Was there something wrong with me? Did I not have enough faith?

In her quest, Bouncy had also asked God to reveal everything about His Kingdom to her – including what His angels looked like and what they did. It was not long after that a Chinese lady randomly approached her during one of those free-spirited events she attended and asked if she had asked God about His angels. This lady claimed that she has been instructed by God to teach Bouncy everything she personally knew about angels; including how to communicate with them, where they go, how they travel and how to get angels to help you in ministry. Convinced that this lady was God's answer to her prayer, Bouncy excitedly invited her friends to join her in her "training". All we needed to do was to pay a deposit before the workshop.

The idea of speaking with angels was exciting and fascinating.

After all, angels have played significant roles in major events recorded in the Bible. Yet something just felt a bit off and disconcerting. Were we seeking to move into spiritual territory that is not ours to pursue? Was this a spiritual trap, a financial scam or a genuine revelation? I couldn't tell and knew that I had to pray and seek my Instructor for His wisdom first.

All I got was a sense of dread and deep discomfort. The Bible never teaches us to seek to communicate with angels. It is the Lord who sends His angels to do His will. They are not for our summoning at our will. We are warned against anyone who is into the “worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind and not holding fast to the Head” (Colossians 2:18-19<sup>56</sup>). We are to only seek and worship the Head Himself, God the Father. Jesus did not die for us to become fascinated with angels, He died to connect us directly with God. We are to actively pursue spiritual gifts for the sake of God's Kingdom (1 Corinthians 14:1<sup>57</sup>), but speaking with angels is not one listed as a spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit. What if this lady was speaking with fallen angels (evil spirits) dressed as angels of light (2 Corinthians 11:14-15<sup>58</sup>)?

Moreover, why was Bouncy's new friend charging for her teaching? Are we commanded to not profit financially from teaching God's Word (2 Corinthians 2:17<sup>59</sup>)?

Before meeting up with Bouncy to voice my concerns, I prayed to check my heart; that I was not being envious or a stiff-necked kill-joy. Thankfully, I wasn't the only one with the same concerns. With the loving counsel of a few friends, Bouncy eventually decided to cancel the workshop and drop all contact with her new friend.

## CHASING SIGNS AND WONDERS

After the Holy Spirit started to teach me about visions, words of knowledge and prophecies, I was hungry to know how I could “switch on” His spiritual gifts 24/7. Like some movie character who stumbles upon some hidden superpower, I felt obliged like Bouncy to seek out

greater knowledge in order to tap into God's superpowers too. I poured over books and sermons from well-known Christian miracle-workers to uncover the "formula".

One of the gifts I really wanted to learn how to "switch on" was the gift of miraculous healing. In the midst of all that searching, God showed me that it is Him who works miracles at His appointed time, not when I seek to switch it on or off. His gifts and miracles are not at my disposal, they are at His. In fact, He has shown me that the only "formula" is to have simple faith.

Andrew and I met Nicky when he spoke at an outreach event named Alpha in 2016. A martial arts instructor, Nicky has a number of national and world titles to his name. Towards the end of his speech, some of us asked if we could bless him with a prayer. He said okay and informed us that he was about to go for surgery for a torn shoulder in a few days. Could we please pray for smooth recovery of his shoulder after surgery? None of us knew the "formula" to pray for healing and we certainly felt under-prepared. Some had never even prayed for a stranger before. So we simply laid our hands on Nicky's broad muscular shoulders, praised God and asked, "Father, please heal Nicky's shoulder in Jesus' name." It was short and sweet, nothing elaborate, dramatic or in the least bit impressive.

It wasn't until two years later that we heard that Nicky had spoken at another church event. He stood before an audience of a few hundred men and testified that he didn't think much of the prayer either. But when he went home after Alpha that day, he realised his shoulder had been healed and no longer required surgery. It was such a great encouragement and reminder that God answers our humble prayers even when our faith is as tiny as a mustard seed (Matthew 17:20<sup>60</sup>).

## CHAPTER 4



# HANDS ON TRAINING

*Deuteronomy 18:9-12 ESV “When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations... anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord. And because of these abominations the Lord your God is driving them out before you.*

My Instructor started my training in 2013 by giving me opportunities to facilitate classes at church. Beside the necessary Bible knowledge I had to build up, these were intensive training grounds for me to learn how to start to care for other human beings, even those I would normally shy away from. Being a highly introverted person, strangers, big groups and boisterous extroverts can be a real challenge for me. I would much rather be up on a mountain wandering around in nature or floating in the sea just staring up at the sky. My Instructor knew that I could not hide in my little world if I was to serve Him. I have found that when you follow Jesus, you don't get to choose whom you are called to love. God chooses them for you because He knows exactly who it is that will stretch your heart and exercise your spiritual muscles.

The next thing He did was to call me into making disciples. I

was sitting in church one Sunday morning glancing through the weekly announcements when I saw that there was a new series of classes for women. I thought to myself, “Ha! That’s something I would never do. Who wants to sit around and talk with other women about their issues? That’s so boring. Ew.”

Then my Instructor spoke to my spirit. “Jennifer, you will start a new women’s discipleship group.” I couldn’t believe what I heard. My heart sank and I silently responded with a series of questions, “Father, my fleshly reaction is to reject this but I know that all Your plans are good, so okay. But who will be in the group? What study material should we use? Where it will be held? Which day of the week we should meet? I will need You to sort these questions out for me first please.”

I finished that prayer feeling quite smug. I was convinced that I had just deftly put off this highly unappealing idea by giving God some practical obstacles to overcome first. But I found God never has any trouble executing His will. As you can imagine, all these logistics were sorted out in no time at all. Argh.

My first discipleship group met at a bridal gown showroom on Wednesday evenings. Its location was the most convenient for all six of us. In fact, its proprietor joined us and we formed the group named PTL, short for Praise The Lord. Surrounded by lace gowns, satin dresses, sample laces and mirrors everywhere, we huddled together to share life and encourage one another in our journeys with God. It was in this group that I began to practise some of the things I had been learning about.

## **FISH BALLS AND PAPER**

The group had already been meeting for a few months when I sat down with Sally for dinner at a local Chinese restaurant before our weekly PTL gathering. The tables were packed so tightly together that you could see what everyone else was eating. I ordered my usual fish ball noodles. Sally choose a veggie dish.

At that point in time, I was feeling a bit out of my depth with PTL, having never discipled anyone before. I had hoped to bring Sally

alongside me to help co-mentor the other girls. Still in her twenties, Sally was very mature in her faith. She accepted Jesus as her Saviour very young, was very familiar with God's Word, and was clearly blessed with spiritual gifts. She had even served as a missionary before she began work as an architect. Yet something seemed to hold her back and I wasn't sure what it was. This was one reason I had asked her out for dinner that night; to get to know her better and see if she would be open to helping me with the group. I don't recall the details of our conversation but I do know that I kept getting the same image over and over again in my head as we were talking – a picture of crumpled pieces of paper in Sally's hand. But I hesitated mentioning anything to her and kept quiet about the vision.

Later that night during PTL, I finally plucked up the courage to share my vision during the girls' prayer time. "Sally, I don't know why but I get a sense of you holding crumpled pieces of paper in your hand that God is asking you to throw away." Sally stayed silent. Embarrassed that I might have made a mistake, I apologised and made some lame comment about sometimes seeing strange things.

The next week during our group prayer time at PTL, Sally began to laugh joyfully. Then, just as suddenly, her laughter turned to an outburst of tears. Shocked, I sat there stunned. What just happened? Sally was usually the most mature, calm and collected one in the group. Why was she now crying so hopelessly? I softly asked her if there was anything she wanted to confess. After a pause, she exclaimed, "I hate myself!" Now I was even more stunned.

We tenderly asked Sally if she knew the source of her self-hatred. She confessed to having battled with it for years without any victory. Sensing that she needed to be delivered from some sort of spiritual oppression, we arranged a private prayer session for her a few weeks later.

Before we met again, I made sure I finished reading Derek Prince's book, *They Shall Expel Demons*, and asked around for a sample inner healing or spiritual deliverance checklist. I also asked Father to please inspire me and make up for everything that I did not know. Together with another prayer partner, we chatted and prayed with Sally for about three hours.



In spite of my lack of experience and skills, I could sense Father's loving warm presence throughout, even though we could not see Him physically. And of course, He set Sally free from her self-hatred.

God has never let my foolish and sinful nature stand in the way of His power and blessings for others. I will let Sally tell you her story.

## SALLY'S STORY

*"I put my faith in Jesus Christ at age five and I first heard Him speak to me at age thirteen. He told me "Sally, I love you, and I have plan for your life, a big plan." I have diligently sought after His plan ever since. I've been so humbled and in awe at how He has moved me geographically and spiritually to places I would have never imagined - further and further from my hometown, closer and closer to Him.*

*But there was always something in the way - something hindering me from living fully the joy and freedom I was proclaiming Christ gives. Deep down, I struggled with self-hatred and I didn't know why. For the majority of my life, I used my perfectionism to counteract it. But that only served the devil another foothold to accuse me of perpetual failure. I've been stuck in physical ailments and deep depression, opted out of ministry and career opportunities, and done terrible things to my own body to "punish" myself - from binge eating horrible food all the way down to suicidal thoughts and cutting my wrists. When the accusations came with such intensity, it was like someone or something else was taking over my thoughts and actions - not me, and certainly not Christ.*

*I kept praying desperately for freedom from this internal torture and God kept telling me to surrender not only to Him, but to confess to faithful friends the depth of my battle, past and present. Every time I considered confessing to others, I convinced myself I did not need community to help me break through - I just wanted it to be between me and God. So, the battle only continued.*

*When Jennifer saw the crumpled pieces of paper in my right hand, I knew they were all those feelings and acts of self-hatred that I had once written down in a journal, torn out, crumpled up and thrown away, in the hope that that symbolic act would set me on the path to freedom. But it did not. I was still carrying them around in my heart and I was too ashamed to tell her.*

*The day I finally confessed my battle to my sisters-in-Christ at PTL was so*

*freeing. Not scary, not shameful, just freeing. They subsequently organised a private prayer session for me.*

*On the morning of Good Friday in 2013, we met to pray for spiritual breakthrough. I shared my life story, confessing all the dirt and joys. From what I told them, they continued to ask more detailed questions about my life events, my family history, and where I saw Christ in my life. It became obvious that there was a generational sin running deep in my family: a spirit of accusation.*

*My maternal grandmother had dabbled in various forms of New Age and witchcraft practices over her lifetime. In my childhood, I remember her using crystals for power and healing. I perceived how she seemed to control and manipulate people around her - particularly my grandpa and my mom, and my mom in turn would do the same. I remember them often putting me in the middle to manipulate each other. There was a lot of blaming, shaming, and self-victimizing. I sort of always knew this but was never able to connect the dots and spear it head-on until then. I could suddenly see so clearly how it was Satan's number one strategy of attack. Because I am a child of God, I knew I could take up my God-given authority through the Holy Spirit to pray in the name of Jesus, to command the spirits of accusation and witchcraft to be bound, to leave me and never to return.*

*During the prayer, I felt the presence of God lifting me up in a way I never have experienced before; so connected, light, full, free, joyful, peaceful, complete, and excited! I was laughing and crying in joy, and felt free to pray in tongues without any barrier. The prophecies and words of encouragement given through the ladies during our prayer time were also strong affirmations of what God has already hinted to me.*

*I had previously been asking God for the gift of intercession, to teach me how to pray, minister, and disciple people more effectively. This experience of freedom allowed me to be more vulnerable and loving in community, to have more understanding and empathy for others' struggles, and to be even more passionate about helping set other people free.*

*I began to learn more and help facilitate similar prayers - some planned, some spontaneously led by Holy Spirit! Growing my understanding of the spiritual realities that we cannot see with our eyes has helped me not only minister to other believers, but also to confidently use my spiritual armour in my own life, and to share the Truth of Jesus across various world cultures and religious backgrounds as God opens new doors to new peoples."*

## WITCHCRAFT

Being from America, Sally's grandmother was probably a practising witch, or a wiccan or a druid, depending on the branch of witchcraft she was following. It doesn't take long researching online to find out about their basic beliefs and practices.

Similar to characters such as Harry Potter, real life witches cast spells, create their own potions, have secret codes and use wands. They will create altars and collect objects to be used in witchcraft, such as crystals, stones, herbs, pictures and personal artefacts. Their rituals include chanting, meditation and drawing circles on the ground for spell casting. They believe in the power of different seasons, the moon, certain dead people and mystical signs. They call upon energies, spirits, deities and elements (all disguised names for demons) to execute their wishes.

People who practice witchcraft seek to fulfill or enforce their personal desires through extra-ordinary ways. This is the heart behind witchcraft; control, manipulation and self-idolatry.

Once Sally was able to identify the work of witchcraft in her life, the problems that besieged her all those years were removed through prayer in the powerful name of Jesus Christ. It was a deliverance so amazing to witness and so joyous to celebrate.

## THE PROFESSOR

I too have had my own run-ins with witchcraft, except within an Asian context. After my fortieth birthday, my body started to protest over the thousands of hours I had spent sitting down glued to my office desk over the years. I suffered from severe backache and would go to bed in pain, sleep uncomfortably, wake up exhausted, and go through the same cycle all over again. Sitting down for twenty minutes would send spasms of pain shooting up and down my legs. My neck and shoulders were always tense and sore. Migraines would constantly tear at my head. There was no escape from the dull soreness all across my body. I was desperate for a miracle.

Subsequently, I was introduced to a Chinese medicine doctor who practiced herbal treatments and bone-setting. His treatments also included sending electric currents through acupressure points on the body. His staff referred to him as “professor”.

Already in his late sixties, professor was always jovial and a lot fitter than I was. They told me that this was because he practised qigong, a type of breathing technique, which gave him the ability to keep up with the demands of his work. Indeed, professor was in high demand. It appeared that people would fly in from all over Asia in order to consult him. Professor was always able to “crack” my bones with great dexterity and address my physical discomforts instantly – until the pain came back in one or two weeks. Hence, I became a faithful follower of professor and signed on for a long-term course of treatments at his clinic.

One day, over a steak and fries lunch, I felt prompted by the Holy Spirit to tell a friend of mine about professor. Let’s call my friend, Eve. I had wondered if God was pleased that I kept spending tens of thousands of dollars on body treatments at professor’s clinic. Would God’s money not be better spent on extending His Kingdom on earth, rather than professor’s “kingdom” on earth?

Eve had been serving at a Chinese-speaking prayer ministry that delivers people from evil spirits and I was keen to share the storm of questions that had been gathering in my head from praying for other people. I had so little experience compared to her and felt as green as the peas on my plate next to this veteran.

She also knew a lot about qigong. “Eve, I go to this bonesetter who uses qigong. How exactly does this breathing technique work; that it improves health and strengthens the body?” A frown slowly formed on Eve’s forehead as she peered at me through her dark rimmed glasses. Eve explained that qigong is not merely a breathing technique but a spiritual discipline originating from Taoism. Those who practice qigong usually invite spiritual powers to give them the ability to accomplish things they would normally not be able to on their own human strength. Qigong is a form of Chinese witchcraft.

Shocked, I felt as if all the blood in my body had gone cold. I immediately dropped my fork and knife, and asked God to forgive me

for turning to this form of occult healing. I prayed to cut off all spiritual ties with professor, his clinic and his staff and renounced every omen they had ever spoken over my body. During that prayer, I saw a white mask showing a façade of goodness to the outside world. Behind that mask was dark, sooty blackness. There was true evil behind the mask. Little wonder I felt a heavy tension leave my body as I prayed. It was as if I could suddenly see clearly. For almost four years, I had been following a qigong master who promised healing but in reality, had manipulated and deceived me into financial enslavement to his clinic.

The next time my body started aching again however, I faced a real dilemma and temptation to dismiss my concerns about qigong as hocus pocus and rush to see the jovial professor again. I thank God that He gave me that vision of the mask to keep me sober-minded enough to resist (1 Peter 5:8-9<sup>61</sup>). I began to look into different ways to care for my body, and thank God that I have learnt to use home massage techniques that have resolved my body pains and saved me many more thousands of dollars at the professor's clinic.

An uncle of ours also experienced freedom from another form of enslavement to a clinic he visited. Let's call him uncle six. Only in his early sixties, Uncle six complained that he had not been able to remember things and had therefore, given up on reading the Bible. As Andrew and I prayed with him one time, the Holy Spirit revealed that there had been some form of mind control through chanting. Uncle six himself had never chanted, but he did consult a Chinese herbalist for many years. This healer broadcast Tibetan Buddhist chanting in his clinic all day long. Together with us, Uncle six prayed to cut spiritual ties with the healer and the clinic, and renounced all forms of chanting performed over his subconscious mind. As he did, he felt as if a veil had been removed from his mind and his memory slowly returned (2 Corinthians 3:14<sup>62</sup>).

Through these experiences, I began to see that our enemy, Satan, can hide behind things that look attractive, harmless or even beneficial on the outside. This is why there are numerous warnings in the Bible to stay alert and be on guard against deception (Luke 21:34-36<sup>63</sup>, Acts 20:31<sup>64</sup>, Ephesians 6:18<sup>65</sup>, 1 Peter 5:8<sup>66</sup>). When we fail to test the spirits behind the things of this world (1 John 4:1-6<sup>67</sup>) and unknowingly submit

to them, Satan can gain a foothold to infiltrate our minds and souls (Ephesians 4:27<sup>68</sup>). Like an invisible virus that attacks our weak spots, our enemy can only gain a foothold if we choose to remain ignorant or complacent. As 1 Thessalonians 5:5-6<sup>69</sup> cautions us, *“let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.”*

Praise God that He is always faithful and full of grace. Any time we humbly submit to our Heavenly Father and ask Him to release us from the traps we have fallen into, He will – even traps that have been laid for us by other people. A good example of this is from Isabella, who shares her testimony below.

### ISABELLA’S STORY

*“It was at a ladies church group that I learnt about the impact of our relationship with our parents on our relationship with God, the Father. After class, I volunteered myself to receive prayer. When I was asked to talk about my most significant memory, I had a really hard time remembering anything. Someone praying for me described a vision of my family having a meal together, which was one good memory I could confirm. But instead of enjoying the memory, I started bawling and grieving. It seemed I could only remember sad things from my childhood. Everything else was blocked. When I became mad at God and questioned Him where He was, a friend suggested we arrange a separate prayer time to dig deeper into my memories and invite the Holy Spirit to free the parts of my mind that could be under bondage.*

*One thing I realised was that I had to first break away from my family’s strong occult ties. Before I was born, my dad had a very good friend who practiced maoshan, which is considered the darkest form of Taoist black magic. My dad met this man through the police force back in the 80’s, when the force relied heavily on Chinese psychics and mediums to solve criminal cases. The friend worshipped the Monkey King and allowed his body to be a vessel for spirits. He communicated with them and invited them to enter other people’s homes or bodies to “fight and capture” other bad spirits. My family spent a lot of time with this friend, but strangely, I had no memory of this person or the time we spent together at all, until my mom told me about him.*

*My mom also told me that as a small girl, I used to see a territorial spirit*

*in our family home quite often and would get quite disturbed. This caused my family a lot of discomfort and worry. They were afraid that something bad could happen to me, such as poor health or even death. So, my dad invited his friend to come and use his black magic on me.*

*The friend seemed to see what I saw and advised my dad to make two tiny red houses for the spirit at the entrance of our house, one for the inside and one for the outside. My family had to light incense for these tiny spirit houses morning and night. There are also words written inside the houses, but I don't remember what they were. After these tiny houses are installed, mom said I didn't talk about seeing spirits at home anymore, but I know the fear was still inside me because I continued to feel that someone was watching me. I also had many bad nightmares. My family thought my dad's friend had done a great job in "saving" me. But it turns out that whatever this guy did actually created a blockage in my memories. A good part of my childhood memories was stolen from me.*

*The next time the ladies from the church group met with me, we prayed together to cut all ungodly spiritual ties with my dad's friend and everything that he had done in my life and my family's life, as well as every ungodly thing that my father practiced or even believed in as well. Afterward, I sat back and felt a great sense of peace, something I described at that time as feeling "empty". Everything was so quiet and slow. This is the first time I experienced peace in my heart, mind and soul and it felt very foreign.*

*The next morning, I asked God to show me my childhood. For one whole hour, I saw lots of happy memories vividly. It was almost like I was reliving them again, but from afar. It was my family's occult practices that put a lock on my sweet God-given memories."*

## MIND CONTROL

For thousands of years, man has explored various methods of mind control. Many people believe that if we can tap into some under-explored, hidden or subconscious potential of our brains, perhaps we can unleash some greater power and knowledge. The principle behind this sounds uncannily like what Satan told Eve in the Garden of Eden, "*You will not surely die... your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and*



*evil*” (Genesis 3:4-5<sup>70</sup>).

God has set certain limits for mankind. We can explore distant parts of the universe and the deepest seas but when we seek to cross boundaries for personal power, we are in essence, rebelling against our Creator. This is why 1 Samuel 15:23<sup>71</sup> calls rebellion a form of witchcraft. Witchcraft is not just about Harry Potter casting spells. It boils down to a heart that seeks to enforce our will over God’s. It is essentially about control and manipulation.

The Bible goes further in Romans 8:5-6<sup>72</sup> to say that we invite spiritual death when we set our minds on finding answers through our own human ways, our flesh, rather than through the Holy Spirit. Those who set their minds on the Holy Spirit find life and peace.

I was about to personally find out about the dangers of human mind control in a very painful way. One morning, I woke up to excruciating pain in my lower back. It was like nothing I had experienced before. The stabbing pain was so intense that I could not move. In desperation, I called out to God, “Father, what is this? Where is this pain from? How do I pray?” Immediately, I got the word, “witchcraft”.

With some effort, I prayed and commanded all spirits related to witchcraft to leave me in Jesus’ name. There was instant relief thereafter. Then I remembered that the day before, I prayed for a lady who used hypnotism to search her memories and seek to know the “truth” about her past. I had neglected to ask God for discernment and protection first before I offered to pray for her.

This episode sent me on a quest to understand hypnotism. Historical records point to hypnotism being first used in sorcery and temple healings in ancient times. When we are hypnotised or put into a trance, our ability to judge or censor anything is switched off. This is how some psychics and mediums, such as Isabella’s father’s Taoist friend, channel spirits to work through them. We effectively lose control and are neither alert nor sober-minded, as 1 Peter 5:8<sup>73</sup> tells us to be. We are unable to guard our minds against evil spirits that are now free to hijack our thought processes.

In an effort to help their patients, mental healthcare professionals have adopted the use of hypnotism in spite of its occult origins. Sadly,



we cannot hope to pick up practices that are rooted in witchcraft and not invite the influence of witchcraft spirits. It is one of Satan's many scams and deceptions within healthcare and healing practices.

## WITCHCRAFT AMONGST CHRISTIANS

In all its forms, witchcraft is very alluring because it promises us good things; healing, love, acceptance and blessings, things that God also promises us. Witchcraft entices us with the same lines that the devil used on Eve, "Just try this. It will improve your current condition. Ignore God's Word. There are no consequences to worry about." At its core, witchcraft is about self-determination and self-government. Once we turn to any power other than God, we are in reality, falling for the oldest lie in the Bible and bowing before evil spirits.

Over and over again, God warns us against participating in witchcraft. Exodus 22:18<sup>74</sup>, Deuteronomy 18:9-12<sup>75</sup>, Leviticus 19:26<sup>76</sup>, Leviticus 20:6<sup>77</sup>, Leviticus 20:27<sup>78</sup>, 2 Kings 21:6<sup>79</sup>, Micah 5:12<sup>80</sup>, 2 Chronicles 33:6<sup>81</sup>, Isaiah 47:8-14<sup>82</sup>, Galatians 5:19-21<sup>83</sup>, and Revelation 21:8<sup>84</sup> are just some verses that repeatedly warn us against witchcraft and all of its guises; magic arts, fortune telling, tarot cards, face reading, horoscopes, zodiac signs, lucky charms, consulting the dead, ancestor worship, psychics, mediums, fengshui, soothsaying and so forth.

Once we turn to Jesus, we must repent of all past or current witchcraft. The early believers in Ephesus felt convicted that they had to make a clean break with their dark arts. They repented and came out publicly to burn their personal witchcraft artifacts which would have been worth millions of dollars in today's terms. Acts 19:19<sup>85</sup> says that *"a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver."* What a statement that must have made to everyone, both for followers of Jesus and otherwise. There is only one Master and Power that believers submit to, and that is God.

I am thankful that when I rededicated my life to Jesus, my church at that time required every church member to confess and repent of past

witchcraft activities. Yet I have not come across such a requirement in numerous churches I have visited.

Many Christians today remain unaware of its spiritual dangers and inadvertently continue to indulge in witchcraft, falling for its many disguised names and rituals. In the Old Testament, the book of Hosea shows that God lamented over His own people and said, *“my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”* (Hosea 4:6<sup>86</sup>) and noted that *“the more they were called, the more they went away from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images”* (Hosea 11:2<sup>87</sup>). God noted *“My people inquire of a piece of wood, and their walking staff gives them oracles. For a spirit of whoredom has led them astray, and they have left their God to play the whore. They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar, and terebinth, because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters play the whore, and your brides commit adultery”* (Hosea 4:12-13<sup>88</sup>).

Don't some of these practices sound all too familiar, particularly for those of us born into cultures where witchcraft is part of our daily routines and family traditions? Just as God's lamented over His own people in Hosea, is He also lamenting over us too?

## WHY SO SURPRISED?

It is heart-wrenching to see that witchcraft has not only been re-packaged for our clinics but also our schools, homes, workplaces and the media. It has become so mainstream and pervasive that we have become numb to it.

Children adore wizards like Harry Potter and happily dress up for Halloween. Blockbuster movies glorify magical powers and sorcery. Just about every newspaper and magazine has a horoscope. People tattoo their bodies with mystic symbols, without understanding their symbolism. Organic health brands promote mysticism. Hypnotic new age chants are marketed as soothing background music. Lucky charms are bought to enhance well-being. Fortune tellers, mediums, and psychics offer prophecies, omens and prescriptions on life. Fengshui is widely used in both residential as well as commercial complexes. People dabble

in ouija boards and tarot cards for “fun” or pray to their ancestors for blessings, without realising that they are not communicating with their family members but demons (1 Corinthians 10:20-22<sup>89</sup>). Did Jesus ever practise or advocate such things?

Even sororities and fraternities have picked up rituals that emulate wiccan practices.

Curled up on my living room sofa, the quiet, docile and sad young lady had come over for spiritual counsel and prayer. Let’s call her Josephine. One would not have guessed that this attractive and talented Christian lady struggled with dark suicidal thoughts every day.

“The moment I open my eyes every morning,” she said, “a voice tells me that the day is going to be meaningless and I should just ask God to let me die. What’s the point of living?”

As she related her life story, it seemed that she found greatest fulfillment in being a “big sister” at a sorority during her university days. Coming from a family that constantly abused her emotionally, Josephine cherished the acceptance, recognition and validation among the “sisters” she met at the sorority.

The more she described her contributions to her sorority house, the more alarmed I became. Many of the sorority rituals sounded just like wiccan rituals. She spoke of leading initiation rites, blindfolded and in complete darkness, holding candles, reciting strange mystical songs, bowing before an altar, as well as pledging oaths to the sorority house, its guiding spirit, its creed and its members for life. She sang songs with lyrics that included Bible verses but that also hailed a “goat” and the power of the moon to rule over the sorority. She was even given a new sorority name in honour of the goat.

Unlike Sally, whose grandmother had been a wiccan, Josephine had unwittingly participated in witchcraft rituals due to a lack of knowledge. She had given her soul over to ungodly spirits through her oaths and continued devotion

When she noticed the horrified look on my face, Josephine uncharacteristically smirked at me and laughed out loud in a lower, menacing, and mocking voice and said, “Why so surprised, Jennifer?”

It was as if she was channeling another voice and it was no longer

Josephine speaking. I prayed silently, “You can mock me, witchcraft spirits, but you can’t win because God’s Spirit is here with me. So just shut up in Jesus’ name.” Immediately, the spirits went quiet. Josephine regained her consciousness and spoke normally again.

When I asked her if she was aware that her voice had changed just a few seconds earlier, Josephine hadn’t noticed a thing. I realised that for Josephine to be set free from the voice that tormented her with suicidal thoughts every day, she had to repent of her past life in the sorority, cut all ties with it, and allow Jesus to truly be Lord and Master of her life – not just in words but more importantly, in her heart. Josephine struggled with that choice and left without turning to Jesus that day.

## CHAPTER 5

# WHAT'S *THAT* SMELL?

*2 Corinthians 2:15-17 ESV For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?*

“Hello, Ginger.” Ginger had just beaten me in our race to the front door as Andrew arrived home. So he greeted her first, again!

We have three cats, Ginger, Checkers and Pepper, with three very distinct personalities. Ginger will joyously greet anyone who walks through the front door, Checkers will coolly ignore you until she’s hungry, and Pepper will patiently follow me everywhere. All our cats are generally well behaved. This particular evening, however, they were falsely accused for something they all did not do.

“What’s *that* smell?” Andrew asked indignantly as he put down his work bag. “Can’t you smell it? The smell is so strong. One of the cats must have peed in the living room!”

I had just finished praying with someone in our home and was feeling quite drained, so I had been resting in the study and hadn’t notice the offensive odour until then. It seemed to bother Andrew a lot more than it did me. The next thing I knew, my husband was on his knees, still in his business suit, sniffing the carpet. He continued to crawl around

the floor of the living and dining room areas, with the three cats and me watching his bizarre behaviour with some fascination. He didn't find any incriminating evidence of his feline accusations and became even more frustrated.

Our cats have never urinated outside their litter box. If they had done so that night, the smell would have originated from a specific location. This smell just permeated throughout the living room. There was no escaping it nor any plausible explanation for how it got there either. It was just there.

I made a mental note for myself for the evening. "Andrew is not his normal self. He is very agitated today. Better not push his buttons tonight. Keep the conversation light!"

Andrew continued to be annoyed for the rest of the evening until we went to bed. As I closed my eyes and recalled everything that had happened that evening, I found myself unable to sleep. It's like when you plunge into a pool expecting to splash into refreshing cool water only to find yourself hovering just above it. "Father, why can't I sleep?" Then, with my eyes still closed, I saw the word "DIVINATION" in capital letters.

Startled, I turned to check if Andrew was still awake so that I could ask if he knew what that word meant. I couldn't recall having read the word before. He was already asleep.

I had a hunch that my Instructor was telling me that this was where the smell had originated from. So by faith, I walked out to the living room and said out loud, "Spirit of divination, I command you to leave this home in Jesus' name!" Immediately, there was an unperceivable swoosh, as the foul smell was expelled and a wonderful aroma replaced it. I would describe the new fragrance as a sweetly scented wood, similar to sandal wood.

This swift and immediate change in the atmosphere startled me. What just happened? Was this the reason why Andrew was so unusually irritated earlier? Was an evil spirit stirring up trouble in our home?

I walked back into our bedroom and just for good measure, decided to pray over Andrew too. At that moment, he opened his eyes. Now it was his turn to be startled. "What are you doing!?" Andrew exclaimed.

Excited, incredulous and bewildered, I explained what had just happened. “Go to the living room and smell it for yourself!” This time, we both walked out and noted the fragrant aroma. Andrew was amazed at the significant change. To ensure that we were not imagining it, he went on his knees again to sniff around the flat. The cats were exonerated from their false charges.

I grabbed my mobile phone to look up the meaning of that strange word. Divination is another word for fortune telling. Then it dawned on me that the lady from church who had come over for prayer that evening had dabbled into fortune telling and witchcraft most of her life. Let’s call her Maggie.

Maggie had also consulted spiritual masters for prophecies on her life based on face and birthdate readings, “played” on ouija boards to communicate with spirits and still checked her horoscope readings using a mobile phone app every day. As she repented to God for consulting demons and cast them out, I forgot to instruct her to command them to leave my home and bow before Jesus. Those spiritual pests were still hanging around until I sent them fleeing. That was the first and last time I ever forgot to instruct people to command spirits to leave and submit to Jesus.

## METAPHORS

As a teenager, I asked a youth pastor why it was so hard to understand what the Bible says. The answer I got was that the Bible is full of descriptive or metaphorical details and that I should not get too caught up with them. Besides, many theologians had different interpretations of what the Bible says.

So when the apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:15-16<sup>90</sup> that we are the aroma of Christ and the fragrance of life, for instance, I was not supposed to take it literally. Three different people could read the Bible and understand the word, fragrance, in three different ways. There was no absolute truth.

His convenient response only brought on more confusion; so

which parts of the Bible am I supposed to believe as literal and which do I dismiss as metaphorical? His reply may have saved himself from answering my many questions but it set me rolling down a slippery slope of unbelief. If God loves me and the Bible is His authoritative Word, why would He make it so tricky and unclear? Why were there theological debates? Why were there so many church denominations? They seemed to preach different conditions for me to qualify for Heaven. So which denomination would lead me to eternity with God and which one to eternity in hell? Several confusing incidents later, my initial euphoria for Jesus slowly morphed into a disdain for Christianity. I came to see it as a deadpan religion with no absolute truths; it just comprised a bunch of different people trying to define God based on the version that they liked the best.

I may have read many amazing reports about Jesus' followers in the Bible but I didn't see any of those things happening around me. Instead, I was expected to conform to people's expectations of how often I went to church and how well dressed or behaved I was. There was no radical life transformations, no power to overcome sin and no true joy, just quite a bit of gossip, materialism, and segregation. The lack of faith I witnessed around me eventually killed mine.

I said to God, "Sorry God, I've tried church and don't like it. The Christians I have met are hypocritical and dull. I don't think this is the life I heard that Jesus promised us nor is it the life that I want either." So in my teens, I vehemently marched away from church. Thankfully, God never gave up on me even though I gave up on Him during those lost years. I dedicated my life to Jesus when I was twenty-seven. This time, I wanted God for Himself.

## **LILIES, CEDAR AND JUNIPER**

After God healed me of my father wound in such a transformative way, I started to read the Bible with new eyes and went directly to the Author Himself for my answers. This changed everything for me.

Over my convoluted personal history with different church



systems, I developed different caricatures for God. I felt like I knew many things about the most famous Being in the whole universe but didn't really know Him personally. I knew what God wanted me to do, but I struggled to know who He truly is; His character, intentions and qualities.

I was confused by many things I heard at church, such as, "Holy Spirit, please come," "God showed up as we prayed," or "Holy Spirit, please fill this place" or "God, please listen to our prayers", as if God mysteriously came and went and that I was very lucky if He happened to be around long enough to stumble upon me and my prayers. I didn't know how to examine the things I heard about God and just swallowed everything without chewing on it first and checking if it lined up with God's Word. I went along with whatever seemed popular and fitted in with my world views. Soon, I had spiritual indigestion. I became confused and nervous about praying. How can I make my prayers important enough for God to pay me any attention? My prayers were repetitive and filled with doubt and wishful thinking. If God answered my prayers, it felt like a miracle.

In certain churches, God sounded harsh and punitive while in some others, God was like my buddy who granted any wish. Over time, I grew to see God the Father as powerful, judging, and distant; Jesus as compassionate, kind and caring; and the Holy Spirit, as supernatural, close and helpful. It was the only way I could reconcile all these caricatures of God. The flip side was that it became impossible to develop an intimate relationship with Someone who has multiple personalities.

Studying the Bible for myself changed everything.

The Bible showed me that Jesus is the exact imprint of God the Father (Hebrews 1:3<sup>91</sup>) and can only do what He sees the Father do (John 5:19<sup>92</sup>). The Holy Spirit is His life-giving spiritual presence in us (1 Corinthians 3:16-17<sup>93</sup>). God has only One Personality. Like light, He is everywhere and holds the entire universe in His hands. He is supremely powerful and holy, yet extremely intimate and personal. Like the photons of light in my body, His Spirit is in me and holds my existence together.

After these misconceptions cleared up, I could perceive God more clearly and pray much more boldly. So I asked God, "When Paul

referred to the aroma of Christ, was it a metaphor or an actual smell he was describing – like what I experienced? What would You smell like if You chose to reveal Yourself through a fragrance?”

God did not answer me instantly but He did answer. One year later, as I was in the middle of my daily Bible reading, my heart practically stopped. In Hosea 14, God used cedar trees and junipers to describe the fragrance He causes His people to give off. “Cedar wood! I had smelt God’s fragrance of choice that night at home!”

*Hosea 14:4-6,8 NIV “I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; his young shoots will grow. His splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon... I am like a flourishing juniper; your fruitfulness comes from me.”*

Shortly after, Father brought those verses in Hosea 14 even more vividly to life. One ordinary evening, I was in bed dozing off when I heard the Holy Spirit softly say, “Do you smell me?” With my eyes still closed, I started sniffing the air. It felt as if I was in the middle of a sweet scented wooded forest. “Yes Father, I do.” He softly said, “I want you to know that I’m with you even when you’re sleeping.” Wow! Like a little child nestled in her Father’s arms, I curled up and grinned.

Another time, we were in the car with Andrew’s mother and uncles, all of whom are Christians. We were on the way to a family funeral and had already been riding in the car for about 30 minutes. Out of the blue, a light sweet aroma permeated throughout the vehicle. It was as if someone had opened a bottle of perfume. “Wow, do you smell that!” The rest commented how sweet the smell was. I quietly replied, “I think God wants us to know that He is with us.”

Yet another time, I was with some ladies who had been sharing testimonies together and praising God. As we ended the session with a worship song, every lady sang her heart out. The scent of sweet lilies wafted around us. They asked excitedly, “Is it the Holy Spirit? Is it the Holy Spirit?” as they investigated each corner of the room with their

noses, checking each other's bags and even sniffing the rubbish bin. Yes of course, He is always with us.

I witnessed this again not long after. One time, a young man came forward for prayer and inner healing of his parent wounds. As we sat and prayed, the Holy Spirit led this brother-in-Christ to confess all his suppressed emotions; that he had felt disappointed, alone and fearful most of his childhood. As the childhood pain re-surfaced, he asked God to comfort him and assure him that He was with him during those growing up years. With eyes wide open in astonishment, the young man asked us, "Do you smell something sweet, like strawberries?" We confessed that we didn't but I smiled and told him to enjoy the sweet, comforting presence of God.

## OUR NEW NAME FROM GOD

I have found that God is big enough to listen to sincere confessions of doubt, desperate pleas for confirmations, and angry emotional outbursts. He not only accepts them, He uses these times to draw us closer to Him. Most of all, God does not shy away from requests for greater revelation, especially when they pertain to His Word.

One time, the same ladies who experienced the scent of sweet lilies were discussing Revelation 2:17<sup>94</sup>, where God says that He will give anyone who conquers falsehood a new name. We all wondered if this was literal.

Do we all get new names once we turn fully to Jesus? God answered our collective question through one of the ladies. Let us call her Tiffany. Here is her story.

### TIFFANY'S STORY

*"In a moment of difficulty, I asked the Lord in prayer "What do you think of me?" I saw a shining star rotating on my forehead, and the words "morning star" came to my mind. At the time I found this so confusing, that I put that aside in my memory.*

*For all of my adult life, I have lived very cautiously, anxious that I might make a wrong decision. Though God put in me great visions for what I could do for Him, I always held back and procrastinated. I thought, "What if I'm not cut out for this? What if I'm not good enough? What if I do or say something wrong? What if this is the wrong way? They are going to call me out."*

*After not being able to sleep restfully for several days one week, I shared with a group of brothers and sisters-in-Christ who decided to pray for me at the end of our meeting. During our prayer time, my sisters sensed a dark figure by my bed. When we asked God what this was, the Holy Spirit revealed that this is a spirit of fear that has been guiding my life. Though I have the Holy Spirit in me, I was still living with a fear of failure. This opened my eyes to the fact that I wasn't being discerning by holding back. Rather, I was afraid of failing.*

*Once I commanded the spirit of fear to leave me in Jesus' name and declared that I will be guided by God alone, one of my sisters was prompted to ask God what my heavenly name is. She received the name "Esther" for me, while another thought she heard "star". In addition, they saw that God had given me a beautiful crown of flowers on my head to remind me of Him. For me, this symbolised a blessed turning point from my old fear-led self to my new faith-led self.*

*At home, I researched the name, Esther. To my surprise, I found that Esther is in fact Persian for "star" (setareh). One source suggested that this name was given to Esther (of the Book of Esther in the Bible) because she was as beautiful as the morning star. This moved me to tears because of what happened a few months ago when I asked God what He thought of me. Now I know that God has called me Esther because to Him, I am beautiful as a morning star. Whenever I am tempted to hold back in fear, I am reminded by this memory to stand firm and walk with God. Praise Him!"*

## ALARM CLOCKS AND SONGS

God can communicate with His children through Bible verses, spiritual revelations and a sense of His peace and comfort. But this new phase of my journey has shown me that He works in other ways too, partly because I became bolder and bolder in asking Him questions.

It was the night before an important race that some church

friends had signed up for. Andrew and I wanted to go give them some moral support but I was struggling with the idea of a 5:30am wake up call. So I jokingly said, “Father, do You want me to be there for them tomorrow? If so, please wake me up on time.” After I had experienced God through my sense of smell, I wondered if He would communicate through my body clock too. The answer is yes. My body jolted up at 5:30am. The experiment worked! Since then, I simply ask Father to get me up on time for whatever He has planned for me the next day. One time, I was very deep in sleep when my toes wriggled so vigorously that I literally jumped up in bed, startled. To my amazement, I realised that my alarm clock did not go off and that I was nearly late for church.

Another time, Father got me out of bed to pray. For reasons unknown to me until today, I woke up at 1:30am and decided that it was a good time to check my mobile phone for messages. There was a string of messages from a friend about his wife. She had become drunk during an office outing and was now acting very bizarrely at home. She attacked her husband violently as he tried to pray for her. From his text messages, it emerged that the week before this happened, they had seen a marriage advisor who opened up conversations on the wife’s most traumatic memories without praying for her or inviting God to heal her. This has made her emotionally volatile. Once alcohol broke down her self-control, destructive thoughts overcame her mind and she attacked the very person she loved. I praise God that He got me to look at my phone that night, so that I could pray for some friends in need. The couple decided to stop seeing that particular counsellor afterwards.

The Holy Spirit also speaks to us in our dreams. One night, I saw Andrew flirting with a strange seductive woman. I experienced such intense emotional distress in my chest that I groaned out loud. Then I heard in my spirit, “It’s a lie from Satan, rebuke it.” Still fast asleep, I mustered up enough consciousness to say, “In Jesus’ name, be gone!” The dream vanished and I woke up. “Are you okay, honey? You were groaning so loudly that I woke up,” Andrew asked groggily. As I related the dream to him, we both burst out laughing at the absurdity of it. The dream itself, however, had felt so real and intense while I was still in it.

Another time, God brought back a long-lost memory so as to

encourage me. I was very nervous the first time I was asked to join a church prayer team to minister to a lady who was clearly tormented by evil spirits. She heard two voices in her head; one that cursed her and told her to commit suicide, and the other that reminded her of God's goodness. She spoke incessantly and her moods would swing from rage to depression. I could not shake off a sense of dread leading up to our appointment with her.

Two days prior to meeting her, I was at my desk working when the song named "Amazed" suddenly popped into my head. It was a Christian song I hadn't heard for ten years and it came out of nowhere. Its melody swirled in my mind and warmed my heart. I started to hum the tune when the meaning of the lyrics suddenly struck me.

"Lord, I'm amazed by You  
How You love me  
You paint the morning sky  
With miracles in mind  
My hope will always stand  
For You hold me in Your hand"

Father was sending a gentle and firm message that He would hold us in His hand as we prayed for the lady. The song continued in my head the next day as well. I arrived for the prayer session filled with joy and peace.

Soon, I began to learn from other friends that God reveals Himself through other wonderful ways too. Each time, it has been uplifting, constructive, and comforting. I will let them share their stories.

## VICKY'S STORY

*"I tend to give my 100% in everything. When I'm not sure I can do something perfectly, I feel stuck and can't move. I had been burdened by perfectionism for a long time. After sharing this with a friend, the Holy Spirit revealed to me that I believed in myself more than in God."*

*Together with my friend, I prayed that my perfectionism would no longer be my life “commandment” and a curse, and that I will rely on God, not myself. Once the prayer started, I heard my friend pray quietly for me in tongues. Right away, I heard music. The music was very close by, as if it was playing just next to my ear. Very delightful, relaxing piano music. I felt like dancing and I had the imagery of dancing.*

*We were in a station at the time and I doubted whether the music came from the station. But it was playing right next to my ear. Suddenly, I remembered my cousin shared that she also heard music during prayer. She opened her windows to look for the source but found nothing. At this point, I realised the music came from the Holy Spirit. God was singing and dancing over me in my prayer. He must be happy that I had this breakthrough prayer.*

*Zephaniah 3:17 “The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*After the prayer, I asked my friend if she heard any music during prayer. She said no. I was shocked and very excited that the music was from God. The prayer was very powerful. Most importantly, I felt so relieved and free after the prayer. I have been burdened by my perfectionism for so long but it made a big difference when I confessed it out loud.*

*I thank God for this wonderful experience. God knows I am very noise-sensitive and would hear the music even in a noisy, chaotic environment like a station. God tailor-made this experience for me. Praise the Lord.”*

## JUSTIN’S STORY

*“For about a week, I had been having strange feelings of loneliness and hopelessness, as if nobody cared about me. I was not sure where those emotions came from and I was almost convinced that I did something wrong to distance myself from God. I tried to overcome them through prayer but those feelings wouldn’t go away. At one point, I asked myself if I truly loved God, but I couldn’t answer confidently – then I knew something was wrong.*

*A friend suggested that those emotions might not belong to me. God could*

*be revealing something to me about another person through my emotions. (One of my spiritual gifts is the gift of empathy.) I asked the Holy Spirit who that person was and He gave me a very clear answer to minister to my uncle.*

*Romans 12:15-16 ESV Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.*

*My uncle (let's call him KF) was the youngest son in the family, a black sheep that everyone despised. To most people, he was known for his failed marriages, reckless spending behavior and the huge debt that he accumulated over the past decade; but to God, he is His wounded, innocent child who had always been hungry for acceptance and love, which can only be satisfied through the love of Jesus Christ.*

*KF was diagnosed with colon and lung cancer six years before he passed away. During his last year, my family arranged for him to move in with us as he was too ill to take care of himself. I never liked having KF around because I felt like he was an ungrateful brat who only brought additional trouble to the family with his cancer. I judged him and refused to talk to him.*

*As much as I disliked the idea of talking to KF, I approached him and asked, "Are you lonely?" I was embarrassed by how bizarre my question sounded. As I was about to pinch myself, KF answered with a feeble "yes" in his shaky voice. My uncle teared up in sorrow and told me how he felt that nobody understood him and questioned why God "wanted" him to be sick. My heart broke for KF. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, we addressed many of his unbiblical life values, past sins and false beliefs about God. The conversation transitioned into a time for prayers of repentance and submission to Jesus Christ. My heart was instantly replaced with a sense of peace, hope and joy again. Praise God!*

*KF was hospitalised a few months later. Realising how critical his condition was, my mother asked me if I could pay him a visit, but I declined. I experienced a terrible headache that evening, and it seemed very abnormal to me. I prayed to God and he placed KF on my mind once again! It was clear to me this time that God wanted me to minister to KF, though not knowing what for.*

*While I was just hanging out at the hospital ward, the Holy Spirit impressed Isaiah 46:4 on my heart.*



*Isaiah 46:4 NLT “I will be your God throughout your lifetime— until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you.”*

*I knew that the verse wasn't just for me, but also for KF. I asked God to open an opportunity for me to share the verse with him. As I was adjusting the position of his pillow, KF told me, “I need God!” I didn't know what prompted him to say that, but I shared the verse as God instructed me. He teared up again. He felt comforted to know that God never left him. Praise God for His words of affirmation that speaks directly into our hearts!*

*KF passed away three weeks later. During his last few days, he had a growing desire to know God's words and wanted me to tell him more about Jesus and what heaven is like. I was blown away and incredibly moved to see his transformation in such a short period of time. As I was praying next to his bed, the word “victory” kept echoing in my head. How amazing is our Father, who specializes in making beauty out of ashes! KF is now reunited with our heavenly Father and Jesus, fully accepted and immersed in His perfect love. I praise God for allowing me to witness and take part in His wonderful work!”*

## SEE WHAT I HAVE TO PUT UP WITH?

When God created us in His image, He deposited His emotions into us; from love to grief, compassion to anger, and all the emotions in between. God is not nonchalant when we seek Him; He gladly welcomes us (Jeremiah 32:41<sup>95</sup>). God is not unresponsive when we sin; He is grieved (Genesis 6:6<sup>96</sup>). He is not unsympathetic when we suffer; He empathises with us (Matthew 9:36<sup>97</sup>). God is not unaffected when we worship idols or destroy one another; He is provoked to anger (Deuteronomy 9:20-21<sup>98</sup>).

Just as God uses our emotions to express empathy and His love for others, God may also allow us to have an insight into other people's emotions or His own emotions too. I was once at a Christian event where they were playing a music video. It was meant to be a song for us to sing along to, but I couldn't help myself but to stop and cringe. The glamorous looking choir in the video looked much more interested in

showing off and performing to their audience than they were in praising God with holy reverence. My heart sank.

Then I heard Father say, “See what I have to put up with?” At that moment, I could picture a person singing completely off-key, but with all his heart, and Father brimming with pleasure. It really humbled my heart as I made a mental note to never judge “atrocious” cringe-worthy singers again. It gave me a deeper insight into Father’s great love, benevolence and patience for us; that He would put up with us even when we make worship more about ourselves than about Him.

## **I’LL COME WITH YOU IF I SEE JESUS**

Another instance I witnessed Father’s great love, benevolence and patience was through the life-changing story of an ex-colleague. Let’s call him Barry. With Barry, I got to witness God’s sense of humour as well.

Barry was very serious and quiet when he was immersed in his work, but we would all know whenever he took a break because we would hear laughter ricochet around the office walls as he shared a joke with someone. Barry was always fun to be around but he seldom joined us for lunch because he kept to a strict religious vegetarian diet. Several times a week, he would visit a temple with his wife to pay his respects to the deities and ancestors their family worshipped. He wore lucky charms and carried his prayer beads wherever he went. Fully dedicated to his beliefs, he made it very clear to everyone that he would never allow anyone to “talk Jesus” with him. I worked with Barry for about a year before he left the company for another job.

Later, through the grapevine, I heard that Barry had become a fervent Christian. I was shocked. Barry, a Christian? He was one of the last people I would imagine becoming a Christian. When? How? Why? Where? I had quite a few questions I wanted to ask him. I soon had my opportunity when we were all reunited for a mutual friend’s wedding banquet.

Amidst the noise, the crowd of faces and the chilli-red wedding decorations, I slowly manoeuvred my way towards Barry and his wife to

say hello. “By the way, Barry, I heard you became a Christian. Could you please tell me your story?” Chuckling and beaming a radiant smile, Barry promised to share his story at our dinner table because several other ex-colleagues were also asking him the same question. “Okay,” I thought to myself, “I have to make sure I grab the seat next to Barry!”

After the first course of suckling pig arrived with great fanfare, Barry began his story. “First, I want you all to know that this story is not about me. It is about Jesus. And I don’t know why He chose to appear to me.”

Apparently, Barry’s childhood friend loved to “talk Jesus” with him and persisted in inviting him to attend church with him. One Saturday night, his friend invited him yet again. “I love my friend but to be honest, I also found him very annoying,” Barry confessed, “Why did he always have to talk about going to church? To politely brush him off, I jokingly promised him that I would go to church with him tomorrow if I saw Jesus that night.”

In the middle of his sleep that evening, Barry suddenly woke up to see a bright light come in through his high-rise apartment window and stand next to him. My ex-colleague began to tear up as he described how an overwhelming sense of peace and love filled the entire room. “It was Jesus! Jesus reached out His finger and touched my ear. He said to me, “Barry, you are My son. From now on, listen to Me.” And then He left the room through the wall.”

“What!” I thought to myself. “Jesus would appear to someone who rejected Him?”

“It was like I woke up twice; one was a physical awakening and the second was a spiritual one,” Barry continued. “And then I cried and cried tears of joy. My wife woke up and was very worried for me. She had never seen me cry before. When I told her I wanted to go to church with our friend, she became even more worried. She thought her husband had gone totally mad!”

“Wait, how did you know it was Jesus when you have never read the Bible before, Barry?” I had to ask. Was he aware that Jesus’ words echoed Matthew 17:5<sup>99</sup>? How did he know to reference that verse? Barry replied, “Jennifer, when you meet Jesus, you just know Him.” I’m glad

everything made sense to Barry, because it certainly didn't make sense to me. Once a burning Buddhist, Barry was now on fire for God. He had also led his wife to believe in Jesus and was going around sharing the gospel amongst his Chinese community in his dialect.

Recounting the rest of that fateful night, Barry said he couldn't wait to tell his good friend that Jesus had responded to his joke. He had seen Jesus! His wife had to stop Barry from calling his friend because it was only 3am. Poor Barry had to wait for three more agonising hours before he shared the good news with his friend at 6am.

Barry is not the only person I know who has seen Jesus face-to-face. I have heard first-hand accounts from other people in Singapore, Hong Kong, America and Israel who have personally seen our Saviour in all His radiant glory. None of them were Christians before that.

I would always ask them the same question, "How did you know it was Jesus?" The answer would remarkably always be the same. "Jennifer, when you meet Jesus, you just know it is Him."

One would think that anyone who meets Jesus face-to-face will be so moved by His love and convicted of their sins that they would humbly submit to God. This did not turn out to be the case in one of the stories. It reminded me how people can still choose to reject God in spite of powerful encounters with Him (John 12:37). This made me very sad. How could anyone still harden their hearts towards the one true and almighty God Himself?

I realised that it doesn't matter if we see Jesus with our eyes or not, it is much more critical to experience Him in our hearts. After all, Jesus had said, "*Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.*" (John 20:29<sup>100</sup>).

## CHAPTER 6



# A SOFTENING HEART

*James 1:5-6 ESV If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.*

I can't say I was born with the gift of empathy. Growing up, I learnt to become very emotionally detached, almost dead. My mother saved enough to qualify for government housing but had difficulty covering all our household expenses, so I began working to support myself at age fifteen. It didn't seem fair to me at that time, but I had learnt to just get on with life. Suppress the emotions, just get on with it and chase achievements.

When I became a Christian, I couldn't believe some of the things that people wanted to pray about. All their issues seemed petty and tedious. Silently, I would think to myself, "This is what you're whining about? If only you knew my story! Get a grip on yourself! Would you just get on with life? Oh my gosh!"

I was infinitely better at being sympathetic towards myself than others. (Later, I had to repent to Father for my attitude because from Luke 8:17<sup>101</sup>, I realised that everything that I conceal in my heart will be

made revealed one day. Cringe.)

Now, my prayers for family and friends are no longer the same as before. Prayers are more about the unseen rather than the seen; resolving people's motivations rather than their actions, confronting pain as well as sin, and confessing the past as much as the present.

I have learnt to ask more meaningful, probing questions and to listen better. Conversations centre on helping people understand themselves and what really drives them; their pain and their shame – rather than simply prescribing solutions. The more confessions I heard, the more my hard heart began to soften.

Although I do my best to look calm and collected on the outside as much as I can, there have been countless times I have secretly panicked on the inside when I didn't have the slightest clue about how to help someone. Each person has such unique needs.

Numerous times, I have been completely speechless and stumped. Each time, I call out to my Instructor for the wisdom and invite Him to speak through me (Luke 12:12<sup>102</sup>, James 1:5<sup>103</sup>). It is in these moments that I can literally feel my heart start to radiate compassion. I start to speak with profound tenderness and indescribable love. God always answers our cries for help and salvation (1 John 5:14-15<sup>104</sup>).

I found that He is committed to our salvation, not our condemnation (John 3:17<sup>105</sup>). Our Heavenly Father gently helps us navigate around and unwind our distorted thought patterns, and lovingly helps us see things more clearly for ourselves. Our Heavenly Father never ever condemns us, He simply leads us to the truth that will set us free (John 8:32<sup>106</sup>).

## WHY ARE WE SITTING HERE?

“If I had to put a number to how much I trust God, I would say it is 70%,” a Bible study leader confessed. Let's call her Amanda.

Soft spoken and thoughtful, Amanda would have described herself as a mature Christian, but in reality, she had been struggling with her faith for quite a while. Her past experience included growing up in

a church that split up acrimoniously after a public spat between two key pastors. The dispute pitted her family against close church friends whom she had loved and respected. The pastors eventually left to set up different churches of their own, leaving her home church in tatters and hurting from the lingering mistrust and disagreements. Some childhood friends even walked away from God as a result.

“Oh no,” I thought to myself, “I’m really out of my depth here. I have no idea what to say next. Help! Holy Spirit, please speak through me.”

Then I heard a strange question come out of my mouth. “Why are we sitting here today, Amanda?” My heart sank and I panicked. “Isn’t it obvious, Jennifer? Amanda asked to meet today because she wants to know how to overcome her fears and doubts!” From the expression on her face, it was obvious that both she and I were both wondering where the conversation was heading to next.

Amanda looked baffled and I heard myself continue. “Let’s look at the early Church. The first Christians were heavily persecuted. Some lost their homes, their families and their land. There were those who were even killed. Many ran away to foreign lands and brought the gospel with them. They must have been dismayed at what happened but this is also how the news about Jesus spread even more. In the midst of great suffering, God can still make good things happen. You and I are sitting here because we have benefited from the shake-up of the first century church. Do you believe that our Father in Heaven is capable of turning the shake-up of your home church into something good too?” With my head spinning, I excitedly processed what the Holy Spirit has just explained to Amanda. I couldn’t believe how profound, wise and kind those words were.

The frown on Amanda’s face slowly melted as she replied, “Yes. I guess I have been doubting God because I believed that He didn’t protect my home church. There was so much pain and animosity there and many people are still suffering from the aftermath. But I can also see some good things come out of it. I am starting to realise that I can’t equate man’s mistakes as God’s mistakes. The pastors dishonoured Jesus with their behaviour but I can see that God can still work through

their mistakes.” Amanda repented for her unbelief, which led to greater spiritual breakthroughs as we continued to talk.

## WHAT TYPE OF PORN DO YOU WATCH?

“I hate the sin I’m in – how it is pulling me down – and I hate myself for doing it. Yet I enjoy sinning enough to keep doing it. I feel like I am in some sort of bondage.” A young church leader was seated on the sofa across from Andrew and me, talking intensely. He had come to meet us for prayer on some hindrances in his spiritual life, which included an ongoing habit of procrastination and pornography. Let’s call him Alex.

Alex had grown up as an only child in a Christian family. All his needs were provided for. His parents cared intensely for him, to the point of being overbearing at times. His mother, for instance, still tried to steer his life choices. At work, he often found himself paralysed with fear at any new assignment, to the point that he just ended up procrastinating on starting many things. After work, he would indulge in pornography as a means of forgetting about the stress he experienced that day. The subsequent shame and self-loathing he felt from his private indulgences made him feel even more condemned and incapable of performing at work the next day. It was a vicious cycle.

Inspired by my Instructor, I heard myself ask, “Alex, what sort of porn do you watch?” The question was so audacious and ludicrous to my own ears that I could not help but burst out laughing. Andrew turned to look at me, slightly alarmed. Did I really just say that?

Alex replied without hesitation, “I tend to watch porn with women who are motherly figures.” Suddenly, everything fell into place. Alex was struggling with a mother wound.

As a result of the high standards that his parents set for him because he was their only child, Alex grew up under a lot of stress. He struggled with a deep suppressed fear that perhaps, he was not good enough to fulfill other people’s expectations of him, particularly his mother’s. This crippled him whenever he encountered anything foreign or new. He was unable to find acceptance within himself because an



inner voice kept reminding him not to disappoint his mom. He wasn't convinced God would accept him until he was "good enough." As a result, he swerved off the path of God's full acceptance and healing, and began indulging in something that he felt provided immediate gratification and comfort, porn. Alex wasn't looking for sex with his mother, he was longing for acceptance.

"Alex, the Holy Spirit is inspiring our conversation; it wasn't my idea to ask you what type of porn you watch. God wants to point out the real reason you are in bondage. There is no condemnation for you, Alex, only redemption. Jesus came to set us free!" For the first time in his life, Alex realised that God didn't need him to be perfect before He would accept him, love him and heal him.

## **ARE YOU CREATIVELY INCLINED?**

"I catch myself getting angry often, even at trivial things. I tell myself that I shouldn't be angry, take a deep breath; so I can refocus on what's important. Just let it slide, show some grace."

Born into a conservative Christian family, Paul seemed a little embarrassed with his confessions. Besides an anger issue, he also had a fascination with occult and mythical figures. From a young age, he had amassed large collections of witchcraft-related cards and mystical figurines, housed in a special display cabinet; a shrine to weird and colourful idolatrous objects with wings, fangs, blood, swords, oversized body parts and what not. Paul was reluctant to part with his shrine of toys, even though he knew they were idolatrous.

It suddenly occurred to me to ask Paul a question. "Are you creatively inclined, Paul?" Dressed in a baggy red and white baseball jersey and looking like he could run off after a home run at any moment, Paul hardly looked like the creative type. The answer was yes, Paul had just taken a spiritual gifts test online and discovered that his top gift was craftsmanship.

"Paul, I have been praying for the Holy Spirit to guide our discussions and am inspired to narrate a story that is forming in my spirit.

Please tell me if it sounds familiar,” I said rather nervously. I could just about make out the beginning of the narrative but not the end, and didn’t know how things would conclude. “As a small boy, you loved sports but your parents, being traditional Chinese parents, forbade you from joining any teams and forced you to spend your time studying at home. This made you angry, but you could not express this injustice to your family or to your friends because you loved them. In your frustration, you chose to escape into a fantasy world, away from your unhappy circumstances. You were initially intrigued by the elaborate art on witchcraft cards, and then slowly, you got sucked into darker and macabre occult imagery. And your anger grew bigger and deeper. Would this be correct?”

I was stunned by that insight as Paul’s eyes widened at first and then teared up. Finally, someone understood him! Obviously, God had been with Paul all his life, observed his every move throughout, and understood his heart. It was His Father in Heaven who had given him his creative talents and love for sports. Even if no one else celebrated these parts of his life, God did because He was the One who put them there in the first place.

That day, Paul forgave his parents for not fully accepting him for who he was intrinsically. In the process, he saw a vision of Jesus holding his shoulder as he recounted some of his most painful childhood memories. The expensive occult toys and collectibles were destroyed and landed up in the garbage bin later that day.

## THE POWER OF CONFESSING

I never really understood how anyone can be kind, compassionate and non-judgmental all the time. The Bible verse, “*Judge not, that you be not judged*” (Matthew 7:1 ESV), is easy to memorise but hard to follow.

It wasn’t until I began to see how shame, fear and anger enslave people into all sorts of nasty tendencies that I stopped jumping to conclusions about others so quickly. Rarely are people’s struggles the real issue. Their real issues invariably stem from unhealthy patterns developed in response to emotional wounding early in life. Emotional

wounds are not limited to one-off events, such as Amanda's story, but also a persistent sense of not being fully accepted, such as Alex's and Paul's stories. Personally, I had suffered from both types of wounding.

When the patterns we pick up are not rooted in God's love and truth from the start, we develop ungodly coping mechanisms and form distorted ideas about ourselves. To cope, we avoid certain topics or people, deny our true feelings, indulge in fleshly distractions, idolise certain people, rationalise away offences or withdraw into our own little worlds. This is how addictions form and why some people become glued to their mobile phones, incessantly playing games, surfing aimlessly, comparing their lives with others' on social media or even obsessively watching "romance porn".

Most of us never stop to reflect on these distorted patterns. We cruise on auto-pilot without realising our navigation controls might be faulty and that we are in for a bumpy road ahead as a result. To ensure we are on a smooth trajectory towards God, we need to actively re-calibrate our ways on a regular basis. This comes from spending time with God and asking the Holy Spirit to help shine His Light into the darkness in our lives, so we can confess them to God and be set free.

Time and time again, I have witnessed the freedom that comes with confessing our destructive ways to someone who loves God and loves us. By seeking counsel from the Holy Spirit together, there are often wonderful breakthroughs that would be hard to replicate elsewhere or alone. This is the essence of what lies behind James 5:14-16, 19-20.

*James 5:14-16, 19-20 ESV Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*

Sadly, this world teaches us to avoid talking about our painful experiences. We convince ourselves, “No one really cares. Even if they did, they can’t help me anyway. No one understands me. I won’t risk rejection, gossip or humiliation. I can’t talk about how other people have made me feel because this might be disrespectful.” So we suck it up, push it down, cover it up, or disguise it. But just like physical wounds will collect pus when they do not heal properly, emotional wounds will continue to infect our souls – until we seek the great Healer, God Himself. He will never reject us. What’s more, He is the only One who has seen it all, who understands us perfectly, and who truly cares. He knows what we need more than we do.

Men seem to have more difficulty in confessing than women. The world is harsh on men; they are taught to never open up, never trust other people with their fears and weaknesses, and never show their true emotions. Ignore your problems and hope they will go away. Otherwise, just handle your problems on your own. And never ever cry. Crying is shameful for a man or a boy.

All human beings of both genders have tear glands but it seems that only the female beings are welcome to exercise them freely. Never mind that Jesus, plus some of the mightiest men in the Bible, including Joseph and King David, wept openly and unreservedly. No wonder so many of us walk around with tortured souls. If our perfect Saviour wept out loud, what more imperfect human beings?

Yet until we confess our pain and allow God to comfort and heal us, it will re-surface in other ways.

## **THE CRYING FATHER**

Since the birth of his baby girl, the young father would catch himself tearing up every so often. Those tears were not joyful, they came from a source of long suppressed pain that were now bubbling up to the surface. He was very excited to be a first-time dad, yet he found himself crying at awkward times. Let’s call him Christopher.

Christopher always had a smile and appeared to have it all;

a beautiful family, a lovely home and a successful career. Beneath this exterior, however, were years of suppressed childhood grief that were never given the chance to heal properly.

Christopher had lost his baby sister to sickness when he was young. His shattered parents coped in their own ways; his father disappeared for long periods of time while his mother locked herself up alone in her room, weeping day in and day out.

Left as the only child, Christopher felt he had no choice but to step up and help around the house. Afraid to evoke more pain, he never allowed himself to grieve openly and hence, never really recovered. He even choked on and swallowed back his own tears at his sister's funeral. Christopher had fallen for the trap of "I can't talk about how other people have made me feel because this might be disrespectful." Without godly guidance on how to go to Jesus for comfort, guidance and help, Christopher turned inwards to himself to cope with his family tragedy. He worked hard at school and later, at work, seeking to overcome his inner pain with worldly achievements.

Over the years, I had observed that people's ungodly patterns tend to revolve around their spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-11<sup>108</sup>), because these inclinations come so naturally. Someone with the spiritual gift of wisdom or discernment may be tempted to judge and condemn other people, instead of lovingly counseling and guiding them. Another person with gifts of empathy and compassion may be tempted to feel sorry for him or herself, instead of caring for other people. Someone who has the gift of faith may be more susceptible to false teachings. People with the gift of administration can gravitate towards being dogmatic about schedules, prioritising tasks and deadlines over loving people. The Bible reminds us that every good and perfect gift is from God but without godly guidance in this fallen world, we will be tempted to abuse them (James 1:13-17<sup>109</sup>).

The birth of Christopher's own daughter not only brought all his neglected emotional pain back up to the surface, it would also point to the ungodly patterns he had developed around his spiritual gifts as well. It was only when he allowed himself to weep openly over his sister's death some thirty years later that he was able to embrace the joys of

becoming of a father, rather than subconsciously think about the pain of losing his baby sister whenever he looked at his own baby girl.

## CHRISTOPHER'S STORY

*“Throughout my life, I put many earthly badges on my identity. This included going to an elite boarding school, graduating from a good university and working on Wall Street. The other badge was that of a “victim” and a “good guy”.*

*My younger sister passed away unexpectedly during my teens. This shook my family to the core. My parents dealt with the grief in their own ways and I felt both neglected and guilty for not treasuring her more before her death. As a result, I saw myself as a victim of the situation and my dysfunctional relationship with my parents. I suppressed my emotions and told myself that I had to be a good guy to make up for what happened. I compensated for all that pain by focusing on performance. I chased worldly achievements and was proud of them. These were some of the badges that I put on myself.*

*After taking a spiritual gifts test, I realised how I had been abusing my gifts of mercy, teaching and pastoring for my own benefit.*

*I misused my gift of mercy by victimizing myself and attracting mercy for various situations, like my sister's death. I realised that I have a choice to celebrate the 11 years of great memories that God had given me with my sister or continue to focus on her passing and victimise myself. I had not realised that by seeing myself as a victim, I was indirectly accusing God of being cruel and punitive. My gift of teaching was twisted by pride to evaluate and judge my parents. I was not using my gift of pastoring to lovingly bring my parents to God's truths and comfort. I had been blind to my self-centred pride. This selfishness distracted me from the truth that God is sovereign. He is also a Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.*

*Instead of using my own understanding to compensate for my past, I should go directly to God for comfort.”*

Christopher's point of emotional pain was relatively easy to identify because it was linked to an obvious tragedy. Other times, we may not even realise we are hurting inside, because our circumstances seems so “normal.” We can even suffer when our legitimate emotional needs

were not met in childhood, such as the need for counsel and comfort, forgiveness and understanding, affection and affirmation, recognition and protection.

We each experience emotional wounding uniquely. We can share the same experiences and come out of them with different perspectives and coping patterns. The only thing we have in common is the hope we share in a good God who knows us individually and seeks to free us from our pain, shame and ungodly patterns.

## **BUT OUR PARENTS LOVE US**

“Would you like to uncover your subconscious relationship patterns?” The two sisters’ pretty faces lit up as this question was posed to them during a class on relationships. In their twenties, the reserved older sister A had cold piercing eyes and a rather stern countenance, while the outgoing younger sister B was bubbly and friendly. How did two sisters who grew up in the same household turn out so different? “Yes please,” they chimed. So I turned around to grab a marker as everyone shifted their chairs closer to the whiteboard.

Before I began, I invited the class to pray with me to invite the Holy Spirit to guide our discussion. It seemed like Father wanted to reveal something deeper to the sisters but I felt very under-equipped, not having been professionally trained in counselling. All I knew was that the sisters needed to confess how they truly felt about their parents and to see that this affected their relationships with other people.

“I know you don’t know everyone here,” I explained to the eager-eyed sisters, “But the more you can be honest about yourselves, the more you will benefit from this exercise. Everything you share here will be kept within this small circle of people. So please take full advantage of this opportunity.”

Then I let the Holy Spirit inspire what happened next, starting with, “Now, please come up with three words to describe your mom and your dad, individually.”

After more questions and more answers were scribbled on the

whiteboard, patterns started emerging. The sisters might have shared common experiences, but their individual perceptions of their parents meant that they developed very different emotional reactions and hence, very different behavioural patterns.

Halfway through the exercise, older sister A protested, “But our parents love us and treat us very well. I can’t say anything bad about them.”

It was one of those common snags that keeps people from confessing how they truly feel or may have suffered. The group encouraged the sisters by agreeing that it can be difficult to talk about those we love but we were not there to judge their parents. The exercise was in fact, meant to help them relate better with their parents.

It emerged that their father preferred to “do his own thing” without the girls and their mother over-compensated for his delinquency by becoming quite controlling. Subsequently, sister A confessed that she felt both loved and annoyed by her mother in equal parts, and was very conflicted about her emotions. Intellectually, she understood that her mother sacrificed a lot and loved her, but emotionally, she couldn’t reconcile how stifled she felt. Younger sister B confessed to feeling lost and often wondered if her mother would ever approve of her choices. This spilled over into all her other relationships; she often felt insecure.

After a few rounds of “oh’s” and “ah’s” around the room as subconscious thoughts and behavioural patterns were revealed on the whiteboard, the sisters prayed to repent of their hidden judgments towards their parents and thanked God for them.

“Are you a counsellor, Jennifer?” sister A asked. I stifled a laugh and said, “No, it is the Holy Spirit who is the perfect Counsellor (Isaiah 9:6<sup>110</sup>). He is the One who had led us this afternoon. And there truly are patterns in this world, as Romans 12:2<sup>111</sup> mentions. After talking to enough people, it is not difficult to begin to notice them more and more.”

The sisters’ patterns were in fact, very common in Asian families. Here is an illustration based on their stories.



# SHIFTING FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

	SISTER A		SISTER B	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
Describe your parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selfless</li> <li>• Loving</li> <li>• Controlling (always thinks she knows what's best)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selfish (loves his freedom over the family)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selfless</li> <li>• Kind</li> <li>• Nagging (always tells me what is right or wrong)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unexpressive</li> </ul>
Describe how this makes you feel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angry</li> <li>• Annoyed</li> <li>• Frustrated</li> <li>• Guilty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confused</li> <li>• Disappointed</li> <li>• Distant</li> <li>• Indifferent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confused</li> <li>• Fearful</li> <li>• Insecure</li> <li>• Lost</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confused</li> <li>• Inferior</li> <li>• Sad</li> <li>• Unimportant</li> </ul>
Describe how you see them	Mum is annoying.	Dad is irresponsible.	Mum is always comparing me with others.	Dad is emotionally irresponsible.
Describe your inner voice and emotional triggers as a result	<p>Don't control me!</p> <p>"Whenever someone makes a suggestion, I become angry and defensive. I don't like to be told what to do or to answer to anyone."</p>		<p>I'm afraid of making choices.</p> <p>"Whenever someone makes a suggestion, I become very insecure and question my abilities, opinion and value. I like to please people."</p>	

## I HAVE NEVER TOLD ANYONE

“I’m going to tell you something I’ve never told anyone before.” Each time someone from church has opened a conversation with a line like that, it has usually led to confessions of struggling with same-sex desires. The first time this happened, I was caught off guard, uncertain how to react. How do I speak with love, compassion and assurance of God’s undying love for the person and address his or her daily homosexual temptations on a gritty, practical and no-holds barred level without shaming him or her or sounding self-righteous? After all, we are all fallen human beings.

Over time, I have found that it is most helpful to simply offer non-judgmental friendship and prayer, and encourage the person to seek pastoral counseling to unravel the patterns that led him or her to be convinced that homosexual relationships were preferred over heterosexual ones. Sometimes, deliverance from generational curses or demonic strongholds may even be needed.

Besides family, environmental and spiritual influences, emotional wounding is an especially important discussion for believers struggling with same sex attraction. We are complex beings, affected by numerous factors. Research has found that even for identical twins, one may choose to turn homosexual while the other, heterosexual. There is no specific gene for homosexuality, no simple answers, and no on-off switch. From what I have observed, many homosexual orientations are linked to some level of parental rejection, betrayal, abandonment or abuse. Growing up with distorted models of love and early childhood rejection distorts the images of what is desirable in our future relationships. Why trust a woman if your mum has been hyper manipulative or desire a man if your dad had abused you?

Many believers who are caught in a web of homosexual thoughts are trapped inside a dark cloud of shame and self-doubt, too afraid to confess their private struggles in church, in case they are rejected. Just talking about the topic itself brings up scary, conflicted emotions. Sadly, some church communities do reject people made in God’s image with homosexual orientations, causing further wounding instead of healing. Some friends have even been bluntly instructed to just stop their

homosexual activities overnight or else, wiping out any grace that God has shown to all of us. No one overcomes years of personal conflict, confusion, rejection, shame and sexual orientation without loving encouragement and support.

We all need spiritual rehabilitation and time to renew our views and deepen our knowledge of God's love for us. I know I am still on that journey. Parental betrayal and detachment will always be part of my childhood story. Through God's grace, I may have recovered from the toxic emotional sting of my past but it hasn't miraculously made me excited about washing the dishes.

## CHAPTER 7



# YOU USED TO BE FUN

*1 Timothy 4:1 ESV Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons*

My eyes were focused on the rolling conveyor belt of small colourful plates, waiting for my favourite shrimp sushi to come around. I was having dinner with a good friend whom I had known for over ten years. Let's call her Cassandra.

Cassandra had been out of a job for a while. Taking her out for a sushi dinner was my way of cheering her up. In the middle of our meal, Cassandra began commenting on how much I had changed over the years. I used to meet up with her for drinks, clubbing, hiking and yoga.

"You used to be fun, Jennifer. Now you won't do this and won't do that. What happened to you? You're almost radical, like ISIS." My heart stopped. I had just been likened to ISIS, a terrorist organisation responsible for unconscionable violence, including the beheading of innocent people. I felt as if the sushi chef had walked over and stabbed my chest with his knife.

Cassandra had been particularly upset with me because I warned her against doing yoga. Yoga was her refuge and regime, something she had practiced several times a week for years. When I practised yoga,

Bouncy had also advised me against it. “Yoga helps me stretch, Bouncy. Besides, I pray and think about Jesus as I do my salutations and poses. A pastor even told me that there is Christian yoga now. It’s fine, don’t worry about it,” I retorted, annoyed that she even cared to have yet another opinion about my life. So I understood how Cassandra felt, but I did not expect such a personal assault from a close friend. The attacks continued, leaving me in a state of shock and great pain.

My heart began filling up with boiling acid and I really wanted to spit some acidic remarks back at Cassandra. But acid doesn’t dilute acid, only fresh water does. If I were to be faithful to Jesus, I knew that “*out of my heart had to flow rivers of living water*” (John 7:38<sup>112</sup>). Fighting back hot sizzling emotions, I composed myself as much as I could.

“I’m so sorry, Cassandra, for the times I have made you feel judged. I hope you will please forgive me. I only said those things because I care for you. You are my friend.” Cassandra’s attitude softened after this and she changed the subject. I finished dinner feeling brokenhearted and left fighting back tears. I felt that Cassandra had viciously pummeled me when all I wanted to do was to care for her.

The next day, I felt led by Father to read Psalm 23. It reminded me that God witnessed the acidic attack firsthand and is the One who restores my soul. I burst into tears, relieved and comforted.

*Psalm 23:1-6 ESV*

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

*He makes me lie down in green pastures.*

*He leads me beside still waters.*

*He restores my soul.*

*He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.*

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,*

*I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;*

*you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,*

*and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

## MY WITNESS ACCOUNT

I had heard that yoga is a spiritual discipline related to Hinduism, not a stretching or strengthening programme as we have been taught to believe, and that we are deceived into performing rituals that in essence, make us bow down to Hindu gods. It all seemed so far-fetched and ridiculous to me until I met a certified yoga instructor who came forward for prayer. Let's call her Peony.

### PEONY'S STORY

*"I used to think my neck pain was only physical. As a computer programmer, my right hand was pretty much chained to the mouse for at least 14 hours a day, 7 days a week. My doctor told me my neck was fine. There was no issue, all I needed to do was stretch it. But I knew it had to be more because I couldn't turn my head and the right side of my body had turned cold and numb. I turned to yoga nine years ago, thinking that it might be the solution to my neck pain and possibly to all my problems in life.*

*When I walked into a Hatha yoga place for the first time, I was instantly in love. I felt great inside and out. The neck pain was greatly reduced after practice. I could turn my head and emotionally, I felt accomplished, worthy – like something was awakened inside of me.*

*Of course, I kept going back and brought friends with me. The yoga community is very welcoming. We dress alike, we think alike, we share the same space and teachers, and we face similar struggles. We usually feel very connected even when we don't know each other.*

*I increased my practice sessions to five times a week and planned my life around my yoga classes. I even took a teacher trainer course, so I could be certified and spread yoga to others. I memorised all things related to yoga, including Hindu words, chants, and history.*

*In the yoga gym, all my anger and agitations towards the world were suppressed. Yoga definitely made me feel better. Then all the negative feelings would come back after practice, but that was okay. I just kept practicing yoga and felt better after each time.*

*Praise God that I met Jesus at an Alpha course in church. I accepted Jesus'*

*offer of salvation and decided to follow God. Where yoga was one cave I could retreat to, now I had two caves. I was a yogi during the week and a Christian on the weekend. Great!*

*Very soon, I noticed something inside me wasn't balancing between these two caves. I started hating listening to sermons and Christian songs. I even resented my pastors. I had never hated so many things all at once. I couldn't sleep at night and was kept awake by sudden heart aches, fear and noises. I literally had waves of goosebumps in and out my body at night. Sometimes, I wanted to kill myself.*

*A friend suggested that I talk to a pastor. The conversation didn't go so well. I was angry at the pastor who was lovingly hinting that yoga has some negative spiritual elements to it. I went from angry to furious. When he prayed for me, my limbs were flooded by goosebumps and I wanted to scream at him, "Stop talking to me! You can't fix me, just leave me alone!" This was the beginning of my journey towards healing and deliverance.*

*God kept sending people into my life to hint that I needed to reconsider yoga. Obviously, I didn't listen. I noticed that a lot of Christians practiced yoga so I told myself that it must be okay. I just needed to find ways around the Hindu or spiritual parts of it.*

*Someone taught me to praise God when I practiced yoga but honestly, it did not work. All my moves in the yoga class were to praise Hindu gods, how would it be possible for my heart to wholeheartedly praise my Holy God? I was told to only stretch during yoga but that did not work. Yoga is so much more than stretching. We are instructed in breathing, channeling, mindlessness, peace, and connecting mind, body and soul. I also decided to stay awake and conscious during meditation, and it did not work either. Even with all my conscious resistance, I fell right into a trance. I thought, next time I will try to leave the room before the meditation starts.*

*But the Holy Spirit convicted me two minutes into a teacher training class. I suddenly felt very dizzy, like I was going to puke if I didn't leave. I had to gather all my strength to walk out of the room. I sat down outside the room and asked God what happened. I sensed God say, "This is not good for you. Open your eyes and see."*

*In the midst of this, God led me to a ladies' discipleship group where I met Jennifer. Through the Holy Spirit's guidance, I asked her if she would pray with me for healing, without knowing about her own journey in this area. In preparation, I completed a long background check form that helped me understand what I had done in the past and everything that was not godly. Yoga was on the list.*

*Through fasting and praying, God revealed that the spiritual roots of yoga in me were deep. The real root is Hinduism and the name of the main spirit principalty is Kundalini. Because I had gone through the teacher training, I knew a lot about Kundalini. There was not just one false god, but four others; Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva, Ganapati. We cast those spirits out one by one. While I was praying, yoga chants kept playing in my head, the yoga symbol appeared vividly, and a numbing sensation took over my body. The resistance was strong. I also felt something poking my eyes. One of the ladies praying for me discerned that yoga spirits were trying to stop me from praying. When we commanded them to leave me in Jesus' name, the pain in my eyes was released immediately and I felt freedom. Praise God that we are given full authority to pray against all demons in the name of Jesus!*

*Through this experience, I have seen that the spiritual world does exist and there are things in this world that are far beyond our human understanding. I am making sure I build a strong foundation by reading the Bible every day and keeping my life clean so I won't fall back into spiritual traps ever again. Things in the world are very one sided and deceiving. Not everything that we are told is good is actually good. I need to rely on the Holy Spirit to discern the truth.*

*It's been two years since that prayer time. I praise God for all that He has given me. The neck pain is gone. All my desire to practice yoga is gone. All the suicidal thoughts are gone. All my anger is gone.*

*My life and my joy was once robbed by yoga. Now, I am redeemed by God, I use my experience to lovingly speak to people who are still trapped in yoga."*

## CHRISTIAN UNBELIEF

My time of intense prayer for Peony challenged my views of what is acceptable for Christians to do or not. In the years prior to my Holy Spirit encounter during the prayer with Bouncy, I believed that Christians can do anything as long as our hearts are right before God. And of course, Christians cannot be demonised right? We belong to Jesus and have the Holy Spirit. Nothing of the enemy can touch us. We can do whatever we like as long as we ascertain that our hearts are right.

"Surely it is not a big deal to display artwork with dragons, Buddha heads, skulls, or sexualised images in my home. What's wrong



with walking into a temple as a tourist and being blessed by a monk? Wearing accessories for good luck is harmless. We ought to show our family respect by bowing before our ancestors' tombstones."

Moreover, I was told that many warnings in the Law of Moses, that strictly forbade many practices, were now defunct. It never occurred to me to ask God why He would put so many irrelevant words in the Bible if that were the case, or why would Jesus proclaim that He did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. In fact, He warned that even the smallest letter or dot would not disappear from His Law (Matthew 5:17-18<sup>113</sup>). Did that mean I, a twentieth century follower, had to be familiar with the Law of Moses too? That seemed much too intense for my liking.

If anything in God's Word made me feel uncomfortable, I chose to sweep it under a carpet and not examine it any further. At times, I would go to people for their opinions and pick the viewpoint that sounded the most soothing and acceptable. I willingly agreed to the things I liked, not the things I didn't. Very seldom did I go directly to God for His opinions and answers. Unknown to me, I was suffering from an "itchy ear syndrome" as described in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 which says, *"For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."* I had been cultivating a faith built on manmade opinions and a spirit of unbelief.

The idea of opinions and unbelief is a funny thing within Christian circles, because we always think we have the right balance of beliefs and that others don't. Since the beginning, Christians have suffered from all forms of unbelief. Each time Jesus reprimanded anyone for their unbelief, He was speaking to His own people, not people who didn't know or worship God (Matthew 17:17<sup>114</sup>, Mark 6:5-6<sup>115</sup>, Mark 9:23-25<sup>116</sup>). He addressed people just like me who believed that they were "doing church" right. When I read that Jesus said, *"For many are called, but few are chosen,"* I smugly believed I was amongst the few that were saved versus the rest of the world that wasn't (Matthew 22:14-15<sup>117</sup>). On closer examination, I was deeply shaken to see that I was probably not amongst the few, but amongst the many Christians in this world who would call

God “Lord, Lord” one day, only for Him to turn me away because He never knew me (Matthew 7:21-23<sup>118</sup>). It was true. I didn’t believe or follow His every word.

Even the apostles did not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead at first, in spite of what He had foretold and all that they had witnessed earlier (Mark 16:11, 13-14<sup>119</sup>). Various forms of unbelief still continue to infect our Christian circles today.

First, there is a lack of faith in God’s character; we doubt His goodness, mistrust His intentions, and lack confidence in His promises. Second is head knowledge; we can intellectually understand what the Bible says but struggle to believe things like eternity, people rising from the dead and the parting of the Red Sea. Third is a faith of convenience, where we pick the parts of the Bible that are easy to follow and ignore the parts that are not. Even during Jesus’ time, many disciples left Him when His teachings became too inconvenient for them (John 6:60-66<sup>120</sup>). All these forms of unbelief did not lead me to God.

## PERSONAL CONFESSIONS

It seems that the true Christian life is easily suffocated by spiritual bias, pride, complacency and ignorance.

I confess that I used to buy into the worldly adages that “seeing is believing (until God serves me with some evidence not to)” and “it’s okay since everyone else is doing it (until God serves me with some evidence not to).”

I was too busy chasing happiness and my own satisfaction to bother to meditate on the Bible every day for myself. I loved one-line Bible quotes such as John 14:14, in which Jesus said, *“If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it,”* and never bothered to study the entire passage. In verse 13, Jesus actually qualified this promise with *“... that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”* I had no idea that God will not indulge me in everything that I demanded and had a twisted understanding of His blessings. I had expected God to bow down to me when I should have been bowing down to Him.

If I heard or saw anything that had the word “Christian” attached, it won my confidence. I blindly relied on human institutions to deliver the goods I needed to steer my faith and allowed them to decide what I believed or disbelieved. I admired and revered people more than the only One who was crucified on the cross for me, Jesus Christ.

It was therefore very disconcerting for me to come across numerous warnings in the Bible about false teachings (Matthew 7:15-20<sup>121</sup>, Matthew 24:10-13, 24<sup>122</sup>, Mark 13:22-23<sup>123</sup>, 2 Timothy 4:3-4<sup>124</sup>, 2 Peter 2:1<sup>125</sup>). What was even more disturbing was that demonic spirits would be behind some of the teachings (1 Timothy 4:1<sup>126</sup>). I certainly didn’t make it a practice to test every message I heard in the past. I never asked Father, “What do You think of this teaching and what the speaker said? Is this message from the Holy Spirit, the person’s own human understanding or from evil spirits? (1 John 4:1-6<sup>127</sup>).”

If certain churches endorsed “Christian yoga”, surely that made yoga okay. The experience with Peony really opened my eyes. What other false teachings are out there which are from demonic powers? How can I lovingly raise awareness of false teachings without offending more people? I braced myself for more “acid attacks” and persecution from yoga devotees. “Gee,” I thought to myself, “I never got persecuted like this during my first 17 years as a Christian. Truly obeying Jesus really does come at a price!” (Matthew 10:22-25<sup>128</sup>).

Yet the more real-life encounters I ran into that contradicted what my Christian community and leaders told me, the more I realised how rife deception is today. Many spiritual traps have been dressed up as harmless, desirable, popular, trendy and “non-religious”. Another example comes from a friend who was lured into taking part in a meditation workshop. Here is Lilly’s story.

## LILLY’S STORY

*“During prayer with some friends, I confessed that I felt like I wasn’t good enough for God.*

*A friend asked if I could say out loud, “I am good enough.” I realized that I*

*couldn't say it because I didn't believe it. Then she asked, "If Jesus went to the Cross for you, do you think you're good enough?" When phrased that way, my mind said, "Yes, I can believe that. It must be true. If Jesus thought I was worth dying for, then yes, I must be good enough." But at that point, I still struggled to say anything more than "T". My mouth could not form the words no matter how hard I tried.*

*After a moment, the Holy Spirit impressed upon one of my friends the words, "monk," "meditation," and "trance." Immediately, I was reminded of the time when I attended a relaxation workshop called "Calming the Monkey Mind" that was run by a Buddhist-trained therapist. I had forgotten about the workshop because it didn't sound religious in nature. At the time, I felt very uneasy about the meditation therapy but I said to myself, "Don't be superstitious. This is not a religious activity. You don't have to go back, but don't get upset about it."*

*My friends led me in a prayer to repent of taking part in that meditation session, cut spiritual ties with the monk and his masters, and cast out the spirits of lies and mind control. Then, I was asked again if I believed that I am good enough, and finally this time, I could say, "I'm good enough."*

*What shocked me was discovering that demonic spirits had a grip on my mind and heart. I hate the very thought that I could be bound by ungodly spirits as a result of something like a "relaxation workshop." I did not realize I had put myself under the spiritual authority of the monk who ran the breathing exercises. I'm now staying far, far away from any kind of ungodly practice even if it looks trivial, harmless, or "non-religious."*

## CHAPTER 8



# SO MUCH SPACE

*Acts 8:36-38 ESV And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.*

I heard that she had been mistreated by her last employer so I wasn't too surprised when our new domestic helper turned up for work looking weary, undernourished and very nervous. Let's call her Rosa. Andrew's parents had just moved in to live with us and Rosa was a welcome addition to our family. Given what she had been through, we made extra effort to ensure that she felt loved and cared for. We were soon to find out that her condition wasn't only related to her last job.

One night at 10:30pm, hours after Rosa had finished work for the day and retired to her own room, we received a text message from her. “Jennifer, may I come to talk to you please?” I read the message with some concern and dismay. Rosa had already been with us for over three years at that point. During that time, she had frequently complained of unexplainable body pains, headaches and extreme anxiety. She was constantly worried that she would just collapse and die. We sent her for numerous body checks, doctor consultations and physiotherapist

treatments. Her medical reports always came back confirming that Rosa was in fine health. We prayed for her often, encouraged her and sat down to do Bible studies together. Nothing seemed to help. Rosa still walked around with a grim expression on her face and an invisible shadow looming over her. We were at our wits' end.

Rosa appeared in our dining room that night looking more terrified than normal. Andrew quietly moved to the living room to give us some privacy, discretely keeping one eye on us in case I needed some help.

As I sat down with Rosa, she grabbed my hand with cold, trembling fingers and said, "Jennifer, I was choking in my room just now. I almost stopped breathing. I prayed to God for help. I am so afraid, Jennifer." Rosa was so overwhelmed that she sat hunched over, her chin nearly touching the table.

"Rosa," I said as gently as I could, "I have always suspected that your problems are not physical, but spiritual." I didn't have the heart to tell Rosa outright that it was obvious that she was afflicted by demons, because this would have brought on even more fear. Rosa wasn't possessed by demons but she was certainly being tormented by them.

Over the years, I began to notice perceivable physical changes after people humbly submit their hearts to God through wholehearted confession, repentance and prayer. Like James 4:7<sup>129</sup> says, the devil loses his foothold in our lives thereafter and has to flee. Many Christian friends who have been freed from evil spirits say that they feel lighter afterwards, as if a weight had been lifted off their shoulders or chests. Some experience instant healing of back pain, neck aches, hip issues and so forth. Almost always will there be a renewed glow on their faces. It seems the radiance that we read about in Psalm 34:5<sup>130</sup> is not metaphorical, it is an actual glow.

Having experienced all this firsthand, it became easier to spot people who are under the influence of evil spirits. There is often a dull grey hue over their faces, a look of stony pride, anger, hatred or simply, a glazed, hollow gaze in their eyes. They will not radiate the joy and light of Jesus. They might talk incessantly in circles or have difficulty focusing their thoughts. There is a compulsion to condemn other people

or themselves. Their decisions are based on fear, rather than love. They may turn to emotional guilt and fear tactics to manipulate or control other people. Seemingly innocent things can trigger strong emotional reactions. They may laugh vacuously and cry without provocation, but can't explain why.

Such people can serve in Christian ministries but they will do so with little joy. They will be legalistic, argumentative and obstinate; a regular source of division, judgment, envy, comparisons, pride, gossip, and slander. They make ministry about their desires, rather than the needs of other people. What's more, they could potentially feel sleepy, doze off or become very distracted during sermons and prayers. When they pray, their minds can sometimes suddenly go blank or they are unable to engage their hearts in prayer. Sexual images and ungodly words may interrupt their thoughts during prayer, particularly if they have participated in new age activities and yoga in the past.

Rosa had some clear symptoms; she always felt heavy and fearful, her face was overshadowed by an ashy grey hue and her thoughts were perpetually fixated on death. As her employer, I didn't feel it was right to subject her to an intensive time of confessional prayer because I couldn't be sure if she would do it because she truly desired God or because she didn't want to offend us. As I had recently heard reports of people being delivered of evil spirits through baptism, I decided to give that a shot instead.

"You know, Rosa, we have tried our best to help and honestly, I really don't know what else to do. Only Jesus can help you now. I know you were born a Catholic but have you ever personally asked Jesus to be your Saviour? Only He can save you." Rosa sat silently without responding, so I continued.

"You have seen how many people come to meet us for prayer, right? Why do you think we keep praying for people, Rosa?" More silence. "Because Jesus is the only One who can take away our fears and pains, when we invite Him into our hearts. If you are open to receiving Jesus tonight, Andrew and I can baptise you to receive new life from Jesus. When you go into the water, you die to your old life and all the pain and fear are washed away. We will invite the Holy Spirit to give you a new life

as you come out of the water; it will be like a spiritual rebirth. Would you like to be baptised tonight, Rosa? If so, I can ask Andrew to fill the bathtub with water.”

Rosa’s big round eyes widened with terror as she replied, “But what if I die in the water and don’t come back up alive?” Oops. That was not the reply I was hoping for.

I realised I had not asked the Holy Spirit for His wisdom nor invited Him to speak through me. Silently, I prayed, “Father, I am sorry I made a mistake here. What do I do now?” Then silently, I was given the word, brokenhearted. “Rosa, are you brokenhearted?” I asked. Rosa thought for a while and said yes.

“You know we love you, right, Rosa? But the love we have shown you is just tiny compared to God’s love for you,” I said as I flung my arms wide open to signify God’s immense love. “Tonight, God wants to heal your broken heart. Would you like to get baptised?” This time, Rosa said yes. What a relief!

Excitedly, I called Andrew over and asked him to fill our bathtub with water while I searched online for a video I had recently seen that explains salvation through Jesus very simply but effectively, with the use of cups and water. Before she watched the video, Rosa had a question for me, “What will happen to me after baptism, Jennifer?” I frankly had no idea so I gave her my standard answer, “Let’s trust God!”

It was past 11pm by the time Rosa got changed and stepped into the warm water of our tub for her baptism. We prayed together and then Andrew read from the Bible as I helped immerse her into water.

As Rosa emerged, she released a few deep sighs and splashed water on her face. Then she started to cry. Andrew and I waited by the tub, unsure what to make of her reaction; was it a good one or a bad one?

Rosa turned towards us with a bright smile. We had never really seen so many of her teeth before that. “So much space, so much space,” she exclaimed. Puzzled, we just stood there waiting some more. “I couldn’t cry for so many months, even when I went back home for a family funeral. Everyone else around me was crying but I couldn’t cry. The pain was all inside but it just couldn’t come out. I was so ashamed. I wanted to let the sorrow out. How come I couldn’t cry? Now, I can cry



and I feel no more fear, no more pain!”

Andrew and I couldn’t believe our ears. Joyfully, we celebrated with Rosa and asked her to read Romans 6 about baptism before she went to bed that night. Relieved but also cautious, I asked Andrew, “Do you think this change is permanent?”

The next morning, Rosa ran up to Andrew’s mother and gave her a big hug. With tears of happiness streaming down her face, Rosa said, “Ma’am, I was baptised last night and now I am free!” Rosa is indeed a changed person. She also has that renewed glow on her face. She reads Bible devotionals every day and prays with vigour. Before all this happened, our bathtub had stood unused for years, but Father knew that one of His lost daughters would need it late one night. I will let Rosa tell her story.

## ROSA’S STORY

*“I used to go to church every Sunday and thought I knew God, but I did not know who He really is.*

*Last year, I started to feel a lot of anxiety, stress and body aches. One night when I was sleeping, I suddenly felt so anxious that I felt my breath would stop and I would die in my sleep. In a panic, I woke up and asked to speak with my employer at 10:30 pm.*

*My employer asked me if I wanted to be baptised but I didn’t answer because I wasn’t sure if it could help or was necessary. But at the end, I decided to say yes.*

*In the middle of the night, I was baptised by my employers in their bathtub. After baptism, I cried tears of joy because I could feel that God was now in me. For many months, I could not cry and I did not know why. I felt very, very light after baptism. To explain how I felt, I used to be a pail full of water. The water was my fears, anxiety, anger, stress, hatred and body pains. My anxiety came from thinking too much; I was a negative thinker and always worried about my health. I was very, very health conscious. My fear came from my body pains and worries about dying. My stress came from my family problems. After baptism, my pail was emptied.*

*From that day, I have learnt to read the Bible, pray, and know more about God and His words. Even though my problems have not changed, I am happy, contented, and stress-free. I have changed.”*

Rosa's story was one of deliverance from bondage to idol worship. We often associate idol worship with pagan temples with tall statues, when in fact, idols can take many different forms. Our worries can become idols, so can our parents or our children, our health, our work, our five-year plans, our dreams and our careers. Idols consume our thoughts and drive our motivations, affections, and ultimately, our lives. The pursuit of happiness, accolades or the latest fads can also become our idols. This is how seemingly harmless things can replace or supersede God's rightful position in our hearts and give evil spirits a foothold in our lives.

## WHAT ELSE IS THERE?

Rosa's baptism and radical change really challenged me. She had not attended baptism classes. Neither was she baptised in front of a church congregation. Like the eunuch described in Acts 8:34-38<sup>131</sup>, she simply got baptised in a small body of water because of simple faith that Jesus loved her and would heal her. It was amazing to witness Rosa's transformation but I was afraid to speak about it openly. Would we get chastised and reprimanded for doing something that we had been told should only be done by church authorities? I was left feeling guilty, confused, and excited all at the same time.

"What exactly is the power of baptism, Lord? Why was this particular baptism so transformational? Are there other simple acts of faith that have become institutionalised traditions over the centuries? What else has been emptied of its true spiritual meaning and power? What else is there that we don't know about?" I decided to examine what God's Word said about baptism as well as communion for myself. What I found opened my eyes and encouraged my heart.

Over and over again in the book of Acts, those who believed in Jesus got baptised immediately. It appears that the primary requirement was simply their belief in Jesus and a willingness to die to their old selves. Being familiar with the ceremonial bath rituals taken before important occasions, the Jewish people knew that they were being asked to wash

themselves spiritually clean before receiving God into their hearts. This was the essence of baptism.

In baptism, we are washed with the Living Water of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5<sup>132</sup>). It is recorded in Acts 2:1-41 that 3,000 believers in Jerusalem were baptised in one single day. It is highly likely that these new believers baptised one another. If one single minister took only two minutes to baptise all the new believers for 24 hours non-stop, it would have taken him over four days to baptise all 3,000 of them.

Further in Acts (Acts 2:42-47<sup>133</sup>), the Bible records a daily practice of communion amongst followers of Jesus Christ with the breaking of bread and prayers. Jesus introduced communion to His disciples at Passover, the festival where Jews solemnly remember their forefathers' deliverance from slavery in Egypt. In the same way, communion is like a Christian Passover, where we remember our deliverance from enslavement to sin. The book of Acts records that the apostles truly exemplified this deliverance by accomplishing many wonders and signs, including the healing of diseases and demonic afflictions, in Jesus' name.

Furthermore, the apostle Paul warned us in 1 Corinthians 11:27-30 to take Jesus' sacrifice and communion solemnly and respectfully because, *"Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died."*

When I realised that communion can be done at any time amongst friends and family who gather in Jesus' name, I looked up recipes for unleavened bread. Today, we keep a stash of unleavened bread in our fridge so that we can honour Jesus at any time through communion.

Following God's Word has taken on a completely new meaning.

## SO DO I HAVE DEMONS?

I once heard that a church goer didn't want to go on mission trips to share God's love because he was afraid of experiencing spiritual pushback or

attacks from evil spirits (also known as unclean spirits or demons). Sadly, he probably wasn't aware that he had insulted God, the ultimate Ruler of Heaven, earth and hell, by placing more faith in the spirits that God created than in the Creator Himself. Our friend did not need to go on a mission trip to be afflicted by evil spirits, he was already blinded and deceived into worshipping them through his unfounded fears.

Evil spirits are not "out there somewhere". Like invisible viruses, they are around us and there is no reason to fear them because God's Spirit, who is infinitely greater than all the spirits in this world put together (1 John 4:4<sup>134</sup>), lives inside anyone who loves and obeys God. How can anything be more powerful than God Himself? Moreover, demons are finite, have limited power, and can only be in one place at one time. In contrast, God is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-18<sup>135</sup>) and has full power over every single being in this universe.

Many of us develop an unfounded fear of evil spirits and spiritual disturbances because of the endless array of scary stories and horror shows that glorify demons which we have been exposed to. Blend that mis-information with our imagination and we can paralyse ourselves with fear. This applies to the physical world too. Hong Kong suffered an epidemic outbreak of the SARS virus (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) between 2002 and 2003, where about 300 people died. Before we had reliable information on how to protect ourselves, many people were too terrified to leave their homes unnecessarily. Once we all knew how to protect ourselves against infection, life went back to normal. Viruses and bacteria are everywhere but we don't need to be terrified of them. We don't go around worrying, "Do I have germs? Do I have germs?" Similarly, once we know how to protect ourselves, we need not become overly-anxious about evil spirits. It all comes down to knowing how to maintain good hygiene and build strong immunity. When we obey God's Word, we won't give "spiritual viruses" like demons any chance to spread spiritual sickness and death.

There are a few key spiritual disciplines that protect us from infections by those pesky invisible germs. One is confession and sanctification, another is fasting and the third is Bible knowledge.

God invites us to confess all our sins in Jesus' name so that we

can be cleansed, made spiritually “hygienic” and sanctified (1 John 1:9<sup>136</sup>). I once asked Father about what sanctification looked like in practical terms. He then reminded me of a vision He had shown me years earlier. In that instance, I saw a large two-storied house with its large main entrance door wide open. The house had many rooms. The rooms with their doors opened felt joyful and peaceful. The rooms with their doors shut tightly felt dark and foreboding. It seemed that the home owner had invited Jesus, Light of the World, into his home as a VIP guest but not yet as Master of every room.

Sanctification is the process of opening more and more doors in our lives to Jesus. Like Revelation 3:20<sup>137</sup> says, Jesus, Light of the World, knocks on these doors. He doesn’t force His way through against our will. In the meantime, illegal boarders (unclean spirits) will continue to hide in those dark rooms when we don’t let Jesus in. The only way to evict them is open up those doors by confessing our sins, ask the Highest Authority, Jesus Christ, to be Lord, invite the Holy Spirit to cleanse us and finally, command unclean spirits to leave in Jesus’ name.

Another important discipline I found very useful is fasting. In His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:16-18<sup>138</sup>), Jesus said “*when you fast*” on two occasions. He did not say, “in case you decide to fast”. Fasting was initially a real mental challenge for me because I used to say rather dramatically, “I will die if I don’t eat now!” I experienced an intense battle in my head between the desire to follow Jesus’ instruction and the desire to satisfy my stomach. It is no wonder that scientists now call our digestive systems our “second brains.”

Various studies over the years have shown that our stomachs can and do influence our thought patterns and choices. Gut bacteria can also modify our brain chemistry and lead to anxiety, depression, and other mental disorders. God’s Word also says in Isaiah 58 that fasting will remove the spiritual chains that bind people in oppressive darkness. By fasting regularly now, I have also noticed that my self-control is sharpened and my ability to hear God’s voice is much clearer.

Studying the Bible will make us more immune to demonic lies. The truth is, demons can only deceive us into positions of weakness and defeat if we haven’t accumulated an accurate understanding of God’s

Word firsthand or made His Word ruler over our hearts and minds. Failing that, we can remain ignorant of our spiritual identity and authority, as well as the enemy's schemes.

All these principles came together in a friend's experience. Let's call her Gloria. This is her story.

## GLORIA'S STORY

*"I was baptised 26 years ago but noticed that my spiritual growth seemed slow. A friend encouraged me to fast and ask God what has been hindering my growth. So I prayed and fasted lunch for a week. Over the course of the fast, I felt convicted by the Holy Spirit that I had to repent of worshipping the belly god (Philippians 3:19<sup>139</sup>), as I've always loved to eat and have always tried to do extensive studies of what's out there to eat. I was a self-professed foodie. Secondly, I was also reminded that I used to practise a form of "qigong" called 大雁氣功 because my parents are into it. I repented to God of that and asked God for His forgiveness.*

*On the first couple of days when I fasted, I would start reading Scripture and fall asleep. After I read a post on the Teaching Humble Hearts website about "Serving God vs. our belly god", I repented and I felt immediately that the sleepiness was gone.*

*On the next few days, as I was prompted by the Holy Spirit and repented of practising qigong, I felt that my mind was clearer. My mind seemed to be more receptive to God's Word. In the past, I was never able to remember Scripture or Bible verses. The other day, after reading through the different components of the armour of God, I was able to recite all the different components – which was something I was never able to memorise although I read it so many times and tried to drum them into my head.*

*2 Corinthians 4:4 NLT Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.*

*It's amazing how God does speak to us as we rest and be still before Him.*

*It's great to not let our physical bodies take control of our lives. After this fasting experience, I would want to build in a regular time to fast and to listen to what God has to say to me every week!"*

## **GOD'S SPIRIT AS BIBLE TUTOR**

In the past, I fell for the lie that it took too much effort to study and understand the Bible. At that time, I didn't know that I could invite the Holy Spirit to help me read the Bible and open my spiritual eyes to its spiritual meaning (Luke 24:45<sup>140</sup>, Ephesians 1:18<sup>141</sup>).

Instead of a proper first-hand diet of God's Word every day, I binged on all sorts of watered-down spiritual fast food. I relied on bite-sized devotionals to feed me the truth and became spiritually malnourished.

Things gradually changed, step by step, when I started listening to an audio Bible as I brushed my teeth every day, going through a few Bible passages at one time, and asking my Instructor and Author of Life to teach me what the passages meant. I found that the Holy Spirit loves to answer us when we ask for His wisdom to decipher His messages (1 Corinthians 2:13<sup>142</sup>). My spiritual understanding began to transform my mind, heart, soul and strength, passage by passage. Every year, I go through the entire Bible, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, at least once this way.

Today, I am no longer too perturbed by spiritual attacks. I have noticed that they are in fact, a sign we are heading in the right direction and gaining spiritual ground. In any battle for territory, you don't attack opponents that are dead, off-track, or fleeing. You attack the ones who are charging straight for you and pose a real threat. For us to then turn around and run from any attack would ruin whatever prize God has planned for us (James 1:12<sup>143</sup>, 1 Corinthians 9:24<sup>144</sup>).

Now, whenever Father points out someone who may be afflicted by demons that He wants me to pray for, I know He wants to set them free and release them into greater spiritual abundance and joy. It is wonderful to walk with God this way, because in the name of Jesus, the

spiritual returns are guaranteed 100% of the time.

## HATRED

“How can God know everything!” The young lady seated across from me at a Bible study session was becoming increasingly unsettled as we studied Psalm 139. Let’s call her Emma.

I had met Emma at various church activities over the years and knew her to be an academic who loved to read and expound on truths. Not surprisingly, she was very familiar with the Bible but she seemed to grow more and more irritated during our discussions. Her face became flushed red with anger.

Now more attuned to recognising demonic influence, I quietly asked Father in my heart, “What is afflicting Emma?” The answer was a spirit of hatred. Seeing that the spirit was causing Emma to be anxious and desperate to leave, I realised that I had to lovingly pull her aside for prayer before the afflicting spirit got away.

I will let Emma tell you her story.

### EMMA’S STORY

*“I saw an ad on Facebook for a ladies meeting at church on confession and community. I thought it sounded interesting and contacted the organisers to ask if I could join.*

*During the discussion, we studied Psalm 139. Everyone thought the passage was so comforting because God paid so much attention to us. I found myself angry because it told me that God knew things that I didn’t know. I even started to tear up a bit. Jennifer said it was okay to cry and asked if I wanted to be prayed for. She and two other ladies then stepped aside to pray for me, while the rest of the group continued their discussion. I thought, “Okay, I guess I don’t have a choice.”*

*At the beginning of the prayer, Jennifer told me that she saw a spirit of hate around me, and asked me if that made any sense to me. I said that I felt like my family hated me, and that there was something wrong with me. I described some incidents from childhood that made me feel that way. They then led me to confess my*



*pain, forgive and bless some family members and invite Jesus to heal my hurt and broken relationships.*

*As we continued, one of them came around, put her hand on my back and said that we needed to pray for my back. The ladies didn't know that all throughout my childhood, I had a recurring dream where I was walking round and round with a huge burden on my back. This burden was so large and enormous and it was way bigger than me. I stopped dreaming about it after I went to college but I still remember that dream so vividly. They also didn't know that whenever I was at a worship session in church and felt touched by the Holy Spirit, my back would start to bend, and I become doubled over. I won't feel pain, just a strong pressure pushing me down. This has been happening ever since I accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour.*

*I was asked to describe what I thought my body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, would look like. I told them that there was light, but there was light only at the front. Behind me, there was a lot of darkness and I felt very, very afraid of it, but I didn't know what it was. They then asked me, "Were you dedicated as a child?" And I said, yes. In my head, I thought I had told them that, but clearly those words hadn't come out of my mouth. I was dedicated to idols in a temple near my home, because I was always sick as a baby. I remember my grandmother would get pieces of paper from the temple with "blessings" written on it and she would light it on fire and throw them into a cup of water for me to drink. Both sides of my family practice ancestor worship and that was what I was born into before becoming a Christian at age 12.*

*As we began to pray and I started to repeat each word of the prayer, it became almost physically impossible to speak the words. I could barely hear my voice. The prayer to cast out the demons from the temple that were linked to hatred was an actual physical battle.*

*As the demons were cast out, I started to feel my back straighten and become more upright. At the end of the prayer, the words kept repeating in my head; "It's gone, it's gone, it's gone!" The demons were cast out. I felt like something had been cut out from the left side of my back.*

*My temple now was brighter and bigger than before, and instead of darkness at my back, I feel Christ standing right behind me, so close. In joy, one of the ladies hugged me and said, "Oh, I just hope that you can feel Christ hugging you." I was still too dazed to tell her that Christ is now standing at my back and He is so close that He might as well be hugging me. I can't move without bumping into Him.*

*As I continue walking with God, I have experienced even greater healing*

*beyond my imagination. I now know greater peace, greater comfort, and greater assurance today because God continues to chase after me in love. I can command demons to get out of my life now; they should fear me, not I them. Miracles such as the one I experienced are only the start of a journey where I continue to be refined and made new in Christ.”*

Since her deliverance and after some discipleship training, Emma has started praying the same way for other ladies. She too is learning that she can reap 100% spiritual returns as she prays with other fellow believers to be set free from demonic strongholds in Jesus’ powerful name.

## CHAPTER 9



# WORDS

*Proverbs 16:24 Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.*

“I suffer from a weak immune system and have to be careful with the activities I take part in. My entire family has lots of health problems. We all die early.” The tall, tanned man standing before me appeared strong and well-built, but his unexpected words set off alarm bells in my head. Let’s call this self-cursing man, Simon.

We are all products of our experiences, environments, cultures, political systems, music, movies, friends and so forth. The deepest influences undoubtedly come from our family’s spiritual heritage, beliefs, values, customs and traditions. It can be very hard for people to believe that even though their families determined their start in life, they do not determine the end. Simon had most likely heard his family make such statements about their lives, and simply repeated what they said. Unknowingly, he had spoken words of death over himself for years. The Bible warns us in Proverbs 18:21<sup>145</sup> that our words can bring death or life. We will reap the consequences of the blessings or curses we utter, whether we say them intentionally or not.

Praise God that Simon received miraculous healing after he

repented of his careless words as well as his family's idol worship. I'll let him tell you his story.

## SIMON'S STORY

*"I was diagnosed with a disease called ulcerative colitis shortly after I turned twenty-five. It is believed to be an immune system malfunction that causes inflammation in the inner lining of the large intestines, leading to symptoms like bloody diarrhea, anemia and joint pains. I felt devastated when the doctor told me that it was a chronic illness. I frantically looked online for answers, but it only left me feeling hopeless when all the articles suggested that there isn't a complete cure.*

*I was angry with God for allowing this to happen to me. "I thought you loved me!" I cried out to Him and wondered what I could have done to deserve this chronic condition at such a young age. I thought it was unfair that God put me through this pain. Deep down, I knew that God is good and it was not His will to give me an impaired body, but the recurring symptoms tempted me to believe that He was hidden. I felt helpless and slowly gave up on even asking why, as I was convinced that I would never be healed.*

*Two years later, as I was fasting for a breakthrough, the Holy Spirit reminded me that I have actually said many curses over my health, including labeling myself as "incurable" and thinking that I was unloved. These lies had taken a toll on my trust in God's healing. The Holy Spirit gently guided me to repent for saying many horrible curses over myself and for hardening my heart from His love. He reminded me that my body is His temple, and my illness can bring glory to Him. I submitted my body to God and invited Him to use my condition to testify of His goodness. The moment I restored my faith in God was when miracles began to happen.*

*On another occasion, a friend prayed for me and suggested that there was a generational curse in my family in relation to my stomach condition. Not knowing what a generational curse was, I immediately rejected the idea. However, as I was reading Exodus 20:5<sup>146</sup>, I understood that curses can be carried down generations if someone in the family worshipped other gods. I reckoned that my maternal great grandmother had once dedicated her children to guanyin and my grandmother used to burn incense to idols as well! I was still suspicious at first, but I was slowly convinced that such generational curses do exist in my mother's family line as her brother and*

*cousin were both diagnosed with stomach diseases in recent years. With that in mind, I confessed for my ancestors' sin of idol worship and decided to cut all ungodly soul ties with my ancestry and the curse of stomach illnesses in the name of Jesus Christ. The symptoms from ulcerative colitis gradually subsided in the next weeks.*

*Soon after that, I went for another medical test and the reports showed that the inflammation marker had reduced by over 90%! I was in shock to see that God actually healed me. The doctors originally wanted to escalate my treatment due to worsening results, but they were surprised by the drastic improvement and even prescribed a lower dosage of medicine! This report gave me confidence in God's tangible healing and love. Jesus had conquered all sins and sickness so that I could live boldly in His promises. He has power over what we deemed impossible. He has authority over every single cell in our bodies and triumphs over all science and statistics."*

## STRUGGLES WITH MY OWN HEALING

I've heard many theories about miraculous healing from numerous Christians. These ranged from "there is no such thing as miraculous healing anymore," "God gave you this pain for a purpose so just accept it," or "miraculous healings do not last," to "God wants to heal everyone's physical pain and sickness," "you need to first thank God and believe then you will be healed," as well as "imagine being healed and it will happen." Finally, I was also told, "God only helps those who help themselves."

I have come across many who put 100% of their faith in doctors and 0% in God and then some who put 100% of their faith in God's healing and nothing else.

Given the episodes of excruciating headaches and back pain that shattered my life from my forties, I was willing to listen and test all theories. I went for physiotherapy and chiropractor treatments, wore orthopedic corsets, took supplements and painkillers, tested Chinese medicine, signed up for bone setting, let people do acupuncture on me. Everyone had their own version of the "truth" on the reason for my suffering. Additionally, I tried yoga, pilates, personal training, running, and swimming. I also begged Father for healing, fasted and prayed, tried to believe harder, read books, attended healing events and even bribed

God by promising to use any healing miracle He gave me to testify of His greatness. How could I get into God's good books so that I would qualify for His healing?

Outwardly, I put up a brave front but inwardly, I was always fearful of anything that might trigger more pain. When I laid my weary body down in bed each night, my heart would silently cry out, "Father, how much longer will I have to suffer like this? I'm only in my forties. What will it be like when I reach my sixties? Is this the life You prepared for me?" Sleep was a temporary relief before the pain started all over again the next day. It took pure gut determination to hang on to the belief that God is always good.

In the Bible, Jesus touched and healed numerous people. He always had tremendous compassion and healed the afflicted (Matthew 9:35-36<sup>147</sup>, 14:14<sup>148</sup>, 20:34<sup>149</sup>). Yet at the same time, there were times He withdrew and ignored them, leaving behind many who came to Him for healing (Luke 5:15-16<sup>150</sup>). Did Jesus really want to heal everyone? I wanted the healing Jesus I read about, not the one who left the afflicted behind to withdraw to isolated places and pray.

God gave the apostle Paul (Acts 19:11-12<sup>151</sup>, 14:8-10<sup>152</sup>, 28:8<sup>153</sup>) the power to perform amazing healing miracles. Indeed, the Bible promises anyone who believes in Jesus that they will be able to heal the sick, cast out demons, and drink anything poisonous without being harmed (Mark 16:17-18<sup>154</sup>).

Yet Paul left Trophimus, a long time missionary co-worker sick at Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20<sup>155</sup>) and reminded Timothy, a young man he referred to as his own child in Christ, to consume a little wine for the sake of his frequent ailments (1 Timothy 5:23<sup>156</sup>). Why did Paul's God-given healing power not include healing these faithful followers of Jesus? I wanted to be like the masses that received healing through a person like Paul, and not be like Trophimus or Timothy who didn't.

We see from the numerous examples of Jesus' miraculous healings (Mark 1:32-34<sup>157</sup>, Luke 13:10-16<sup>158</sup>, John 5:1-15<sup>159</sup>) that sickness is often the result of the brokenness in this world, sin and demonic affliction. Yet certain people in the Bible encountered sickness simply because God intended to manifest His glory through the restoration

of their bodies. It was not their sins that caused them to be afflicted. We see this in the example of Job, whom Satan afflicted with sores all over his body (Job 2:7<sup>160</sup>) as well as the blind man whom Jesus healed (John 9:1-3<sup>161</sup>). Both had a powerful personal encounter with God afterward. I wasn't sure if I was afflicted as a result of sin, demons, poor posture or God's glory.

In spite of these seemingly inconsistent facts, I started to notice some consistencies in how people receive healing from God. First, miraculous healing often happens where there are witnesses who can testify first-hand of God's power, like in Simon's case. His doctors were astounded by his miraculous recovery. Second, it is usually done to reach those who do not yet know Jesus. Like those whom I met who have seen Jesus face to face, unbelievers cannot deny Jesus once they have witnessed or experienced miraculous healing for themselves.

A friend from church related how the opposite is sometimes true. Some of her friends left God altogether after they were not miraculously healed of cancer. Saddened by their attitude, I had to also check mine. Was I praying for healing simply because I wanted to use God for instant relief or because I wanted God Himself?

The Bible states that God opposes the proud and self-entitled (James 4:6-10<sup>162</sup>). He will not respond to prayers when we continue to hold on to sin (John 9:31<sup>163</sup>), refuse to forgive others (Mark 11:25<sup>164</sup>) or ask with the wrong motives (James 4:3<sup>165</sup>). One recognises the proud when we become angry and frustrated at God for not fixing us; elevating our own physical condition over His will, and forgetting to reflect on the condition of our hearts. Many times I had been tempted to curse God, as Job's wife had tempted her own husband to do (Job 2:9<sup>166</sup>). Her words echoed in my mind, "Why maintain my integrity? Just curse God."

Like King Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20, we can miss God's heart and intentions for healing and seek only to fulfill our own plans. King Hezekiah received a miraculous healing from God for a fatal skin condition and even received an extra 15 years on his life. Instead of thanking God, the king challenged God for a difficult sign, which God also graciously agreed to.

Despite all this, King Hezekiah did not humbly honour God.

Later, the king foolishly glorified himself. As a result, God proclaimed judgment on his kingdom. Sadly, the king was not remorseful or repentant after he learnt that he would not live long enough to see the judgment come to pass. He pleaded for mercy for his suffering but didn't plead for mercy for the many who would suffer as a consequence because of his sin. King Hezekiah may have been healed from his fatal disease, but his heart was evidently sick with selfish pride.

This was a great reminder to check my own heart. What would I do if I never received healing and continued to live in pain every day? Jesus suffered tremendously through brutal torture and crucifixion for my sake, would I tolerate some pain on earth for a few more years? If I received miraculous healing, would I be tempted to forget about God?

During this journey, God opened my eyes to the condition of my own selfish heart. He also gave me many opportunities to witness miraculous healings that come through confession. In the last five years, I have seen numerous people relieved of persistent eczema, insomnia, stomach cramps, eye problems, shoulder pain and hip issues, simply because they repented of taking part in idol worship and witchcraft, as well as various other sins. As I witnessed them receive instant healing before my very eyes, I had to discipline my mind and heart to not envy, but to rejoice with, them.

Then at times, when the pain in my back became overwhelming, I would privately vent to God in desperation and exasperation. "My body aches so badly, Father! I'm so weary and exhausted from living with pain. Can You heal me already please? Are You trying to test me? What am I doing wrong?" In despair, I would cry out with tears streaming down my face. Each time, the Holy Spirit would fill me with His peace and comfort.

I never received complete healing overnight but I did learn to trust God for His plans, even when He doesn't tell me the "why, when or how" – no matter how many times I ask. Along the way, I learnt about ungodly forms of healing first-hand. It is these personal experiences that led me to research into and write about new age, qigong, energy and other forms of healing as a tender warning to others.

Praise God, I am mostly free of pain today, after cutting off all links to witchcraft and learning to break down my stiff muscles with my



own hands. With regards to all my questions about why I didn't receive a miraculous healing, I am saving them for when I see God face to face.

## DO YOU BELIEVE IN GENERATIONAL CURSES?

Simon's story showed me clear evidence that sickness can be passed down to us because of generational sin, and that it can be removed when we humbly pray in Jesus' name, without any doubt of His goodness (Mark 11:22-25<sup>167</sup>). What an amazing privilege from Jesus! But first, Simon needed to put away his unbelief and wrong views of his Heavenly Father so that he could pray with the right attitude in his heart. He might not have believed in generational curses at first but thankfully, he was humble enough to turn his personal opinion around.

In the Bible, we see an example of generational curses with the prophet Elisha's servant, Gehazi. One day, Elisha healed an army commander, Naaman, of leprosy. In his greed, the servant secretly went to look for the commander afterward and lied to him, so that he could take some of the lavish gifts that Elisha had turned down for himself. The Bible clearly states that as a result of his greed and lies, Gehazi and his descendants were cursed with leprosy (2 Kings 5:27<sup>168</sup>).

Similarly, we still find families today with histories of persistent sicknesses, childbearing difficulties, early deaths or mental disorders. It is not surprising to find that their forefathers, up to their great-great-grandparents, had defied God's commandments or turned to idol worship. Other signs of generational curses include families that persistently fight each other or slip into bankruptcy. One might notice that uncles and aunts don't get along; grandparents are abandoned; and siblings don't speak with each other. Figuratively speaking, family members will tend to set themselves up on opposite sides of the fence and see each other as enemies. Hatred and unforgiveness run throughout family relationships. Wealth that was once accumulated is not prolonged either. Business failures, bad loans, betrayal by business partners, bad investments and bankruptcy dry up the bank account.

We may doubt the consequence of a spiritual heritage that

is rooted in rebellion against God, yet He warns on four occasions in the Bible that our iniquities have consequences on future generations, specifically down to the third and fourth generations (Exodus 20:4-6<sup>169</sup>, Exodus 34:6-7<sup>170</sup>, Numbers 14:18<sup>171</sup>; Deuteronomy 5:9<sup>172</sup>). Clearly, this is a warning that we should not take lightly.

On the other hand, some people's lives seem to be blessed. Things go smoothly, there are no major diseases, and families are closely knit and loving. Generally, whatever they do seems to go well and prosper. It would appear that events and circumstances around them set them off in the right direction. Take a closer look and it is likely that such people are descendants of a line of families who have been faithful followers of Jesus Christ (Deuteronomy 28:11-14<sup>173</sup>). Such is the promised legacy of those whose forefathers obeyed God's commandments. God's Word promises that they will enjoy generational blessings for a thousand generations (Exodus 20:6<sup>174</sup>). That lineage is frankly, quite uncountable.

When God created us, He made us to "*be fruitful and multiply*" (Genesis 9:7<sup>175</sup>). His original intent was for us to replicate His blessings and goodness across the entire earth. Because all human beings have this inborn spiritual calling and assignment programmed into us, we sadly only multiply sin, grief and curses when we rebel against our Creator. Thank God that He has only limited generational curses up to four generations and that He gave us His Son to die for our sins, so we can revoke these curses once we have personally turned our hearts fully to Jesus.

## **THE POWER OF WORDS AND THE SUBCONSCIOUS**

Simon's story also taught me about the destructive power of misdirected faith, mistaken beliefs, and malignant words (Proverbs 18:21<sup>176</sup>). The Bible warns us that we will "*eat the fruits*" of our words. Words do bring about changes in the visible, physical realm. Consider the Israelites whom Moses helped escape from Egypt to go to the Promised Land. They all died in the desert after wandering around for 40 years. The

reason? It wasn't because God is wicked – but primarily because they kept grumbling and declaring over and over again that they would die in the wilderness. God did not intend to leave their bodies in the desert but eventually, their own words overturned His intent (Numbers 14:28-29<sup>177</sup>). Thankfully, Simon was willing to repent of and renounce his self-curses. One doesn't need to learn witchcraft spells to curse someone. We all have said curses over people that sounded like, “he/she is just stupid”, “it is better he/she just dies”, “he/she will never be successful” or “she will never be able to have children”.

We often don't think about the consequences of our words nor do we think about what we think about. Only 10% of the human mind is conscious. The 90% that is subconscious rules our lives much more than we are aware.

Our subconscious mind starts to gather information about ourselves from the time we are in our mothers' wombs. It receives and stores sensory information all the time, even while we are fast sleep or under general anesthesia.

God has gifted us with such a powerful subconscious that it can scan information at lightning speed. Our brain's total capacity is the equivalent of 4.7 billion books<sup>A</sup>. Ninety percent of that, or 4.23 billion books, is a lot of subconscious data! This is the part of our brain that is responsible for 95% of our behavior and decisions<sup>B</sup>. Yet we don't curate the information we expose our minds to.

The danger is that our subconscious mind has no filter. It does not differentiate between what is true and what is false. It primarily learns through repetition, not by logic, and believes what it is fed.

We aren't always conscious of what we feed our minds with. At home, the views of our family members will subconsciously steer our beliefs. In the mall, we will subconsciously store up the lyrics from the background music we hear. At work, the gossip we hear about people will inadvertently affect our views about others. On the street, we will subconsciously absorb the advertising messages we see around us. There is enormous pressure to conform to what everyone else believes and follows.

The “diet” that we feed our subconscious mind will affect

our emotions, thought patterns, decisions and eventually, the course of our entire lives. When we neglect to study God's Word until it is firmly imprinted in our subconscious, there is a danger that the world's subconscious messages will take over and dominate our thinking. As they say, garbage in, garbage out.

So if we put our faith in a medical practitioner who says we will die in a year's time and keep listening to the same message over and over again, our subconscious minds may start to believe and react in a way that affects our bodies negatively. We may not literally die in 12 months but the words can have a powerful effect on us subconsciously. We are less likely to be able to receive God's miraculous healing, no matter how many times we consciously pray, until we repent of placing more faith in a person than in God's promises. Praise God that He is gracious and will always forgive His children for our misguided ways.

A. Professor Terry Sejnowski. Salk Institute for Biological Studies, California.

B. Professor Gerald Zaltman, Harvard Business School.

## CHAPTER 10



# SHALL WE BRAINSTORM?

*Luke 14:33 So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*

Congratulations on reaching the final chapter of this book, despite probably raising your eyebrows a few times or feeling uneasy as you read some parts. In the past, I would have felt the same way too. I didn't ask for these experiences and at times, have felt quite uncomfortable about them myself. Please understand that I have nothing to gain from talking to you about them. It would be a whole lot easier for me to live my life without saying anything. But that might not be very loving, especially if the revelations help make a difference to your eternity with Father.

## I DON'T WANT THIS ANYMORE!

Andrew has been on this journey with me over the past five years. He has seen me returning from ministering to people so exhausted that I would sit slumped over the dinner table barely able to eat, but somehow still have enough excitement to share jubilant stories about our Father's work. He has sacrificed countless hours while I have been out praying for

someone. He has also witnessed the amazing testimonies and changed lives as much as the sacrifices it has cost. As you may be able to imagine, he hasn't always been thrilled by the direction my life has taken. At the same time, I have also been tempted to give up numerous times.

Three years into my journey, a church leader referred a lady to me who saw dark shadows in her apartment and constantly experienced demonic manifestations while she slept. Something unseen would walk up and down her room at night and hit her pillow while she tried to sleep. Unlike my relative, Aunty, whom I knew heaps about because we are from the same family, I knew almost nothing about this lady. I was told that she served as a worship leader at church and had previously sought help for deliverance without much relief. Let's call her Mei Mei.

After an initial chat over coffee with Mei Mei to get to know the background of her troubles, we arranged to conduct a spiritual cleansing of her flat. Admittedly, I was nervous. If no one from church had attempted to do a flat cleansing for her, what on earth was I doing?

All I knew was that my beloved Saviour's reputation was at stake. Just imagine the conversation that Mei Mei would have with other people, "I have been actively serving at church for three years. But no one there has been able to get rid of the demons in my home. I prayed to Jesus many times for relief but nothing happened."

If my Instructor connected me with Mei Mei, He would also help me help her. After all, Jesus had died to set her free and given us authority over all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:19<sup>178</sup>). Still, I was nervous. So I called Eve and asked her if she would take a break from her deliverance ministry and accompany me on this solo mission. I was relieved when she said yes.

The day for prayer arrived and the only thing I found exciting about it was the chance to go to a district I had never been to. I heard it was known for its old buildings and colourful role in the city's history. I met Eve and we hopped into a taxi to head to Mei Mei's flat. It was nice to catch up with Eve, she was always so positive, wise and joyful. Then in the middle of the pleasantries, she cut straight to a pointed question, "Jennifer, why isn't anyone from your own church helping you? Whenever I pray for people, there are always others covering me

in prayer. We help each other out. Where is your spiritual coverage from your own community?”

It was a valid question and one that had always been lurking at the back of my mind. Each time it surfaced, I would intentionally beat it down like a fly. I had been very reluctant to think about it but Eve had just yanked it right to the forefront. The question hurt and I had nowhere to run. I never wanted to admit that I felt lonely and cast aside by people. I just kept my eyes focused on the people who were hurting and lost who needed Jesus. Jesus loves them as much as He loves me, and I wanted them to know that. I comforted myself with the thought that as long as Father saw the sacrifices, I was satisfied (Romans 12:1<sup>179</sup>). No one else mattered.

“Where is your pastoral coverage, Jennifer?” “Eh... it was a pastor who referred this lady to me. Does that count as pastoral coverage? We have God with us, that’s the most important!” I insisted. “Yes,” Eve replied, “But Jesus always sent out His disciples in two’s.”

Shortly afterwards, Eve and I hopped off the taxi and proceeded to witness another successful spiritual eviction at Mei Mei’s flat. Eve and I taught her how to confess and repent for the idol worship, witchcraft and immoral sins that had previously taken place in her flat and command the residing demons to leave in Jesus’ name. Mei Mei was delighted that her flat felt brighter and was cleansed, and that she would be able to have a good night’s rest for the first time in a long while.

Back home, I continued to feel deeply disturbed and discouraged by Eve’s question. It felt as if a dark weight began to hover around my shoulders as my thoughts got darker and darker.

“I don’t have enough support.” Yes, that’s true. “Why aren’t more people stepping up in the authority that Jesus has given them?” Yes, that’s so sad. “People are just making use of me. They don’t care for my welfare. They just call when they want relief and then drop me when they’re done.” Yes, that would be an accurate observation. “No one cares about the personal risks I take on for the sake of other people.” Yes, true again.

Feeling weighed down and sick to my core, I waited until I took my shower to let it all out. I didn’t want Andrew to see me crying and

hoped that the sound of the shower would drown out my sobbing. I fell to my knees and confessed, “Father, I don’t want to do this anymore! I know I agreed to following You as my Instructor, but I am worn out and feel so isolated. If this is the work You want me to do, then You have to do something or I quit!”

Then Satan hit me with another heinous suggestion, “I should leave church altogether.” It was then that I realised my thoughts were being played by the enemy. I rebuked Satan in Jesus’ name and asked God to restore my thoughts to His thoughts, my ways to His ways (Isaiah 55:8<sup>180</sup>). Over the next few days, I kept my schedule free and rested both physically and spiritually, enjoying God’s company and feeling restored by the Holy Spirit.

I made an appointment to meet with the pastor who referred me to Mei Mei. He graciously encouraged me to train up other people to pray like His first disciples did. With his blessings, I started a few discipleship groups, comprising different groups of women and men. It wasn’t too hard to enlist people from those who have experienced spiritual victories and miracles through prayers in Jesus’ name. Today, my Instructor continues His work by passing on what He has shown me to others. Andrew is now onboard and makes time to pray for other men. With the discipleship groups have come many more revelations than I could ever imagine. In 2017, an idea began to swim around in my head; that I should write about the research and observations uncovered together in a standalone website.

One morning, I turned to Andrew at breakfast and said, “Honey, I’ve been thinking of setting up a website to publish all the findings and learnings from the past four years. Can we brainstorm together on a name for the website?” My husband turned around and cheerily said, “I have a name for you, Teaching The Humble Hearted. Use it!”

That wasn’t quite what I had in mind. Who brainstorms like that? I had several nice ideas of my own and frankly, this one sounded rather old school and loonnngggg. Who is going to remember a website name with seven syllables?

Andrew went on to explain. “Two weeks ago, I had a dream that was so vivid that I still remember it very clearly. I was given the words,



teaching the humble hearted, and told “Use it!” When I woke up, I went straight to my mobile phone to check if anyone has used the name or if the name had any significance. I found nothing. As you know, honey, I don’t usually remember my dreams but this one was very clear. Seems to make sense that it was meant for the website.”

I sat there quietly considering what Andrew said. “What! Andrew had a prophetic dream and he didn’t tell me? What other prophetic dreams from God had Andrew received?” If God had given Andrew the name, then I couldn’t possibly turn it down. Besides, it would indeed take a humble heart to accept some of the things we were going to publish. Perhaps this was Father’s way to address the target audience, I had no idea. After some domain searches and intellectual property checks, we eventually arrived at teachinghumblehearts.com. The adapted name is still quite a mouthful but at least it is down to five syllables.

The website is live today and includes everything from Biblical truths on spiritual disciplines, such as how to fast or recognise the Holy Spirit, to considerable explanations on spiritual authority, evil spirits, emotional healing, as well as practical tips on relationships and mentoring. It includes sample prayers and numerous testimonies of people who have been set free from spiritual afflictions or healed of childhood wounds. We also touch on less-covered topics, such as shame, inner vows, generational curses, soul ties, fengshui, demonic dreams, qi energy, yoga and chanting. The goal is to provide as much Biblical guidance as possible on areas that can become spiritual traps. Much of the writing is backed up by real-life testimonies. The revelations and new life we have freely received, we freely pass on.

## **A RENEWED MINDSET**

The website also represents the major paradigm shifts in my thinking over the past five years. You may have noticed that I have not used the word “supernatural” about what I have witnessed even though there have been many amazing things done in Jesus’ name. The more you walk with Jesus, the more His way of life becomes normal and routine. We often

use the word “supernatural” because we look in awe at God’s wondrous works and forget that all these are so incredibly easy compared to how He created the 100 billions of billions of planets out there.

I am cautious about actively seeking “supernatural” spiritual gifts for myself. Through the years, I have found that the Holy Spirit will disperse God’s spiritual abilities as His need arises, rather than as my desires dictate. We can all seek God’s gifts and completely miss out on the Giver. His gifts are not a sign of His favour on us. Instead, they signal His favour on the people whom He has called us to care for.

Neither do I mention the word “spiritual warfare” in this book even though I talk about evicting evil spirits. I have observed that the real battle is not with demons. Most times, the real battle is within us; we need to fight our lack of faith, lack of knowledge, and lack of confession. The spiritual battle against demons has already been won. Jesus did the fighting and we get to reap the spoils of His victorious conquest (1 John 3:8<sup>181</sup>).

We aren’t fighting evil spirits, we are fighting our own unbelief, ignorance and rebellion. Once we confess all our sins and know our authority, there is no longer any need for fear.

Spiritual attacks are merely an annoyance, a bump on the road to be stepped over, rather than a roadblock that stops us from enjoying an abundant life. What I once deduced as spiritual attacks, I now see as spiritual insight. God has a purpose for allowing certain things to occur and doesn’t allow us to be tempted beyond what we can endure (1 Corinthians 10:13<sup>182</sup>). Now when anything ill-timed, disruptive, disturbing, or malicious happens, I turn to Father and ask, “What is the source of this and how shall I overcome it please? Do You intend for me to wait, take over, endure, or exit the situation?”

Obedying God’s commandments is no longer about compromising my desires. It is my desire! It is the only way to live; His Word leads to lots and lots of amazing and wonderful surprises. Bringing salvation to loved ones is no longer about convincing them to attend church in order to hear someone preach the gospel, but living out the Bible before their very eyes every day. Nothing is as convicting as a transformed life that clearly came as a result of following the world’s Saviour, Jesus Christ.

I no longer rely on institutions to serve me pre-packaged spiritual fast food. Fast food tends to be laced with extra flavourings to make it tasty and palatable for the masses but seldom does it provide the deep nourishment we need. We all need to munch on solid servings of God's Word every day in order to stay spiritually robust and healthy. I have learnt there is no perfect church system. No human being is perfect and neither is any church system. We all need Jesus, who promises to come back and restore us all to perfection (Ephesians 5:25-27<sup>183</sup>). Some church systems may even look at the Bible through rose tinted glasses. We need to be very careful about the spiritual lenses we are prescribed because we may not always see Jesus very clearly through them.

Only God's Word and His Holy Spirit will provide us with the truth. Sadly, most churches cannot even agree with another on the right "system" of faith. It's important not to get sucked into the institutionalised differences and debates (1 Corinthians 1:10<sup>184</sup>) but instead, to focus on the Father's will. Without spiritual revelation through the Holy Spirit, we will be easily sidetracked and prone to quarrel amongst ourselves. The Holy Spirit will bring unity if we all submit to Him (Ephesians 4:1-6<sup>185</sup>).

*2 Timothy 2:14-17 Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene.*

## THE COST OF THE NEW NORMAL

Jesus' way of life is the "new normal" for anyone who accepts Jesus' offer of salvation and follows His instructions closely. This is how we live as new creations, no longer hampered by earthly temptations and spiritual entanglements, but free to worship God fully with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength (Luke 10:27<sup>186</sup>). The life of the early disciples did not die out with their deaths. They are recorded in the Bible to show

us how we are to live today too.

It also comes at a cost. The abundant life that Jesus bought for us came at a great personal sacrifice for God (John 10:10<sup>187</sup>). It cost the early disciples their homes, their families, their comforts, their reputations and their status. Surely it will also cost us something too.

I used to joke that I have a Father that is far wealthier and much more powerful than Asia's richest man, Li Ka Shing. Yet I know my loyalty to the most loving and awe-inspiring Father in this universe is persistently being tested. I am constantly tempted to deny my Father (Matthew 10:31-33<sup>188</sup>) and follow the world.

I struggled for a long time to understand what it means to renounce everything to follow Jesus (Luke 14:33<sup>189</sup>). God does not accept dual citizenship. Philippians 3:18-21<sup>190</sup> talks about believers being made citizens of Heaven. Those who do not renounce all the things that keep us in bondage to worldly ideas and idols are called enemies of the cross of Christ who are headed for destruction (Philippians 3:18-21<sup>190</sup>). This journey has shown me that more than being self-aware enough to stop being materialistic, carnal and shallow, I needed to let go of all of my own perceptions of God, other people and even myself in order to embrace all that He has prepared for me. I need to test my own heart regularly.

Will I withstand the tremendous peer pressure to conform to the patterns of this world?

Will I chase the things this world tells me are good for me, or only chase God's will for me?

Will I voluntarily walk into suffering if God calls me to?

Will I take on the messy work of loving the unlovely?

Will I choose to speak the truth even if it costs me the life I know?

Will I withstand ridicule and rejection for the sake of Christ?

I have noticed that there is something fundamentally wrong with our faith when we don't look and behave any differently from the secular world. Jesus' disciples are all called to be set apart (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1<sup>191</sup>), separated from the patterns of this world (Romans 12:2<sup>192</sup>), and to

fearlessly outdo others in love, patience, and endurance in the midst of persistent persecution (Romans 12:10<sup>193</sup>).

I once visited a tiny church where I didn't understand the local language. Every time they worshipped, the only word I understood from their worship songs was the local equivalent of the precious name of "Jesus". Every time I heard that name, I just cried with deep gratitude. Onlookers might have assumed that this newcomer was moved by the church service that Sunday, when in reality, I didn't understand a word of it. In the midst of my tears, I sensed Father quietly ask me, "Will you give everything up for me, Jennifer?" I'd like to say that my immediate answer was, "Yes, of course, Father!" But my true reply was, "I am afraid. I can only do it if You are with me. I am scared! Please don't leave me." My Instructor was asking me to look at the prize, the Light of the World Himself, rather than at the cost.

Emma, the professor who was delivered of a spirit of hate, as described in chapter eight, eloquently describes her own experience of leaving all that she knew behind to follow Jesus.

## EMMA'S STORY (PART TWO)

*"As I walk with God, each new season feels like the start of a breathtaking journey. I thought that being delivered from demons was the pinnacle of my spiritual life—surely God has outdone himself. But God doesn't stop working at the end of a prayer session. We are healed to enter into a relationship with the living God whose presence only grows bigger and more majestic the more we get to know Him.*

*A year and a half later, I have cried fresh tears but I have also discovered new depths of joy and freedom as I leave behind so much of what used to feel normal. Walking with God one day at a time can be frustrating because surrender can feel like a kind of dying. But as He carries me through each trial or struggle, I learn that pain is temporary. Joy does come with the morning.*

*If we wait for God to provide for our needs, we will also find that what God gives to us is far better than anything we take for ourselves. When we wait and seek His face, we will hear Him say over and over again, "Come, there's so much more! This is just the beginning. I can't wait to show you everything else!"*

*I came to the conclusion that walking with God is like hiking up a steep and dense mountain. The brush, thorns, rocks, and branches obscure the road ahead. But the trees, the ground, and the rolling hills of the mountain will eventually, thankfully, become visible. The obstacles that were in our way are now under our feet.*

*Those of us who like to pretend we're in control may feel small, scared and lost. I did, and I wondered if I would ever learn to let go. But God helps us in all our weaknesses even when we don't know how to take that next step.*

*God showed an academic like me who found comfort in a life of the mind that to devalue the other parts of how God created us is to step outside of God's designs. Because so much of what I truly wanted seemed impossible, I told myself that my desires were not that important to me or even to God. Out of fear, I chose to live by what I could see and understand, and it allowed me to create the illusion that I could stay in control of my life.*

*I came to realize that my old world was built on the belief that if I can just figure everything out, I won't be hurt. But this is the gospel of the self. God wants to change everything about how I live because I simply don't know as much as I think I do. When we grasp and grab out of fear or greed, we turn God's treasures into trash. What I wanted most became less than what God meant it to be.*

*He asks us to let go not because He wants to throw everything away but because He wants to give it all back to us. Transformed. Renewed. In the presence of God, who set the world into motion and determines its ends, I don't set the agenda; He does. I have come face to face with the One who created all knowledge.*

*Instead, when we place the different parts of who we are before an awesome God, we discover that God loves everything about us including the good, the bad, and the weak. God's glory shows up most clearly in the parts that we wish had never existed and would write out of our lives if we could.*

*When we wait in the pain of silences that feel too long, we learn to worship. When we wait, we discover for ourselves that God's promises are true and that He can be trusted. If deliverance or healing can be compared to the startling buoyancy of falling in love for the first time, walking with God in the humdrum rhythms of the everyday will grow that love into something deeper, wider, and more encompassing than our hearts can contain.*

*Yes, the world continues to be heartbreakingly broken and everywhere we look, we see injustice. How can things be fair when we make God so small in our eyes while He makes us so big in His? He thinks of us far more than we think of Him.*

*God—not us—is at the losing end of a lopsided, messy, glorious love affair. We can be sure that the Father will be more than good to us because His Son said so. At the cost of His own life, Jesus is God’s guarantee that until we find ourselves finally Home, we are not alone.”*

## SO THE NEW NORMAL CONTINUES

My friend, may I ask if you, like Emma, have started on your own journey towards a life that is a transformed “new normal” with Jesus? I assure you that it will not be easy but it certainly will be worth it! It will be as if you have received new eyes, a new heart, a new mind and a wonderful new life. This new normal does not come by staying comfortable or by only relying on others to show us the way. It does not come by keeping one foot in this world and one foot in God’s kingdom, that will tear us apart because they are two extreme opposites.

It comes through humbly submitting to God, seeking the truth in His Word through His Holy Spirit, and repenting of all the lies we have fallen for as well as the idols in our hearts. It grows by us walking our lives out with a community of believers who truly hunger for and seek God with all their hearts (Jeremiah 29:13<sup>193</sup>). Relationships can be messy, but it is in relationships that our rough edges become exposed, our status quo gets challenged and our characters are refined as we make daily choices to love others as Jesus loves us. It also requires us to stay alert and resist our arch enemy, Satan, without giving him too much credit or living in nervous ignorance of his scams.

If my story has stirred a deeper hunger and desire for you to know the one true God from the very core of your being, I encourage you to pray in Jesus’ name to invite God into all of your heart, mind, and soul. Name and renounce everything you have held on to for your identity, validation, security, and comfort. All these are temporary and will not quench the thirst of your soul (and you know what I mean). Give 100% of yourself to Jesus, don’t hold even 1% back. Ask the Holy Spirit to come fill you, to give you the power to live out the life that God

has ordained for you. Don't pigeonhole yourself based on what others say. This life is too short. Be liberated to follow God wherever He leads you. He is the greatest Prize of all and He wants to reconcile you, yes, precious you, to Himself now and for all eternity.

As for me, I will continue to trust and follow my Heavenly Father. Pepper, my "living teddy bear", continues to faithfully follow me around our home, looking at me with her bright yellow eyes, in anticipation of my next move. She waits patiently for my affection, confident that I will always love her, feed her and take care of her. Each time I call her name, Pepper will show up at my feet. She reminds me of the kind of relationship I want with my Heavenly Father, always staying close to Him, anticipating His next move and being available whenever He calls me. He is too good to miss out on.

*Philippians 3:12-21 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.*

*Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*



# CLOSING REMARKS

by Andrew Sum



## The unseen

Like many of you, I was brought up in a traditional education system that encourages us to only believe in what can be observed, with concrete evidence, and challenge anything that cannot be seen. But as we get older, we start to realise that this helps explain only a fraction of what we have encountered in our physical lives. There is far more that we don't know about this universe that God has created for us. In fact, our physical eyes are not even close to being able, or be reliable enough, to see reality around us. The unseen seems to influence our lives much more than what we might feel comfortable with.

Growing up, I spent many years wondering about the above, feeling puzzled. Why doesn't God just reveal everything through our eyes in full clarity?

With the testimonies from all our brothers- and sisters-in-Christ over the years, I have come to realise that our reality isn't in the observable world but rather, it is in the unseen spiritual realm where God's work of healing, bonding, loving and forgiving takes place, just like many of the stories you have read in this book.

And if you have read till the end of this book, I think you might agree with me that our relationship with God is not in physical form. I hope all the testimonies in this book can help you open your heart, mind and soul to God, rather than to search for Him with your eyes only.

# BIBLE REFERENCES

- i. *Philippians 2:3 ESV* Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.
- ii. *Ephesians 4:15-16 ESV* Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.
- iii. *Matthew 25:17,24-30 ESV* Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'
- iv. *Proverbs 29:25 ESV* The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.
- v. *John 8:12 ESV* Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
- vi. *John 16:13 ESV* When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.
- vii. *1 Peter 2:9 ESV* But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
- viii. *Revelation 7:12 ESV* saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."
1. *John 15:15 ESV* No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.
2. *John 17:14-15 ESV* I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.
3. *2 Timothy 1:7 ESV* for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.
4. *John 4:13-14 ESV* Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
5. *James 5:16 ESV* Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.
6. *Mark 11:25 ESV* And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."
7. *Deuteronomy 31:6 ESV* Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."
8. *Romans 8:28 ESV* And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.
9. *2 Corinthians 4:17-18 ESV* For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
10. *Hebrews 4:12 ESV* For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
11. *James 2:19 ESV* You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!
12. *Luke 8:28 ESV* When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me."
13. *Mark 5:6-7 ESV* And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me."
14. *Matthew 8:29 ESV* And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"
15. *James 4:7 ESV* Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
16. *Colossians 2:15 ESV* He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

## SHIFTING FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

17. *Luke 10:17-20 ESV* *The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."*
18. *Philippians 2:9-11 ESV* *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow; in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*
19. *Romans 8:26 ESV* *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*
20. *Psalms 91:1-16 ESV* *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge—no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot. "Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."*
21. *John 6:66 ESV* *After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.*
22. *1 Peter 5:8-9 ESV* *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.*
23. *1 John 4:4 ESV* *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*
24. *James 4:7 ESV* *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*
25. *2 Timothy 4:1-5 ESV* *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*
26. *Hebrews 11:6 ESV* *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*
27. *Ephesians 1:11-12 ESV* *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.*
28. *2 Corinthians 2:17 NIV* *Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.*
29. *John 14:13-14 ESV* *Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.*
30. *James 1:5 ESV* *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*
31. *1 Corinthians 3:18-23 ESV* *Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*
32. *Luke 18:17 ESV* *Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."*
33. *2 Timothy 4:3-4 ESV* *For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*
34. *Proverbs 3:11-12 ESV* *My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.*
35. *Luke 9:23-26 ESV* *And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.*
36. *John 3:17 ESV* *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*
37. *Isaiah 9:6 ESV* *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

38. *Genesis 1:27 ESV So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*
39. *1 Kings 19:11-13 ESV And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*
40. *Galatians 5:19-21 ESV Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*
41. *Isaiah 32:15-18 ESV until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.*
42. *1 Corinthians 2:11-16 ESV For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.*
43. *Romans 15:13 ESV May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*
44. *Ephesians 4:30 ESV And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*
45. *1 Corinthians 14:15 ESV What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.*
46. *Acts 2:6-11 ESV And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."*
47. *1 Corinthians 14:2 ESV For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit.*
48. *1 Corinthians 14:4 ESV The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.*
49. *1 Corinthians 13:1 ESV If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*
50. *Matthew 6:5,7 ESV "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.*
51. *Galatians 5:22-23 ESV But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*
52. *Matthew 21:22 ESV And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."*
53. *Ezekiel 14:7-8 ESV For any one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel, who separates himself from me, taking his idols into his heart and putting the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to a prophet to consult me through him, I the Lord will answer him myself. And I will set my face against that man; I will make him a sign and a byword and cut him off from the midst of my people, and you shall know that I am the Lord.*
54. *James 4:3 ESV You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*
55. *1 Corinthians 12:4 NIV There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.*
56. *Colossians 2:18-19 ESV Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.*
57. *1 Corinthians 14:1 ESV Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.*
58. *2 Corinthians 11:14-15 ESV And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*
59. *2 Corinthians 2:17 NIV Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.*
60. *Matthew 17:20 ESV He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."*

## SHIFTING FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

61. *1 Peter 5:8-9 ESV* *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.*
62. *2 Corinthians 3:14 ESV* *But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.*
63. *Luke 21:34-36 ESV* *"But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."*
64. *Acts 20:31 ESV* *Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.*
65. *Ephesians 6:18 ESV* *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,*
66. *1 Peter 5:8 ESV* *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*
67. *1 John 4:1-6 ESV* *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*
68. *Ephesians 4:27 ESV* *and give no opportunity to the devil.*
69. *1 Thessalonians 5:5-6 ESV* *For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.*
70. *Genesis 3:4-5 ESV* *But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*
71. *1 Samuel 15:23 ESV* *For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king."*
72. *Romans 8:5-6 ESV* *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.*
73. *1 Peter 5:8 ESV* *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*
74. *Exodus 22:18 ESV* *"You shall not permit a sorceress to live.*
75. *Deuteronomy 18:9-12 ESV* *"When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord. And because of these abominations the Lord your God is driving them out before you.*
76. *Leviticus 19:26 ESV* *"You shall not eat any flesh with the blood in it. You shall not interpret omens or tell fortunes.*
77. *Leviticus 20:6 ESV* *If a person turns to mediums and necromancers, whoring after them, I will set my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people.*
78. *Leviticus 20:27 ESV* *"A man or a woman who is a medium or a necromancer shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones; their blood shall be upon them."*
79. *2 Kings 21:6 ESV* *And he burned his son as an offering and used fortune-telling and omens and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger.*
80. *Micah 5:12 ESV* *and I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more tellers of fortunes;*
81. *2 Chronicles 33:6 ESV* *And he burned his sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger.*
82. *Isaiah 47:8-14 ESV* *Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures, who sit securely, who say in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me; I shall not sit as a widow or know the loss of children"; These two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day; the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments. You felt secure in your wickedness; you said, "No one sees me"; your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray, and you said in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me." But evil shall come upon you, which you will not know how to charm away; disaster shall fall upon you, for which you will not be able to atone; and ruin shall come upon you suddenly, of which you know nothing. Stand fast in your enchantments and your many sorceries, with which you have labored from your youth; perhaps you may be able to succeed; perhaps you may inspire terror. You are wearied with your many counsels; let them stand forth and save you, those who divide the heavens, who gaze at the stars, who at the new moons make known what shall come upon you. Behold, they are like stubble; the fire consumes them; they cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame. No coal for warming oneself is this, no fire to sit before!*

83. *Galatians 5:19-21 ESV* Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
84. *Revelation 21:8 ESV* But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."
85. *Acts 19:19 ESV* And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.
86. *Hosea 4:6 ESV* My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.
87. *Hosea 11:2 ESV* The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.
88. *Hosea 4:12-13 ESV* My people inquire of a piece of wood, and their walking staff gives them oracles. For a spirit of whoredom has led them astray, and they have left their God to play the whore. They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar, and terebinth, because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters play the whore, and your brides commit adultery.
89. *1 Corinthians 10:20-22 ESV* No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?
90. *2 Corinthians 2:15-16 ESV* For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?
91. *Hebrews 1:3 ESV* He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
92. *John 5:19 ESV* So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.
93. *1 Corinthians 3:16-17 ESV* Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.
94. *Revelation 2:17 ESV* He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it."
95. *Jeremiah 32:41 ESV* I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.
96. *Genesis 6:6 ESV* And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.
97. *Matthew 9:36 ESV* When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.
98. *Deuteronomy 9:20-21 ESV* And the Lord was so angry with Aaron that he was ready to destroy him. And I prayed for Aaron also at the same time. Then I took the sinful thing, the calf that you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it very small, until it was as fine as dust. And I threw the dust of it into the brook that ran down from the mountain.
99. *Matthew 17:5 ESV* He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."
100. *John 20:29 ESV* Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."
101. *Luke 8:17 ESV* For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.
102. *Luke 12:12 NIV* for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."
103. *James 1:5 ESV* If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.
104. *1 John 5:14-15 ESV* And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.
105. *John 3:17 ESV* For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.
106. *John 8:32 ESV* and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
107. *1 Corinthians 12:1,4-11 ESV* Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

## SHIFTING FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

108. *James 1:13-17 ESV* Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.
109. *Isaiah 9:6 ESV* For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
110. *Romans 12:2 NIV* Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
111. *John 7:38 ESV* Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"
112. *Matthew 5:17-18 ESV* "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.
113. *Matthew 17:17 ESV* And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me."
114. *Mark 6:5-6 ESV* And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching.
115. *Mark 9:23-25 ESV* And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."
116. *Matthew 22:14-15 ESV* For many are called, but few are chosen." Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words.
117. *Matthew 7:21-23 ESV* "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'
118. *Mark 16:11,13-14 ESV* But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it. And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them. Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.
119. *John 6:60-66 ESV* When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.
120. *Matthew 7:15-20 ESV* "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.
121. *Matthew 24:10-13,24 ESV* And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.
122. *Mark 13:22-23 ESV* For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.
123. *2 Timothy 4:3-4 ESV* For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.
124. *2 Peter 2:1 ESV* But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.
125. *1 Timothy 4:1 ESV* Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,
126. *1 John 4:1-6 ESV* Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.
127. *Matthew 10:22-25 ESV* and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.



128. *James 4:7 ESV Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*
129. *Psalms 34:5 ESV Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.*
130. *Acts 8:34-38 ESV And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.*
131. *Titus 3:5 ESV he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,*
132. *Acts 2:42-47 ESV And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*
133. *1 John 4:4 ESV Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*
134. *Psalms 139:7-18 ESV Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How rust is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.*
135. *1 John 1:9 ESV If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
136. *Revelation 3:20 ESV Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*
137. *Matthew 6:16-18 ESV "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*
138. *Philippians 3:19 ESV Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.*
139. *Luke 24:45 ESV Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,*
140. *Ephesians 1:18 ESV having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,*
141. *1 Corinthians 2:13 ESV And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.*
142. *James 1:12 ESV Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.*
143. *1 Corinthians 9:24 ESV Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.*
144. *Proverbs 18:21 ESV Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.*
145. *Exodus 20:5 ESV You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,*
146. *Matthew 9:35-36 ESV And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*
147. *Matthew 14:14 ESV When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.*
148. *Matthew 20:34 ESV And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.*
149. *Luke 5:15-16 ESV But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.*
150. *Acts 19:11-12 ESV And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.*
151. *Acts 14:8-10 ESV Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking.*



## SHIFTING FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

152. *Acts 28:8 ESV* *It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him, healed him.*
153. *Mark 16:17-18 ESV* *And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."*
154. *2 Timothy 4:20 ESV* *Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus.*
155. *1 Timothy 5:23 ESV* *(No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.)*
156. *Mark 1:32-34 ESV* *That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.*
157. *Luke 13:10-16 ESV* *Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"*
158. *John 5:1-15 ESV* *After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed." But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk?'" Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you." The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.*
159. *Job 2:7 ESV* *So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.*
160. *John 9:1-3 ESV* *As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.*
161. *James 4:6-10 ESV* *But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.*
162. *John 9:31 ESV* *We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.*
163. *Mark 11:25 ESV* *And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."*
164. *James 4:3 ESV* *You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*
165. *Job 2:9 ESV* *Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die."*
166. *Mark 11:22-25 ESV* *And Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."*
167. *2 Kings 5:27 ESV* *Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever." So he went out from his presence a leper, like snow.*
168. *Exodus 20:4-6 ESV* *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.*
169. *Exodus 34:6-7 ESV* *The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."*
170. *Numbers 14:18 ESV* *The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.'*

171. *Deuteronomy 5:9 ESV* You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,
172. *Deuteronomy 28:11-14 ESV* And the Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, within the land that the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. The Lord will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands. And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only go up and not down, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, being careful to do them, and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I command you today, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.
173. *Exodus 20:6 ESV* but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.
174. *Genesis 9:7 ESV* And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it."
175. *Proverbs 18:21 ESV* Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.
176. *Numbers 14:28-29 ESV* Say to them, 'As I live, declares the Lord, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me,
177. *Luke 10:19 ESV* Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.
178. *Romans 12:1 ESV* I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
179. *Isaiah 55:8 ESV* For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.
180. *1 John 3:8 ESV* Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.
181. *1 Corinthians 10:13 ESV* No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.
182. *Ephesians 5:25-27 ESV* Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.
183. *1 Corinthians 1:10 ESV* I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.
184. *Ephesians 4:1-6 ESV* I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
185. *Luke 10:27 ESV* And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."
186. *John 10:10 ESV* The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.
187. *Matthew 10:31-33 ESV* Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.
188. *Luke 14:33 ESV* So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.
189. *Philippians 3:18-21 ESV* For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.
190. *2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 ESV* Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty." Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.
191. *Romans 12:2 ESV* Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
192. *Romans 12:10 ESV* Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.
193. *Jeremiah 29:13 ESV* You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer Sum combines over a decade of experience in discipleship, inner healing, deliverance and professional writing to bring followers of Jesus highly practical books that answer questions that most people are unaware to ask. Her books are filled with scriptural teaching and insights from mentoring more than a hundred believers over the years.

Read more of her writings at [teachinghumblehearts.com](http://teachinghumblehearts.com)



# LIGHT OF THE WORLD

**What would you do if you experienced something that challenged the foundations of your faith?**

**Christian author, Jennifer Sum, shares her personal story of encountering the Holy Spirit in such a radical way, it turned her life around. Putting aside what she believed as a Christian for 17 years, Jennifer set out to re-examine her faith with fresh eyes and understand what it means to truly follow Jesus Christ. Be prepared to be in awe of God and have your heart challenged by what she shares in this book.**

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