

Jesus Christ is my personal Lord and Savior

You've heard me talk about someone named Jesus Christ, and how he has been our substitute, our freedom from sin, how He is a gift from God, and how He is our example of lowliness and costly love. Let me bring this a bit closer to something that you can see. My own life and encounter with God.

My life originated in Hong Kong. Having both my father and my mother as pastors brought me into the church before I left the womb. Apparently, my mother was preaching the week I was born. On some days, instead of heading home after school, I would head to church to meet my mom. Being introduced to the church life early, I knew how to act Christian; what to say, what to do, to smile when around people, and to say "Thank You" once in a while. So was I born a Christian? I wouldn't say so. There is no substitute for a personal commitment to Christ.

The turning point in my life was in my late teens. At that point, I was in a serious addiction to video games, spending minimum 6 hours per day on the computer. It was a vehicle of escape, to shut off my mind. The only thing it was good for was to knock me out, and to occupy my consciousness so I didn't have to face my hopelessness in my own pride. I knew of God, but instead wanted to be one. So I lived in my own virtual reality, ignoring the need for doing homework, or to obey my parents, or to contribute to the family. The real world, God's world, had rules to follow, and I chose to follow none of it. I wanted to play by my own rules.

The real world was frustrating to me, and I came into conflict with other family members. There was no escape from what I knew; I did not deserve to be a god. The thought of suicide hung in the air because I refused to submit to God. However, despite my pride, God would not let me go. I recall the two things that stopped me from killing myself. One was that I imagined it would be kind of sad for my parents, and for a time, I would cry over the thought of killing myself. Two, I could not get the 6th commandment out of my head; "Thou shall not murder."

I didn't feel sad about my parents for very long. Eventually, I could no longer cry. I had no emotional response to the thought. The plan was to get up after everyone went to bed, slice my wrists open, and bleed for couple hours. I was still going to church, but was getting increasingly discontent with the experience. True salvation required me to acknowledge my need of Christ because of my sins, and I

simply would not admit this. But the fact was, I was losing my reasons to live, and I wasn't finding new ones. The only thing left was the 6th commandment, and I didn't believe that would keep me alive very long.

That year, I went to the teen fellowship retreat. It is actually the same place we're heading to this year. A fellow Christian brother approached me and wanted to talk. I never found out why he wanted to talk, but the conversation was quite different. Instead of telling me what to do or giving me advice or trying to interrogate me, he started with his own life. His own struggles, his own weaknesses, and ultimately, his own submission to God for true hope and joy. Having been in the church for almost two decades, this was my first personal encounter with why Christ died; to make the dead alive. This Christian brother was, in essence, dead in his sins, because he had his own plans, his own ideas on how to live life, then God came in and turned his world upside down.

So what made this brother so different? It was not his intelligence, though he was working on his Ph. D. It was not his career, though he was an actuary. It was not his personal discipline or physical appearance, though he was the person to turn to for exercising advices. It was his honesty with his Christian life. On one hand, you can look like a Christian, and on the other hand, you can be a Christian. I was content looking the part, but to be one, I would need to surrender myself completely to God, just like this Christian brother.

That night, I shared with him what I thought was troubling me. I shared nothing close to what I know now in hindsight, but it was a step in the right direction. My words came with tears, and he pointed me towards the only comfort that was truly comforting; Jesus Christ and his salvation.

I realized that doing things my way and making my own rules gave me only misery. Worse than that, they were turning me into an evil person. But I knew that God didn't want me to be miserable. He wanted me to turn from evil, to enjoy life, and to live a good life. This is all possible because He loved me so much He sent His Son to die for me so I can obtain what he wanted me to have.

My life is not without struggles, but I now have hope. Instead of working against God, I am now working with the power and wisdom of God. When I wanted to be a god, I was alone. Powerless, hopeless, and a slave to addiction. When I submitted to God, I was filled with hope and joy. I became

more than what I was before, because my purpose now is directed at someone eternal, God himself. As Jesus himself said: “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16: 25-26)

Are any of you living in your own world, and setting your own rules? Perhaps you are running away from God and living your life as if he didn't exist. Or perhaps you are trying to live by the world's rules, pursuing after power, reputation, and wealth. From my own experience, running away from God will make you miserable in the end. God has a better purpose for you. He loves you and wants you to turn from evil and towards Him, so you can enjoy life to the fullest. He wants nothing less for you.