

Foreword

The following anthology was created in the summer of 2023 by SBI (Summa Bible Institute) 7.0, a youth ministry team from Brooklyn Community Christian Church.

Our goal is to model ourselves after 1 Timothy 4:12:

Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

Each SBI member has written their testimony, a story detailing their experiences with God and their acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Along with their testimony, we have each submitted creative works which serve as expressions of our faith in Jesus. God has done so much in our lives, and we only wish to share it with the world. We're hoping you will be inspired and moved by these works.

Cullen Ye and Simeon Leung,
SBI 7.0 Directors

SBI 7.0 Members

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Adam Chang

“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money.

- Matthew 6:24

Adam's Testimony:

It was 3 AM when he died. Each hand and foot nailed to a decomposing piece of wood, covered in blood and skin. On the center of this lay a feeble man, strangely compliant to his persecutors. As he groaned in agony, I could only wonder, why?

Hey everyone, how's it going? My name is Adam, and I am your typical teenage Christian: someone who tries really hard to live up to the standards of a "good person". I used to call myself the perfect child, one who would ace all the tests, follow the rules, and help others in need. Everyone would praise me on how well behaved and how innocent I acted, but in my heart I was a completely different person. The mask of innocence I was expected to wear would occasionally fall off, and when alone, I would do the most horrendous things that made me even question who I was. For my whole life, I have been trapped in the cycle of sinning, repenting, and "faking" my genuine repentance that I desperately needed.

My walk of faith started when I was very young, with my parents bringing me to church, where we sang worship songs and learned about God. Every weekend, I would get swept away into Sunday school and "restrained" on a chair, being forced to listen to a monotonous speech about how "Jesus saved the world". In reality, I couldn't care less for Jesus; I haven't even seen him or really interacted with him. To me, God was an exclusive entity that I only acknowledged when I needed him. Although I still prayed 3 times a day and went to church every Sunday, I never really took Christianity seriously.

As I matured, I started to try and find loopholes in the Bible so that I could justify my sinning without any punishment from my parents. I started telling white lies and "borrowing things forever" in order to cover up for my sins. However, one day, as I was lying to my parents, a strange feeling overcame me. I felt convicted in a strange way, and suddenly, lying didn't feel right to me. The tremendous guilt that had built up inside of me for years suddenly burst out and I ran to my parents, ashamed and seeking forgiveness. I was expecting them to beat me to a pulp after what I did, but surprisingly, they had mercy on me and spared me. It was only after this when I realized that it wasn't only my parents who gave me a second chance, but God too. A sense of gratefulness was implanted in me, and everything that I felt entitled to turned into blessings that I did not deserve.

Things started to change after that moment. I used to hate the song "King of Kings" because of the slow melody, but when I actually paid attention to the words, it showed me how merciful God's love was. Jesus had lived his entire life for God and even died on the cross to forgive us, despite our sins. For my whole life, I had never really thought deeply about Jesus' sacrifice on the cross; I simply took it for granted. The realization finally came upon me, that no matter what I did, no matter how many good acts I did, I still fell short of the glory of God. His forgiveness became so much more real to me, and I started taking Christianity more personally instead of faking my genuineness. Instead of trying to be good in order to "look good" in front of others, I tried to be good so that God would be glorified. I learned it wasn't the action that mattered, but the intentions that I had.

Right now, I am still a terrible person that deserves to go to hell. Even though I have grown a lot in my faith, I can never be the perfect Christian God designed me to be. The amazing part is: I don't have to. The only reason why I can go to heaven is because Jesus bled on the cross for me. He has already paid the price for everyone's sins and all he asks is that we accept his offer.

I have already accepted it, but the question is, will you?

Romans 3:23 states "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God".

We can never undo our sin, we have all fallen short of the glory of God. The only way for us to be with God is through Jesus' sacrifice.

Holy Ghost (Parody of Ghost by Justin Bieber)

Verse 1

I feel so lost I don't know where to go
Without your love my heart feels so hollow
I know you lived a life that I should follow

Pre Chorus

Since you died on the cross
And suffered for us
I have been set free

Chorus

Because of your great sacrifice
I know that one day you'll rise
I need you in my life (in my life)
No matter what I try to do
It always leads back to you
I need you in my life
You saved me from my strife

Verse 2

Your blood washed my body white as snow
Your pain, your grief, rejection and sorrow
I want to live the life that I should follow

Pre Chorus

Since you died on the cross
And suffered for us
I have been set free

Chorus

Because of your great sacrifice
I know that one day you'll rise
I need you in my life (in my life)
No matter what I try to do
It always leads back to you
I need you in my life
You saved me from my strife

Instrumental

Woah
Na, na-na
In my life (oh)

Verse 3

I'm sure that I can testify
With your guidance I would never hide
I need you in my life
I can completely trust in you
You have changed me anew
I need you in my life
I want you in my life

Da Christian Rap:

Yo yo yo

In the past I had become a slave to sin
It was really sad because I never win

Meeting Jesus when I needed changed my life
Through my trials and temptations and my strife

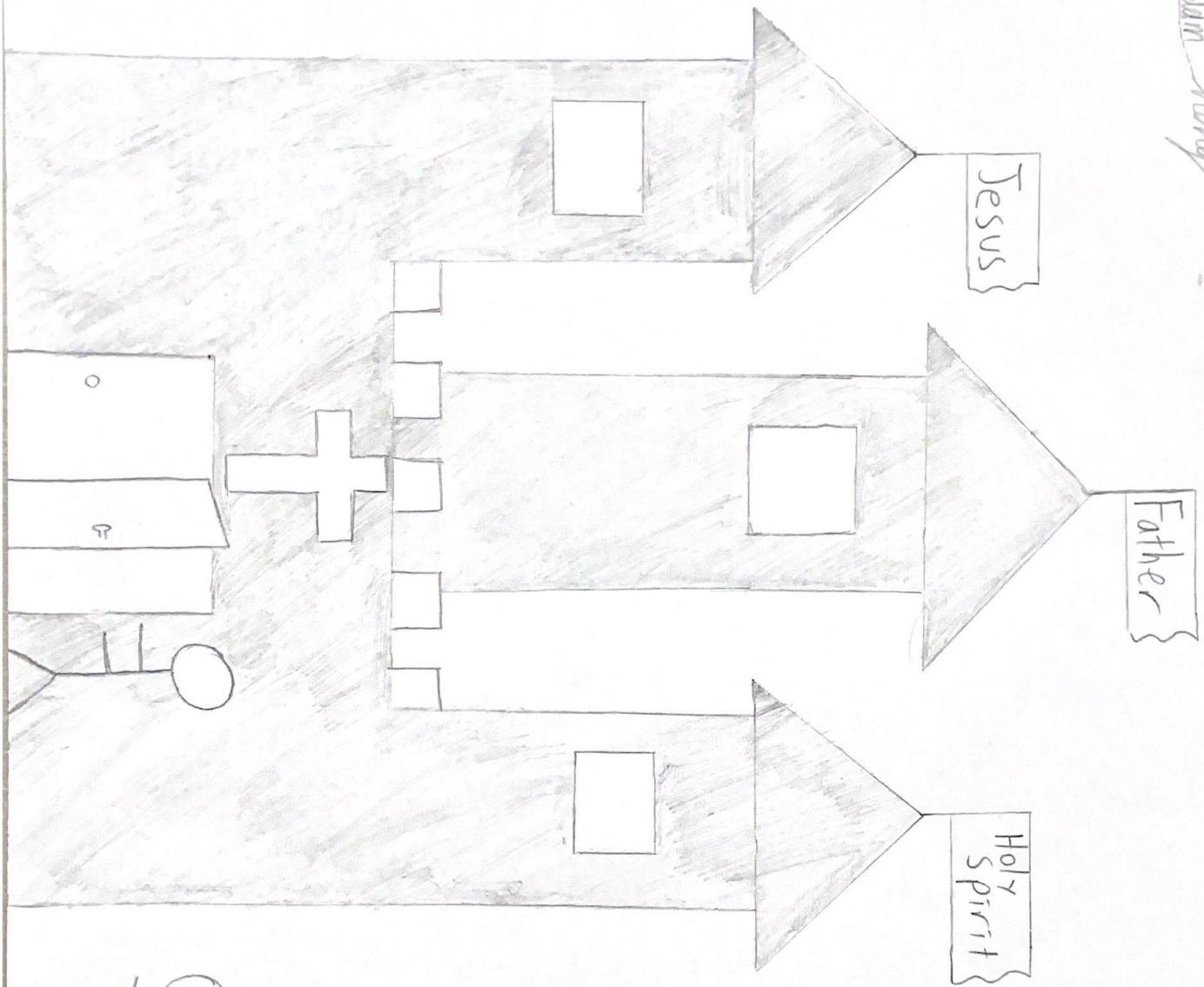
My mind was truly in a daze and skeptical
Now I understand he is fully impeccable

Before this moment I had stole and I had lied
Now the Holy Spirit fills my cup inside

Deep down, I could never repay God for what he gave
Jesus dying on the cross, mighty to save!

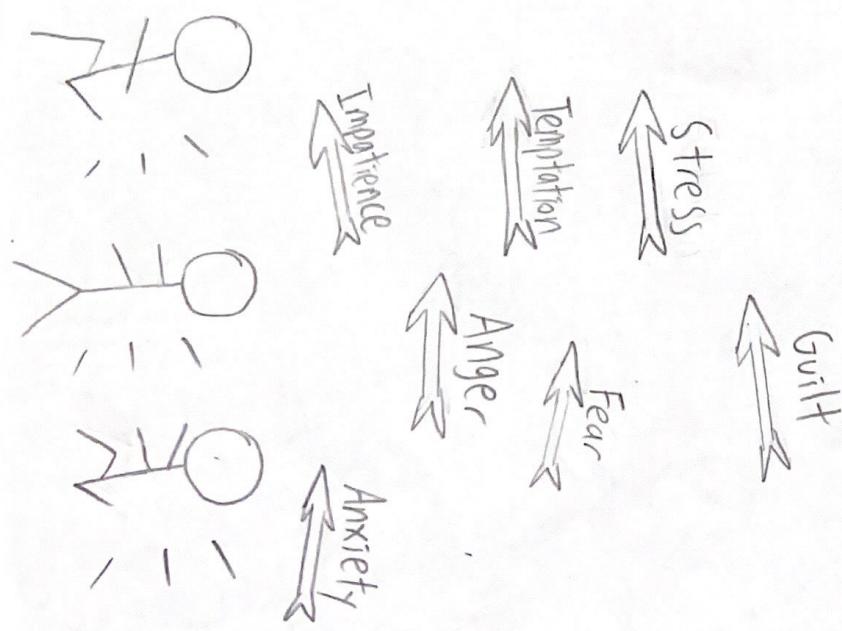
My heart yearns to praise the Lord forevermore
I love him deep inside, right to my core.

Adam Hong



Matthew 11:28

"Come to me all who labor
and are heavy laden, and
I will give you rest".



Andy Chen

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- *Romans 8:38-39*

Andy's Testimony:

Today marks another year of her empty promise she made with us. She told me that we will all be together even if my dad is not around, and she will be perfectly content with just the 3 of us. Yet she can't, because she is just another someone who lifelessly gave herself up to the scheme of this so-called 'American Dream'.

My parents came to America with a purpose of reaping the benefit of what America offers. Their purpose closely ties in with the 'American Dream', for they strive for a higher standard of living. Of course, my parents have to start somewhere. Little did they know, it came with a cost. My mom works in the restaurant early in the morning and comes home late at night. There would be times when she won't be home at all. She would spend her leisure by taking up the role of my dad, who barely fulfills his part of the family. Oftentimes, we lend her our hands, and she justified herself by saying something along the lines, "it's another opportunity for you to grow" or "it is for you to know what the world throws at you". Yet, our hands were not sufficient enough to cover what dad had left behind.

As for my dad, he's not always part of the family. Instead, he's in his own little world. He has a similar working condition as mom, just that he almost never returns home. Mom would constantly tell us that he's seeing other women, as it's her excuse for him not being home, but that was only a speculation she jokes about; deep down, it wasn't humorous. There will be times that he'll be home, but his presence there was only to keep a roof over his head. Another thing about him is that 'persistence' is not part of his vocabulary. He would initiate things but eventually fade away from that. I heard from mom that he wanted her to work for a year to have a head start, anticipating our family to be the same or somewhat similar to how the 'American Dream' portrays it. Little did she know that her labor was in vain because my dad resorted to gambling.

As for me, I wasn't exactly the brightest child either. I resorted to bullying my brother and cousins for attention. There would be plenty of times where I chased my cousin around the entire house and I'd receive a whipping from my aunt's collection of weaponry. The bullying would reach the point where my mom, someone who rarely is home, tells me that my brother is afraid of me. Despite all that, I still turned to bullying. This continued to happen all the way till my brother and I had to move to New York; they thought it would be the best for us.

Being in New York, away from home and weight off their shoulders, surely has its perks. Yet, I was someone who hardly had anyone who showed me what it means to be loved. My grandparents would often bring us to church and I can say that the sermons aren't my cup of tea. Instead, the community was what caught my attention each Sunday, after the sermon. The joy, laughter, and all the bright smiles that everyone had within the community are the things that I envied so much. I longed for this joy that they all possessed. Still, I colored my world colorless and dull, for I was afraid of changes.

The church has a summer program, Summa Bible Institute (SBI). SBI was an opportunity for the development of one's faith and relation with other members within the program, with an end-of-the-year production. I signed up for it to reap the most benefits. I volunteered to be the main character of the production "Pilgrim's Progress", Christian. In addition, I was in charge of designing the props necessary for the production. Little did I know, my forsaken heart had now seen a glimpse of light. Frequently, Deryka, a director, would go through a series of drills with me to fit Christian. There was a sign that said "LOUDER" designated for everyone within the production, but I knew that sign was geared toward me, and I persisted. I wanted this year of SBI to be different from previous ones.

After several weeks of tedious practice for the upcoming show, there was a scene of a waterfall that flowed down to the floor and formed a river called "River of Death" that I had to cross. The water represented the weight of the failure in which Christian had committed. This weight dragged Christian down, and he was incapable of picking himself up, just like me before this summer. Hopeful, another character from the show, had to assist him to trust more.

I resonated with Christian, because my failures have resulted in deserting my concerns. I finally was able to take initiative, not just in props, but to develop who I am. All this time, I thought they were out to harm me, but in reality, they were trying to welcome me in with open arms.

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart." - Jeremiah 29:11-13.

 there is No Life before coffee...

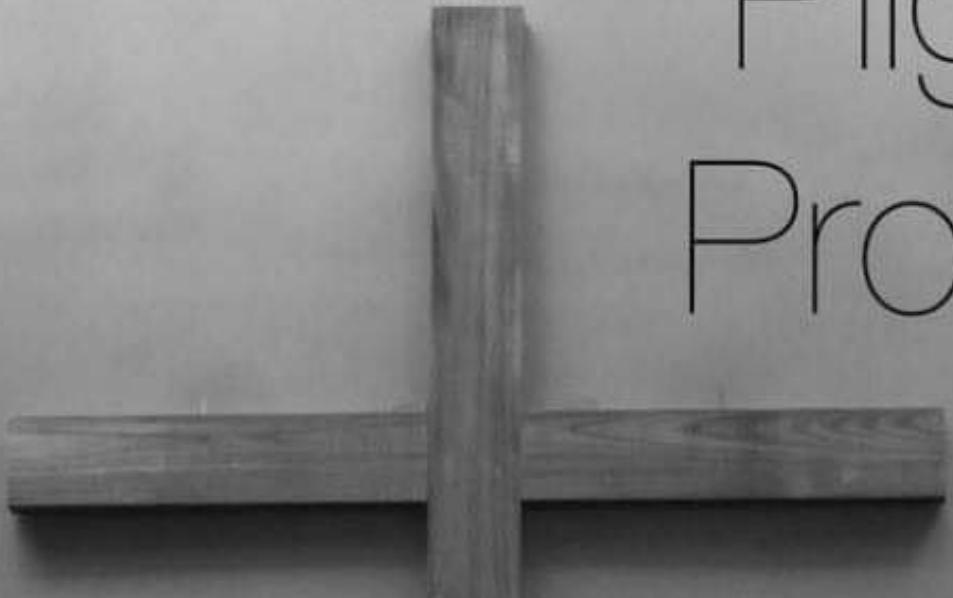
Cherish Life's Simple Pleasures



ATS

10

Pilgrim's Progress



Anthea Zheng

The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

- Psalm 118:6

Anthea's Testimony:

Initially, we were Buddhists who just followed traditions and even had a weird picture of Buddha above our fridge. We didn't even really know what we were praying or worshiping. Every once in a while after sleeping in, I would wake up to the woody and smokey smell of incense. I never knew what was happening though. Then, one day, the picture disappeared, but I didn't mind because it wasn't important to me at all, and I knew nothing about Buddhism.

Then, in 2011, I was dragged into experiencing Christianity with my mother, who had already experienced Christianity with a friend of hers. We didn't go on the normal churchgoer day (Sundays) though. Instead, we went on a Friday. All I remember that day was meeting the bright headed pastor, bright headed not just because he was smart, but also because he was bald. The memory is distant, so I don't remember well what he had said, but he is the same now as he was back then: strange, lively, and welcoming. He was weird, being so happy about a child who was forced to come, one that he didn't even know yet.

I didn't want to go to church on Sundays, so much so that I even made excuses to not go. You know, the excuses you would tell your parents when you were younger, like "I'm so tired, can I have 5 more minutes" and then go back to sleep. That way, eventually, my mom would go to church on her own. But whenever my excuses didn't work, I had to be there for Sunday school, where we learned about the classic Bible stories of people like Jesus, Jonah, and Goliath. As I grew and learned more about God and the Bible, I believed I was a Christian. However, I came to realize that even though I understood God, I still didn't have faith. At that time, God just didn't feel necessary to me, other than to go to heaven.

I started volunteering in the church afterschool as a teacher with my middle school friends, who just happened to need volunteer hours for school. They came on the weekdays to help but didn't come on Sundays to service. Even if they didn't believe or just acted like they did, they were still the first step to my faith. This faith first started at my first retreat in Winter 2018, where my friends also attended. There, we learned about God, the things he did, and fellowshipped together. I knew the names of everyone there, but I wasn't close to any of them. What stood out to me there was the kindness everyone showed my friends and I, even though we didn't really know anyone other than each other and Pastor Andy. They incorporated us in what they did, like volleyball or their meal tables, rather than forming cliques.

I had been in church for so long, I only started believing a little after my friends from school stopped coming. I ended up with only my church friends who helped me grow in God and taught me apologetics. It was with them that I realized that I don't need other people to find joy and comfort. I now realize that this is what God has done for me, as He says in Proverbs 13:20 - "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companions of fools will suffer harm." God separated the good and the bad for me, so although my original friends had left me, I was no longer disappointed, because I know God will always be with me even when I'm alone.





Athena Wu

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.

Amen.

- *2 Peter 3:18*

Athena's Testimony:

The hot sun was overhead. The people sang loudly. The pastor preached endlessly. The kids ran freely. My mom cried secretly. Yet there I was, waiting til it was lunch time to eat and go home. Hello, my name is Athena. Around the age of 7, my mom would bring my sister and I to a church every Sunday. I didn't like it at all. It was so boring and a waste of my time, especially since I often felt separated from other kids who were already friends. After my dad got a new job that forced us to move to a different place, my mom found another boring church for us to go to. BCCC. Auntie Kim was at our store one day, and she told my mom all about this new church, so the next Sunday, our mom took Rita, my sister, and I there immediately.

Another church, with more kids, with another bald pastor, and yet I sat in the midst of the Chinese congregation, listening to another boring sermon I couldn't understand. Being in the Chinese Service made it even harder for me to pay attention. Outside of church, I was prideful, selfish, and a liar; I argued with Rita about the smallest things. I often did things for others only because I wanted to be praised, and I wanted to please people more than putting God above all. Even more importantly, I pointed out issues of others when I had the bigger problem. Matthew 7:3-5 says, “³Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.” I was the one who pointed out the speck in others' eyes when I had a log in my eyes.

I really related to this passage, especially because I had Rita. Again, I would often argue with her about small details. All these disagreements led to right and wrong answers, and I was always wrong. I would tell Rita she was doing something wrong even if I didn't know how to do it either, and she would hit me with answers like “Can you do it? Do it.” My silence always answered her question. These conversations slapped me, showing how incompetent I was, and that humbled me even if I've never noticed before. I believe God giving me Rita as someone who always kept me accountable was His way of caring for me and reminding me He was there when I forgot Him. There were often nights where I would stress about all the things I needed to get done and what I did wrong. I would cry and cry for what seemed like hours, worrying about such small things. In these times of grieving, I silently cried out to God, begging, “God. God. Please be in control. Please help me.” God is always here for me, comforting me. After I cry out to Him, I find myself thinking positively. I would say to myself, “It wasn't even that big of a deal.” God was always there to calm me down, and I have learned to accept His help.

Looking back, God has truly been working in my life, changing my view over these years, making sure I see clearly before I correct others' views. I have learned to look at my own problems, putting God first, before pointing out the small problems of others such as what they say to me. I focus on prioritizing God and what He would do/say if He were in my situation. Finding my own mistakes helped me figure out how to be above reproach. Paul tells the Philippians to “...prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world” This verse serves as a constant reminder for me, being a child of God, to be above reproach so that no criticism can be made. I strive to mature in faith and grow in knowledge.

Even through all the lessons and sermons about God, I never truly understood how to prioritize him in my life. People always say “Put God first and everything else will come after.” I look to do better and pray that God will open my heart so that I can live my life for Him and Him only. I am still on my way of accepting and truly understanding Jesus, but I know that I have grown closer to Him. Please pray for my future and to grow in God even more.

A verse that I will end with is 2 Peter 3:18, which says, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

The great sun was overhead. The people sang beautifully. The pastor preached passionately. The kids listened carefully. My mom cried joyfully. Finally, I was there, listening attentively and praying earnestly.

Him & I

He came about purposefully,

And

He grew wisely.

Then

He dwelt righteously,

Thus

He remembered me clearly.

But

He lived contrastingly,

Until

He died purposefully.

Nevertheless

He rose accordingly,

And

He blessed unconditionally.

Finally

He ascended fulfillingly,

As

He rules sovereignly.

I was born sluggishly,

And

I was raised sparingly.

Then

I found Him accidentally,

Thus

I remembered Him vaguely.

But

I lived indifferently,

Until

I fell unintentionally.

Nevertheless

I prayed earnestly,

And

I searched diligently.

Finally

I know undoubtedly,

As

I strive relentlessly.

信望愛

Brooklyn Community Christian Church

Where God Called Me

- Athena Wu

Bryan Ha

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

- Psalm 16:11

Bryan's Testimony:

What would you do: abort a baby or nurture and raise it regardless of the outcome? Hi, my name is John Quiñones, and I'm with the TV show "What Would You Do?" Just kidding. My name is Bryan Ha, and thanks to my mom (Judy Ha), she made the right choice.

Before I pour out my life to you, let me ask you another question: if you tell a kid that you are half Chinese and half Dominican, wouldn't you be really confused? Well, to some people, this confession would not faze them. However, for me, this confession ruined me, because I know why I'm half Dominican. Before I was even born, my mother attended college in Brooklyn, New York. While attending, she would meet a man who would become my useless and cowardly father. To her surprise, this man would rape her and cause her to be pregnant with me. Now, when my family caught wind of her pregnancy, they brought up that one big A word: abortion. However, my devoted Christian grandmother was so against this idea, and it would lead to a big family argument. Inevitably, the argument would be settled when my mom would listen to her grandmother's plea. So, nine months later, I was born in Bellevue Hospital (located in Manhattan, New York) at 5:58 PM.

One year would go by, and my father returned to ask my mother the most ballsy question he ever asked, "Can I do a DNA test with my son to see if he even is my son?", which would lead my mom to strongly utter the word "NO!" After hearing that rejection, he would disappear for the rest of my life. Now concluding this part of my life, when I was 4 years old, we had to move from my old church, New Life Now, to my current church, where I have been at for 15 years and counting: Brooklyn Community Christian Church. At first when I entered the church, I was intimidated because I never met these people before; however, as months would go by and I started attending Sunday School, I would start fitting in and making new friends in every age group.

Now, even though I was starting to fit into the church, I was more of a rebel at home. I would constantly go against my mother's and grandparent's commands. This mentality would carry on to kindergarten, and my teacher was not having it with my behavior. I still remember one time during nap time, I banged on all the cabinet doors, and my kindergarten teacher would grab me by the hand and sternly warn me that if I don't start behaving, my reputation would be ruined. So, after that interaction, I would get my act together in elementary school, and I would always do my best to finish my homework and classwork correctly and pay attention to my teachers. Along this journey, I would make friends that stuck with me throughout my elementary journey that would help me to be kind and loving to everyone around me. However, at home, I would still be the same rebel. This rebellious attitude was heightened when I graduated from PS 254 (my elementary school).

Throughout my three adventurous years in middle school, the difficulty of my workload increased drastically, and I wasn't hanging in there. Instead of asking for help from my family or my brothers and sisters from church, I succumbed to my helplessness, and I started to care less about my homework and focus on my friendship and popularity. Also, I would devote more time to my video games. Now, obviously, when it comes to my reputation amongst the teachers, I would still do my classwork, pay attention, and participate; however, I would not put a lot of effort into it. Now, outside of the classroom, I was learning new things and actions that helped grow my friendship and popularity, such as profanity, racial slurs, girls' physical and emotional attributes, acting like I was in the hood, throwing up gang signs, etc.

Exhibit A: *There was a trend on Instagram, where there were dares that were designated for each day. One of those days was when someone slapped your butt, you slapped someone else butt. I still remember that day vividly, when I slapped the most beautiful girl's butt in my class and my friends were so proud of me. Obviously, I would be slapped across the face by that same girl, but it didn't faze me.*

Exhibit B: *In the lunchroom, my friends and I would instigate fights with each other. We also liked to throw food across the cafeteria. We also liked gossiping about things that were happening around us.*

Exhibit C: *When I hung around my African American, Mexican, and Middle Eastern friends, they would teach me many racial slurs. However, the most common slur I used was the n word, and my African American friends would encourage me even more.*

Having learned this new knowledge, I started applying this at home and my family would be very disappointed and try to fix this behavior; yet, I would always give them a more vulgar and racial response that meant NO! However, this way of living my life started to slow down. This process started when, days after the slap, I started to be more respectful to the girls, which led to having more friends that were girls. Then, my bad way of living life would really slow down during the night of the parent teacher conference during 7th grade.

It was a rainy and dark night. My mom and I were standing in the school's auditorium while she was glaring at me intensely and holding my report card in her hands. She stormed out of the auditorium and took me with her to meet all my teachers and discuss my somewhat decent grade. Finally, we met the final teacher who taught me ELA, where she would go on and state how I should have failed the class, but she felt bad for me, so she decided to pass me with a 65. After hearing this, my mom thanked her and left the school. On our way home, she bombarded me with words of disappointment, but I didn't care, because, mentally, I was thinking "Why is she so mad? I passed all of my classes; isn't that what she wants?" However, when we got home, in front of my family members, she shouted at me: "Did I raise you to be a failure? If it weren't for me and grandma's faith in God, you would not be here today." After hearing this, I stormed off to my bed and cried my eyes out. It was in the lowest of times that God revealed himself to me.

Crying there, I would question God, "Why did you put me in this world?", to which it was revealed to me that my life is a blessing in disguise from God and that there is a reason why I'm here. At first, I was really confused, because my mom just called me a failure and how I probably won't be here today. Then, it clicked, because throughout my life, I always resented my mother, because I thought she was the reason why my dad left. This led to the mindset that if my dad isn't here to discipline me, I could act as careless as I want. It is also around this moment that my mom would come into my room to tell me all the bad stories on why my dad left our family. After this talk, I had another epiphany that God has been there for me since the beginning, just like how a caring, kind, and compassionate dad would be there for their kids. After all those epiphanies and talks, I started to treat God, school, and my family with more respect because I was reminded to not take my life for granted because it is a gift from God.

Knowing what went wrong in my life, how do I become better? Obviously, I still slip up at times, and I'm not perfect like God, so how? Well, first I went to my pastor and confessed everything, from the hatred towards my mom to my 65 on my report card. After hearing this, he would tell me four things.

- 1) Pray everyday
- 2) Read the bible everyday
- 3) Give me your electronics
- 4) Let do Alpha Phonics

After hearing all his reasons, I went back to praying and reading the Bible everyday, because I would always read or pray once in a while before this change. When it came to doing better on my classwork and homework, I decided to give my pastor my electronics until summer came around. This was because this device took most of my time, rather than spending that time to focus on my homework and reading the book that was assigned to me. As for the Alpha Phonics, I was confused because I knew how to read, but after many tearful sessions, I realized I couldn't read, because I was always stuttering and had a lisp when trying to read sentences. While doing these activities, I started to see the improvements in my grades and my relationship with my siblings in Christ and God himself.

After seeing this complete 180 in my life, I would graduate middle school with a better perspective on school and God. In the best four years of my life (high school), I would make more friends, and even though I would be very vulgar and careless at times, I was definitely more tame than I was in middle school. I would attend class everyday, do my homework and classwork correctly, pay more attention to what the teacher was saying, and most importantly, remind myself that God was always there for me as a father. This would all happen while my grades were going from 60s and 70s to 85s and 90s. Now, when it comes to church, I would start to volunteer for the

church's after school program (been there for 8 years now), lead Sunday School, and participate in many worship teams and church events.

In conclusion, God transformed the life of a child who was supposed to be killed off because of his father's mistake. Through the trials, tribulation, and love that he went through, God turned me into a man who reflects his image everyday. Also, I realized, in all of this, that God is the heavenly father who never abandons you when things go wrong.

Frog (extended)

Frankly when it comes to God
Unanimously, they will always pledge themselves
Lord of their own life or
Loyalty to other gods rather than the one true God
Yet don't you worry because God will always get to you

Reel them in with the word of God
Electrify them with your testimony
Lure them with the fruit of the spirit
You always got to pray for them no matter what

Only on Sunday do we not share the gospel message
NO DUMMY, we shared the gospel every day

God doesn't like the lazy
On his belief, we must share his word
Don't believe it, you better because this is the F.R.O.G way

-By Shmoovin the Frog

Disclaimer: I can't rhyme

JESUS



WEPT

Cullen Ye

For [Christ] I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully
works within me.

- *Colossians 1:29*

Cullen's Testimony:

Tic. Tak. Tic. Tak. Tic. Tak.

The clock on my wall seemed to tick endlessly into the night.

It's midnight. I'm lying on my back in bed, mindlessly staring into the blank, white ceiling. The pangs of guilt tear through me, gnawing at my bones, inflicting righteous punishment. Lost in thought, I sigh.

I'm reflecting on the constant torment I bring upon others. It was *that* type of night. Underneath my facade of a typical straight-A student, I'm a perpetual bully. At school, I physically and verbally hurt my classmates. At home, I tear my family apart by instigating fights. By myself, I'm lonely and socially inept, resorting to playing video games all day. Nobody was safe from me, not even myself.

That night, I contemplated things I'm not too proud to admit. I sincerely believed I was beyond redemption, for how could such a horrible person like *me* change? I was left dumbfounded, like a deer caught in headlights.

I'm a bad son. I'm a bad person. I'm a burden. Even I wouldn't like me if I met me.

Okay, now what?

I've always been an intellectual person. That doesn't mean I was always right, because surely I wasn't. But that does mean I valued truth. I valued pursuing what was correct, more than what was convenient, more than merely what the majority believed.

This obsession with knowledge and truth, although commendable to a certain degree, led me to not care about much else. My family was traditionally Buddhist, pushing my older brother and I to excel in school. But to me, school was easy.

Listen in class. Memorize the right formulas. Ace those tests. Do the homework. Rinse and repeat.

Other than that, school was my playing ground for my selfish desires. I bullied people to make myself seem bigger than I really was. I recall one routine I particularly enjoyed. If a classmate somehow offended me, I'd demand an apology. If I didn't receive one, I'd twist their pinky finger back, forcing a "sorry" out of them.

Home was no better. My parents were perpetually exhausted from having to deal with my rebellious ways. I'd refuse to obey even their basic commands.

"Take a shower." No.

"Come eat dinner." No.

"Go to sleep." No.

Looking back, it was often out of spite. I *wanted* to rebel, and so I even refused to listen when a command was for my own benefit. All I cared about was my video games. Playing for hours on end, I found joy and community in my games.

I especially fought with my older brother, who was the only one who'd really contend with me. Not a day would pass without some argument between the two of us. It was strange: Although I looked up to him for certain qualities, I naturally wanted to rebel against him too.

Everything started changing when I was in 5th grade. My brother, through a miraculous story of his own, had come to accept Christ.

"You have to believe in Jesus."

That was such an absurd thing to ask of me. As someone who valued rationality and intellect, religion seemed absurd. I believed in science and philosophy, things that are incompatible with Christianity, I surmised. "I don't need religion as a crutch for me to get through life", I thought to myself.

But my brother, persistent as ever, never gave up. For the next three years, he kept hounding me to come to church, to give Christianity a shot. And for three years, I refused, making excuses to not go.

It was a Friday night when it happened. I had just finished my weekly art class, where I learned to sketch reality on paper. I was in the backseat of my family car, as my mom drove me home, steadily into the night. I was exhausted. I survived another week of school, along with art class which I hated. My earbuds were glued into my ears, with my music playlist on shuffle.

Suddenly, a song started playing, a song that I didn't really know. Confused, I pick up my phone to take a look.

Ah, it's that song my brother showed me years ago.

The song was "I Am" by Crowder, a Christian song that I thought had sounded pretty catchy. I forgot I kept it in my playlist. I shrugged and put my phone down to keep listening. I listened to the words that were being sung.

Take me in like an orphan child. Never let go, never leave my side.

I am holding onto You. In the middle of the storm, I am holding on, I am.

My face felt wet. I reached my hand to my face, only to find tears streaming down, much to my surprise. I was baffled. I didn't know why I was crying. As I desperately wiped away the tears, I considered the implications of this event.

If God is real, this might've been a sign from him.

I'll go to church.

It didn't take long for me to recognize a difference in the people from church. Unlike the kids from my school, these people seemed *genuine*. That's the best word I can think of to describe them. They weren't perfect. But they were genuine. They seemed to genuinely care about me, my interests, and my wellbeing. It was easy for me to see that that was because of their united faith in Jesus.

Seeing this made me feel even worse for my own inadequacies. I felt rotten that I was such a bad person. It motivated me to be better, to really consider the truth of Christianity.

Inspired by this, I started doing my own research. I read books and articles, studied science and philosophy, and asked questions. The more and more I studied, the more convinced I became that Christianity was true. Eventually, I couldn't help but put my faith in Jesus.

However, for a full year afterwards, I found it extremely difficult to open up to others at church. Although I had come to believe in the same Jesus they believed in, I couldn't join their community of love and fellowship. It wasn't until my first retreat that things changed for good.

The fire crackled and snapped as I sat around the bonfire. It was the second night of the retreat. Our church was far from home, all the way in Pennsylvania for three days, with the hopes of bonding together and with God. I didn't want to be there. I only came because I felt pressured by my pastor. I reluctantly participated in the group activities, fought to stay awake during the sermons, and I spent most of my free time alone in my cabin. The fire was nice, I guess. I closed my eyes and sighed, feeling the warming aura from the massive flames we were all gathered around.

Hey, everyone!

I turned to look. A leader had brought out a speaker and microphone. He was encouraging us to share about how God has changed our lives, in front of everyone. I had no interest. I had never spoken in such a way in front of everyone, and I had no intention to start doing so. I closed my eyes again as I turned toward the fire.

As I sat there, enjoying the fire, I listened as people went up to the microphone to share. I half-listened, zoning out as their words entered one ear and out the other. However, as more and more people shared, I felt a strange sensation in my heart.

To this day, I believe this event was the closest God has ever directly communicated with me. Against my will, I felt my heart being tugged to stand up and share. I was scared. I didn't want to. I had never willingly publicly spoken like this before, and I've never felt such an inclination to do something against my will. I told Bryant, who was sitting on the log next to me, "I think I want to go up and share." He told me, "Then go."

Legs shaking, I stumbled my way up to the speaker. As I grabbed the microphone, I looked out at a group of people. They were shocked, probably as shocked as I was. With my uneasy legs barely supporting my weight, I shared about how God helped me conquer my fears. I don't know how I did it. I felt empowered to speak, as I felt the warm hug of the bonfire envelop me, as if God himself was there, hugging me.

Since that day, my life has never been the same. After opening up to my church community, I've blossomed in my faith and maturity. I began serving at church, finding immense joy in doing ministry. I discovered that teaching was a talent of mine, and so I taught more and more, expanding my own personal knowledge on this constant quest. Eventually, I felt compelled to drop my plans of pursuing computer science in favor of full time ministry. God changed my life against all odds, and so I'm confident he can change anyone's.

A Lament of Job:

A burning house, smokey trees, and broken dreams.
A moment of joy and care, a lifetime of despair.
It's difficult to hope. It's impossible to smile.
I'm walking through glass; it's been a mile.
Perhaps it's deserved, this life of mine,
Riddled with holes, spoiled by time.
I guess it's nice here and there,
A bit of joy, a moment of care.
But nothing is ever enough,
For God's never enough.

Rebuked by friends,
Humiliated by my own,
Abandoned, I'm all alone.
I weep. I try. I try to cling on.
I know nothing; that's why I fear.
On that day I came into the world,
I wish I had perished, forever unfurled.
I curse the day, the day known as today.
I curse God, the God who made me this way.
I curse and curse, for I know nothing more to say.

It's cruel, how God planned evil for me, not welfare.
He gifted me a dead end and endless dread.
An inconsolable pain; nothing can be said.
The Almighty dares claim magnificence,
And might He possess innocence,
But tonight He is indifference.
What have I done wrong?
What did He do right?
Answer me, O God.
Incline your ear.
That, I dare.

A whirlwind,
A God of power,
With voice of thunder,
Where was I at the start?
Where, before He set me apart?
So I humble my heart and my mouth.
I'm of small account; what shall I answer?
The tapestry of life, I can only see from the back,
With all the muddled colors, the front picture, I lack.
I have learned many things, things outside of my scope.
Even at the end of my rope, though He slay me, I will hope.

Explaining An Argument For God In 3 Levels:

I wanted to write this apologetics paper as a way to explain my favorite argument for God in 3 different levels of difficulty. The argument I'll be focusing on is the "Kalam Cosmological Argument", first proposed by Muslim philosopher Al-Ghazali, but reformed and popularized by Christian philosopher William Lane Craig.

The reason I like this argument so much is because it proves so many of the attributes of God while retaining its simplicity. The argument at its core is very intuitive and easy to understand. But even at an advanced level, the premises hold true to scrutiny. Because of this, the Kalam Cosmological Argument appeals to a wider audience than most arguments.

Level 1: Child

We know that when something happens, something must have made that thing happen! For example, if a cup falls off the table, it must have been because someone knocked it off! Or maybe an earthquake happened! If I told you, "Nope, nothing made the cup fall off. It just fell off on its own", you would think I was silly.

But we know from science that the universe wasn't always here. One day it just showed up! But then we have to ask, "What made the universe show up?" Whatever or whoever made the universe show up must be more powerful than the universe, so that would be God!

Level 2: High Schooler

We understand that everything that happens has a cause. This is the foundation for science and knowledge. If we abandoned this principle, we would have no basis for claiming we know anything. Imagine if things could happen with no cause. Imagine if a horse just popped into existence in your living room, and you're expected to accept the conclusion that there's no explanation. We wouldn't be content with this, and we *shouldn't* be. We would rightfully demand to know what caused the horse to show up.

We know from contemporary science, such as the Big Bang Theory, that the universe hadn't always existed. Instead, the Big Bang spontaneously created the universe. And we also know that along with the universe, time and space were created.

Therefore, when we ask the question, "What caused the Big Bang?", we should not be content with the answer of, "Nothing caused it." So we can analyze what the hypothetical cause would be. Whatever caused the universe must be timeless and spaceless, since the Big Bang created time and space. The cause of the universe must also be very powerful to be able to create everything. This would be what we call God.

One might object by asking, "What caused God?" However, because God is timeless, he is beyond time, and therefore, he doesn't need a cause. This cannot be said about the universe, because we know that *it* is not beyond time.

Level 3: Advanced

Premise 1: Everything that comes into being has a cause.

Premise 2: The universe came into being.

Conclusion: The universe had a cause. This is what we call God.

Since this being caused the creation of time and space, it must transcend time and space. Also, this being must be extremely powerful to create the universe. Furthermore, this argument can be expanded to prove that this God is personal, or that it can think and cause things. This timeless and spaceless being can be either unintelligent or intelligent. The only things that are timeless, spaceless, and unintelligent are abstract objects, such as ideas, numbers, and the laws of logic. However, abstract objects cannot cause anything, and therefore, this being must be intelligent and able to cause things. Therefore, its capability to think and enact essential causes indicates it is personal. As a result, this argument proves the existence of a being that is spaceless, timeless, extremely powerful, and personal.

The first two premises have been the source of many debates. To begin, we can analyze the first premise. The first premise is vastly supported by the causal adequacy principle, a metaphysical concept that is generally accepted by all. This is a crucial fundamental truth that is affirmed in science and ontology, constantly validated by personal experience, and has yet to be invalidated by any piece of evidence. Essentially, it's extremely rational to believe the first premise, and it would be unreasonable to think otherwise. Furthermore, if the first premise were false, then it would be inexplicable why anything and everything doesn't randomly exist without a cause.

The most common objection to the first premise is by citing quantum physics, namely, quantum decay. However, this is a misunderstanding of quantum decay, as even in particle decay, particles don't come into being from nothing. Rather, one type of matter is converted into another with the net amount of energy remaining unchanged. Furthermore, some are quick to mention quantum particles that come into existence out of nothing, hence violating the causal principle. However, although quantum physicists have yet to determine the cause of such a phenomenon, they accept that there still exists a cause. Namely, the only way for quantum particles to come into being is with a particular set of criteria that make up the quantum vacuum or quantum field that even allows for this to occur. We currently do not know which property in that quantum field contributes to this occurrence, but scientists agree there is an undetermined explanation.

Next, the second premise is supported by scientific evidence and philosophical reasoning. The leading cosmological model for the universe is the Big Bang theory, which is supported by the general scientific populous. This theory supports the notion of the beginning of the universe. Many discoveries have served to support this theory, such as the Hubble Telescope observing a red shift in the universe, indicating the expansion of the universe. Since growth in space is intuitively successive addition of space, this discovery led to the development of the idea of a singularity before the universe came to be. In addition, according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the entropy in the universe is increasing, and because entropy is quantifiable, it is logical to claim this increase is successive addition. This indicates a point in the universe at which the entropy was minimal, the beginning of the universe.

However, some people have rejected the Big Bang theory, opting for alternate cosmological models. The issue with these alternatives is that they lack significant evidence as opposed to the Big Bang theory, and they're currently under investigation. Furthermore, these alternatives would be philosophically erroneous, as I explain later. One such alternative is the theory of the shuttlecock universe, popularized by James Hartle and Stephen Hawking. This theory suggests that the cosmos had no temporal beginning, but rather, a rounded-off cap of pure space. However, in 1905, Albert Einstein published his theory of special relativity, which indicated that space and time are intimately linked and unlikely to be independent from one another. Furthermore, it states that space and time can be warped by gravity, and as a result, they are unlikely to be eternal since they are contingent. Another idea is the "bouncing cosmology" theory, which claims the universe has always been expanding and shrinking for eternity. I discuss the illogicality of an infinite past in the next paragraph.

The eternity of the universe would indicate an infinite past, but that is logically impossible. For instance, if infinite events had to pass before arriving at today, how did we get to today? There are philosophical arguments against the possibility of actual infinities, which is not to be confused with potential infinities. Potential infinities are merely concepts and do not exist in the real world, such as the number of locations there are on a number line from one to ten. Actual infinities, however, are an infinite number of quantitative things that exist in reality, such as an infinite number of books. In mathematics and physics, it's agreed upon that actual infinities cannot exist, and if an experiment reveals such data, it is regarded as erroneous. Furthermore, the acceptance of the existence of absolute infinities is logically incoherent and would undermine all of science as a whole. Because time is a set of successive addition of events, an infinite past would indicate an actual infinite number of events, which is not possible.

In response, some may argue that time is not a successive addition of events. In the philosophy of time, there are two positions that can be taken: the A-theory of time and the B-theory of time. A-theory is the intuitive theory that things come and go out of being because of the linearity of time. This is what we typically imagine when we think of the passage of time. However, B-theory claims that all of time, including the past and future, is

simultaneously real and existent. It is merely human consciousness that perceives time as the present. In this theory, the past and future are infinite. I believe the only feasible way to debunk the cosmological theory is with belief in the B-theory of time. However, this is very rare and this belief lacks substantial evidence as compared to the A-theory of time. It's quite unlikely that someone you're conversing with will even know what the B-theory of time is. Philosopher William Lane Craig wrote two books, analyzing the validity and evidence for both theories of time. The books are:

- The Tensed Theory of Time: A Critical Examination by William Lane Craig
- The Tenseless Theory of Time: A Critical Examination by William Lane Craig

Based on his analysis of both theories, he comes to the conclusion that the A-theory of time is more plausible.

David Lei

Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.

- Proverbs 16:3

David's Testimony:

In a small neighborhood in Brooklyn, I was born and raised into a relatively large family. I lived with my 2 siblings, my parents, and my Grandma.

I started off as a not so smart kid. I started Pre-K at P.S. 206, and have been to this school for basically my whole life. I was a not so smart kid, I didn't know anything, and I was dumb. This happened from Kindergarten to 1st Grade. And during 1st Grade, I discovered video games and procrastination overtime.

I got introduced to video games by my brother. This was the time I got really hooked. During this time, I had also discovered Christ; my Grandma would bring my brother and I to church every Sunday. I started believing in Christ but didn't enjoy church all that much. I hated going to church, as I thought of it as boring.

I still went only for the food, and I had also started to become smarter. I felt proud of my big brain. Due to this, I thought that getting good grades would be an excuse to play video games. I disobeyed my parents and stayed up playing video games. I had also stopped going to church. It only got worse over the years. I got lazier and procrastinated more and more. This would get to such lows during quarantine.

It began in the middle of 5th Grade of 2020. Covid had become a global pandemic, and everyone was indoors. We had online classes and school was easier. I became lazy and played video games instead of doing school work. I would start getting calls home about my lack of work. But I still graduated from public school. I don't know how, but I did. My Grandma also died during this time, and it hit hard.

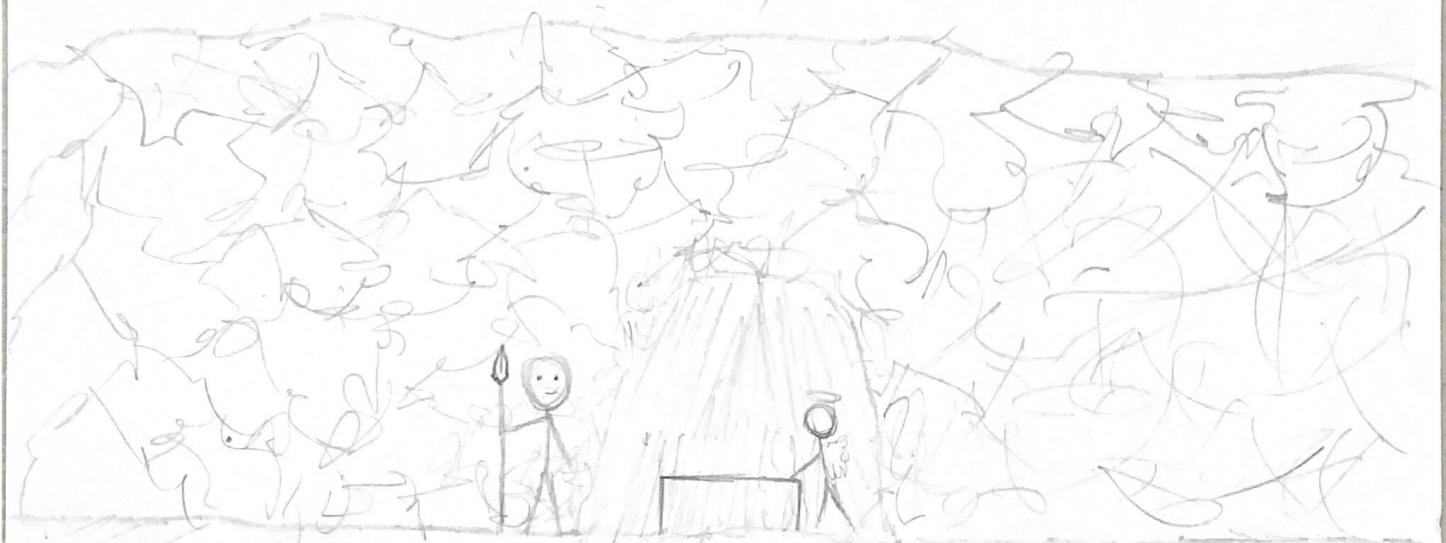
I became more introverted during my 6th Grade classes as well. Becoming the same thing during my 5th Grade online classes. It was my 5th Grade online classes all over again. It was when I returned to school in 7th Grade when I started doing work again.

Getting my grades back up and whatnot. I would only return to my procrastination in 8th Grade, getting senioritis and doing less work. It was only until later in the year, in May, when I started going back to church. Cullen had come over with my brother, and after a chess game, I agreed to come to church on Sunday, but I also came to FNF. I met new people and enjoyed fellowship. I also started listening to sermons, and it brought me more into God.

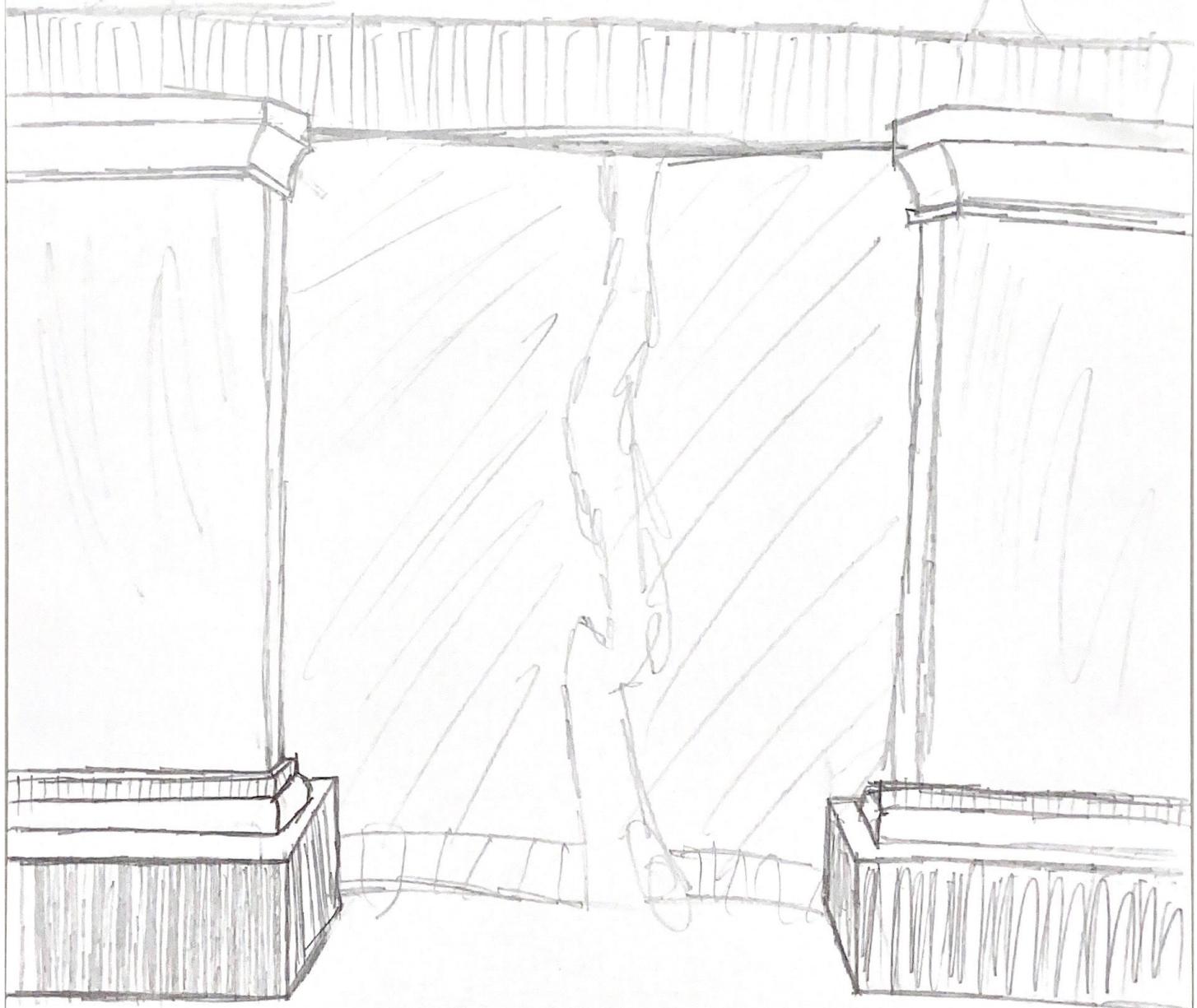
David
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Matthew 27:57-61



David Lei



Matthew 27:51

"And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the Earth shook, and the rocks were split"

Earvin Wang

Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all
that you do be done in love.

- *1 Corinthians 16:13-14*

Earvin's Testimony:

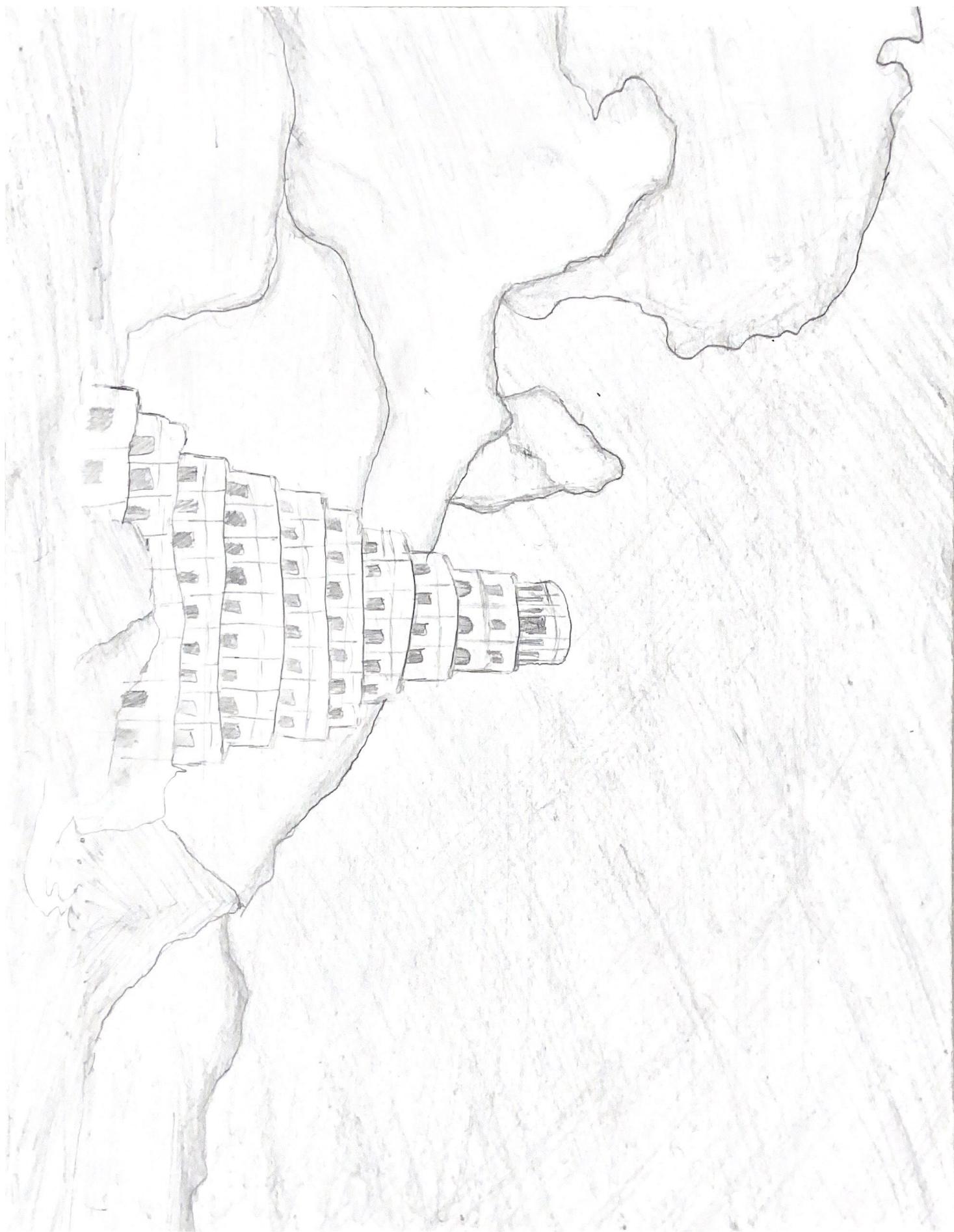
My name is Earvin Wang, and I was born and raised in a non-Christian family. I was born and raised in Williamsburg Brooklyn for my early years. My family had a family business, which was a Chinese takeout restaurant just below our apartment. When I was 4 months old, I went back to China, since it would be easier for my parents. In China I was a "Buddhist." I used quotation marks, since I really didn't know what I was doing back then. I would go to the temple to worship the fat bald statue and bow down to him. I had no clue why I was there or what the purpose of bowing down and worshiping Buddha was. People would also chant "Amituofo" in the temple. I just did all these things since my grandma did them too.

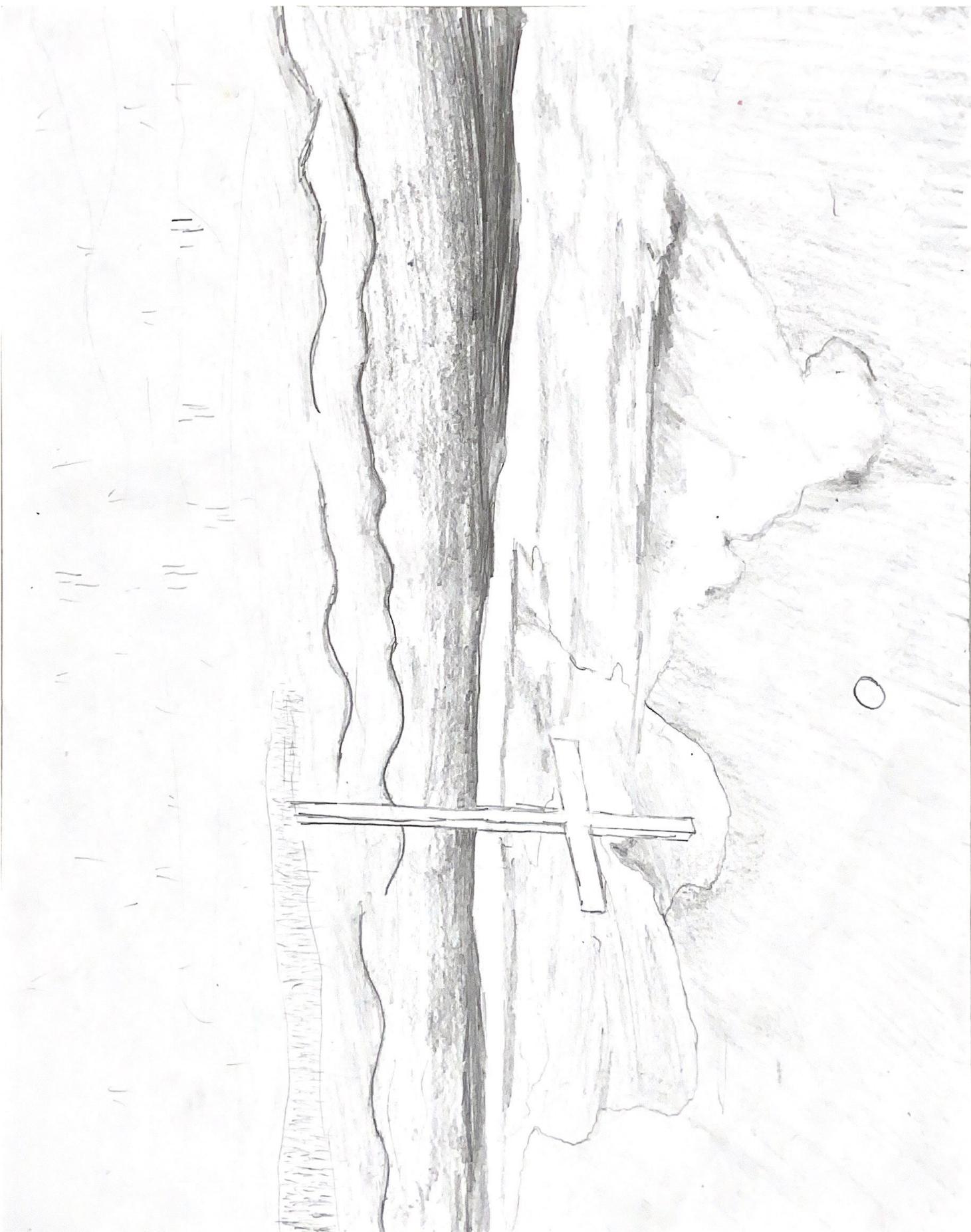
After some time, I came back to America. When I came back, my mom suggested that we go to a church in Queens. However, after some time, I had to move to Dyker Heights. The neighborhood was nice and had nice people. My mom's friend goes to the Chinese service of BCCC and invited us. Pastor Andy was very nice and funny. However, I found service very boring and found Sunday school also boring, except the games. I would go to church just for pingpong and games.

This kept on happening like a cycle every Sunday, until one day in 5th grade when my mom got really sick from eating leftover seafood that was about 3 days old with a lot of bacteria in it. Basically she got very severe food poisoning. She would throw up so often in the morning, and it got so bad that she had to get an IV in the afternoon after the doctor came. She couldn't even move to get to the bathroom, and my dad had to help her, since she was too weak and had very little energy. I prayed and read the Bible in hopes that she would get better, and thankfully she did, but she got a little weaker permanently after.

Then in seventh grade, I forgot about what good that God has done and got into the wrong friend group. They would curse and do bad things, so I continued to follow their sinful ways and also cursed. I remember that they were so bad, that in almost every class, they would get in trouble, such as throwing a door stopper at a teacher and making the fire department come to school thinking there was a fire, because my two friends pulled the fire alarm and didn't fix it. Our entire class got in trouble, and our class had the worst reputation. Ask any person in our school about the worst class, and they would say "753" and spread gossip about our class, since even though it was an honors class, our behavior was terrible. Thankfully though, I had nothing to do with all the incidents that my friends caused.

In the middle of 8th grade, I made a new friend from another class, and she was interested in who I was friends with in hopes of being friends with them too. I told her who I was friends with, and she began to tell me every single bad thing that they did. I began to realize what terrible people that my friends were and started to not hang out as much anymore with them. I would sit with my other friends in other classes at lunch and would talk to other people in class. If I hadn't realized how bad they were, I probably wouldn't be writing this at the moment. Now, I actually pay attention to sermons and just recently started to take notes. I don't curse anymore and do not even talk to my old friends anymore, not even on social media apps. Two bible verses that I like are: 1 Corinthians 16:13-14. **13:** "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong." **14:** "Do everything in love."





Ethan Shi

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

- *Proverbs 3:5-6*

Ethan's Testimony:

Hello, my name is Ethan Shi. I was born into a Christian family. I started going to church when I was born, moved to the U.S. when I was 3, and started attending BCCC when I was around 3-4 years old. My grandma has been taking me to church since I was little.

When I was young, I didn't see the church as I should have. I didn't think much of church. To me, worshiping and learning about God didn't mean much. When I had to sit through sermons, I remember checking my parent's phones to check the time every fifteen minutes.

When I was in second or third grade, I watched a video that terrified me. It essentially said that millions of people would be in hell. After watching this, I realized I was scared about the prospect of spending eternity away from God. At this time, I didn't understand how the stories of the Bible fit into the greater plan of God. I had heard phrases such as "Jesus died for our sins", but I didn't know what that really meant. Because of my lack of knowledge, I had created unbiblical views about God. At the time, I wasn't worshiping the God of the Bible. Instead, I was worshiping my own god; He was a wishing well. Every time I wanted something, I would ask Him for it and I would throw in a few thanksgivings to appease my false, grotesque version of God. Because my foundation was not in God, but in myself, I started to have health anxiety. Because I didn't have a biblical foundation of life, I was struck with deep and false fear about my health. I didn't seek God for peace, but instead, my fear deepened from my foundation of the internet. I was terrified.

One day, after talking to my mom, God revealed Himself to me through my mom. After that, I felt a moment of strange peace that I hadn't felt in a long time. There, I was compelled to put my trust in God and His assurance and not the world. Every Sunday after that felt different. I felt assured because I knew what God planned for me and that He would take care of me.

In 4th grade, I was put in afterschool at church where I learned more and more about God. Pastor Andy was leading a sort of Q&A about God and I read all four gospels for the first time and got my own Picture and Study Bible from Pastor Andy. Near the end of 4th grade was the first time I attended Friday Night Fellowship and God continued to graciously reveal Himself to an undeserving sinner. I was compelled to start praying to God every night and read the Bible daily. At this point, I then understood the gospel and understood what the phrase "Jesus died for us" really meant. I was finally connecting all the pieces I didn't understand before, and seeing the full picture of the Bible. I suddenly realized and understood what the Bible was preaching, but because of my depraved will to sin, I forgot God's grace so quickly.

When COVID-19 started, I couldn't attend church anymore, so I began to attend church virtually on Zoom. After the first few months though, I started to get bored. After the first 3-4 months had gone by, I often took out my Ipad during online church and played Minecraft. I also hadn't touched my Bible in so long that it became dusty.

When I was in 6th grade, I started to procrastinate. Online school was easy and I rarely would pay attention in class. I pushed all my work to after school and did it slowly while being easily distracted, which meant a 10-minute task lasted hours. Around the summer leading to 7th grade, I sometimes returned to the church in person. I hated getting up early in the morning because I had become lazy. Like my pastor had warned against in one of the few sermons I paid attention to, I had put my convenience over God.

After 7th grade had started, I found myself attending church more consistently. I met with some friends at church and it was only then that I realized that I had adopted an overly common use of curse words and also used the Lord's name in vain very often. That night, I prayed to God to draw me back to Him and to help me stop sinning against Him like this. God made me realize that I had turned away from Him despite Him getting me out of the darkest point of my life. God's grace started to regenerate me again, and He slowly drew me closer to Him. In February of 2022, God used my induction into the National Junior Honor Society to bring me to church more often by making me get community service hours. I noticed that God enabled me to sit through a service without being bored. He also allowed me to understand and apply what I learned.

From this point forward, God has been slowly changing my behavior. God stopped my procrastinating and I started doing my schoolwork on time. God made me desire to read the Bible again. God showed me how wonderful prayer was and caused me to start praying to Him. Through His grace, I now strive to live a life that He will be pleased with. God compels me to share the Gospel with the people I know, and through His grace, I'm unashamed to proclaim that I'm a Christian. I find myself having more patience and peace because of God and try to humble myself because of Him.

When 8th grade started, I felt a radical transformation. I was gripped by God and the desire to seek Him and learn about Him was given to me. I talked with my pastor about theology and I would find myself watching hour-long debates about Christianity that I never could have imagined myself doing previously, considering that I couldn't even sit through 15 minutes of a sermon. I felt like I could reasonably defend my faith now. With my newly found knowledge, I wanted to spread the truth of Christianity. I would often get into conversations with my atheist friends and tell them about God. I would also speak up about the LGBTQ movement a lot. Unfortunately, this caused me to receive a lot of backlash. In my school, for one, I often faced many negative comments from people who thought I was being hateful. In fact, I wrote an essay to a friend about my position and the grounding for it. On June 27th, 2023, I gave 8 of my teachers from the past two years a bag. In it was the gospel of John, a gospel bracelet, chocolate, and a letter telling them about the gospel. A group of teachers got offended by this and reported me to the school and sent the papers to my high school.

Throughout my experiences, God has made the best out of negative situations in my life and helped me overcome many obstacles. Despite me not knowing it, He had a plan for me. He used my circumstances to help me learn more about Him and helped me change. Even though my sinful will rebelled against Him and I should have been stuck in my sin, He graciously regenerated me from my helpless state multiple times for His glory's sake. And for that, I will be eternally grateful. A verse I like is Proverbs 3:5 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and he will make straight your paths."

Ethan's Fictional Story:

There were two brothers of the same mother and father. One of them was called Aiden, and the other was called Caden. Aiden was a follower of Christ and Caden was a follower of the things of the world. When Aiden and Caden were little, Aiden was taught about the Bible, while Caden didn't like reading the Bible. Aiden was very generous in his giving; he would always give away his snacks to the people that couldn't get any, while Caden would keep all his snacks so he could concentrate on his studies. Aiden would study God's Word every day when he got home, while Caden would study for his next test. As they got older, Aiden would always obey his parents. Caden wouldn't want to listen to his parents because he thought that he should get to do what he wanted to do because he thought he was doing well in life. When they went to college, Aiden went to a regular university while Caden went to a prestigious university to get a degree and pursue his business. Throughout the years, Aiden always trusted in Jesus and followed his Word. He decided to become a pastor and a missionary and spread the gospel around the world. Caden became a very successful businessman; he made billions of dollars and became very rich. He amassed a fortune through his business by manufacturing water bottles. He exploited his workers and caused detrimental damage to the environment. Caden went on to retire and spent the rest of his days in luxury. Aiden went on to share the gospel with thousands of people that didn't know about it. Caden died alone, while Aiden died a peaceful death with his congregation surrounding him. The brothers reunited as they entered the judgment room of God. God asked Caden why he should be let in the kingdom of heaven. He said that he deserved to be there, since he always lived in luxury and worked hard to have an easy life. The Lord said, "How dare you laugh in the face of the righteousness of the most high God? Depart from me." The Lord asked Aiden why he should be let in the kingdom of heaven and he responded that he doesn't deserve it, but he thanked God that He died for him. The Lord replied "Before I laid the foundation of the earth, I chose you to join me in my kingdom, thank you for taking my message to all the corners of the earth."

Fatherly

Matthew 23:9 - "And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven."

All-powerful

Matthew 19:26 - "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Triumphant

Exodus 15:1 - "I will sing to the LORD for he has triumphed gloriously"

Highest

Isaiah 55:9 - "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways your ways"

Everlasting

Psalm 90:2 - "From everlasting to everlasting you are God."

Righteous

Psalms 145:17 - "The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works"

Savior

John 14:6 - "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me"

Only

Deuteronomy 6:4 - "Hear O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."

Nice

Exodus 34:6 - "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious"

Sustainer

Psalms 55:22 - "Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you"

Perfect

Psalms 34:8 - "Oh, taste and see the LORD is good!"

Improver

Ezekiel 36:26 - "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you"

Regenerator

Romans 8:2 - "You are now controlled by the law of the Holy Spirit who gives you life"

Infallible

Numbers 23:19 - "God is not a man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change"

Truth

John 16:13 - "When the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth"

Grace Cheung

What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.

- *Ecclesiastes 1:9*

Grace's Testimony:

I write this as a reflection on the person I have become since my belief in Christ. I wholly believe that this change comes from nothing I have done, but the work that Christ has done in my life, the people He has given me, the experience He has put me through. It is evident to me that every good thing I have accomplished, I have done so through His guidance and power.

I started this journey as an angry and melancholic person. I was dissatisfied with my life, and I blamed it on God. The crux of my testimony is that I didn't understand the concept of God's love for me despite learning about him all my life. I understood his power and righteousness, but instead of accepting his love for me, I feared and resented him instead. I only understood once he placed someone in my life that exemplified his care. This person was able to demonstrate to me the difference in behavior that Christians had and how it could serve to be the light and salt for others. Her Christ-like actions were my motivation for belief— I wanted to become Christ-like as well if it meant that I could have genuine care and love for others. I was tired of having a jaded and nihilistic mindset that only led me to numbness and despair. Until that point, I spent my life questioning and lamenting over the bleakness of my future, but God's love was the answer to my sorrows.

After my belief in Christ, I became more involved in church. I attribute much of my growth to being in an environment full of others in the faith that strove towards a like minded purpose. If I could describe the way that I have been changing, it is not through a sudden revelation, but through a quiet, insistent nudging cultivated from Sunday sermons, Bible studies, and encouraging fellowship. I gained a deeper understanding of God's Word, and His loving community taught me how to be humble, gaining contentment and peace in serving others.

There is a stark difference in the person I am now and the person I used to be, yet there will always be an inherent need for growth in my character. I often identify myself as a person of little faith, an attribute that presents itself as I struggle to relinquish control of my life to God. Oftentimes, instead of prioritizing Christ-like characteristics, I grow comfortable with the person I currently am. I forget that my way of doing things should never take precedence over God's methods. Whenever I encounter difficult situations, I hesitate to turn to God for help, instead formulating solutions based on rational thought or the experiences of others.

However, I have full confidence in God's ability to change me for His goodness. I have come so far, and I know that I will go much farther. Even through my doubt, I understand that God is the one enabling me to become a testament to His glory.



Helen He

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

-Joshua 1:9

Helen's Testimony:

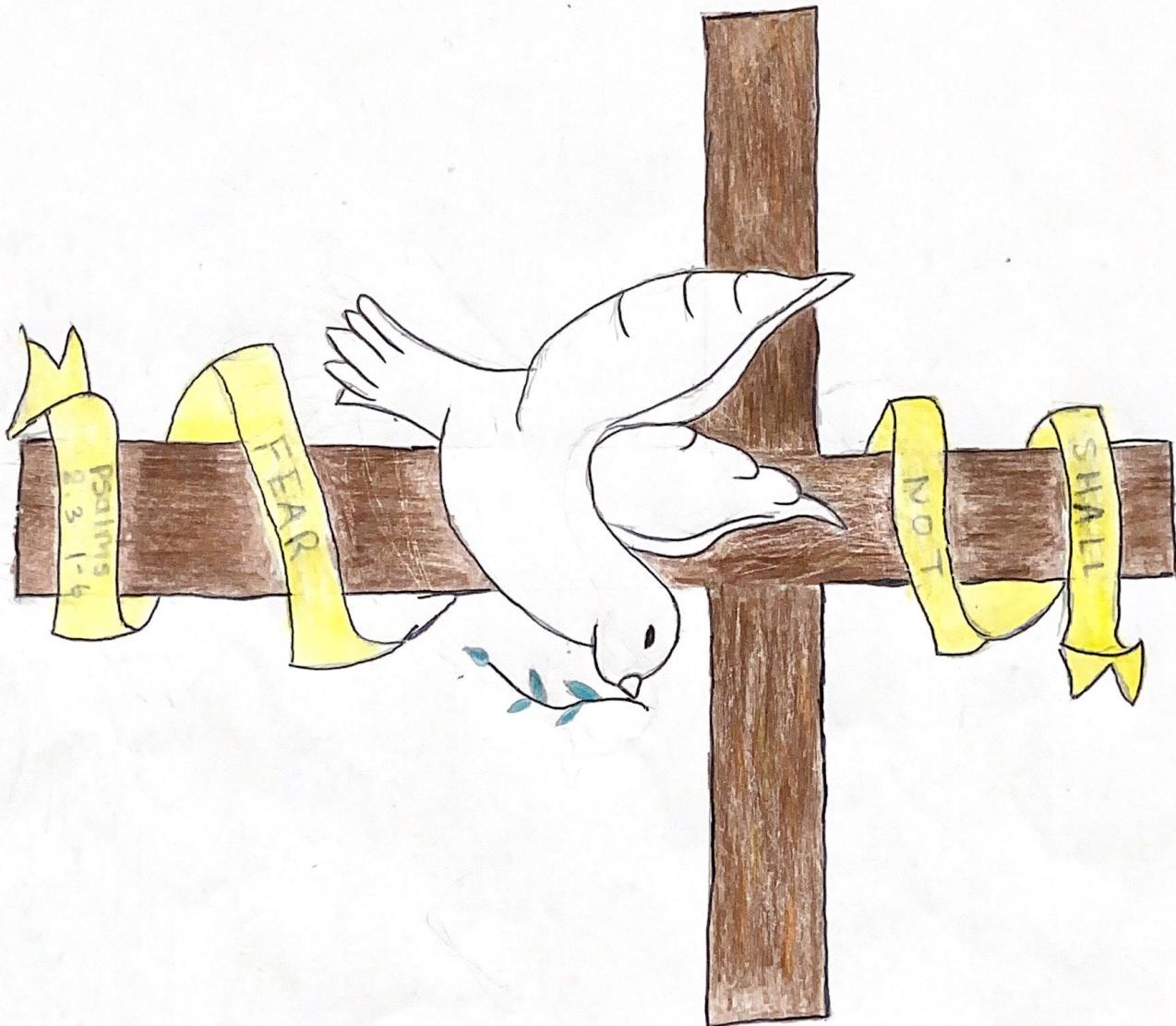
Hi, my name is Helen He. I was born in a Buddhist family. I've always been a shy kid. I was scared to get in trouble, yet when I started sixth grade, all my friends started cursing, so I got influenced. Because I was scared of getting in trouble, the cursing started small. I went to school at P.S.206. Something I struggled with in school was being jealous of the other kids. I would always feel left out, so I was jealous of the people that my friend ditched me for. I wanted to be the person that my friends replaced me with.

Surprisingly, two years later, my mom asked someone from the Chinese side to go to church, and she also told me to go with her too. My mom asked me if I wanted to go to church. I didn't want to though, since people said that church was not fun but was instead boring. So whenever my mom asked me if I wanted to go, I just said no, until one day my mom just dragged me to church.

When we were walking there, I was so scared, I was shaking. I was scared that people would look at me weird or that I wouldn't make any friends. Once we got there, I didn't want to go in, but the pastor immediately came forward and approached me. Church was unexpectedly fun, but kind of awkward in a way when I saw Kelly and some classmates from my school. I have always wanted to be Kelly's friend since elementary school, so on Sunday, I wanted to go to church just to be friends with Kelly. Once Kelly and I became friends, I started coming to Friday night and Sunday service because I wanted to know more about God, and eventually, I accepted God.

Title: Water

God created it
Every wave you see is his
All to say "Holy"



Ivan Yip

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

-John 14:6

Ivan's Testimony:

Hi, my name is Ivan Yip. This is the story of how I found Christ in my life. I was born into a typical Buddhist-atheist Chinese family. My family always had high expectations for me, especially academically in school. Of course, I always did well in school. I was always top of the class and exceeded standards above grade-level. This was because my parents homeschooled me sometimes or either sent me to a learning center after-school. In the classroom, I was always known as the smart Asian kid, as I always knew the answer to questions. This was my main sense of confidence and reputation as people always asked me for help. However, this made me arrogant, as I felt that everyone around me was dumb and inferior compared to me. This made me develop a bad habit of often giving rude comments to people. Even to this day, I still continue this bad habit.

In school, I always exceeded standards and finished all my work. However, at home, I had nothing to do. This made me go to video games, specifically Roblox. I had the mindset that if I did good in school, I could do whatever I wanted at home. When my parents weren't watching, I played video games for several hours, staring at my screen, mindlessly. I played without taking breaks, without eating, and even holding in my wastes in my body just to continue playing. This was my main hobby at home for all of my elementary school years. This hobby got further worse when quarantine hit. This allowed me to be on my computer all day long... and of course all I did was play video games. One of the major events during quarantine was when my parents got COVID themselves. As a horrible son, I took advantage of this and played video games all day long, even skipping some of my online classes. I would have up to 9 hours of screen time a day, mostly on entertainment. Everytime my parents called to check up on me, I lied to them about completing all my work and participating in all my classes. By the end of my 5th grade online school year, I had about 40 missing assignments but still somehow passed. My video game addiction continued during the summer too.

During my elementary school years, I would go to my cousins' house quite often too. Everytime I would visit, Alvin would always ask me questions about my faith in God or something like that, and I wouldn't understand what he was talking about. He would always recommend me to go to this church, and of course, I never went.

After I graduated elementary school, I started middle school, 6th grade. 6th grade would also be another online school year. To sum it all up, I participated and joined in most of my classes, did most of my work on time, and casually got 95+ grades on all my classes. On occasion, I submitted late work or skipped some classes... However, school would only be 40% of my focus on my computer. 60% of my focus would be on video games. This was also the time where I met Lucas. He would always play games with me until after-school, where he had to attend a daily Zoom meeting. I would always be curious about his after-school, until he told me it was his church Zoom. One day, Lucas asked me "How are you friends with my teacher [on Roblox]?" He then showed me Cullen's Roblox profile. I revealed that Cullen was my cousin and Lucas was absolutely flabbergasted. I was also surprised that my cousin taught my friend.

Moving onto 7th grade, I went to church for the first time out of family influence (Alvin). I didn't really think much of it, as I also did not understand much of the sermon. This was also when school became in-person again. During this time, I became peer pressured to do stupid things and became influenced by bad people. This was probably one of the worst points in my life, as I followed bad morals out of influence and attention.

After I graduated 7th grade, I had online SHSAT prep over the summer. Here, I faced new challenges. Everybody would be just as smart or smarter than me in class. Sometimes when I didn't understand a question, I valued my pride and ego over my understanding of the class. This led to me having mental breakdowns after every class. This continued over the Fall of 8th grade. On the actual day of the SHSAT, I thought that this would be an

easy way into Brooklyn Tech. Fast forward to March 2023, I got my HS results back. I was absolutely heart-wrenched when I found out I didn't get into Brooklyn Tech. This was when I decided to come to church, as I felt like my life was torn down in pieces. For some reason, one of my first instincts was to come to God.

When I first came to church, I only knew my cousins and Lucas. During the first few weeks I came, I was pretty shy. I did not really know how to talk to people, and I also did not feel comfortable when the only person I really knew, Lucas, was absent. However, over time, I met more people and learned more about God. I made connections with people through God and prayers and kind of came out of my shy bubble. Ever since I first came here, I've become a better person overall. I learned how to humble myself through tasks, make new friends, and learn more about God. This is my testimony; thanks for reading.

Ivan's Poem:

Lost in my tracks,
I needed to find my way
Until I met the Lord
Through my footprints of faith

The Lord has heard my cries
He has prevented me from going astray
For sin has been denied
He comes down to shine his arrays

He who was perfect
Fought temptation and resisted sin
For He was nailed on the cross
He died for all our sins

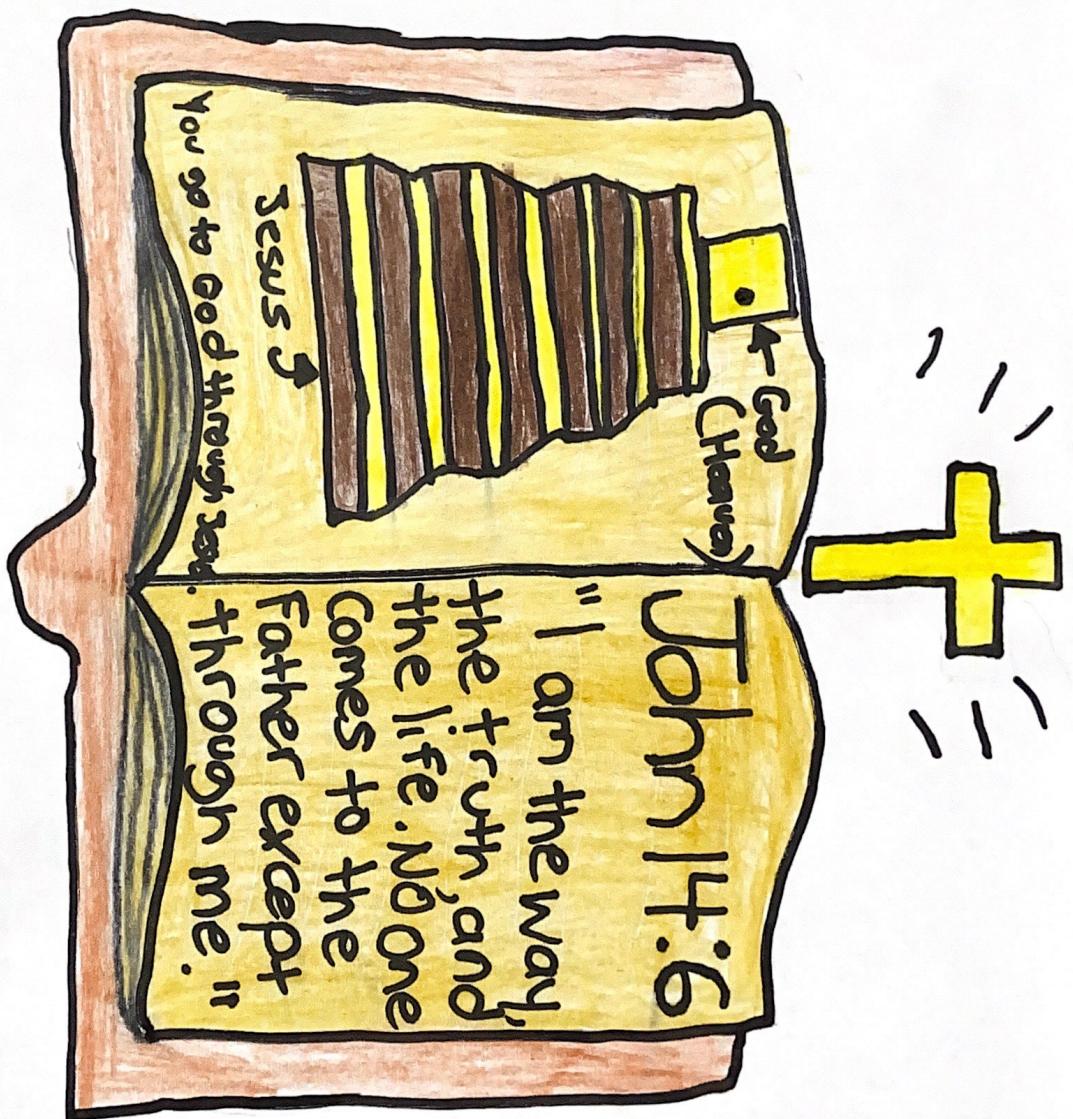
We are all apart of God's plan
For we are created to evangelize
Our sins will be forgiven and we will go to heaven
As long as we repent and follow his guide

He was here since the world began
He is timeless and eternal
He is the ultimate man
As his love is universal

Hallelujah
God be praised
Our Lord and Savior
has come down to save

Ivan Y SB1

Drawing Context : You need to go through Jesus to go to Heaven. Jesus is the only way to Heaven. Staircase and door to heaven after Jesus.



Jacky Chen

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

- 1 Peter 2:24-25

Jacky's Testimony:

Hans Urs von Balthasar said, "What you are is God's gift to you; what you become is your gift to God." Hello everyone! My name is Jacky Chen. Everyone who is from God is a gift for Him, but not everyone has the same gifts as each other. I am one example of God's discipleship, which has given me many skills that have changed my life. I was born into a Christian household, but not everyone will come out ideally as a Christian, except for us to experience it ourselves. I was an unbeliever in my family. My parents are dedicated believers. I had to go to church with them, because parents are not supposed to abandon their children during adolescence. It was frustrating; I was sitting there and could not understand a thing from the Pastor. I wanted to live in a child's dream, where I could run and play in the playground with other children.

My family moved to Georgia (Atlanta) when I graduated from preschool, which is PS 206. Four years later, during the middle of fourth grade, I lied to my parents a few times by saying that I had finished my homework when I had a little left. It was too hard because I didn't understand the questions, so I skipped them and left them blank. I was also stealing money from my parents by going into their room in the middle of the night when I couldn't sleep, while my parents were sleeping. I would put it in my bookbag for snacks. Whenever my mom told me to do something I had to do but didn't want to do, I would leave it alone. Over time, my Aunt would eventually do everything for me because I was too lazy. When I was still in elementary school, my family moved back to New York. My siblings and I decided to stay in New York with my grandparents and for school.

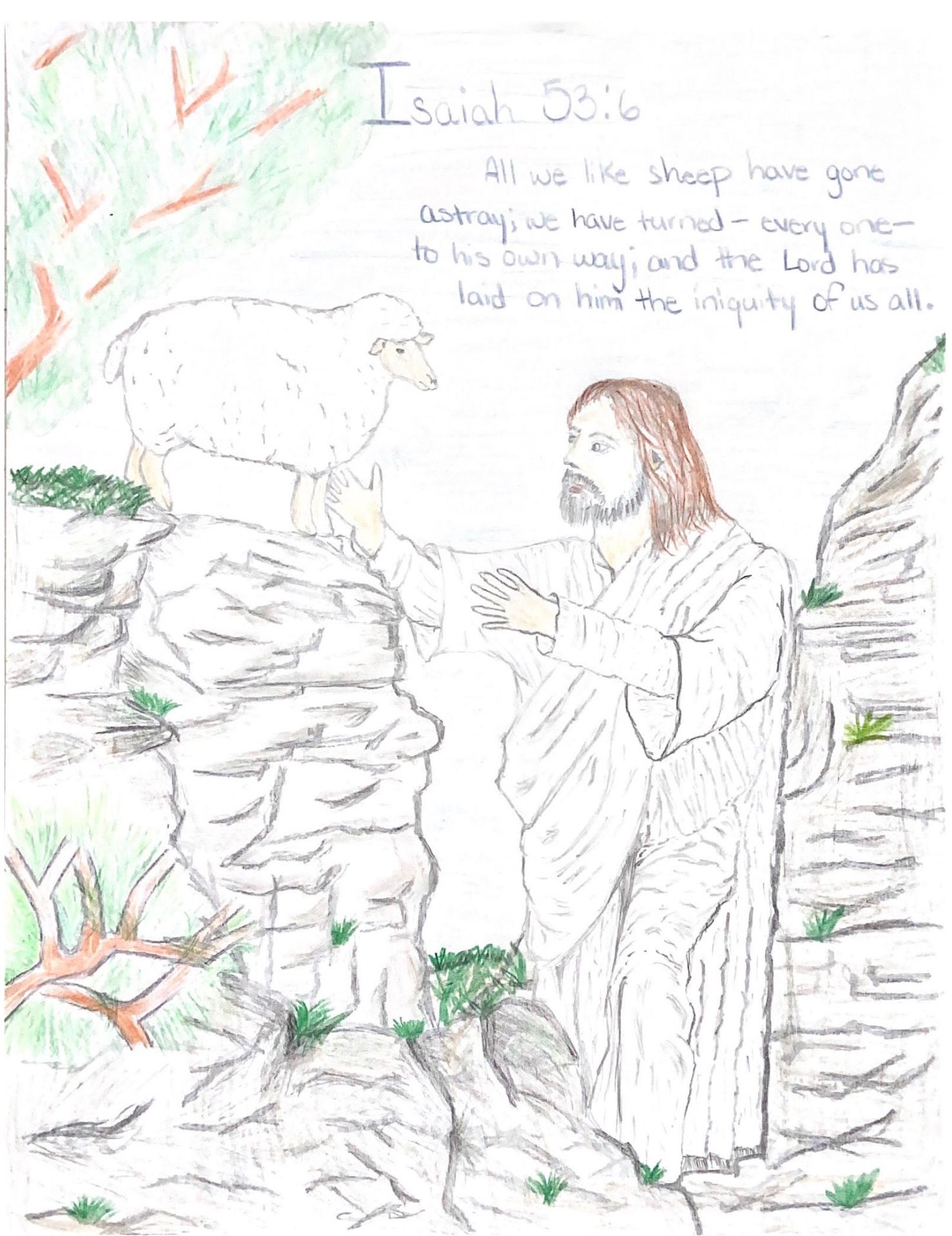
However, something happened during the fifth-grade summer: Elijah's Mom invited my family to BCCC (Brooklyn Community Christian Church). My grandparents, who were also devout believers, brought us. It was okay. My first impression was when I saw Pastor Andy. He was weird. I have no reason why. During sixth grade, nothing significant happened. In seventh grade, I gave up on my life and didn't care about schoolwork or anything. But God didn't give up on me. I realize that it was God who guided me through being able to move on from seventh grade. I decided to change my life by improving my responsibilities; for example: getting good grades, being more obedient, and being responsible for my actions. During high school, Ms. Lily told me and my friends to volunteer for afterschool, which was called King's Prep. She was the coordinator for King's Prep. King's Prep is a program where elementary and middle school students learn about the Word of God and are able to do their school homework. For me in high school, I wanted to be more responsible to be able to do things alone. One way I can be very accountable is to teach the younger generation about the scripture from the Bible.

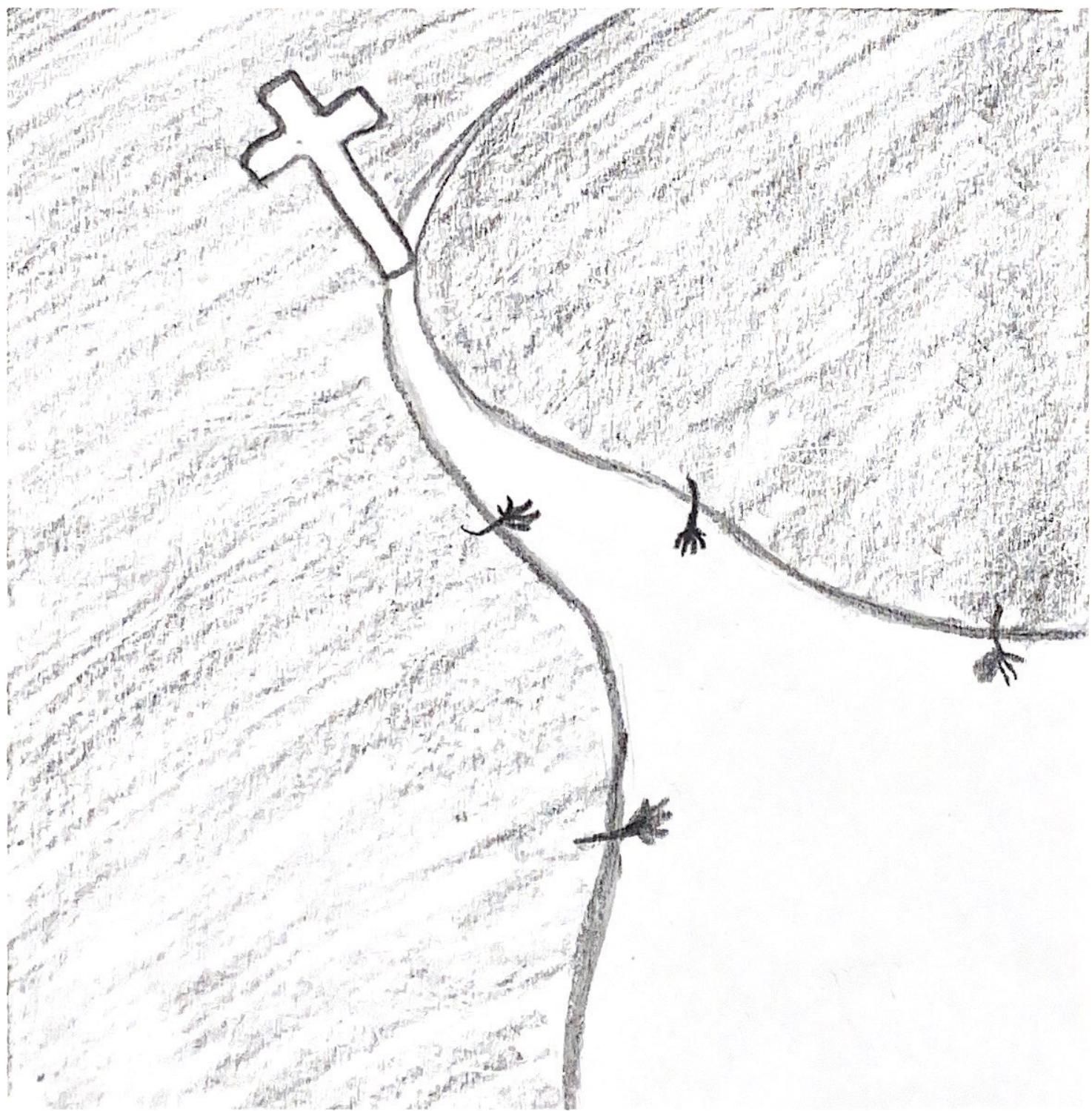
The first time doing King's Prep was challenging, because we were not prepared to be able to teach the scripture. Ms. Lily didn't give in, because she knew we could adapt quickly. She assisted us through everything, and I was able to accomplish such a thing. I decided to go to my first winter retreat, which was in 2018. There, I learned a lot from Emmet and Pastor Andy about the Bible. After the retreat, I started to like this church. I was too shy about four years ago, but now I'm trying to overcome shyness, and I have also learned to be more open to others. Within the four years, I have grown closer to God and been able to talk more to my community. I was able to do it for more than four years with confidence in teaching the Bible and helping the kids with their homework.

A song I like is "At the Cross" by Hillsong. The song is about how he knows how we live, how he planned my life. He still loves me and is willing to forgive me although I failed him, committed many sins, disobeyed him, and sometimes I doubt what he can do. He sacrificed his life to save and wash me of my sins. God shows the world that even though I am imperfect, his love still surrounds me. The cross symbolizes that I must still bow my knees to God because his blood is still on me, his name is so precious, and no one can compare to his greatest love. The Earth fades, but the Holy Spirit is falling on me. He loves me no matter what sins I've committed. 1 Peter 2:24-25 - "He bore our sins in his body on the tree, that he might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds, you have been healed. You were straying like sheep but have now returned to the shepherd and Overseer of your souls." This represents that through Christ's death on the cross, those who turn to him are delivered from both the penalty and the power of sin.

Isaiah 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned — every one — to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.





Jacob Wang

For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will,
than for doing evil.

- 1 Peter 3:17

Jacob's Testimony:

As the scolding came from my father, tears started to trickle down my face. The scolding was happening because my parents told me to read a chapter of the Bible every day and write a response on it. They wanted me to write something interesting about the chapter and make a summary of it, but I was lazy, so I started to begin every response with more or less, "nothing interested me." My father discovered that, so he began to scold me on it.

During the scolding, my father said I was disrespecting God, which was a problem, because He is the greatest being deserving of love. God was being disrespected because I disrespected His Word, which is the Bible. So, my father sent me to my room to pray to God for forgiveness.

Then, I started to cry. It would only intensify whenever I said or thought "God" or "Jesus". Crying to a nonexistent sky spirit is not something that is logical. While I prayed to Him, chills kept going down my back, even though it wasn't cold. After I finished praying to God, I associated the chills with the presence of God. I then realized that God was with me and had more peace afterwards. Of course, it doesn't end there and it didn't start there.

As a kid, I grew up in church, always being told to be the good kid and learning the Bible stories and lessons. During service, I didn't pay attention to the pastor's sermons. It was in afterschool and summer camp where God laid my foundation. During Sunday service, I used to not sing the worship songs until my dad told me to sing louder. Eventually, I began to like worshiping. I'm *totally* sure that listening to Christian songs on the radio had *no influence WHATSOEVER*. During my elementary school years, the foundation was laid for growth. Although, that's not to say that nothing grew. For example, my loving side was put to the test when my brother was a toddler and started hitting me. I allowed it, to a certain extent. Through this, I was still patient with him and still loved him.

The real growth started in middle school when the afterschool for middle schoolers became extremely God-based. There, I would learn about advanced theology like predestination. Before, I would've been like "What is that?" and be lost. Still, I absorbed information, so my parents wanted me to read a chapter of the Bible everyday, which led to the whole incident at the beginning. One would think that such a big moment like that would lead to a whole new person that's such a good person. That's a misconception. The story doesn't end like that. After the incident, I had another one, where I rediscovered Minecraft videos and started watching them during afterschool. I eventually confessed to my mom, who forced me to tell my afterschool teacher what I had been doing.

Even after these, I still continue to grow in God and become more spiritually mature. My path will never be complete because there is always room to learn and grow. I still do bad in my life, for evil will always be in us until we die. People in general are always growing, whether it be for maturity, morals, knowledge, etc. The question is whether or not to grow in God. Being a Christian does not make you perfect, but it sends you on that path. The choice is yours. Which will you choose?

A short story of His love

God is the one,
Through whom all things come.
The good are a gift from above,
Although we all art scum

For this He sent His son,
A sacrifice for us He was to become,
So that we might become His beloved.
To Him we must run

This gift is to those who have begun
To receive Jesus, into our hearts He must come.
Once saved, we may enter heaven because of His love,
It is then that the war against sin in us is won

Jacob's Fictional Story:

One time, there was a man called Bob, who was a construction worker and had two sons. He was building a sawmill. A really big one with five floors and saws on all of them. While he was moving steel to help with construction, a saw from the fifth floor fell down and cut off his right arm. He was sent to the hospital where they were able to seal the wound.

Leaving the hospital, he was okay at first. However, he soon realized the difficulty that comes with having only the left arm. For one, many basic tasks take two arms, such as trying to cook and lifting large objects. Also, many tools are specialized for righties, which unfortunately doesn't work out. With all these problems in life, Bob became depressed. Some may say that he could just get a prosthetic arm, but he was unable to get one. So, his sons took care of him. They fed and helped him with everything. Eventually they were able to convince him to take up jogging. One day while he was jogging on a Saturday, he happened to pass by a Church. He had always heard about Church and decided to go try it the next day. On Sunday he went to Church. There, the people there felt different from others, so he became interested and came back next week.

That Sunday, he heard the pastor talk about Jesus and how everyone needed to accept him as their savior because everyone was a sinner. Bob was moved so much that he decided to accept God into his life and decided to talk to the pastor about it. The pastor was glad to hear that and gave Bob a Bible, then told him to read it. At home, Bob started reading the Bible, but he didn't really understand it. So, every Sunday he asked the pastor his questions, and every week, he learned more about God and how he should live his life. In time, he began to see life in a new way, every moment an opportunity to worship God.

In time, he began to find a purpose for his handicapped life. Bob found a reason to live. For this reason, he came out of depression, out of his sin, and became a new man. Throughout this, Bob was unemployed, but when he started following God, he found a job as an evangelist. His life lit up when the light of the world entered him. That is the story of Bob and how God fixed his life

Jeremy Liu

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

- Jeremiah 29:11

Jeremy's Testimony:

Hello, my name is Jeremy Liu. I was born in an agnostic family. Despite this, we still practiced traditional Chinese practices. When I was 3 years old, I apparently told my mom that I wanted to go to church, and she found one on my block. At 4 or 5 years old, I started attending Sunday School. There, we read the Children's Bible, but I would only pay attention to the characters and the games we played but never the lessons that were taught. After Sunday School, I would either go home and play games or attend service. If I went to church, it was not my choice, since I thought that the pastor's preaching was loud, annoying, and boring.

When I was around 6 - 7 years old, I stole some toys from my siblings. I think that I only stole for fun, because the toys I stole had little to no significance to me and I lost them the next day. I realized that I was envious of my siblings because they had those toys. To add on, I would lie to my mom by telling her that I completed the extra homework she assigned me, but I would always get caught. At first, sinning felt good, but now, it feels bad, because I know that lying and sinning is offensive toward God.

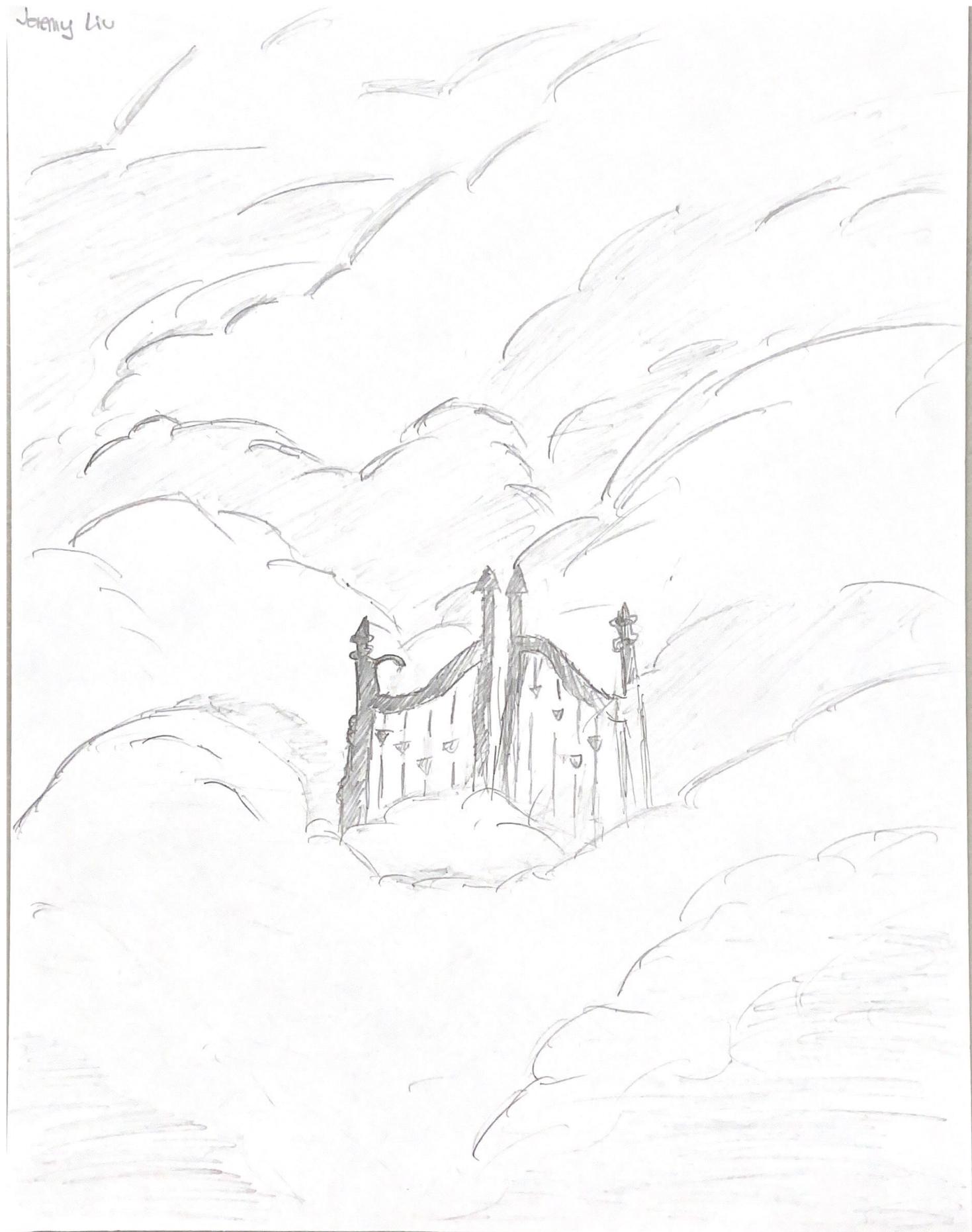
At 8 years old, Auntie Kim invited my mom to go to BCCC's systematic theology class. My mom accepted the invitation and brought me with her, even though I only played games on her phone the entire time. The next day, my family went to BCCC for Sunday service. When Pastor Andy was preaching, I didn't pay attention, and I was super bored.

About a year later, my brother told my mom not to be afraid to say that you are going to heaven.. I got worried because I didn't know if I was going to heaven or not. During Gladiators of 2020, the same topic emerged, and my worries came back. Guilt emerged as a result of these worries, because I knew thieves and liars don't go to heaven. I was also worried that I wouldn't be in heaven with God or my family.

One day, I asked God for forgiveness and felt assurance wash over me. God stirred my mom to introduce my family to Him, and over the years, God stirred me. Later on in 2020, my grandmother wanted to get baptized after attending church online for a year. This made my grandfather want to get baptized with her. This influenced my father to also get baptized with his parents. This was a blessing from God because my family had been praying for them for around 3 years. It was also a blessing because my grandma died a few months after she was baptized. Since then, I have barely lied or stolen things and am trying to learn more about God. To end, my favorite verse is Jeremiah 29:11 : "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare, not for evil, to give you a hope and a future."



Jeremy Liu



Joshua Chang

Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

- 1 Timothy 4:12

Joshua's Testimony:

Hi, my name is Joshua. Before I met God, I felt like a good person born in a Christian family, as I was introduced to God instantaneously. As a person born into a Christian family, I was encouraged to be baptized and accept Jesus in my life. I thought I was fine, until my mom asked me what I thought about the Bible, and I told her I thought it was a dusty old book. I didn't care about the Bible, because I cared about doing fun things and playing with other kids. During the sermon, I would love to fold origami and not pay attention to whatever the pastor was saying. To me, church was just a daily ritual, and at the end, I could play with my friends. Before, I did not see the importance of the Bible, because it never stood out to me as an important thing. I disregarded the 10 commandments without even thinking about it. For example, in 4th grade, in ELA, the class was reading this book called the Big Friendly Giant. The teacher told the class that if they forgot their book, they would get a zero for the day. And guess what? I forgot my book that day, but there was another book in the desk. It was not mine; it had the name Sofia on it, written in pencil. So I took my pencil, erased her name, and wrote mine. I don't know if that's stealing, but after that I felt really horrible on the inside. I stole a total of three books.

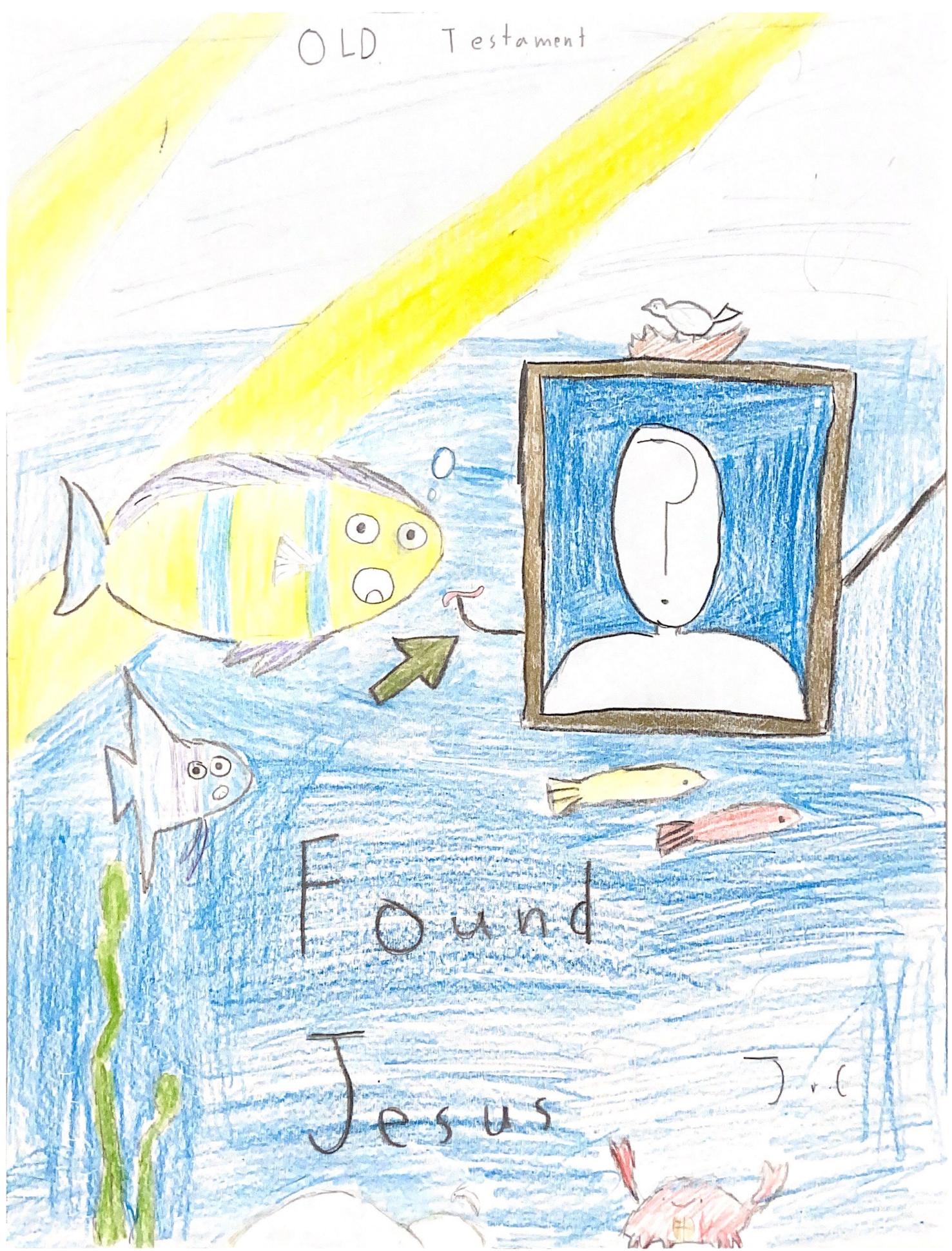
My mom then proceeded to have a Bible study after every service and taught me how important this book was. I learned that whatever we did, we were all sinners and would eventually go to hell. She taught me and made me understand Jesus's love and his sacrifice toward mankind and what happens when I do not accept him as my Lord and Savior. I was fearful of him and loved him at the same time.

Then one summer I decided to accept Jesus in my life. During that summer, we were being looked after by a friend of my mom. My mom's friend was a Christian, and she would pray and tell me about Christ. At that time, my brother was a Christian, and I felt empty, like I was missing something. At a time, I had everything I wanted, or I felt like I had everything. I was done with all my games, I was full, and I had good grades and nothing to worry about. When I thought about this predicament, I felt really empty, like I had nothing to do in life. The point is that I felt useless, and I still enjoyed the stuff, but whenever I went to sleep, I would think: Do I really matter in life? With this question in mind, I would do the exact same stuff: go to church, have fun, and go home for more fun. My mom would tell me many times that at one point in life, you will feel empty and you need Jesus to fill that hole. However, I heard this Bible verse that helped me through this trial: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." This made me feel comfortable, and I felt like I mattered, and even God knows if a sparrow gets food, and I felt very cared for even when my family was away. After that, I felt less empty, slowly and surely. So one summer, a Christian friend prompted me to accept Jesus into my life, and I saw no reason not to.

As a new believer in Christ, I was changed on the inside as I looked at the world in a different perspective, not worrying as much about worldly issues. I also started to pay attention to messages and sing songs that, before, I did not enjoy doing. I felt like I was free and not bound to this world.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) I think that this Bible verse says it all to why I think he is my Lord and Savior. Or Romans 5:8 - "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." My dad taught me these verses to help me with my walk with Christ. I didn't get as many thoughts of stealing other people's things, and I felt like I had a purpose in life. And I had faith in God that he would help me through hard times and humble me through proud times.

OLD Testament





Karen Zeng

“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

- Matthew 6:34

Karen's Testimony:

There was a story my mom always told me. When my mom was about 7 years old, she became very ill and was taken to the doctor and given the wrong shot. She was put into a coma for many weeks. During those weeks, my great grandmother, who loved my mother very much, prayed for her healing. My mom miraculously survived and started attending church.

My great-grandmother first brought my mother to Christ. My mom told me I met her when she was 97 years old and I was 1 ½ years old. It was the first time I met her and also the last. Of all her grandkids and great-grandkids, I was the one who caught her eye and approached her. As a very outgoing social kid when I was younger; I would go up to her and talk to her all the time. She loved me the most, and every time I went up to her she would give me 10 dollars. My great-grandma prayed for my mom and advised her to seek a church when she comes to America. After that, she passed.

My mom immigrated to New York City, where she met my Dad and lived in an apartment in Brooklyn, and she was also pregnant with me. She remembered her Grandma's words about finding Christ and church. So she went looking for churches and found Brooklyn Community Christian Church.

One day Pastor Andy, the pastor of BCCC came with his mother (I called her grandmother Tso) to pray for my mom and even me when I was in the womb... So I was prayed for and blessed even before I knew it... Then, I was born.

As a toddler, I always stayed with my mom in Chinese service. I didn't understand what was happening around me, but everyone was really kind to me in church. Once, my mom was crying during worship; I didn't understand why at first, since I was very young, but I cried with her without knowing what was going on. When I grew older, I realized that she was crying because she was so emotional from all the worship songs.

I had a typical Christian childhood, attending children's ministry, singing worship songs, and doing body worship. After I went in small groups, I was given a picture Bible. I learned about the ten commandments and all the stories in the Bible. I either didn't truly understand, or it wasn't that important to me. I really liked the games and crafts, but I still wasn't intrigued. When I was promoted to the next grade, I began to understand what it meant to be a true Christian. Although, when we got to read the Bible, I wasn't good at reading, and I didn't like to read either. Sometimes I feel upset and feel like everyone is better than me since I didn't read much of the Bible when I was a kid and don't know the whole story of the Bible. I just left the picture Bible at home, and when I saw it again, I looked through the pictures and thought it was pretty interesting and brought it to school to show how "smart" I am.

Then when I was about 7- 8 years old, a tremendous event happened in my family. My dad left, and it caused a huge impact on me, my mom, and my sister. Before he left, we went on a trip to Boston, and I was partially begging my dad to not go because he already planned on leaving. My parents had a huge argument, and usually they don't really argue, but because of that one argument, they divorced. I remember crying at night with my mom while my sister was in college. I would send text messages to my dad through my mom's phone to see if he would come back or reply. It felt like I was in this darkness and pain for 2 years and cried for 2 years straight. I was a pretty social kid before my dad left, but after this incident, I started to talk less and bottle everything up. My mom would tell me how much different it would be if he was still here. My mom would say the heavenly father is our father. Even though I knew my dad on earth left our family I still said and acted like he was still here. My friends would ask me what my dad does as a job. I would say "he is a chef" since he was. About 2 years later, God blessed my mom with a business, and we also moved and decided to forget the past and carry on with our lives.

Before the pandemic, when I was 9-10 years old, my mom brought me to Friday night fellowship for the first time... I sat there awkwardly while my mom talked to the people at church. I was led upstairs to sing worship songs and suddenly I heard the song, "I surrender...." and I began to cry... and I started to recall all my sins. I used to steal things from my sister, and I disobeyed my parents. After my dad left, I gave my mom a hard time and didn't want to listen to her. My mother had to run her business, so she didn't have much time to take care of me. I hated my sister for the longest time because of jealousy. 1 John 3:15 - "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

When COVID came and we had to do everything remotely, we couldn't go to church or school in person anymore. My mom signed me up for a program called "Gladiators" during the summer. I didn't want to go at first and I was super upset about it, but when I went there on the first day, I learned about the four gospels, and we also played games. But when it comes to reading I did so poorly on it, and I couldn't pronounce a simple word, and I always stuttered in sentences. Every time I get picked on to read, I feel very uneasy, and sometimes, I don't pay attention in class and when I was asked a question that was taught yesterday. I was really stressed out. I felt like I was forced to go. A few months passed, summer passed, and the school year started. I still had to go to Gladiators and I was used to it now. I go there most of the time. I also learned more about the Bible and about the four gospels. I was also always quiet, and I didn't like to speak, and I was also bad at public speaking. My mom put me in morning cram class with the pastor of BCCC for reading, writing, and speaking lessons in the morning... and now I feel more confident and I am better at reading and communicating.

The next summer, I was put into Gladiators again, but this time, it was in person. This is the start where I was more willing to attend church activities. I made great friends that made me grow spiritually. I started to attend Friday night fellowship every week and expand my knowledge.

To conclude the story of my faith, I would like to end off with Matthew 6:34, "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." Despite all the troubles and fear I've conquered, I believe that God is always watching over me, guiding me on the right path, and he made me who I am today. He has given me comfort and courage to persevere through challenges, and I will continue to grow and follow the Lord and Savior for all the days of my life.

Anxiety

...hello, hello, HELLO...?

My vision was blurry

I began to worry

I'm feeling dizzy with everything around me

"Are you okay...?"

I closed my eyes again

And started to dream

In a great horizon

Over the seas

I was alone

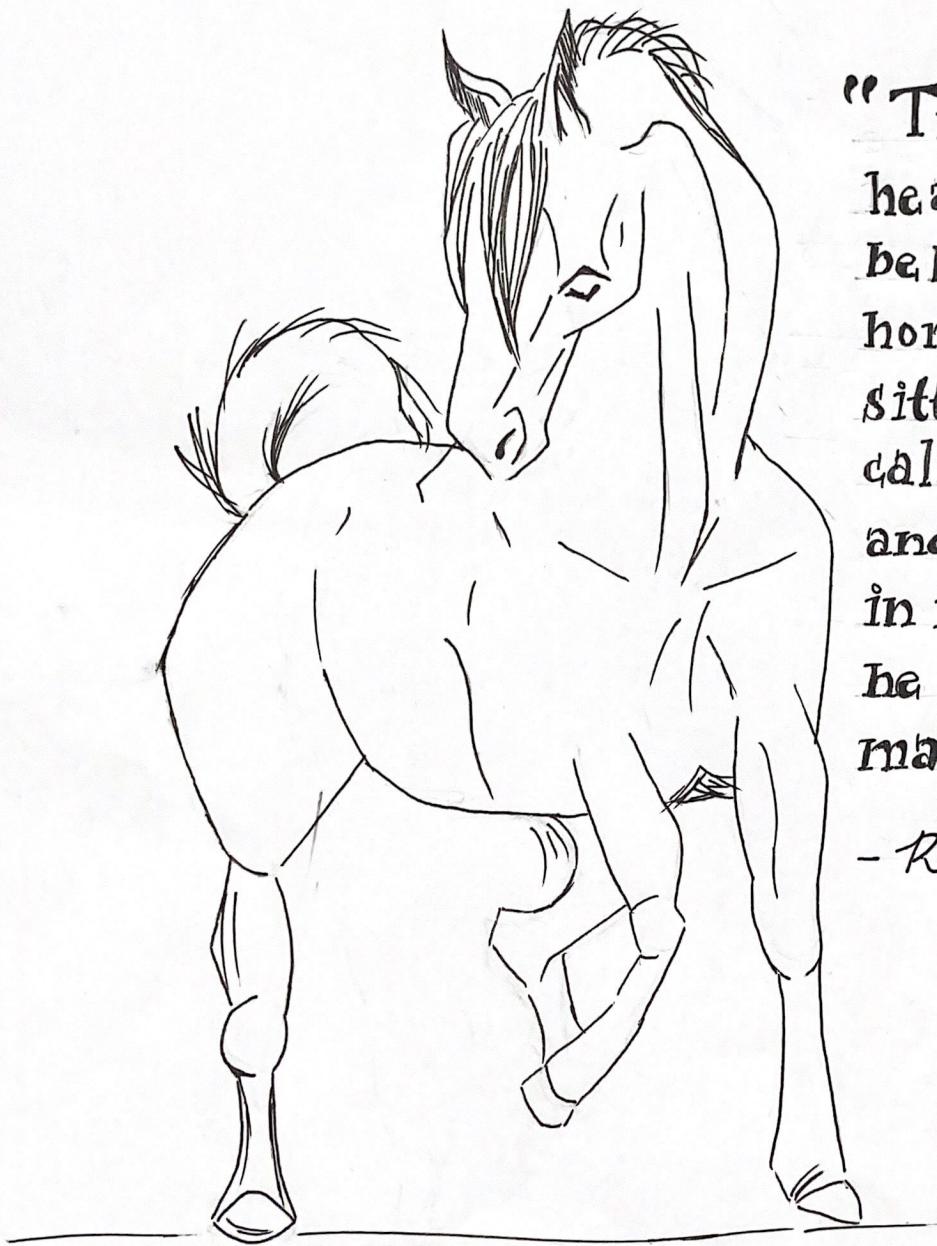
But God was beside me

He gave me comfort during the highs and lows

And the strength through joys and woes

I felt the warmth and breeze surrounding me

Waking up, fear leaving me miraculously



"Then I saw
heaven opened,
be hold, a white
horse! The one
sitting on it is
called Faithful
and true, and
in righteousness
he judges and
makes war."

- Revelation
19:11

Katelyn Yu

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- *Galatians 2:20*

Katelyn's Testimony:

Hi. My name is Katelyn Yu. I was born in a somewhat Christian family. My mom is Christian and my dad isn't. I grew up in BCCC and started coming ever since I was 2. I've always enjoyed coming to church, but I've never really understood or had a full on relationship with God. I grew up knowing most of the Bible stories that I was told but never really took it to heart.

Although I loved coming to church, I would only come to hang out with my friends. When I would come to church and attend service, I wouldn't really pay attention to what Pastor was saying. Instead, I would be making origami out of the paper they used to give out and talk to my friends. I used to make paper airplanes and paper fortune tellers with the pamphlets the church used to give out. At home, I would always misbehave. I would complain about certain things which would drive my parents crazy and would constantly argue with them over little things, such as not wanting to eat meals that they provided for me for dinner. They would force me to eat. I would also hide my brother's toys and not give them back until he started crying.

A few years later, during the summer of 2020 when COVID hit, my mom signed me up for Gladiators. During the 5-6 week program I learned a lot of deep theology and intimate lessons about God. After really thinking and reflecting on all the lessons as the program ended, I realized that I wanted to change. I felt guilty in a way for the sins I have committed. I wanted to serve the Lord. This is probably the first time I really met Jesus. I started reading my Bible more often and praying. This continued on for about 2-3 months. At first I was reading my Bible everyday, and then it progressively started to get less and less until I stopped reading my Bible and praying.

But in early January 2021, my family got COVID. This is the first time we've ever got COVID, and everyone was very worried and anxious. This was a hard time for my family, and everyone in my house had to distance themselves. Even though my symptoms were not bad, I remember being really anxious, to the point where I couldn't sleep. I started really praying to God by myself when everyone was asleep and asking for his help to heal my family. This is when it really hit me. That night, I flipped to a random chapter in the Bible, and it really calmed me down. After reading the Bible and praying, I fell asleep peacefully, knowing that God will heal my family. Knowing that God was protecting me was a relief. 2 weeks later, my family was all healed, and I knew that it was God's doing. I thank God for helping my family.

I continued reading the Bible and praying most of the time. I mostly read the Bible everyday and am trying to work on reading my Bible every single day. I trust God and have faith that he will do great things in my life. I am still not the best kid at home and disobey, but I am trying to work on listening. My Bible verse is Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths."

Bubble:

Some bubbles make their way up
As some go back to the surface and pop
This bubble was a screw up
Until it met the biggest one on top
The big bubble changed
Even when it rained
The bubble stayed the same
On its A game

Kevin Lee

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

- Genesis 1:1

Kevin's Testimony:

I came to church during my initial month of being a junior in high school. I was excruciatingly bored, and I wanted to search for another hobby other than video games. Before this occurred, I was a recluse and video gamer. I've been playing video games since I was essentially an infant. I played initially on handheld and home consoles, and then I progressed to the computer. Throughout the entirety of my adolescence, childhood, and early teenage years, I was playing video games. I eventually became bored of it because of how repetitive it was. Not only that. Playing excessively can be detrimental to your mental, social, and physical health. So, I really wanted to improve my life, because I was in that desperate, depressing phase. And believe me, it was atrocious. Playing video games excessively had led me to becoming a hermit. I was basically a shut-in who did basic and simple functions, like eating, showering, brushing my teeth, sleeping, and playing video games. That's all I did throughout my life, predominantly in my teenage years where I was in middle school, a freshman, and sophomore in high school.

I learned how to keep to myself, became introverted, reserved, and shy. However, I was terrible at socializing. Talking was daunting, and I sounded so monotone, emotionless, and inexpressive. I was aware of all of these issues. I was aware that I sucked at socializing, that I was a hermit, and a no-lifer at video games. Now, I've reached my junior year in high school.

It was late September when I decided that I wanted to visit this church that I was familiar with because I had attended it for after-school programs and summer camp in the past. So, I wanted to reminisce and have nostalgia, and this ultimately led me to being a Christian. There are many reasons for converting to Christianity except searching for another hobby. I have many beliefs that are similar to that of Christianity's. I believe that human life is precious, that people should be respectful of others, to be loving or nice to others, and much more.

Although I was socially awkward, I consider myself as a kind individual, and this was especially with friends and family, or even strangers. Okay so, besides wanting another hobby to do, I have many similarities with Christian values. And I believed that I can be suited for Christianity, because it promoted comparable values and virtues of mine. I began to frequent church, because everyone there was unbelievably friendly and hospitable. I also was bored of video games, and I wanted to be occupied or improve. I felt welcomed, and that's what led me to becoming a Christian. It was these Christians at church that really influenced me to persist in my conversion, and that's how I became Christian. And to be quite honest, I don't regret it at all. Being a Christian has made me more productive, and it's been fantastic for me.

Blood Shed, Darkness, Then Light

Was it what it seemed?
Were we redeemed?

Jesus was slain,
But it wasn't in vain.
He suffered pain,
So we may gain.

Jesus had saved,
For the depraved.
He paved a way,
So we can find a way,

For us he prayed,
So we don't get weighed
He took our sin away,
That we may have a yay

He didn't fade,
He made a trade
He himself
For our ourself

When he died,
The sky was night,
Then there was light,
It was shining on us,
Thus, we were saved.

Who Were They?

The Three Kings, who witnessed the birth of Jesus Christ

One night, in the city of Bethlehem, three men appeared. These three men were named: Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar. They were present during one of the most important events of the Bible, which was the night Jesus Christ was born. These men visited Jesus during his first hours as an infant in a manger, accompanied by many shepherds, angels, and God himself. All of these men were extraordinary and remarkable for who they were. They were not ordinary men; they all possessed substantial status and were scholars. They were quite wealthy with riches, and when they reached the house that Jesus was conceived in by God and the Virgin Mary, they gifted Jesus with trinkets, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Melchior was from Persia, Caspar is supposedly Indian (but many Chinese Christians believe he was Chinese), and Bathazar was Babylonian. These were the Biblical Magi, meaning Three Kings, Three Wise Men, or the Three Magi. They were represented as kings from the east and men who studied the stars, or astrologers. They observed the stars, and the star they specifically followed was the star named "The Star of Bethlehem" or "the Christmas Star" that led them to the house where Jesus was.

In many Christian traditions, to commemorate this event, we celebrate these three men on The Three Kings Day or the Feast of Epiphany. These holidays occur during the 12 days of Christmas when the magi journeyed during those days to visit Jesus on the 6th of January. It is believed that on the 6th of January, that is when these three men presented the newborn Jesus Christ with symbolic gifts and offerings. One important meaning of their visit is that these three men represent how God, no matter the geography and distance, can be everywhere and anywhere. These three men are of multicultural and multiracial origin. Their visit represents that anyone can be Christian, despite being Indian, Persian, Chinese, Babylonian, or your ethnicity and nationality.

Lucas Chan

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.

- *Psalm 23:4*

Lucas' Testimony:

Hello, I'm Lucas. When I was young, my mom had work, so I was left in the care of my grandparents, who were also very busy, so I usually just played alone. When I started Pre-K, everyone else had all known each other previously, and the group I had to sit with said to my face "we don't like you here". I moved to America during kindergarten and understood absolutely nothing anyone said. When I did finally make some friends, I lost them after transferring schools. I was not the talkative type, so I was not good at making many friends at my new school.

Around that time my parents began bringing me to BCCC, but I would find it boring and didn't enjoy going, since everyone was a stranger to me. Instead, I would pretend to be asleep to avoid church.

As I started to go more, I began seeing how everyone was accepting and loving, and I grew an interest in the Jesus I heard in the lessons that were taught in Sunday school. As I went to church more, I learned that Jesus died for our sins. And not only that; he also deeply cares and loves us.

I slowly began to trust Jesus more in my life and found that it had helped me improve. As I prayed more about my schoolwork, my grades improved, and I made many more friends, both in school and in church. In Jesus, I found a trustworthy and caring friend who is always there when I need him, and I try to be like him to others as well.

Lucas' Poem:

As we sail through the ocean of life, alone,
We have to endure
Through the lightning, the waves, the dark unknown
We might wonder
"Where are you man in the sky?"
We might doubt God and ask "why?"
But God said to not fear
And as the stormy clouds start to clear
I now see
That it was He,
Who had guided me
All the way through that thunderous sea

The Bible summarized in 60 words:

God spoke
Adam woke
Eve ate
Noah's flood
Abraham's test
Jacob cheated
Joseph traded
Bush command
Moses send
Egypt plagued
Sea divided
Israel saved
Tablets made
Promised land
Judges judged
Saul disgraces
David replaces
Kingdom divided
Prophets cautioned
Israel's destruction
Messiah prophesied
Jesus born
Disciples formed
Haters swarmed
Savior crucified
Jesus rose!
Following grows
Paul's transforming
Now awaiting
King's returning!

Michelle Yu

For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, “Fear not, I am the one who helps you.”

- Isaiah 41:13

Michelle's Testimony:

"Michelle Yu. Please report to the Dean's Office."

Ugh, not again. I mean honestly, what's the point of going to the dean every single day if all I've done is *really* nothing. I'm a good person, so why do people keep complaining about me for bullying?

Looking back at it, I wish I had realized my ignorance earlier. Especially since I grew up in a Christian family, I knew the general values and morals I had to uphold. But church was lonely as a kid. At some point, my friends moved to Long Island, which was horrible for me, since we bullied kids together in church. I was left an outcast, as other kids around my age found me annoying and irritating. Lonely and now despising people at church for not reaching out to me, I turned to surrounding myself with school friends.

My first year of middle school, I got in trouble daily and was called to the dean for my behavior daily. Being physically and verbally violent to others felt liberating to me. I would purposefully pretend to trip people I didn't like so they would fall down the stairs and harm themselves and verbally bullied several people, causing them to be on the verge of committing suicide. Even so, all of this hatred in myself that I projected made me happy. I was in control of my own life, my own actions, with no one telling me what to do. I lived off a phrase named YOLO, meaning "You Only Live Once". However, deep down I knew this wasn't fulfilling. It all came crashing down when I lost all the close friends I made in middle school because they were fed up with my actions and attitude. I started to ask myself "What was my original motive for doing this?" "Do I really feel fulfilled living this life of lies?"

My thoughts came into reality on a Friday night at church where Pastor taught about how our life was a timeline. As humans, we die eventually because of our sin. However, with God, we can have eternal life in heaven. This is the moment I realized I wasn't doing anything with my life. It wasn't fulfilling, and if I was being honest with myself, I wasn't truly happy knowing I had blood on my hands. Hearing the message opened my eyes to seeing that I needed to change. And I made a bargain with myself that if I tried Christianity out and it went well, I would stay with it. If it didn't change my life for the better in some way, I would revert back to how I was before. Yet here I am, fully declaring my faith because knowing God ever since I made the choice to take him seriously has changed my life. It affected me so much more than I thought it would. I learned what it is to truly LIVE instead of just to exist. As I see people who repeat my past that come into church, God has given me the ability to be open and welcoming. Through this, I know God will be holding my hand through every trial and tribulation I encounter.

Isaiah 41:13 "For I, the Lord your God,
hold your right hand;
it is I who say to you, "Fear not,
I am the one who helps you."

Solace

I crave a place to call my home,
A place to deprive my life of monochrome.
I search all over town, pursuing worldly pleasures
To replace my homeless frown.
But a voice calls me from above to go back to my place
Because deep down I know I'm solidified within God's base.

If ever you feel lonely or left out,
Know God will always be there to face your doubt,
Holding your right hand through hevel
Winning each and every war against the daunting devil.

Remember where you came from,
Remember who this is all for,
The same savior who saved all of us off death's shore.
So we proclaim our faith to you and prepare our drumming,
Unashamed and ready for your coming.

A diary to write whenever you feel:

Upset/Overwhelmed:

Psalm 34:18 "The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."

- What happened today that made you upset? Will you be okay? Write and pray to God.

Happy/Joyful:

Philippians 4:4 "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice."

- What memory or moment did you think of that made you happy? If Jesus came back now, would you have any regrets? God gives us strength through every trial. We are most joyful when we bring God glory!

Angry/Jealous:

Psalm 30:5 "For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning."

- Why do you feel angry? Will you try to resolve your anger? We should strive to show love to everyone as God has loved us unconditionally. However, those who have wronged us will face the vengeance of God for it is his wrath.

Patrick Zhong

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

-John 3:16

Patrick's Testimony:

Hi, my name is Patrick Zhong. I was born into a non-Christian family. When I was a little baby, I was sent back to China to be taken care of by my grandparents. I arrived back in America when I was seven years old. I lived in New York City, which is where I still live now. I was a pretty bad kid during my first years coming back from China. I would get scolded about every single day. I was pretty ashamed of it, because my mom would work from morning to night just to have to scold me. I was pretty annoyed at these scoldings since I had to stand there and wait for my mom to eventually walk in and scold me. I tried to be the best student I could since I thought school was the most important thing in life. I went to church sometimes with my Aunty, since I thought it would please my mom if I wasn't disobeying and not staying home just to play on the iPad.

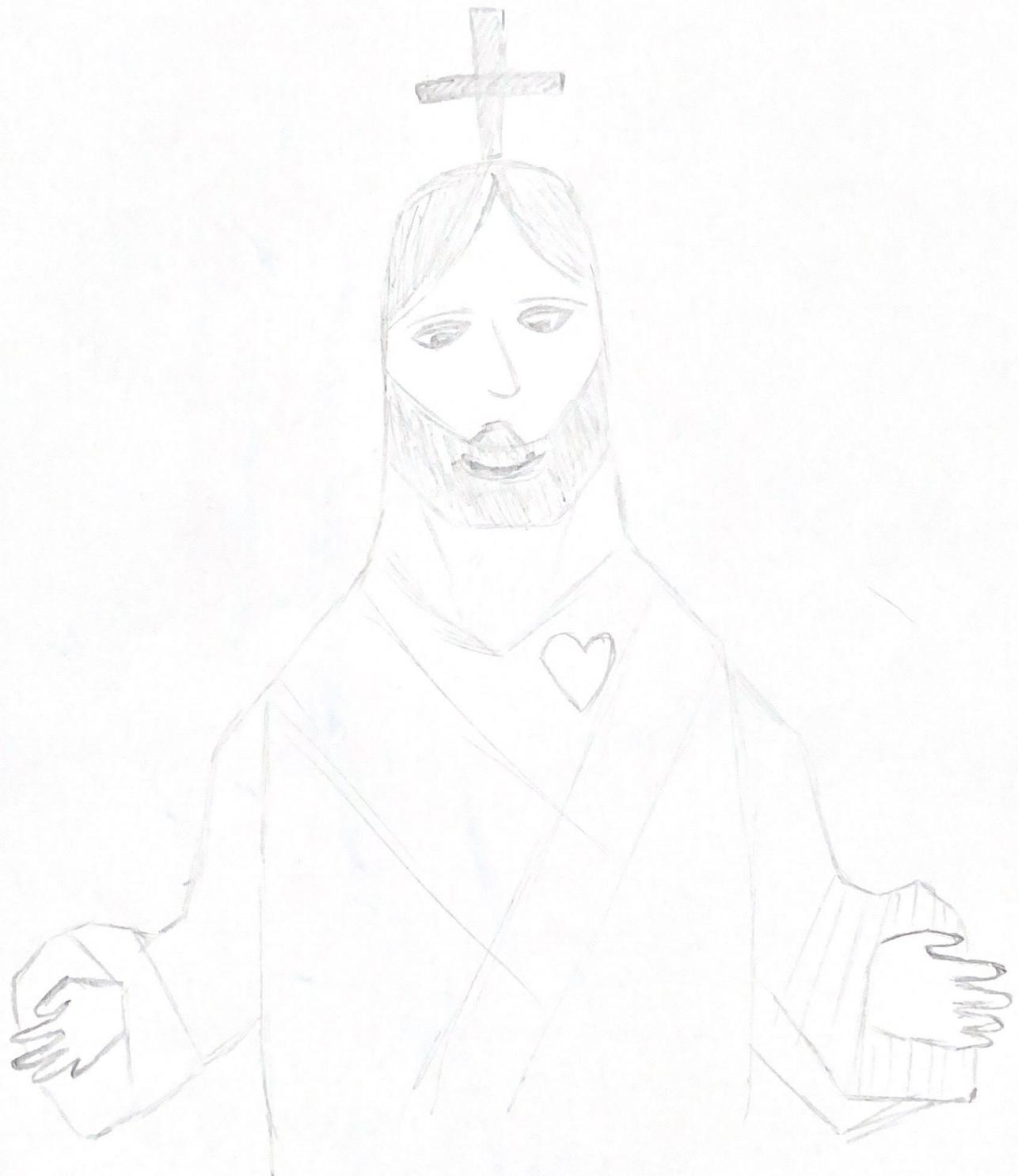
After a while, I started going to church because I wanted to not just behave. Playing ball and talking with friends was fun. My mom and dad's relationship got worse. They argued a lot, my dad doesn't fulfill promises, talked about my mother behind her back; the relationship got super toxic, so that's why we moved to New York. Some examples of me being a terrible person are stealing often from my classroom in school. I lied about finishing my school work. There's a lot more, but I think my brain purposely made it forget those. I enjoyed life in New York, but I was still a brat so my mom would still get mad at me everyday. My mom was sick of it, so she threatened to send me back to Virginia to my dad. I was super worried about this since I had made friendships and I didn't wanna be alone without them. I remembered in church, how when people had major problems there, they would pray to God. So I started praying every day to God to fix my problems. I think my mother decided not to send me back after I started behaving more.

More problems arose for some reason and I had to go to Virginia, which after hearing that news, I got super upset, worried, and I also prayed a lot more to try and cope with the news. I started to cherish my life in New York a lot more. My mother blessed me with the news that I could stay in New York, which was great. I knew it was God's gift from all those times I've prayed. I never really could hate someone truly, since I always think there's some good in people. Life was normal for some time. My bond with the church grew stronger. I've got better as a person and stopped being annoying and bothering my mom. Although, about my father, I still had a bit of hope of him coming back into my life. I know it was pretty stupid to think after all those times he would come back after all the stuff he did, but I always think there's some good in everyone. He was invited to talk with Pastor Andy in church, and after that talk, Pastor was really pissed and upset, so even I gave up. I know the Pastor is always super friendly with visitors, like giving them a mug and being really friendly with them. It was my dad's first time meeting Pastor, and even Pastor just got so upset about what they were talking about. Pastor told me about how he uses work as an excuse to not come and live with us, and even I totally gave up at that point.

Covid appeared and destroyed everything. I couldn't go to church in person, which honestly changed the experience a lot for me, which it shouldn't. The feeling of not being there in person really made it feel off. After a while, I stopped joining the service meetings. I strayed further away from God. I felt empty during quarantine, waking up and getting on the computer and doing nothing since I was stuck inside. After around 2 years of basically doing nothing, I went to Gladiators for the summer. That was the first time I went to church in person frequently in years. After this I started going to FNF frequently as well. I felt a lot better and enjoyed church. I still feel like I missed out on a lot without my father, but God filled the role of my father in my life. I knew God will always be protecting me no matter what.

Once in 5th grade, I got in a car crash. Luckily everyone involved was safe. Right before the crash occurred, I was sleeping in the car with my head down, and I think I might've got really hurt if I didn't wake up and pick my head up right before the car crash occurred. I think I got woken up by the Holy Spirit telling me to wake up.





Rita Wu

fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

- *Isaiah 41:10*

Rita's Testimony:

Something I had always bragged about in middle school was slamming this dude into the gym wall because he was poking me.

He was one of those annoying kids that everyone collectively disliked. After a few laughs though, I realized he couldn't get up. Scared, I tried to help him stand, because the teacher could be going to get the basketball from the storage office near him at any moment now. I reached my hand out to him, and although he took it, I was too weak to pick him up. I began to panic. All of this was spontaneous and only happened because I was trying to seem tough to get attention. I should've been sitting on my floor spot, instead of this. I just might get punished for this, expelled even.

I'd never felt like I was a bad kid. I got good grades, without ever getting into trouble with others. This was a first.

When he went down, even the teacher ignored him, despite his cries for people to help him up. At that moment, even I, the one who did this to him, felt bad. I knew I had messed up, but what can I do now? Move on.

This "whatever" type of mentality made me a careless person. In school, I would only care about popularity. I made mean, backhanded jokes, and would do many terrible things just to get the attention of others. Often I would pick at my friends' insecurities to make everyone else laugh, and while I knew this hurt them, I loved the feeling of having the people around me laugh along with me to my jokes, thinking I was hilarious. I gradually adopted this toxic personality regardless of who was around me. At home, I'd constantly boss my younger sister around, telling her to do my chores for me. When she said no, I would get upset. Because of this, we argued multiple times a day, every day. Every time, I would keep pushing for my side, telling her why I was right, even when I had already realized I was wrong. Pride.

After moving to Sheepshead Bay, I started attending BCCC. I won't lie and say that there was something different here since it seemed just like another church. I continued isolating myself from the other people in the church and behaving in the same awful way outside of it.

During the summer of 7th grade, my mom sent me on a Chinese-side retreat by myself. It was scary because I didn't have friends, and all the older people seemed intimidating. The experience humbled me, but it finally started my journey with God. The second night at the retreat is known for being the night when people tried their best to stay up as late as possible, talking and getting to know each other on a deeper level. I didn't know about the all-nighters, but I was down to talk and get to know the other people better. As we talked in a small group, we got to the topic of Christianity, which was to be expected because this was a retreat for a Christian church. I sensed the question coming but was hoping no one would ask.

At this point, I had already realized that I didn't have the same type of relationship with God as the others did, but I never really questioned it. When the question of whether we were truly Christians and believed in God finally got asked, I wasn't the first to answer. The first person who answered said yes. What was I going to do, say no? No way... so I lied and said yes too. That night, though, and many nights after that, I was unable to rest well, thinking of my purpose in life and God's will for me.

This question made me rethink all the times I've been in church. Did I know God? Who was He, and is this really how a child of God lives? God seemed like someone far away, someone I had heard stories about but hadn't met myself. Who was I to God? If I didn't know God, then God and I must not have a relationship. With my tiniest smudge of faith and boatloads of doubt, God made way for me. Slowly but surely, He has helped me gain confidence in Him. Trusting in Him was hard, but He never gave me a reason to doubt Him. Each time I prayed, I would put a little more trust in Him, and He would never fail to help me gain a little more faith. He worked in me, and it has shown through outside.

God helped me be more cautious about what I said to those around me by opening my eyes and showing me how toxic I was. In doing so, I finally understood how rude I sounded. God let me experience how badly I treated others. Because of that, I understood how much my attitude needed to change. Even in church, God has given me a home. Through the positive influence of the people here, I've come to build a better relationship with my

sister and family. The Holy Spirit's constant whisper within me has nudged guilt into me when I sin, and it feels like there's someone else in my brain who knows everything I'm thinking. There is nowhere to hide from God, and even now, I am often ashamed of my thoughts because God knows. Despite that, His presence is comforting. I know that God is there for everything, and He knows my intentions. He holds my future in His hands and will work all things for His glory. I know that He has forgiven my sins and that Jesus is sufficient.

My sister and I have grown closer than I ever thought possible, and I tell her everything I need to rant about. We argue way less, and when we do, I try my best to pick my fights. Sometimes it's easier to let her have it and be the bigger person, but sometimes my anger and pride get the best of me.

At church, the change is plain to see for all. Instead of being alone and without friends, I am constantly surrounded by brothers and sisters who I know I can turn to in times of need. I've met people who genuinely want to be friends for life, who want us to be there for each other in every step of it.

I still pray continuously for the salvation of my Dad, that he may be saved one day as well, and although it does seem pretty impossible sometimes, I trust that God makes all things work together for good, for those whom he called.

Rita's Poem:

On the shore, this story starts, dull.
The boat was unbothered,
But the hull was null.
With the wind, it'd sail,
sometimes sunny, sometimes hail.

Though it would go with the flow,
The strong winds it'd often undergo.
The boat was always shaken,
With many little burdens,
The ship was laden.

Then came the boat's savior,
The one and only steady Anchor,
It changed the boat's behavior –
In Him the boat trusted,
No longer old and rusted.

Even though the storms still come,
One with the Anchor, the boat had become.
The boat could be sure of one thing –
To this anchor, it could cling,
In the worst weather, it could sing,
Calling out to the King of Kings.

Dear God,

I'm envious of all the academically talented kids. I envy all the kids whose parents force them to eat breakfast in the mornings, kids whose parents drive them to school every day. I envy extroverts, and people without the fear of public speaking. I envy English-speaking families, and how easy they seem to have it all. I envy those who have their life together, those whose faith in you never wavers.

Help me to be content in you, to be okay with only you. Let me know you're with me all the time, and that you're worth way more than anyone or anything will ever be. Give me faith to trust what you say, that you're good and your love is great. Even though I'm broken inside, may I be able to dedicate my life to you. Help me put you first, and know that all things will fall in place after. Help me to seek you with all my heart, and that nothing on earth will ever satisfy me the way you do. Help me to feel whole again. Heal me in my hurt, and remind me to remember you in my happiness. Remind me you'll never let go, through ever high and every low.

Teach me that even though I'm not academically talented, extroverted, and am terribly scared of public speaking, even though my parents don't drive me to school everyday, or speak English fluently, you are all I need. Even though my doubts often come and go, help me to stay grounded in you, and through my doubts may you strengthen my faith in you. Be with me through all my troubles and guide me in the right direction; remind me you're always here, and that I'm never alone.

In Jesus' Name,
Amen.

Simeon Leung

saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me.
Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.”

- Luke 22:42

Simeon's Testimony:

8:34. (Crap, I'm late. Why didn't I wake up on time? Why didn't Dad come to wake me like he usually does? Why does it smell like flowers? Wait, is today a school day? Oh, he's probably still at the hospital with Mom. Wait, it's Tuesday. Crap, I'm late.)

8:35. (Freaking out in bed isn't going to make me any less late. School starts in 10 minutes. I needed to wake up at 8:00. Ugh, is this going to be my first time? I hate being late.)

I continue grumbling as I shuffle down the ladder of my bunk bed, a hand-me-down from my two older sisters when I started 6th grade last September, enjoying for a brief moment the way that the sun is coming through my window blinds.

"Dad?" (It really is strange that he's not back yet. He should've known to be back to wake me up on time, he should know what time I need to be at school.)

Hearing no answer, I move out into the hall towards the bathroom, when an unusual flash of color catches the corner of my eye, and I stop with my foot halfway through the door.

(Flowers? Those look like the ones we got Mom. Yeah, there's even that little beige teddy bear holding a heart we bought from the hospital gift shop.)

Drawing closer towards the kitchen where my Mom's gifts had been laid out on the dining table, I see my Dad sitting on the couch in the living room, arms crossed like he usually does when he's ... had a long day.

(Wait.)

(Shoot.)

(Crap.)

(No way.)

(No freaking way. Not like this. Not today. I'm not ready. What the hell.) A million and one thoughts flit across my mind in the time my backside finds the seat on the couch next to Dad.

Mom was diagnosed with breast cancer when I was 1, but no one ever told me. By 3rd grade I realized something was wrong with her, but even then I just thought she was sick. No big deal. Everyone gets sick sometimes.

Growing up in church, I learned that if I wanted something, all I had to do was ask God for it. Like the good little Christian boy I was, of course I included her in my prayers. "Thank you God for giving us food to eat. Please let my mom get better. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen."

For 3 years straight, my daily prayer remained unchanged. For 3 years, before every meal, without fail, I prayed those same words. And for 3 years, my mom never got any better. In fact, she got worse. By 4th grade, her hair started falling out. By 5th grade, she stayed home most of the time. By 6th grade, she started staying at the hospital, for weeks at a time sometimes.

All the while I kept a childish hope that God was right about to heal my mom, that He was waiting for just the right moment to swoop in and save the day, that all I needed to do was pray just a little bit more, repeat those words just one more time, two more times, three more times.

A couple of weeks earlier, my dad took me to see Mom. She was in her more permanent room at the hospital; in hindsight I guess it was the hospice care floor. I had found a little teddy bear downstairs to bring up with us, and I set it down next to a few bouquets of flowers someone else had left on the side table.

I didn't really want to be there. We would always stay for hours, even though she was almost always asleep, and the TV never had anything good to watch. The constant beeping from the heart monitor got annoying after a few minutes, and there was always a lingering odor in the air, the smell of sanitizer and sickness.

To my surprise, she was actually awake this time, albeit kind of dazed, looking as if she didn't really understand what was happening. I mumbled a faint "Hello". (*Why is she looking at us like we're strangers?*) I found out later that she really didn't know what was going on; maybe it was the chemo, or maybe it was the late-stage cancer. (*It's kind of creepy.*) As she sat there, eyes not really focused on anything, with half a smile plastered on her lips, I turned my attention to whatever boring show was playing on the TV, wishing that time would speed up so I

could finally go home. Dad tended to my mom for what seemed like an eternity, going back and forth across the cramped room, when I felt a nudge on my shoulder from behind me, where I was leaning up against the bed.

When I turned, I saw Mom looking right at me, still with that half smile, but that's all she was doing. It looked like she was attempting to say something, but no words came out. I felt so awkward. I didn't really know what to do so I just sat there in silence, thanking my lucky stars when Dad finally announced it was time to go home. That was the last time I saw Mom until the funeral.

(God, I did what I was supposed to. I prayed. You didn't do what you're supposed to. You didn't answer my prayer. I prayed for years, every single day, three times a day and you still couldn't do this one thing for me. And not only did you refuse my prayer, you took my mom from me.) So from that day on, I decided I didn't really care about God, because he's not fair. He's not just.

Going to church when you've decided on canceling God is quite an experience. 6th grade meant I got to graduate from Children's Sunday School and move up with the big kids in Youth Fellowship. That's where all the junior high schoolers had our own worship service apart from the little babies. I had all my friends there too, friends that I grew up with in the church, and it was great. Seeing my friends every week, hanging out, playing games, being cool in the cool Youth Fellowship. That's what I went to church for – what more could I ask for? I had a great pastor and CMO; they really loved us and cared for us, treating us all like their own children. They taught us to grow up, accept more responsibilities, and study the Bible more. And because of how loving and awesome they were, I really wanted to do all that. But in the back of my mind, I knew I couldn't. Because the God of the Bible from which they wanted me to read wasn't a good guy. He says he loves us, he says he'll take care of us, that he wants what's best for us, but he doesn't. A loving God would have saved my mom. He would have let her live. He would have let me keep her.

The day God proved me wrong is a day I'd never forget. On that day God's truth hit me like a truck. I was in high school, and was just talking to a friend from church. I don't remember what he was responding to, but he said to me, "You know, sometimes, when God answers prayers, sometimes the answer is 'No'". Once he said those words, they continued to echo in my head. *Sometimes when God answers prayers, sometimes the answer is 'No.'* I don't know how to explain what I felt at that moment. It was like a wind was rushing through the room. It felt like a current of electricity went buzzing throughout my body. I even got a little lightheaded. It was something so simple, so obvious, and yet something I had never thought of nor understood. All these years I spent hating God, I spent because God could not be good, could not be just, could not be loving. He couldn't have my best interests at heart, because he didn't give me what I wanted most. *Sometimes, when God answers prayers, his answer is no.* I thought that God was my genie. That's what I understood from Sunday School: if you want something, you pray and ask God for it. And if you pray, then God will give it to you. So convenient, so helpful, just what I want from a God. I thought I knew everything there was to know about God. I thought that I heard all the Sunday School lessons, and all the Bible stories. In my pride, my selfishness, I didn't understand God at all. I didn't understand what it meant to have a real relationship with God at all. The part I was missing was submission. I did not submit to God. I didn't submit to his laws. I followed my own rules, my own laws. Instead of God telling me what to do, I told God what He should do, what He had to do. Yet even when Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, he said "Not my will, but God's."

When I realized it, it felt like everything just clicked in my head. Everything I ever learned about God from my family, from Sunday School, from Youth Group, it all just made sense. And this clarity, I know now in my heart, could only come from the Holy Spirit speaking the truth to me. Once I opened my heart to submit to God, then He showed me the truth: that His ways and His will are higher, His plan is perfect, that everything that happens can be exactly what you need and will always be what God says is good and perfect. In that instant I felt so relieved, I felt like a million bucks, like I could start floating. It was what my heart ached for for so many years. And at the same time, I hated myself. I was such an idiot for so long, how could I think those things of God, how could I not see the truth I now see so clearly?

But now that I do see clearly, I can start my relationship with God. I can finally accept all the things I learned about Him. I can see His goodness, His love, His justice, His sovereignty. I can begin to trust Him and what He says about Himself. I can trust that He hears me when I call. I can trust that the suffering I go through will build me up in perseverance. I can trust that God's plan will always trump whatever I could think of, that His way is the best way. I trust that he acts for my benefit, to his own glory. I know that He's real and I know He's there. And now that I know God, I will walk with Him for the rest of my life.

Let It Be Done

[Verse 1]

I thought I'd rule from my own throne
I thought my ways were all my own
I thought my heart was fully grown
My house was built without a cornerstone

[Pre Chorus]

And there was no way I was wrong
To think so highly of myself
And hell if I knew I was wrong
To think so lowly of my God

[Chorus]

My whole life, I've been trying to do it myself
All along, You've been begging for me to let go
"Just surrender and trust Me 'cause I'll take control"
God, Your will, God not mine, (let it) be done

[Verse 2]

I can't believe where I came from
My heart's completely come undone
My pride, my sin You've overcome
My cup Your love has fully overrun

[Bridge]

By Your love and grace I'm forgiven
By Your Son I'm given eternal life
By Your Spirit our relationship's made new
I will take up my cross and follow You

Simon Lei

Surely I am too stupid to be a man.
I have not the understanding of a man.

- *Proverbs 30:2*

Simon's Testimony:

Hello, new phone who dis? I'm Simon, and you may be wondering Simon who? But you don't have to worry about that. However, enough messing around, let's talk about you. JUST KIDDING. THIS IS ABOUT ME.

I started going to church with my grandmother when I was in elementary school. I would come to just play and have fun after Sunday school. I didn't learn much, other than how Jesus died to pay for our sins and that sin is bad. However, I stopped going for a long while to play games and to just do things a kid would do, instead of anything better. I would even steal and lie a lot as a child. But this was all until one of my aunts invited me to a potluck, where everyone invited was encouraged to bring a dish to share with one another. Now, who doesn't want free food? So my mother said yes, and we went.

Little did I know it would change my life, so we got to church and sat down, and soon after we sat down, the pastor came by, and the pastor knew of me, mainly through my relatives. He asked my mother about summer school and where I went for summer school. However, I did not go to summer school, since I missed the application deadline for a summer school program called BCA (Brooklyn Chinese American Association), which was one of the worst programs I've been in. I never really cared about anything in BCA and always wanted to just go home. BCA was a community organization that wasn't Christian-related in any way to God. But once my pastor found out I wasn't in summer school, he offered me to join a program, SBI, and I joined in the middle of SBI, so everyone but me had already become accustomed to the way things worked in SBI by then.

SBI, also known as Summa Bible Institute, is a program dedicated to growing more godly men and women to go out and spread the gospel to others as well. In SBI, we would help out around the church where it was needed, initiate prayer stations on Saturdays, where we go to a designated spot we have and spread the gospel in the streets to people passing by. Every summer, we also host a play inspired by a book or an original work. I have been attending it from SBI 2.0 through SBI 7.0, for a total of 6 years. It wasn't until I joined SBI that I finally started believing in God and his love for us. Throughout the years I have felt a connection growing closer with God. I have also been slowly taking in things I learned under the different teachers in SBI and slowly applying it into my daily life, especially in my later years where I have matured more. I have also been able to witness the miracles he has done for the people around me. Seeing what he has done was also a major factor in my belief in Him and truly seeing His love for us. Then, finally in 2019, I was baptized into Christ and have been growing in my faith and biblical knowledge since.

Currently, I am living a much more godly life, turning away from sins I have once indulged in. I am currently all around church helping out with my acts of service. Some things include helping out on A/V with sound and doing powerpoints almost every week, as well as handy work around church, such as fixing miscellaneous things, helping some of the older people who are in the HVAC part of church, and other building management problems and projects. I also help around with church events, such as outreaches and wherever I can be of assistance.

Reigns on High

I was a sinner
But Jesus is my savior
He reigns forever
His name is an anchor

All my life he reigns on high
Powering through the enemies might
All my life he reigns on high
Shining brightly through the night

His name is a mighty tower
For all to go and cower
For he protects us with his power
Leaving us in awe and wonder

All my life he reigns on high
Powering through the enemies might
All my life he reigns on high
Shining brightly through the night

My Lord is compassionate and kind
He is there in heart and mind
As long as we have Him we can find
The way, the truth, and the life

This is a story about my parents on the verge of splitting apart. For a few weeks, my mother was on and on about my dad having an affair. A few nights, I prayed to God to help keep this family together, but even if God did not, I would not hold Him to it. If they did split, then it would just be part of his plan, and there must be something he plans for me. This was also about a month after their return from a month long trip to China with just the two of them. They weren't even sleeping on the same bed.

My sister took it pretty hard and wasn't in the best of relations with my parents. One night, she left and went to her friend's house, where she stayed for a couple of hours before coming home later in the night. I took this well on the outside, but I still had an uneasy feeling about the whole problem going on. My brother, on the other hand, didn't show any signs I could visually see that were bothering him during this time. But during this period, my mother has been asking me and my siblings who we wanted to stay with, and I was set on staying with my mother. The main reason behind me staying with my mother is that, for most of my life, my dad was out working from early in the morning and only came home around midnight.

I had a 3 day boot camp, where I was going to be out of the house for the entirety of the time, and I feared they might split during this time. But whether it be God's hearing my prayers or His grace, I came back, and they were on okay terms. They weren't fighting anymore and went back to sleeping on the same bed again and manageable talking terms. I have personally not seen or heard them fight since then. But this was all possible through steadfast prayer and my faith that God would be there to help us in time of need. This entire event was a representation of Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." I asked God to help keep my family together, and in the end, God answered my prayer and brought it back together.