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KERYGMA

No. 279 Vol. 23 August 2013

THE BUCK STOPS WITH ME

HOW TO TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR LIFE

Receive Love and Heal Your Shame

Find Your Personal Power

A Bulimic Shares Her Secrets and
How God Set Her Free

Bishop Ted Bacani, Jr.:
Faith Is Obedience

Allan and Maribel Dionisio:
A Life Plan to Help Your Teens Have Focus



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Incredibly Simple and Affordable Health Habits That Will Protect Thousands of People from Dreaded Illnesses



Do you want to be healthy? Are you sick and losing hope that you will ever be cured? Are you looking for medical advice that actually works, that have been proven effective by others who have overcome even terminal diseases? There are essential steps that do not involve invasive treatments, expensive surgery, and huge hospital bills that you can take to improve your health.

In his book, *Health Made Incredibly Simple*, Dr. Romy Paredes teaches simple but highly effective habits that can turn your health around, as proven by testimonies of patients who followed his wise advice.

This book is not for everyone, but it should be! You don't have to suffer from illnesses or die young because of poor lifestyle habits. You can start your journey to wellness today.

Imagine yourself in the peak of health during your twilight years inhaling the fresh breeze coming from the ocean, walking barefoot in the sand, and enjoying the warm hugs of your grandchildren.

Imagine yourself happy, healthy and whole in your old age, jumping for your joy, still serving actively in your ministry, tending to your garden, dancing to music with your loved ones without the burden of disease.

Today, that may seem like a far-fetched dream for many, what with all the diseases we hear about every day. But it is possible to be happy and healthy, well into your old age, if you only know the things that work and do not work.

In this very down-to-earth but eye-opening book, you can read about the experiences of Dr. Romy's patients who took the journey out of their illnesses into wellness by employing very simple but effective natural healing methods prescribed by the good doctor.

Health Made Incredibly Simple addresses the root causes of illnesses and will teach you how to help your body heal itself, by empowering your immune system through the simple but very effective means available in nature, as God provided for us from the very beginning.

- ✓ You will learn how to improve your health through simple habits that you normally don't hear in a doctor's clinic.
- ✓ These simple tips will make you feel better and healthier without the side effects and burdensome expense associated with maintenance medicines.
- ✓ You won't have to go through painful and expensive surgery if you change your unhealthy lifestyle and follow the simple, healthy habits which Dr. Romy recommends and has proven successful for his patients.
- ✓ You will learn from the experiences of those who have been healed from dreaded diseases and protect yourself from getting sick. Yes, you can heal yourself with the guidance of your doctor.
- ✓ Prevention is always better than the cure. This book will help you do just that.



Romy Paredes, M.D., C.M.T., is a product of the UP College of Medicine and UP-PGH Medical Center. He trained in Integrative Medicine in Reno, Nevada, USA. He is also a clinical medical toxicologist. He was given the Honorary Recognition Award by Dr. Rath International Health Alliance for his outstanding achievement in the fight for health freedom. He is the founder

of Bio-integrative Healthlink Center, Inc., a leading exponent in integrative medical systems, and Wellnessland Health Institute, a leader in the field of natural and complementary health care and education. He actively practices Integrative Medicine in Cebu City, where he resides with his wife, Dr. Mila, and their son, Michael Randell. (Visit www.wellnessland-ph.com or email support@wellnessland-ph.com for inquiries.)

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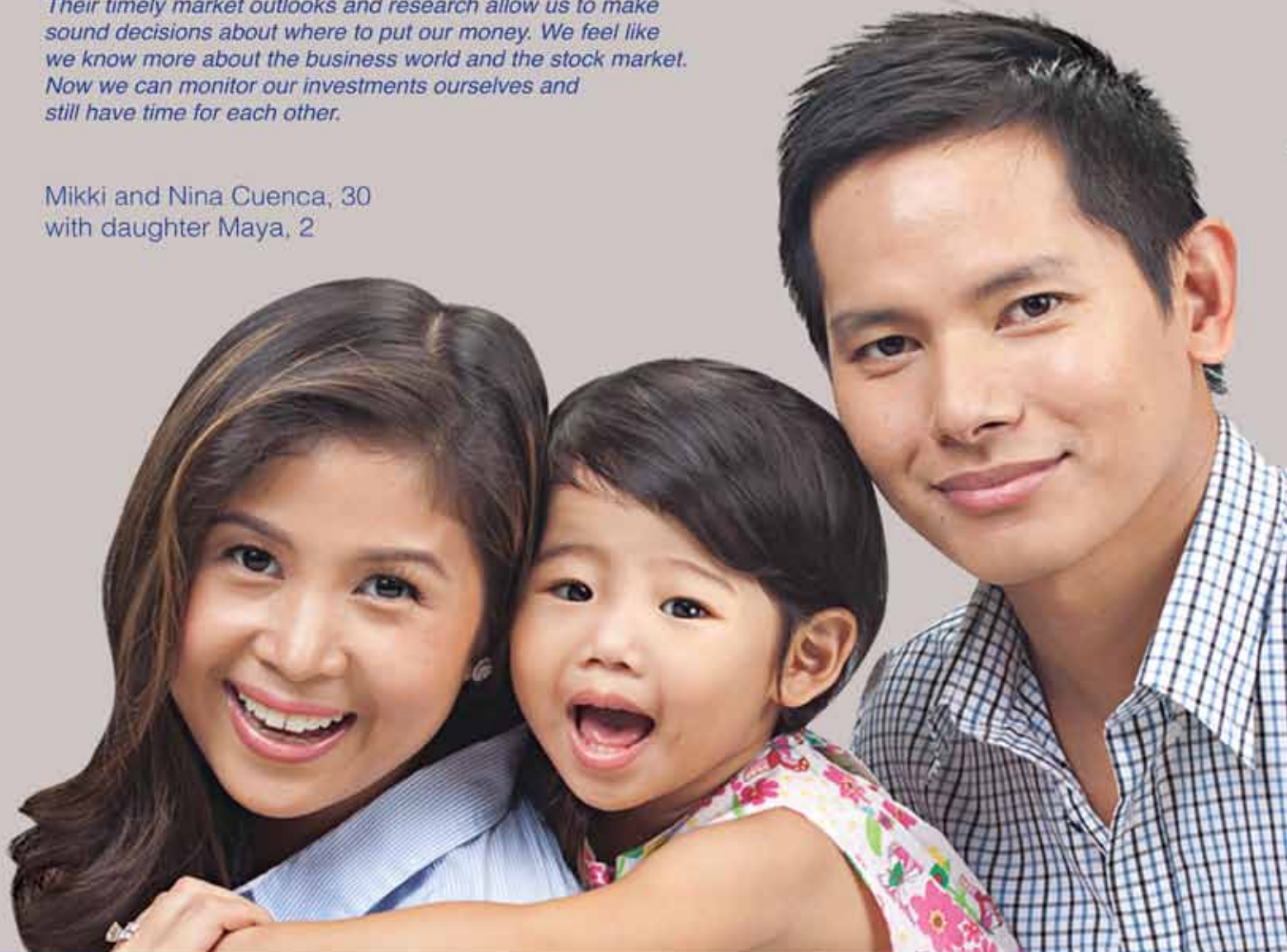
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Mikki and Nina Cuenca, 30
with daughter Maya, 2



Margaret was born a hunchback, dwarf, deformed, lame and blind. And she didn't have very good parents. Her parents, Parisio and Emilia, were so ashamed of her, they imprisoned her in a tiny cell far from their house. How long did she stay in that prison? Fourteen years.

One day, when her parents realized there was really no cure for her deformity, they simply abandoned her.

By God's grace, a kind priest came to know her and introduced God to her. And she gave her life to Jesus.

That was how she *responded* to her situation. Let me say this very important point: Your past doesn't *define* your future. Yes, your past influences, affects and *disturbs* your future. But it doesn't define your future. What defines your future is your response to your past. And this was how Margaret responded to her horrific past: She followed Jesus.

She was able to go out of her prison and later on joined the Dominican Third Order.

Here's the massive blessing: Because of the suffering she went through, she understood the suffering of others. Because she was imprisoned for 14 years, she knew what it meant to be imprisoned. She would visit prisoners and share God's love to them. Because she was physically deformed, she understood the sick. So she would visit hospitals and share God's love to the sick and dying.


Let me tell you the bigger miracle in her life. Despite all her suffering in the hands of her cruel parents and being locked up in prison for many long years, Margaret grew up to be a very happy woman. Her friends said that they never heard her complain about life. They never heard her complain about others. Discouragement was a word she didn't know.

Because she followed Jesus, the curse of generational sin was broken in her life. Her past didn't hold her prisoner. She was free.

Because of this, the Catholic Church beatified her — and she is the patron saint of the crippled and unwanted. Her incorrupt body lies in a church in Castello, Italy.

Margaret's past was not perfect. In fact, it was evil. But it prepared her for her purpose. As the Bible says, what was intended by the enemy to harm you, God will transform it for your good (see Genesis 50:20).

When you look at your past, especially when you look at all the suffering you went through, don't be discouraged. Every detail of your history — both good and bad — will bring you closer to your destiny.

Let me say it again: *Your past may not be perfect, but it was perfect for your purpose.* 

May your dreams come true,



Fourteen Years in Prison

By Bo Sanchez



I am a college student taking up Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering here in Cebu. I started reading Kerygma last year. Every time my mother buys a copy, I just love to read it. Because of this, and with the grace of God, I have changed my principles in life. When I have trials, no matter how big or small, I thank God for them.

People say that my course is a hard one, but for me, no matter how hard it is, for as long as God is there for me and if I study hard, I can fulfill my dream to become a successful chemical engineer. God wants us to dream big, and this is the first thing I learned in reading Kerygma and listening to Bo's talks. More power and God bless!

Onix of Cebu City

Thank you, Kerygma. I have just read your March 2013 issue. I was so inspired by it, especially the articles of Bo Sanchez. I know that my God has good plans for me and now I want to have all the issues and start a personal collection.

Kristine Datiles
Singles for Christ, Pangasinan Chapter

I first read a Kerygma issue in 2000. I had two kids then; now I have four, all boys, and separated from my husband for eight years. I went through a lot, but praise God I can say that I have moved on.

In October 2012, my mind, heart and soul longed for inspiring words and encouragement. I bought Kerygma again and wow, until now I've been enlightened by every word printed on it. Big thanks to Bo, you have touched many lives. Every month I long to have my copy of Kerygma. Continue the good work!

Che via text

Thank you, Kerygma, for always inspiring us, especially teenagers like me. I am so blessed that every time I read the different stories, I am touched and inspired also. I am 14 years old and I've been reading Kerygma since I was 12.

I hope that you will continue to write and inspire many more people.

Stephanie Sanglay
Bislig City, Surigao del Sur

I started reading Kerygma when I was assigned as a student assistant in our library in third year high school. And I have not stopped since then. It inspires me a lot and serves as my guide in achieving my goals. Whenever I feel down, I grab a copy of this wonderful magazine, and then it's like God is talking to me through the articles. I will continue to read Kerygma as I enter a new chapter in my life, my college years.

Nicolas B. Omongos
Plaridel, Misamis Occidental

I am a fourth year high school student. Our proctor in the national achievement test gave me a copy of Kerygma as a gift. She said that I will learn a lot from it. I read it and I am very thankful to her who linked me to your magazine, and to Kerygma because God continues to enlighten me through it.

God bless you and your magazine. More issues to come!

Ernie Concepcion
Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat

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The Owner vs. *The Gardener* Let's revisit a familiar story

By Rissa Singson-Kawpeng

Walk with me a while.

Over here, at the vineyard where a fig tree grows. Do you see that man? He's strolling on his property the way he does every day. He checks out this tree where he looks for fruit. But he's disappointed. Again.

So he calls his caretaker, the man who has cared for his vineyard all these years. He says to him, "It's been three years and this tree hasn't borne a single fig. Can you cut it down?"

Maybe I can plant more grapes instead."

His kindhearted gardener bargains, "Sir, how about we give it another year? I'll give it extra care. I'll fertilize it. And let's hope that by next year, it'll have the figs you're looking for. If not, then let's cut it down."

The owner shakes his head but lets his caretaker have his way.

You know this story. You've heard it in the Gospels. So let me ask you this one question: *Who is God in this parable?*

Is He the man who orders the tree to be cut down or the gardener who digs and fertilizes?

Ah, now you're stumped. At least, I was. Because I've always thought God was the man who ordered the tree to be cut down. But when I was asked that question, I was forced to rethink my assumption.

How can God *not* be the gardener who wants to save the tree he's cared for all these years? This gardener has spent countless hours hoeing around it. His hands have grown calloused and dirty caring for this tree. Now how could he cut it just like that?

I realized I have a lot of growing to do when it comes to understanding God's love. After decades of knowing and following Him, that single question has exposed my flawed, limited grasp of the immensity of His heart.

It also gave me a better insight into why my life has to be fruitful for the Lord. Because He's a gardener, He enjoys the rewards of the work of His hands. He takes such pains to make us bear fruit. He sends His grace, human intervention and the resources we need to make this happen.

God delights to see us bear fruit.

When we exercise our talents and create something meaningful that benefits others, He smiles.

When the kindness we extend to others makes them feel God's touch incarnate, He smiles.

When we bite our tongue to keep us from saying something nasty or we choose the way of humility when we could have easily put the other person in the place she deserved, He smiles.

Do you see Him now? The Gardener, I mean. It's been a year and you can see Him there through the window of His small cottage. He is silhouetted by the warm saffron glow from the hearth. He sits back on His easy chair, feet up on a footstool, with a contented smile on His face. He holds a wine glass in His hand and takes another sip from His homegrown grapes. But it's not just His wine that gives Him pleasure. He turns to His side table where a bowl full of figs rests.

He pops one in His mouth and He thinks of you.

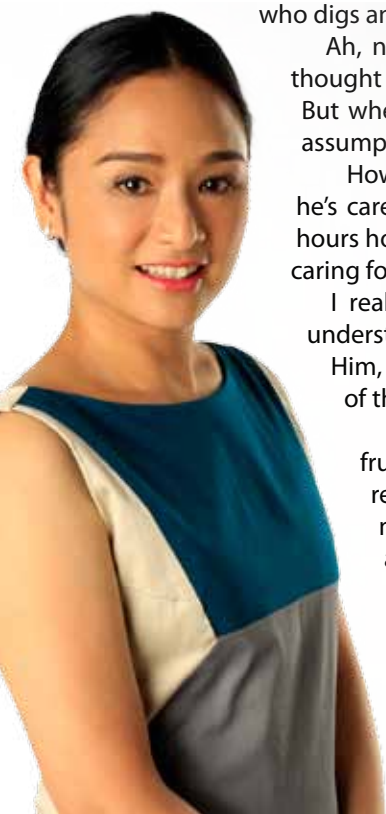
(Paul) planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. (1 Corinthians 3:6)

Email me at justbreatherissa@gmail.com, subscribe to my Facebook updates, or visit my website www.rissasingsonkawpeng.com.

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ABOUT OUR COVER MODEL

Ysza Bianca Pineda, our cover model for this issue, is a recent graduate of AB Multimedia Arts. But unlike other new graduates, Ysza plans to first expand her service at The Feast Alabang before she gets a full-time job. She has been serving as a photographer in Feast Alabang's media ministry even when she was still a student. Now, she wants to serve also in its dance ministry.

Ysza possesses a take-charge attitude. When she was 19, her mom moved abroad and she, being the *unica hija* of her parents, levelled up and took care of her dad and siblings, including the family budget.

Ysza loves taking photos and doing short films. She plans to work in the Philippines first so she can get proper training, then eventually move to Singapore where IT professionals and multimedia artists are in demand.

**The Feast is the weekly gathering of the Light of Jesus Family in different locations. Call 725-9999 for infomation.*

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KERYGMA. A Greek word meaning Proclamation of the Gospel. It is a Catholic inspirational magazine. It aims to be an evangelistic tool to all nations, providing Scriptural, practical and orthodox teachings to Catholics, particularly those in the Catholic Renewal, as an alternative to present-day magazines. It is also committed to fostering the renewal and unity of the whole Christian people. Philippine copyright Shepherd's Voice Publications, Inc. 2013. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without permission. KERYGMA is published monthly by Shepherd's Voice Publications, Inc., whose editorial and business offices are located at 60 Chicago St., Cubao, 1109 Quezon City. Tel. Nos.: 725-9999, 411-7874, 725-1190. Fax: 727-5615 Email: editsvp@shepherdsvoice.com.ph. Website: www.shepherdsvoice.com.ph.

New You

Tips for personal development

How to Say 'I Do' Every Day



French actress Simone Signoret once said, "Chains do not hold a marriage together. It is threads, hundreds of tiny threads, which sew people together through the years." Here are some ways you can sew more threads into your marriage:

- **Pull the plug.** Studies show that couples who watch above-average amount of TV are 26 percent less satisfied with their relationships than couples who watch less than the average. So pull the plug and, instead, put on a music CD and snuggle together.
- **Walk the block.** If you have children who are old enough to be left alone at home, or you don't have any kids yet, each evening after supper dishes have been cleared away, take a walk or two around the block. The evening walks will not only invigorate you, it will also allow for good, private conversations.
- **Take advantage of small moments.** Don't overlook small blocks of time that you can spend with your spouse — while walking from church, having lunch together, etc. These small snatches add up to a closer, more intimate relationship.

Source: <http://www.catholicdigest.com>

Why You Should Write Daily (Even If You're Not a Writer)



Not a writer? There are still advantages to writing daily. Here are some of them:

1. **Writing clarifies your thinking.** When you write, you are forced to make your thoughts clear and more understandable. So it forces you to put logical order into your thoughts and feelings.
2. **Writing helps you reflect.** "An unexamined life is not worth living," Socrates said. Through writing, you are able to reflect on your life and the changes you're making.
3. **Writing makes you a better writer.** This will come in handy sooner than later in our digital world.
4. **Writing makes you more creative.** If you force yourself to write daily, then you are forced to come up with new ideas regularly. You become more creative and more doors will seem to suddenly open to you — and not just in writing.

Source: <http://zenhabits.net>

Potassium is an essential nutrient that our body can't make on its own. High-potassium foods help muscles and nerves function properly. Spinach, lima beans, potatoes, soybeans and other high-potassium foods fight muscle weakness, confusion, irritability, fatigue, heart problems and chronic diarrhea. Potassium also helps lower your risk of high blood pressure. Besides those already mentioned, other very good sources of potassium are eggplant, bell pepper, tomatoes, summer squash, cauliflower, papaya, green beans, banana and carrots.

Source: <http://www.whfoods.org>

Quick Health Tip





Pope Francis's Message to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal: 'I Love Them Very Much'

The 36th National Assembly of Catholic Charismatic Renewal was held in April in Rimini, Italy, with 15,000 people present. Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, celebrated the Eucharist to end the second day of the assembly.

He met the Pope the day before and Pope Francis told him, "Tell them that I love them very much!" Then he added as he was going out, "Look, tell them that I love them very much because I was responsible for Charismatic Renewal in Argentina, and that's why I love them very much."

During his homily, Archbishop Fisichella thanked the attendees and shared with them. He said, "The secret of our existence, the full realization of happiness, lies in the degree that we know God's plan for us and that we put it into practice." He added that this "realization" can only come about in Christ, who never leaves us alone.

Archbishop Fisichella added: "Therefore, our witness cannot lack the proclamation of hope, of the resurrection which opposes the tendency to the culture of death, in which the lack of God robs us of prospects and orientation." He concluded, "We must become pilgrims. He, Jesus, is the end. And in this end we must find ourselves."

Source: <http://www.ewtn.com/vnews>

A new study published in the journal *Pediatrics* has shown that controlling what children watch on TV improve how they behave.

About 600 families were recruited and assigned to one of two groups. Parents in the first group were encouraged to substitute violent shows with educational and pro-social ones. They were given monthly TV guides listing educational programming for their area.

After a year, researchers found that children watching less violent and more child-appropriate shows scored better on tests that measured cooperation, willingness to share or compromise. The children also had fewer incidents of aggressive behavior such as yelling and hitting.

The study notes that "although television is frequently implicated as a cause of many problems in children, our research indicates that it may also be part of the solution."

Source: <http://thechart.blogs.cnn.com>

What TV Shows Your Children Watch Affect Their Behavior



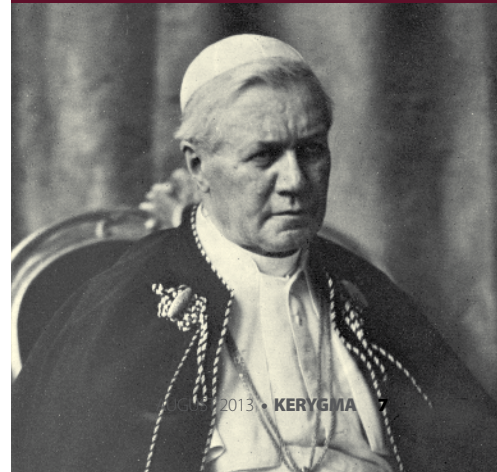
St. Pius X

Born and Died: June 2, 1835 – August 20, 1914, Italy

Notable Facts: Pope Pius was the 259th Pope and was the first pope after Pius V (1566 to 1572) to be canonized. He promoted traditional devotional practices and orthodox theology. He was able to publish the first *Code of Canon Law*, which put together the laws of the Church into one volume for the first time. He instituted frequent communion from childhood. Found on his last will and testament is the sentence, "I was born poor, I have lived in poverty, and I wish to die poor." His feast day is August 21.

Source: <http://www.catholic.org>

Saints at a Glance





1987

Founded by Raul L. Locsin in July 1987, BusinessWorld traces its roots to BusinessDay, Southeast Asia's first business daily and a paragon of fairness, credibility and integrity in the world of business journalism.

Today, BusinessWorld still provides decision makers in business and government here and abroad with competent and responsible news reportage.



BusinessWorld
25 YEARS OF STERLING INTEGRITY

The Black Carbon Project

By Osy Erica

Deteriorating air quality has long been a major environmental issue in the country, evident especially in urban areas such as Metro Manila. Today, the concentration of several pollutants in air has reached alarming levels, well above that commonly affecting human health and attributed mainly to both mobile (primarily motor vehicles) and stationary (power plants and boilers in various industrial processes) sources.

With the Philippine economy's growth in the past years and its anticipated prolonged surge in the future, emissions of air pollutants from such sources have been and may still be expected to increase significantly in the absence of mitigating actions. If the issue of air pollution is not properly addressed, it cannot only be detrimental to public health and the social well being of the population but can also erode any possible economic gains for the country.

A testament to the detrimental effects of air pollution is the high percentage, at 60 to 70 percent, of medicines for bronchitis, asthma and other respiratory illnesses sold in the market, as reported by the Department of Health in 2010. In this year's Sustainable Development Summit, Commissioner Heherson Alvarez of the Climate Change Commission (CCC) mentioned that the country spends more than \$400 million per year on health expenses caused by poor air quality. Even the World Bank has backed up the premise that air pollution is a serious matter, as it reported nearly 12 percent of all deaths in Metro Manila are premature deaths caused by respiratory and cardiovascular diseases from exposure to air pollutants.

The Culprit

According to Alvarez, air pollution has cost the Philippine economy some \$1.5 billion per year, largely due to diesel motor vehicles. About 70 percent of the total amount of soot or black carbon emissions in the country comes from diesel-fueled jeepneys, buses, trucks and other vehicles in Metro Manila, which produce 22,000 metric tons of soot emissions per year.

Black carbon can affect not only air pollution but also climate change several thousand times more than carbon dioxide can. In a recent scientific study done by the CCC, black

carbon is the second most important, but previously overlooked, factor in global warming. Studies further show that reducing black carbon emissions from diesel-engine vehicles could effectively and economically decrease the pace by which glaciers in the Arctic region are melting.

Mitigating air pollution and climate change


Fortunately, unlike carbon dioxide, black carbon can be mitigated easily by fixing the diesel engines of motor vehicles so they burn fuel efficiently at the right fuel-air mixture.

Black Carbon Project

Enter the Black Carbon Project, an environmental initiative the Philippine government is inaugurating this year via the CCC. The goal of the Black Carbon Project is to modify some 500,000 Metro Manila jeepney and bus engines over a five-year period to reduce their soot emissions. The target soot reduction is 80 percent, which is equivalent to at least 25 million metric tons of carbon dioxide reduction. The estimated total investment on the project of \$615 million will be sourced through public-private sector partnerships.

With the implementation of the Black Carbon Project, air quality in Metro Manila is expected to improve and the chance of controlling global temperature rise to below two degrees Celsius will increase, thus preventing the advance of climate change by several decades.

The Black Carbon Project is only one of the reforms that the government has taken to mitigate air pollution, climate change and its harmful effects. However, such reforms can accomplish their objectives only through successful collaboration among government agencies, the transport and private sectors, and civil society.

It is every Filipino's responsibility to contribute in efforts to improve air quality, and environmental conditions in general, in the country. A clean environment is for the benefit of all; thus, it should also be the concern of all. 



Our Toddler Misbehaves in Church

Our problem started when our son learned to walk. But with God's grace, we were able to deal with it as each Sunday passed. But lately, I felt that we need to have a solution for this.

Raised by Catholic parents, I have always wanted that we should attend Mass as a family, especially on Sundays. But these past Sundays, we could no longer concentrate on the Mass and became stressed out.

My son is going four years old and is really makulit when he's in church, especially when he sees other kids. We live in the province and there's only one Mass every Sunday in our parish. We don't have any house help so we can't leave our son at home. Either we bring him to church or one of us will not attend Mass and stay with him at home. My husband suggested that I attend the Sunday Mass and he will just attend the Wednesday Mass.

Would this be a better solution? Or should we just let our son play outside the church and we take turns in watching over him?

Please help.

Jullen

Dear Jullen,

Thank God you are able to attend Sunday Mass as a family. Also, thank God for giving you a healthy child. That your son is *makulit* shows that he is very healthy. But it causes you a very common problem: What to do when children are misbehaving and disturbing the Mass?

Maybe your son is not yet aware what the Mass is all about. When I was three, our family also attended Mass together, but my parents had no problem with me. At home I was also *makulit*. But since we prayed at home together, before and after meals and in the evening, and since our mother always told us who Jesus is, and that during Mass this Jesus is there, it was natural to "behave." After Communion, my mother would sit down and press me to her body, saying, "Jesus is now in my heart; come close so that He will bless you also." Mom was, as Pope John Paul II asked all parents to be, my "first catechist."

Maybe you could do something in this direction, bringing your son without threats and scolding to have a right attitude towards the Mass. You can still attend the Mass as a family. If and when your child misbehaves, one of you can bring him outside until he is pacified. Or you can stay at the back pew so you don't have to worry about distracting the other Massgoers. I assure you this is a temporary situation. Your son will grow and, with proper guidance and with your good example, will learn how to behave in Church.

Fr. Rudy

When Fr. Rudy Horst came to the Philippines in 1984, he was first assigned to the Immaculate Conception Parish in Cubao. It was here where he came in contact with the still young Light of Jesus Community. In 1990, he moved to Christ the King Mission Seminary where he now serves as head spiritual director of the seminarians and teaches Religious Education. He also teaches Holy Scriptures at the Maryhill School of Theology and the Divine Word School of Theology in Tagaytay.



Email your questions to editsvp@shepherdsvoice.com.ph. Or if you need to talk to someone, call (632) 726-4709 or 726-6728 to contact a Light of Jesus Pastoral Care Center's counselor. Telephone counseling is 24 hours from Monday to Friday, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays. Face-to-face counseling is by appointment. For correspondence counseling, email lojcounseling@yahoo.com or go to www.kerygmfamily.com.

Or Call (632) 725-9999

Pregnant? Confused? Abortion is not the answer. Contact Grace to Be Born at 0917-816-4700 or email reylindo.ortega@gmail.com. You may also contact Pro-life Philippines at (632) 733-7027.



How Can I Help My Father Stop His Porn Addiction?

I am disturbed with what I am going to share but I can't seem to find a better solution to this problem than writing anonymously to you. The Internet gives us easy access to information and communication; however, it also has negative effects. My father views porn sites using my laptop since it is the only unit we have at home. Every time I check the history of my browser, I would see the porn sites he has visited. I respond to this by nagging him. Still he doesn't stop. I consulted my mother but she seems to be indifferent to his behavior.

I respect my father for he has been a good provider to the family, but this one is not something honorable of a father. I hope you can help me with an effective strategy of making him feel God's love so that he may not resort to porn for pleasure.

Concerned Daughter

Ditas Español is a cancer survivor. Twenty years ago, she fought for her life with the sword of faith that God has given her. Now a counselor, she still uses that sword to battle the pain of others. She believes she was healed so she can be an instrument of our Divine Healer. Together with her husband, Vic, Ditas trains the counselors of the Light of Jesus Pastoral Care Center.



Dear Concerned Daughter,

I admire you for your courage in sharing your problem with us.

In dealing with chronic negative behavior such as pornography use or addiction, it might be helpful to first educate yourself and develop a good understanding of the dynamics behind pornography use and the addiction cycle. For many people, pornography is a way of coping with a variety of negative emotions such as sadness, stress or anxiety. It gives the user a temporary respite from negative feelings. The sexual images that they view produce feelings of pleasure that are triggered by a chemical in the brain called dopamine. However, over time, the brain develops a tolerance for dopamine, thus the user seeks more hard-core porn to get the same pleasurable feelings. This is when pornography use becomes a full-blown addiction.

Since he is your father, nagging, scolding or lecturing him about the sexual addiction process may not be the best ways to reach out to him. Talk to him in a calm and loving way. Express your love for him, gently point out your observations about the Internet sites he visits, and suggest information in the Internet (<http://candeobehaviorchange.com/3-keys-to-breaking-free/>) that can help him understand the addiction cycle and the negative effects and consequences of the use of pornography.

Try to understand what motivates your father to view porn sites. Is he trying to cope with negative emotions? What negative emotions are these? How is his relationship with your mom? Is there intimacy in their marital relationship? Developing intimacy in their marital relationship may help fill in your father's deepest emotional needs, and your mom needs to understand this. Based on her reaction, she seems to be in denial that a problem exists. You can help her understand that she is as much a part of the problem as well as the solution.

Remember that for your father to change his behavior, he needs to admit that he has a problem, understand the roots of his behavior, and most importantly, go to God. Try and bring him to a deeper relationship with God. You can invite him to The Feast, a weekly Catholic prayer gathering, where he can receive spiritual nourishment as well as loving and accepting support from community. (Check www.lightfam.com for venues and schedules.)

Lastly, may I also suggest counseling help for your father? You may get in touch with a counselor at The Light of Jesus Pastoral Care Center (see contact info on opposite page).

I pray that your father may have the desire and openness to change.

Ditas



Tugyaw: A Concert Praising the Lord with Dance and Music

By Rey Ortega

There's an old Chinese proverb that says, "If I have but two loaves of bread, I will eat one and sell the other, to buy myself a hyacinth and feed my soul."

Almost all visitors and outreach groups that go to our Tahanan ng Pagmamahal Children's Home, a group of orphanages in Pasig City, bring sandwiches, *pancit*, pizza and other food to the kids.

So it was a pleasant surprise to the staff when some members of the Light of Jesus Family came one day without any food for the children. They instead brought with them the gift of music.

These kindhearted folks, members of the LOJ music ministry, taught the kids how to sing solo and as a chorus. They taught the kids how important it is for them to learn one or two musical instruments, and that the best time to learn how to produce music is while they are young.

These Marias are not exactly the Julie Andrews type (they are a zillion times better) and our kids are not exactly as gifted as the Von Trapp children (our kids are simply more cute and drop-dead charming). But learn and love music, our Tahanan kids did with great zest.

And so it came to pass that two Tahanan kids began studying how to play the violin for free, courtesy of a music school. The school even loaned two violins, which the kids brought with them to Tahanan.

The rest of the children embarked on a magical discovery of singing in front of a microphone — individually and as a group. Beat that?

Not to be outdone, the LOJ dance ministry came in and like the magi in Bethlehem, offered to the kids the gift of dance — dancing for the Lord, like David did.

To dance in public! The Tahanan kids got scared? Intimidated? Nah!

The kids devoured the new lessons like learning new games to play. It was a brand new world for them. Like magicians, the kids blended the grace of Liza Macuja and the roarin' and rockin' steps of Michael Jackson.

The beauty of the arts, like a feast, becomes more dazzling when shared with others. And share the Tahanan children did.

A not-to-be-forgotten event happened last November 2012. Some LOJ volunteers organized a concert dubbed "Tugyaw" in Ynares Stadium in Pasig. It was held to raise funds for the construction of a permanent Tahanan orphanage (we are just renting houses today to shelter these homeless orphaned, abandoned children and babies).

Lo and behold, the Tahanan kids went up the stage and dished out solo and group songs to the delight of the crowd. Some people in the audience were moved to tears, seeing teeny-weeny kids belting out praise songs in one magical evening.

And over there in Valle Verde Country Club, The Feast attendees are treated to a great sight on Sundays. Tahanan kids dance for the Lord on stage and at the aisles, with ear-to-ear smiles splashed on their faces, with that I-don't-care-if-you-like-my dance-or-not, I-dance-for-the-King-of-kings attitude!

Awesome kids! 

Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with timbrel and harp. (Psalm 149:3)

A permanent orphanage for the Tahanan kids is being constructed in 45 Dr. Pilapil St., Bgy. Sagad, Pasig. If you feel the Lord touching your heart today to help build a home for these orphans, please deposit your donation to Banco de Oro Savings Account 4-302-301-76. Account name: Tahanan ng Pagmamahal Children's Home.

For more details, please contact servant Rey Ortega at 0922-859-7035 or email him at reylindo.ortega@gmail.com.

THE FEAST PICC OPENS ITS FIFTH SESSION

**George Gabriel Leads the
Newest Session at 2 p.m.**

**By Bella Estrella
Photos by Cris Legaspi**


Sundays at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) bustle with energy as more and more people, now reaching 10,000, troop to the Plenary and Reception Halls to be blessed by the Word of God through the preaching of Bo Sanchez in three morning sessions, and of Alvin Barcelona in an afternoon session.

To accommodate more people who are excited to worship and be refreshed by God's Word, a fifth session was launched on April 7, 2013, at 2 p.m. This newest Feast at the PICC is held at Meeting Room 5 of Delegation Building with worship leader and preacher George Gabriel at the helm. The meeting room, with a capacity of 400, is filled weekly with happy Feasters and servants.

George revealed his vision and plans for the 2 p.m. session at PICC: to have awesome music, powerful worship, inspiring and practical talks presented in a creative way, engaging and loving servants, excellent event management, and passionate youthful attendees no matter what the age. And his vision and plans materialize every Sunday.

Although Bo Sanchez, founder of The Feast, was in a pilgrimage in Europe during the launch, he sent a message expressing his excitement at starting a brand new home and fresh house of worship which will be a recharging place for those who will get connected with God through the 2 p.m. Feast in PICC.

George said the launch was a success not merely because the venue was jampacked, but because of the overflowing love of the servants who gave themselves selflessly. Because of them, God's presence was felt. And so with a grateful heart, he said, "Let's rock!"

Further, he posed the challenge, "Let us lead people to The Feast not by what we say, but by what we do." 

For venues and schedules, check out www.lightfam.com or call Annie Mesias at 725-9999 local 122.



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Donna's insecurities are now a thing of the past as she journeys toward being truly rich.

It Happened

My Mess Is Now My Message

***Filled with Insecurities,
I Never Thought
I Could Become Truly Rich***

***By Donna Reganion Poserio
as told to Tess V. Atienza***

The room was dark and silent. Nothing was left of the once happy family. That particular night, I should have been ecstatic. My school had just announced that I was the valedictorian of Batch 1995. We should have been celebrating.

Instead, there I was, alone and lonely, with no one to celebrate the happy occasion. I missed my mother and stepfather who had just broken up, and my two stepsisters. Suddenly, there was no father figure again, no one to lean on to.

At 12 years old, I knew what depression and hopelessness meant. I was in that mode when suddenly I saw a *Kerygma* magazine lying on the dining table. I read it from cover to cover, but what really drove me to tears was Bo Sanchez's confession of his struggles as a molested child.

I realized I was not alone. I, too, was molested twice — when I was seven and eight years old. And for many long years, not a single soul knew of my secret. What I didn't know was that the longer I kept it hidden, the more it festered into a bigger wound and affected many areas of my life.

Growing Up Insecure

My parents separated when I was four years old. From Zamboanga, my mother brought me to Manila, and then eventually transferred me to Leyte where I lived with Papa Gil, the brother of my grandmother, and his wife, Mama Pina. It was one of the best blessings of my life. They treated me like their youngest child and showered me with love and affection.

Still, because of the molestation that happened, I grew up with many insecurities. I felt dirty and ashamed of myself. I became tired of people who pitied me because I came from a broken family. I performed well in both my academics and extracurricular activities, but only to project that all was well in my world. At age eight, I was already part of a Catholic Charismatic community and served God, but I felt like I had two faces — holy in the eyes of my classmates and teachers but a great sinner in the eyes of God. I thought it was my fault that I got molested.

Consequently, my innermost insecurities led me to cheating and stealing. Sometimes I'd give in to the temptation of cheating just so I could make it to the top. And most of the time I would steal a few pesos from Mama Pina and Papa Gil so that I could buy stuff that I liked but couldn't afford. Papa Gil never got mad at me but would admonish me, assuring me that he understood me. He always made me feel that there was hope for me. For him, I was a "buotan" (Visayan word for great person).

And just when I decided to change my

sinful ways, I met my long lost father in Zamboanga. It was not exactly a great encounter because he shared with me a private and sensitive reason why he left my mother. That knowledge further amplified my insecurities.

College life in Zamboanga was not any easier. By that time, my grandparents were already in the United States, and I had to fend for myself. At 18, I had to take two jobs to be able to pay for my boarding house and to eat decent meals. This awakened the entrepreneurial spirit within me. I felt that entrepreneurship was the best way to get out of poverty. So I got involved in multi-level marketing. I told myself, why wait to graduate before I earn if I could already do it now? But my business got in the way of my studies. So from being a dean's lister in Ateneo de Zamboanga, I was kicked out of the university.

I transferred to another college in the next town and finished my studies there. I met my boyfriend there and two years into our relationship, we got married in 2003. But I never told him of my childhood experience.

A Marriage Not Made in Heaven

Our marriage was, and still is, full of trials. Although we didn't have any vices, we encountered a lot of crises: financial and emotional. We had a hard time coping with our financial needs, so I decided to help my husband augment our income. He was then managing their family's textile business. I started my *ukay-ukay* (used clothing) business with a start-up capital of P5,000. My husband did not approve of it, but it was the only business I knew that time that I could run with a small capital. I gave my all to make it profitable, to the extent of going to different offices to sell my stuff.

God must have sensed the purity of my motivation in entering into that business — He gave me good sales. And because of this, I was able to take a vacation in Cebu in 2007 with a fellow businesswoman. I felt the freedom and joy of earning money — but the downside was that my marriage was getting shaky, especially with issues coming from my in-laws. I grew up with the notion of being an unwanted child and now I was an unwanted in-law.

Meeting My Future Mentor through His Book

When my friend and I arrived in Cebu, I met a high school friend. We strolled in a mall and entered a bookstore. My eyes zoomed in to two books: *8 Secrets of the Truly Rich* by Bo Sanchez and *The Purpose-Driven Life* by Rick Warren. I bought them both.

Before going to bed that night, I read Bo's book and right then and there, my mind was opened. I got in touch with my heart's deepest desires and sought to find my life's purpose. I wrote down my dreams and I asked God to bless me in all areas of my life. Bo's book helped me change my perspective and inspired me that, despite my painful past, I can achieve success in all aspects of my life. I remember writing how I wanted to become a great wife, mom and in-law. I wanted to earn passive income from my investments and businesses.

I wanted to serve God wholeheartedly and not just to cover up my insecurities. Most of all, I wanted to be healed of my shameful past because I realized that, yes, I could forgive my perpetrators, but I became too hard on myself. There was



Once alone and lonely, Donna now basks in the love of her family and in-laws.



Fun moment at the Wealth Circle's Superconference in Dos Palmas.

that inner voice telling me I was filthy, dirty and an unworthy person — someone who didn't deserve God's love and blessings.

Every now and then (not every day, as Bo suggested in his book), I would read the dreams I wrote. Even so, I started seeing my dreams turning into reality — faster than I imagined — and with the realization that the more I give, the more I receive.

Becoming Truly Rich

In 2007, after reading Bo's book, I joined Kerygma Family. I watched his Internet and TV shows and through them I became more empowered to take charge of my life while at the same time be more connected to God through his preaching.

When Kerygma Conference was still held only in Manila, I dreamt of attending it with my husband. In 2009, after pleading with him, he agreed, but because I was about to give birth to our second child that December, we didn't push through with our flight to Manila. The following year, we weren't able to attend also because we didn't want to leave our one-year-old baby with only teenagers taking care of her.

By God's design, our entire family went to Manila for a vacation. But just when we were about to travel to Cebu on our fifth day of vacation, my son got sick with dengue and had to be confined in a hospital in Manila. My uncle, who was my son's attending physician, told us that we had to stay in Manila for a longer time, maybe a week more, so that our son would be able to recover before the trip.

Call me insane, but I happily told my husband that we could finally attend The Feast in PICC (Philippine International Convention Center) and hear Bo Sanchez preach live. We were physically and emotionally drained because of our son's confinement, and I was expecting to be recharged spiritually at The Feast. On the morning of November 6, 2011, as I was getting ready to go to the PICC, my husband arrived from the hospital. He scolded me for being so unrealistic, worshipping while our son was in the hospital. I never said a word, but I felt so down on my way to the PICC together with our daughter.

After the Mass, when Bo came out, my heart was overjoyed at seeing him preach live. I felt truly blessed to listen to him when my family was going through a health crisis. But that's not all. Before he finished his talk, he declared healing for the sick family members of those present at The Feast. My baby was already crying because of hunger as it was nearly 1:00 p.m. while I was crying for the miracle that I was about to receive.

As soon as we left the venue, I called my husband and asked about our son's condition. To my surprise, he said that Christian Angelo, our son, was feeling a whole lot better. I knew then that it was a miracle!

In December 2011, my husband and I attended the Kerygma Conference in Davao, and our relationship became better after that. It was the first time we went out for a vacation, just the two of us.

My journey to being "truly rich," the way Bo defined it, was not easy. But I persisted. I joined Bo's TrulyRichClub online and started investing in the stock market through COL Financial. My husband could not believe that I, a spender, would now

be talking about savings and investments. But deep inside, I knew that I was on my way to becoming a better steward of my God-given resources.

I trusted in God's provision more, like when I received an invitation to join the Truly Rich Club's superconference in Dos Palmas, Palawan. When I told my husband about it, he said that we needed the money more for our business than for a seminar. But in my heart, I knew that if it was God's will for us to attend it, He will provide. And He did!

By being a Truly Rich Club member, I am learning a lot from its roster of mentors and speakers in every event.

More Equipped to Meet a Crisis

Coming from the superconference in Dos Palmas, my husband and I felt overwhelmed by all the learnings and blessings, not knowing that we were about to experience another trial soon.

I went to bed early that night of October 21, 2012, but at about 10 in the evening my sister-in-law woke me up and I learned that our store (main branch of Rubina Sporting Goods and Musical Instruments) was being razed by a fire. I scrambled to get there and found my husband watching helplessly as the fire consumed our five-year-old business.


I cried when I saw him, not because I regretted the loss, but because the Lord had prepared us to face the trial before us. We were also equipped with an abundance mindset and believed that God had better things in store for us.

True enough, the fire paved the way for the realization of my husband's desire to put up a hardware store. And I became richer in the sense that I am able to give more back to God than I ever did before.

Not only that. I was finally able to let go of my hidden fears and insecurities as an abused child after a special counseling session with Jojo Apolo, a neuro-linguistic programming expert.

And by God's grace I have just finished writing the first draft of my book after joining Bo's Bestselling Authors Bootcamp a few months ago. Through my book, God is using my mess and turning it into a powerful message to the world.

While others thought I was a total failure when I was kicked out from the university and got married right after college, God allowed some detours in my life just so I can claim His greater miracles.

My past does not define my future. Dreams do come true — even for someone like me who had a shameful past — for God's love has no limits. 



*Donna with her mentor,
Bo Sanchez.*



*With husband Allan and
children, Angelo and Sophia on
a getaway.*



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THE BUCK STOPS WITH ME

HOW TO TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR LIFE *By Bo Sanchez*

Do you want to succeed in life?
Stop whining.
Take charge.
Make things happen.
Here's what I realized:
Addicts are expert blamers. They will never take charge. They will never say, "I'm in charge. Depending on what I choose, my life can be very beautiful or very ugly." Because addicts believe that others are to blame for their problem.

Researchers did a survey to find out what is the common denominator of all successful people in the world.


They checked family background — and they found

nothing in common. Some had great families while others had broken families.

They checked education — and there again, there was nothing in common. Some had doctorate degrees while others didn't even have a high school diploma.

They checked religion — and there was nothing in common. Others were Christians, some were Muslims, some were Buddhists, some were atheists.

There was only one thing that all successful people had in common: They responded to failure positively. When the going gets tough, they took charge! They took the steering wheel of their life and drove.

Friend, it's time you take charge! 



Special Section

*Receive
Love and*

Heal Your Shame

By Bo Sanchez

oxic shame is your dream killer, your joy stealer, and your spirit cancer. It makes you blind to the ocean of blessings around you. And it makes you hide so that you can't receive your miracles.

How do I know? I'm an expert in toxic shame.

Not because I read it in a book or wrote a thesis about it. I'm an expert in toxic shame because this hidden monster was my constant companion for more than 20 years. Like a parasite, it lived in me. Like an alien, it grew larger and larger within me, controlling everything in my life.

For many years, I didn't have a name for it. All I knew was that every morning, I'd wake up feeling a dreaded sense of utter sadness. The sadness was so palpable, I could almost touch it. I didn't know why I was sad. Usually, I'd just shake it off, pray and dive into my busy day. I'd go home exhausted and fall sleep. But the next morning, I'd wake up with the same dreary feeling again.

I felt that there was something terribly wrong with me. This went on for years!

Logically, it didn't make sense. I had a personal relationship with God. I got to know Him when I turned 12. I was also serving God ever since as a missionary. So how could I feel this way?

Years later, I was able to define that dark feeling. I was able to give it a name.

It wasn't just sadness. It was toxic shame.

I realized I was ashamed that I was alive, that I was breathing, that I existed in this world.

Every day, I lived under the heavy shadow of shame. It ruled my life. It fueled my addictions. It defined my relationships. It darkened my world.

My shame was very deep because I was molested as a child. Later, I learned that sexually abused persons usually have a shame-based personality.

But when I talk to people all over the world, I realized I wasn't alone with this problem. *Everyone* deals with toxic shame, although perhaps in different degrees.

Toxic shame is the problem of the little girl from a broken home, or that little boy with absentee parents, or that teenager with that narcissistic mother, or that young woman with an alcoholic father and a codependent mother.

Toxic shame is caused by a lack of love in the family.

Let me give you one simple example...

His Shame Came from Being Compared

James had an older brother named John, who was a consistent honor student, a basketball star, and crush *ng bayan* (crush of everyone).

James wasn't any of that. His grades weren't bad but they weren't great. He was a good basketball player but he wasn't a star. And his looks were OK but he wasn't as dashing as his older brother John.

Without being aware of it, his parents kept comparing James to John. When there was an exam, his mother would

tell James, "If you studied like your brother John, you'd be an honor student, too." Or when he missed a basket, his father would tell him, "Study how John shoots the ball. Study your brother's moves. If you do that, you'll be a star player like him, too."

Soon, James developed this pervasive feeling of inadequacy. He saw himself as someone who wasn't worthy of love. That he didn't deserve success. Toxic shame took root in his heart and became its permanent resident.

Ten years later, John has a great job, a great marriage, and is happy with his life. But James has a problem holding a job. He's buried in a mountain of debt. He's also separated from his wife and his kids are lost.

All these things added to his shame.

Let me share with you a law of this universe: *You don't get what you deserve. You get what you think you deserve.*

In his mind, James thinks he deserved failure, hardship, lack, struggle and misery — and that's what he's experiencing every day.

Perhaps you feel like James today. You think that what you're experiencing now is what you deserve. That's not true. God wants you to experience abundance.

Here's my message for you: You don't have to resign yourself to live a mediocre or miserable life. Because God created you to live a magnificent life!

You don't have to live with your toxic shame.

Don't be afraid, because you won't be put to shame. Don't be discouraged, because you won't be disgraced. You'll forget the shame you've had since you were young.

— Isaiah 54:4

Five Signs of Toxic Shame

Because I lived with it for so long, I can give the five signs that will make you know whether you have toxic shame in you:

Sign 1: You See Your Failures as Proof That You're a Failure

There are two kinds of shame — toxic shame and true shame. Here's the difference: True shame is connected to the action while toxic shame is connected to the actor.

For example, if I had an adulterous affair, I should be ashamed of that. If I stole money from a business partner, I should feel ashamed for that. That's true shame and it's God-given. True shame pushes me towards God. True shame is useful especially in the early stages of your spiritual growth.

But I've noticed that the people who read my books and listen to my talks — because of their religious and cultural background — lean towards toxic shame.

They are ashamed not only of what they've done but who they are. They confuse the action with the actor.

An emotionally healthy person (in other words, someone who doesn't have toxic shame) won't mix those two up. When you fail, you don't say, "I'm a failure." You say, "I've failed, but I can do better. I'm a winner who has failed but will rise up stronger, better and wiser!"

Sign 2: You Forget What It Means to Be Human

Sometime last year, we renovated our small house. We enlarged our kitchen, replaced the staircase, redesigned the lighting fixtures, and repaired the floor tiles.

In other words, I'm poorer.

While all that renovation was taking place, I didn't like my house at all. It was messy, dirty, filthy, and there was dust all over the place. Piles of wood in one corner. Paint cans at the back. Cement bags in front.

But I put up with the mess because I knew the mess was temporary. Because I knew it was temporary, I didn't give up on my house. I didn't say, "By gollygee, I don't like this house anymore! It's so messy!"

Because I understood that my house won't look like that forever.

Your life is under construction, too. It can be messy right now. It can be dirty and filthy, but that's OK. Because God is renovating your life. He is redesigning your character, repairing your weaknesses, restoring your soul, and rebuilding something beautiful within you. We don't change overnight; we change over time. We don't change in days; we change in decades.

I believe God isn't focused on our destination but on our development. He isn't focused on our perfection but on the process towards perfection.

So don't be too hard on yourself. You'll make mistakes. You'll fail. You'll fall flat on your face. You'll be tempted. But listen — God knows you're going to fall. He expects it. And He will cause every defeat in your life to be part of your victory.

Sign 3: You Blame Yourself for Bad Things That Happen

As kids, we think we're the center of the universe. We think that everything happens because we made it happen.

Insane.

When a mom gets sick and dies, her little girl can say, "Mommy died because I was bad girl. If only I obeyed her more, she would be alive today."

This is the insanity of toxic shame.

When I was molested as a child, I really thought that somehow it was my fault. That it happened to me because I deserved it.

And I carried this shame with me for decades.

Let me declare this truth to you today: If bad things happened to you, it doesn't mean you're bad. It means that you live in a world where bad things happen to good people.

Life is not fair.

But God is fair. At the end of the day, He'll right your wrongs. He'll heal your wounds. He'll return your loss. He'll see to it that you'll come out a champion.

Sign 4: You Feel Hopeless

Toxic shame says, "It's hopeless. You won't change. You'll never change. Life will never change for you."

That's why toxic shame and depression always go together. I didn't know that the sadness I felt every morning was already depression.

In your depressed state, you'll keep wallowing in your sin.

Sign 5: You Have Addictions

I'm not only talking about obvious addictions such as drugs or drinking or smoking. I'm also talking about the more socially accepted addictions such as materialism, shopping and eating addictions, or hidden addictions such as sex addiction, approval addictions, even religious addiction. (I know of people who go to church every day because they can't face their problems at home.)

Every addiction is a deep hunger for love. Every addiction is an escape from facing that bottomless pit of worthlessness. Every addiction is a painkiller so we won't feel toxic shame.

Heal your toxic shame and you heal your addiction!

How do you heal toxic shame?

There really is only one way.

How to Heal Toxic Shame

To heal a disease, you simply look at its cause. If you understand its cause, you'll understand its cure.

Remember Magellan, the guy who discovered the Philippines? (As if the Philippines needed discovering...) Magellan had 230 men on his ship. Out of those 230 men on board, only 22 men survived. A total of 208 men died from one specific disease.

Magellan wasn't alone. It was a widespread fact. From the year 1500 to 1800, two million lives were lost in ships because of this one disease.

What disease? Scurvy.

But one day, one doctor finally understood that scurvy was caused by a lack of Vitamin C. Because men were on the ship for as long as six months, they couldn't eat fruits and vegetables. This doctor said, "To cure scurvy, simply give what the body lacks. Eat fruits and vegetables."

It's so simple an explanation that many people didn't believe him. It took a while for everyone to believe this doctor. In fact, it took 400 years for everyone to finally accept this simply theory.

Friend, toxic shame is like scurvy.

It causes death. It destroys your life.

But the cause and cure of toxic shame is so simple, many people don't believe it.

Here's my simple explanation: Shame is caused by a lack of love. *So the only solution to toxic shame is to receive love.*

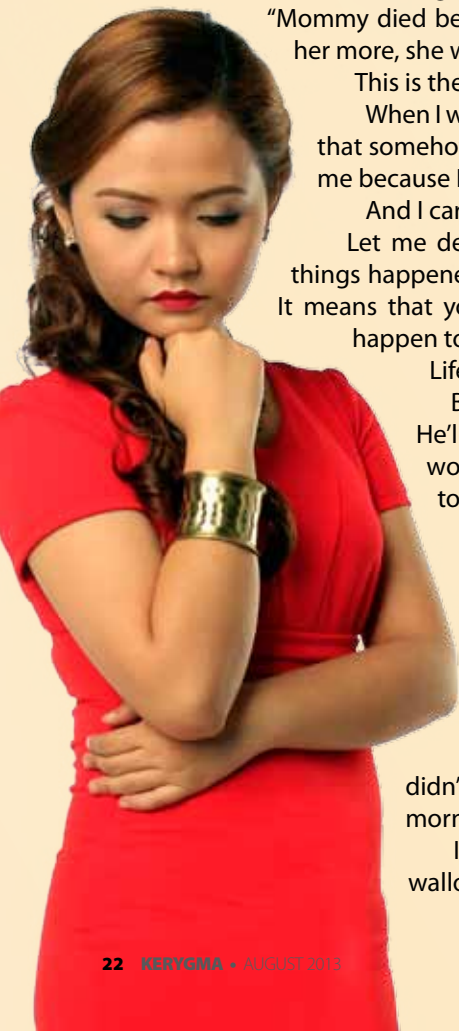
It's so simple. We insist on a more complicated cause and a more complicated cure for our human problems. We think that complex psychotherapy will heal us. We think intricate community structures will heal us. We think brilliant theology will heal us.

All those things are good. But they can't heal anyone.

Only love can.

We receive love from three sources: from God, from others, and from ourselves. (For this article, I will focus on receiving love from God.)

Receiving love from God isn't as simple because God has many faces. He comes in many versions.



We Worship the Wrong God

Many Christians worship a vengeful, punitive, judgmental, selfish, cruel God. If you worship this kind of God, you'll never receive love from Him.

When I was a teenager, our small prayer group decided to go to the beach. Twenty of us piled onto an old van and went off. After two hours of traveling, all of a sudden, we lost our brakes. My brother-in-law, who was driving, had to swerve to the side of the road. And the van went careening down a ditch. Wham! The van hit a slender tree — the only thing that kept the van from falling even deeper.

I can still remember what happened next. I saw the horrible sight of my 60-year-old auntie stepping down the van with her face dripping with blood and covered with splinters of glass from the shattered windshield.

I recall one woman — let's call her Tonya — who told me, "Brother Bo, I know why this happened. Because before we left for the trip, we forgot to pray. God punished us for not praying."

I was a young Christian then, but even then, I already knew there was something wrong with Tonya's statement.

Can you picture Tonya's punitive God?

I imagined her God saying, "Hey, hey, hey, you forgot to pray! How dare you forget me? You bunch of ingrates. Let me zap your brakes for a while to teach you a lesson!"

Sadly, many people think of God in this way. When misfortune attacks them — like when they lose their job, or when they lose their boyfriend, or when they lose their health — they automatically think that God is punishing them.

That's not true. God has nothing to do with our misfortunes! Today, I know why we met that accident. We lost our brakes and fell in a ditch because we drove an old van. It was so old, it was used by General McArthur in World War II.

But believe me, I knew Tonya's God so well.

He was the God I preached for a long time.

Monstrous God

When I started preaching as a young preacher, I was what you call a guilt-trip preacher. Every time I preached, I wanted people to go home feeling guilty — guilty of their sins, guilty of not loving God enough, guilty of loving themselves too much.

Aside from feeling guilty, I wanted them to feel *ashamed* — for not being prayerful enough, for not knowing their Bible enough, for not serving enough, for thinking bad thoughts. Most of all, I wanted them to feel ashamed for being themselves.

I didn't know that this was all a crazy projection of my own toxic shame.

But my image of God was monstrous. (I only realized this decades later. During that time, I thought my image of God was absolutely perfect.) My God was not in love with me — He

was in love with His rules, His Kingdom, and His perfection. And if I couldn't follow those high standards, He'd toss me away like an insect-ridden fruit that didn't pass quality control. My God's favorite pastime was shaming me for my shortcomings. My God was obsessed with pointing out my mistakes, my indiscretions, my impurity.

But slowly, the real God knocked on the door of my heart and reintroduced Himself to me.

Happy God

I noticed that this version of God seemed too happy, too light, too relaxed. He was concerned about petty stuff — like my dreams, would you believe? I asked myself, "Shouldn't He be only concerned about my sinful ways? Shouldn't He be correcting me for my mistakes?" At first, I shooed Him away. Who was this imposter that was claiming to be God? He couldn't be God.

But this happy God just kept coming back. He shocked me by telling me that He was proud of me. Huh? I couldn't understand it. How could He? I was so messed up. Yet it seemed like He didn't see my mess at all. Every time He looked at me, He kept blabbering about how wonderful I was.

Slowly, my image of God began to change.

In God's presence, I used to feel ashamed. Now, I began to relax. I felt accepted, honored, celebrated, embraced. And then I noticed something crazy, something totally insane.

I noticed that I sinned less when I was with this happy God.

I was actually becoming holier without even trying too hard.

This happy God never used the tool of shame. Whenever I did something wrong, He'd simply say, "Bo, I believe in you. You're so much better than that. I know you. You deserve better." I didn't feel at all that He thought my sin was a big deal. Instead, I felt that to Him, *I was the big deal.*


He isn't obsessed with your sin; He is obsessed with you.

He doesn't even look at your sin; He looks at you.

He doesn't focus on your sins; He focuses on you.

He doesn't see what you're doing wrong; He sees what you're doing right.

God will heal your shame.

He loves you. 

Email me at bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com.



Bo's Action Steps:

1. Recall at least three bad experiences that happened in your life. In each instance, to whom or to what did you attribute the blame?
2. After reading this article, how would you heal and put closure to each experience?

Kathy's fragile self-esteem is made stronger by the love of God and the people around her.

M

Masks and Secrets

How God's love has set me free

Text by Kathy delos Reyes-Carriedo
as told to Osy Erica

asked, I advance."

Rene Descartes clearly described how I survived through life: I had put on a mask for so long as protection and shield. With it on, I could do everything I needed to do, without anyone knowing how weak I truly was.

Mask of Perfection

I am the second of three children, which makes me the middle child. And I tell you, I could be the poster child for the "middle child syndrome," always feeling that I have to struggle to find my place in the family.

Don't get me wrong. I grew up in a happy home, and my parents had never deprived me of love. But I guess what I was craving for was attention. My brother was the *unico hijo*, the prized possession of my mom. My sister was the pretty one, tall and modelesque, and the apple of my dad's eye.

Then, there was me. Conversations about me would always be like this: "*Si Kathy, mabaityan, matalino at madasalin*" (Kathy is kind, intelligent and prayerful).

So to find my place in the family, school and friends, I put on my mask. If I couldn't be the pretty one, I would be the "perfect one." I was the perfect daughter — I gave whatever my parents needed, when they needed it. I was the perfect student — I always got high grades. I was the perfect leader — I earned a position in any organization I joined. I was the perfect friend — I was available 24/7.

However perfect I seemed to be, the truth was I was locked up in an emotional prison. Behind my mask was a huge and painful secret.

Locked Door of Secrets

Everyone may have, at one point, struggled with a self-esteem issue, and all of us have different ways of addressing our insecurities. I handled mine the only way I knew how: with a damaging eating disorder. I was bulimic.

My self-image issues started in my early teens. I would look at myself in the mirror and wish for a different body. I asked God, "Why couldn't You make me thinner, taller, prettier?" Time came when I stopped looking in the mirror, simply because I was disgusted at what I saw.

I have tried everything — diet pills, yoyo diets, every form of exercise — but I would always fail. They would work alright, but then I would see someone thinner, prettier, taller than me, and I would think, "Why can't I be her?"

When all else failed, I turned to another route: forced purging. Forced purging gave me some sense

of control. If I couldn't control how much food my body could burn, I could control how much would actually stay in it.

My self-esteem issues found their way into my romantic relationships. I always felt I wasn't good enough. I would always think that I deserved every hurtful word, painful action, and confusing mind game. My best friend, Dessa, would tell me otherwise, but I still believed that had I only been like other girls, maybe I wouldn't have been verbally and psychologically abused. Every lost relationship was difficult to cope with. And to drown all the pain, I would go home, lock the bathroom door and purge.

The locked bathroom door continued to imprison me, until I reached the lowest point of my life: when my husband Bindoy caught me in the middle of purging.

Bindoy learned about my secret life when I confessed it to him when we got engaged. He accepted and loved me just the same. At that time, I felt ready to leave that part of my life behind, and I hadn't purged since.

But all that progress was thrown out of the window when I started feeling insecure again. Having a hard time conceiving and hearing comments from people around me slowly shook my self-esteem. Then, one day, I just gave in.

I will never forget my husband's face as he opened the bathroom door to find me bent in front of our toilet with my finger stuck down my throat. I told him I might have eaten something bad and my tummy felt funny. With a knowing look, he slowly closed the door.

Bindoy was the first person to know about my secret. And that day, he saw it happen right before his eyes.

Unmasked and Set Free

I looked at myself in our bathroom mirror and, for the first time, cried and asked God for forgiveness — forgiveness for hurting myself all these years, for hating myself and hating food, for hurting the people I love. I had been imprisoned for so long by this secret that I hadn't allowed people to love me and see the real me.

At that moment, I felt God embrace me, telling me that all the love I needed was right outside that bathroom door. All I had to do was choose — to live inside this secret life or to step out and allow myself to be loved.

As I slowly opened the door, I was saying goodbye to this secret life; I was being set free.

A New Life

Now, I remind myself that food is a blessing from God. I place God's opinion of me above everyone else's. I don't need to be perfect or be in control because God already is. All this time, I was hiding this part of my life from God and other people because I felt so ashamed. But when I decided to let God love me — all of me — only then was I truly set free.

I admit that I still have weak moments when my old self threatens to return. There are still days when the opinion of

Bindoy is Kathy's strong shoulder to lean on when she's weak.



other people dictate what I think about myself. Frankly, my self-esteem is still fragile. But God made sure that I wouldn't be alone in this journey of healing. God continues to teach me what true acceptance is through the people around me, and for them, I am grateful.

I thank God for my parents who were ready to love all of me if only I had let them, and for my siblings, who are now my best friends. I thank God for my best friend, Dessa, whom God used to bring me back to Him, and for my friends in Pag-ibig sa Diyos Singles Ministry, who love and welcome me back even after the times I've become weak. I thank God for my husband, Bindoy, who is also my best friend, confidante, partner and ally. Bindoy has seen all my imperfections and known all my failures, yet he has accepted and loved me completely.

I am still a work in progress. God is not done with me yet. But I am content in knowing that, for God, I will always be His child, precious and beautiful in His sight — made whole just as I am. No need for masks. No need for locked bathroom doors. **K**

Kathy's family is her little piece of heaven on earth.



Kathy's friends from Pag-ibig sa Diyos' singles ministry have been her safe haven in times of weakness.



Kathy with Dessa, her best friend, who was instrumental in her renewed life with God.



Special Section

TAKE CHARGE!



HOW TO FIND YOUR PERSONAL POWER

By Bo Sanchez

I've been reading up lately on something totally insane: the crazy court cases we have in the world today. Here's a sampling. (I'm sure you're familiar with some of them. Others, I presume, will be new to you.)

- Have you heard of the guy who sued McDonald's for making him fat?
- Have you heard of the smokers who sued Philip Morris for their lung cancer?

- Have you heard of the parents who sued a beer company because their son got drunk, drove his car and had an accident that killed him?
- Have you heard of this obese, chain-smoking woman who has high blood pressure and a family history of heart disease who sued her doctor for \$1 million for not forcing her to change her bad habits?
- Have you heard of the woman who sued a beauty salon for a bad hair treatment that caused her to be depressed and lose her teaching job?
- Have you heard of this guy who was hit by lightning in the parking lot of an amusement park? He sued the amusement park for not warning their customers not to stay in their cars lest they be hit by lightning. (Hello?!)
- Have you heard of the woman who had a car accident and sued the car company for not giving a detailed instruction on how to use the seatbelt?
- Have you heard of the woman who ran up nearly a million-dollar credit debt? When the credit card company sued, she counter sued and said that the company "should have known that she was acting irrationally at that time."
- Have you heard of the man who worked very hard to woo his fourth wife? When all efforts failed, he sued her to get back the expensive gifts he gave her.
- Have you heard of the group of friends who rented a car and loaded it with fireworks? When the fireworks blew up inside the car and caused injury, they sued... who else? The rental car company. (Uh... Gee... Wow.)

My brain is freezing here. I can't take it anymore. Why write all these to you?

To tell you that we're a people that's gone totally nuts! The reason the world is in such a big mess is because no one wants to own their personal mess. Each person likes to blame someone else. No one says, "Me. I did it. I'm responsible. I chose this. I'm partly to blame. And I'm sorry."

Even if you're not to blame, even if someone really did violate you, you can still take personal responsibility and say, "You've hurt me once. But I won't let you hurt me again by depending on you to right the wrong in my life. I'll right it myself."

Friend, are you in a mess?

Stop the blame.

Own your mess.

Stephen Covey said, "We immediately become more effective when we decide to change ourselves rather than asking things to change for us."

Are you blaming others or are you taking charge?

Here's what I learned in life: You can't do both.

I urge you: Stop complaining about your mess and make things happen!

In John Maxwell's book, *Failing Forward*, he asked the question, "What is common among all successful people in the world?"

1. Is it their family background? Many came from great families, but others came from broken families, too.
2. How about education? Sure, there are many college graduates who became successful. But there are a number of very successful people who didn't even graduate from high school. There are 222 billionaires in the entire world, and 10 percent of them are college dropouts. (That includes one of the richest men in the world, Bill Gates.)
3. Is it religion? I wish I could say that only those who are real disciples of Jesus are successful in life. But that's not true. Because there are also devoted Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus who lead lives of love, excellence and abundance. And atheists, too!

If it's not these three things, what then is common among all successful people?

You Can Be Successful!

The only thing that's common to them is how they respond to failure: They take charge.

Every successful person in the world responds to failure positively. They bounce back.

They don't whine, complain or blame. Instead, they stand up and fix it. They take responsibility.

Unsuccessful people, on the contrary, are expert blamers.

You'll also discover that all addicts are expert blamers. They will never take charge. They will never say, "I'm in charge. Depending on what I choose, my life can be very beautiful or very ugly." Because addicts believe that others are to blame for their problem.

The Three Favorite Things That Expert Blamers Blame

1. Another person
2. The devil
3. God

Find out who you blame the most...

First Favorite Thing to Blame: Another Person

Adam and Eve represent all the unsuccessful people in the world.

Because they were expert blamers. When God asked, "Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" Adam said, "The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it" (Genesis 3:11-13).

In other words, the woman is to blame!

And if you study history, men have always blamed women for everything that has gone wrong in the world. (I think the scientific word for this phenomenon is jerkhood.)

What's the truth?

Many of the problems of this world are really a problem of manhood.

Author Larry Crabb says the same thing. He says the world is in a catastrophic mess right now because of one sin: the silence of Adam. (That's the title of his intriguing book.) He says Adam didn't protect his wife, Eve. Instead, Adam remained silent. He should have said, "Sweetheart, what are you doing talking to that slimy Mr. Snake? I'm your husband and I will not just stand here while he lies to you and robs you. I will protect you. Stand back while I whack that creature on its head."

Men have not taken responsibility for the spiritual life of their families. Men have not been aggressive enough to care for their wives, their children and their communities.

What do men do? They earn the money and do nothing else.

Thinking that's all there is to being a man, they live their own little selfish lives with a beer bottle on one hand and a TV remote control on the other.

When You Blame Other People, You Give Them Your Power and You Become Powerless

One day, I had the uncomfortable task of confronting a guy — a member of our community — when we found out he was having an affair. Without warning, I visited his home.

"What happened, my friend?" I asked him.

Immediately, he knew I knew. Like a cornered cat, he became defensive.

"Bo, if you knew my wife," he said, "you, too, would commit adultery. Each day, I'd come home from work tired and exhausted, and I get nothing but a nagging wife upset about this and about that. Every single night!"

That was not all. After blaming his wife, he began to say, "And you know why I fell, Bo? Because of you..."

"Wha...?" Shucks, I wish someone took a photograph of my facial expression at that precise moment.

"Bo, I'm a member of your community," he continued, "but you don't call me. You don't visit me at home. You don't follow me up. That's why I fell."

He was Adam resurrected.

With that kind of blaming mindset, he would never change his life.

Second Favorite Thing to Blame: The Devil

Can I tell you one of my original bedtime stories? (If you're a father of hyperactive boys, you probably have your own made-up stories as well.)

I call it "The Legend of Mugaboo."

One day, in an otherwise pleasant forest inhabited by many happy animals, an eerie sound was heard. From a cave up on a cliff, all the animals could hear a menacing voice. "I'm Mugabooooo! I'm Mugabooooo!" the voice said again and again.

All the animals scampered in fright like mice on a shiny kitchen floor. The little birds took flight, the monkeys climbed to the tallest trees, and even the lions hid in their caves.

"Bring me fruits now!" the same voice ordered, "or else!"

The animals went to the opening of that cave, trembling in fear, bringing apples, oranges and berries to Mugaboo.

The next day, they heard the same voice again. And the animals would bring fruits to the cave on the cliff again.

The day after that, it happened again.

Thus began a ritual that lasted for many years.

In that same jungle was a spunky little turtle named Benedict who wasn't afraid. (Just in case you don't know, that's the name of my son. That's "Storytelling Strategy 101 for Parents.") He had doubts about the Legend of Mugaboo. He wondered why each day, his parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts were slaving themselves collecting fruits for this monster.

"Has anyone ever seen this beast we are all afraid of?" he asked. So far, no one has ever told him that they had seen the monster. But everyone had a scary story to tell.

The monkeys spoke of terrifying shadows inside the cave that shifted like the wind. The deer and antelopes spoke of hearing eerie footsteps in the night. And the bears, tigers and lions spoke about how large and fearsome Mugaboo must be — possibly a bear, a tiger and a lion put together!

And as these stories circulated, Mugaboo's power grew stronger by the day.

That was when Benedict said, "Enough is enough. I will go into this mysterious cave and see what Mugaboo looks like."

When Courage Sets an Entire Forest Free

Early one morning, Benedict climbed up the cliff and crept into the cave. Except for its funnel shape, it was a normal looking cave. And except for half-eaten fruits inside, he found it empty. So he pulled his legs and headed back into his shell, and waited for the monster to appear. After two hours of waiting in the darkness, he heard footsteps. And immediately, he felt a cold chill run through his spine.

Mugaboo had arrived!

And then he heard the words he always heard each day, "I'm Mugabooooo! Give me fruits now!"

But this time, from inside the cave, the voice didn't sound so menacing at all. In fact, it sounded oddly familiar.

Benedict popped his head out and was shocked to see a little squirrel shouting at the top of his lungs. And then he understood why. Because of the cave's unique funnel shape, it made the cave a giant megaphone. Everything said here — even the slightest whisper — was amplified throughout the forest.

Benedict knew the squirrel's name, too. And it wasn't Mugaboo but Kookoo, a squirrel already known for his mischief.

So Benedict, from behind the squirrel, shouted at the top of his voice, "I'm Kookoo... Oops! Er, I mean, I'm Mugaboo!"

Kookoo turned around in shock to see the turtle behind him. His secret was now exposed! Fearing for his dear life, Kookoo darted out of the cave — and out of the forest — never to be seen ever again.

Benedict crawled out of the cave amidst the cheering animals, chanting "Benedict the Great!" Because of courage, the forest was free again.

The Devil Is Running on Borrowed Power

In the Garden of Eden, these words were spoken: "Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate it'" (Genesis 3:13).

After all these centuries, nothing much has changed. People still say, "The devil made me do it!" There are people who find the

devil hiding behind every corner, tempting us, oppressing us. People like blaming demons for everything — a flat tire, a migraine, a sick child, a divorce, a loss of job, a business failure, an adulterous relationship.

But here's the truth: Just like Kookoo, the devil operates on borrowed power.

Whose power? Yours. Unless you give your power to the devil, he will have no power over you. Because his power is based on a lie. Because his power is based on your fear.

The more fear we have of him, the more power he has over us.

Friend, here's the truth: You have power over the devil. Why? Because you're a child of God.

Chisel this on stone: Blaming the devil for our problems is useless.

Stop doing it.

In fact, he likes that you blame him. By making himself bigger, he has power over your life.

Instead, be like Benedict the Turtle. By your courage to take charge, you will free yourself — and others as well.

Third Favorite Thing to Blame: God

Adam said, "The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it" (Genesis 3:13).


What was he saying? That God — who created the woman — is to blame!

Here are true-to-life scenarios:

- A single woman emailed me. She told me she was having an affair with a married man. She ended her letter by saying, "*May tampo ako kay Lord* (I have a grudge against God). Why did this happen? Why did God allow me to fall in love with this man?"
I wrote back to her, "God gave you the ability to fall in love with anyone when He made you a human being. But no, God did not make you fall in love with this married man. You chose for that to happen."
- A man came up to me and said that he had been smoking for 30 years and now has emphysema. He asked me, "Why did God make me sick?" I told him bluntly, "God did not make you sick. Cigarette smoking did."
- A young woman cried to me one day, telling me she was three months pregnant by her boyfriend — who was now nowhere to be found. Her parents still didn't know. She then asked me, "Why is God punishing me? Why did He give me a baby?" I told her, "God isn't punishing you. Having sex makes babies."
- A married couple asked me for prayers, "Bo, we're heavily in debt. And we're mad at God. Why is He abandoning us?" Later on, I discovered that they liked eating in fancy restaurants twice a week, and they liked wearing designer clothes and they liked driving a beautiful car — all bought with borrowed

money. I told them, "God did not make you poor. You're financially poor because you're financially illiterate."

When you blame others, when you blame the devil, and when you blame God, you're saying, "I'm a helpless victim of circumstance. I'm not in control. I'm not in charge."

Friend, take charge! 

Email me at bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com.

Note: This article is reprinted from Bo's book, *Stop Hidden Addictions*. For orders, call 725-9999 or visit www.shepherdsvoice.com.ph.

Bo's Action Steps:

1. What unfortunate circumstance are you in right now? Reflect on how you brought yourself to that situation. Do you blame other people? Or do you accept that it was your bad decision that led you to it?
2. If it's the latter, how can you take charge and reverse your situation?

You're Cinderella," my dad used to tell me before. Not that I own a glass slipper but because he noticed how my *ate* (older sister) would comment on my taste in clothes and shoes, and on how I organized my things. Just like Cinderella who was maltreated by her cruel stepmother and stepsisters, my three elder siblings had hurt me emotionally. When they did something wrong and didn't want to be punished, they would say I did it. When our youngest was born, they accused me of being jealous because I wasn't the youngest anymore. When my baby brother suddenly cried while being held by her nanny, they said that I twisted my brother's arm secretly from behind or I pinched him.

During my teenage years, *Ate* would embarrass me in front of our peers, saying things like "*Ang dami mong peklat*" (You have many scars). The piled-up criticisms and humiliations I received resulted to my poor self-image. All these things I kept to myself. I suffered in painful silence.

As I grew older, I distanced myself from my family. I was often out with friends and spent more time in parish youth meetings to escape from home. It hurt a lot to feel uncomfortable in my own home without the freedom to be myself. How I longed to openly talk at the dinner table about how my day was.

But just when I had finally mustered the courage to open up to my dad, he died of a heart attack before I could actually do so. I got stuck in the belief that it would just be status quo for me and my family.

Searching for Love in the Wrong Places

I sought love and attention outside our home. Every day I dressed to impress so no one would criticize me. I established very close friendships in school that I made them my family.

I was a lonely and disconnected teenager. The feeling of isolation was often accompanied by a yearning for connection. I fell in love with men easily and when they left, it didn't surprise me, because I didn't see myself as valuable. I had my first boyfriend in first year high school. In college, I met a lot of guys through soirées, and dated them. When I'm in a relationship, I felt that someone was connected to me, that I was his extension.

In my first job, I had a relationship with a man separated from the mother of his three kids. I justified our relationship thinking that he wasn't married. We lived together for a short time. He made me feel precious. He completed me. When our relationship became shaky, I moved out but when I tested positive for pregnancy, we got back together again. I was happy — not with him, but with the thought that I have someone connected to me who's inside of me. After a terrible fight a few months later, I left. I was five months pregnant. Later I discovered that the mother of my boyfriend's kids was eight months pregnant. It crushed me. I decided to come back home to my family.

I gave birth to a baby girl. My family showered her with all the love they could give. For the first time I felt at home. But a part of me was still angry. Deep inside I knew I hadn't forgiven them. I became cold-hearted as demonstrated by my decisions

*I kept looking for love in
wrong places*

My Real Prince Came to Save Me



*An Anonymous
as told to Judith C*

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Me

and the men I got involved with again. In 2010, I had two short-lived relationships. After this, I stayed single for three months but felt incomplete. I found consolation in late night-outs, drinking, smoking and shopping.

A Painful and Difficult Choice

In 2011, I had an intimate relationship with a married man who had kids. I was already attending The Feast then. He brought out the best in me, made me feel loved and accepted. No one else could give me this same affection and that I could never have this connection with anyone else. I believed that same lie every day. I attended The Feast primarily because I could meet him afterwards because he worked near the venue but I only attended if his schedule permitted it.

I didn't acknowledge I was sinning. When I concealed my hidden wounds and denied it wasn't there, I didn't feel my desperate need for God.

When I started feeling that I wanted more from the relationship but could never get it, I decided to accept my sister's offer to work abroad and live with her. That was my plan of escape. It would be easier to deal with the pain. That same month, my visa got approved. When I told my boyfriend about it, he was devastated.

Then one morning, after I sobbed for hours the night before, begging the Lord for something, I went to my boyfriend's house where he and his wife lived. I confessed to his wife and asked for her forgiveness. This was the only way I knew how to end everything — to let his wife know. Giving him up was my most painful decision. I sought grace with desperation, to be able to take it one day at a time.

Falling Again

One Sunday, I was back at The Feast during the "Bounce" series. Here I acknowledged my desperation for God. After the session, I approached Arun Gogna so as to be prayed over and without shame I uncovered my broken, wounded and needy self. He introduced me to a sister who disciplined me through the discipleship program called "Love Someone Today" (LST).

Working in the same company, it was unavoidable not to bump into my ex-boyfriend. I found it hard to resist him. We went out again on dates, and still did the same things like we were a couple minus the commitment. Every day, I started over. I went to my LST sessions sharing my weekly garbage.

I kept sinning and I was in need of a miracle. I desperately sought God's grace to heal me from my destructive patterns. I attended a retreat. As I listened to the talk on "Self-love," I felt God's embrace and love. His love opened my heart, my mind, and spirit to His messages.

I went home with a new found strength as I knew I still have battles to face. But my strength easily wore

off as I found myself falling again. I came to God in prayer, feeling terrible about my repeated sins. Every day, I asked for forgiveness. I grieved before the Lord, shedding tears of sorrow after another day of struggle. Until one day, I took responsibility.

Bouncing Back


Two weeks before my birthday, I asked God for a birthday gift. Nothing specific, but in my heart I wanted Him to take this man away from me. I also asked for His guidance to help me find a new job. One day, I just had it. Suddenly I faced my ex-boyfriend with anger, asking him to return all the stuff I gave him. He did so the following day. In front of him, I threw everything in the garbage can. It was the only way I knew how to truly end the relationship. That was the last time we spoke. My birthday came. God granted my birthday wish. Honestly, I was sad. I went to confession after many years of not availing of the sacrament.

God embraced me in my shame, listened to my anger, held my hand and sat beside me in pain until I was ready to let go. Bo Sanchez said: "We cannot love God or others without first being overwhelmed by His powerful love for us. But this applies also to loving ourselves. That we cannot simply decide one day to love ourselves and go on from there. We have to first of all be loved by someone else, to tell us that we are lovable." I entered into a covenant with the Lord, wanting Him to be my first Someone.

Indeed, it's easy to make decisions when one is clear with one's values. In my case, these are to do what is most loving to God, to others, and to myself. Now, I do not search for love in the wrong places.

I started 2013 right when I left my emotional baggage in 2012. I went to confession. I forgave myself for my wrong choices. I set goals like loving myself daily. I allowed myself to receive love from my family. There's no more anger and I already forgave them. I'm already opening up to them little by little.

God used my painful situation coupled with His unconditional love, mercy and forgiveness to turn my life around. I gave up one man that I dearly loved but He replaced it with 11 caring group sisters with whom I regularly connect with as one of our ways to fill up each other's love tank. I feel God's peace every time I pray. He also blessed me with a new work that I have always wanted to do. My healing continues.

Cinderella found her Prince Charming and lived happily ever after. I believe that one day, God willing, my prince — the one prepared for me by God and one who will be best for me and my daughter — will come. As I wait for that day, I will enjoy myself in the presence of my Divine Prince, saying yes to His call every time. 

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GUIDELINES

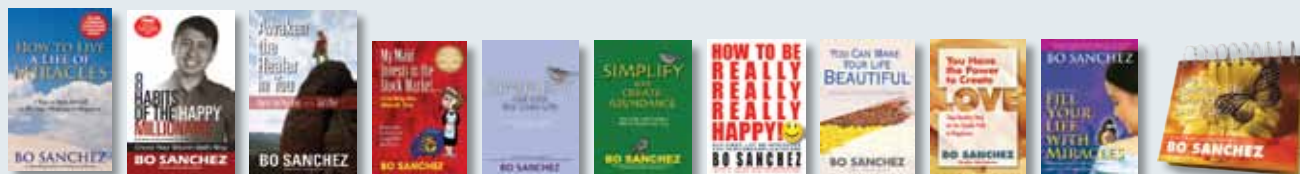
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5. Prizes are transferable but not convertible to cash.
6. Winners for trips shall shoulder all the taxes and documentations related to the trip, and the 20% tax for prizes exceeding P10,000.
7. Prizes must be claimed within 60 days from receipt of notification, except the trip to Holy Land which the winner needs to coordinate until January 23, 2014.
8. Prizes unclaimed will be forfeited in favor of SVP with prior DTI approval.
9. Claiming of prizes. The Winners shall claim their prizes at the Shepherd's Voice office at 60 Chicago St., Cubao, Quezon City. Winners must present the notification letter, claim stub and a valid ID with photo and signature (e.g. driver's license, company ID or passport). Winners may send a representative on their behalf provided they present the following:
 - a. Letter of authorization from winner
 - b. Proper identification
 - c. Letter sent by SVP and claim stub
10. The promo organizer's decision is final with the concurrence of a DTI Representative.
11. All SVP employees are not eligible to join the raffle promo including the in-laws up to the third degree of consanguinity or affinity.
12. A DTI Representative will be on hand to witness the draw on January 5, 2014, 10:30 am at the PICC during THE FEAST.
13. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 1459 Series of 2013.



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LIFE PLAN Helping Teens Have Focus

By Allan and Maribel Dionisio of The Love Institute

A very important tool that we have used with our children and with our teen clients is the life plan. The life plan is an organized chart showing the teenager's age, the ages when the teen would like to achieve a certain milestone, like graduating from college, having a girlfriend or boyfriend, getting married, pursuing postgraduate studies, etc. The age of the parents is included to give the teen an idea of how long he can expect his parents to support him financially.

Below is a sample life plan made in 2012 by a 12-year pre-teen named "John."

Life Plan of "John" as of May 2012

YEAR	AGE	STUDIES/ CAREER	RELATIONSHIP	DAD/ MOM's age
2012	12	Grade 7	Getting to know more girls	51/52
2014	14	Grade 9	Getting to know more girls; parties	53/54
2015	15	Grade 10	Getting to know more girls; parties	54/55
2017	17	Grade 12	Getting to know more girls; parties	57/58
2018	18	1 st yr College – Business Management	Dating	58/59
2020	20	3 rd yr College	Dating	60/61
2021	21	4 th yr College	Special friend	61/62
2022	22	Work	Special friend	62/63
2023	23	Work	Girlfriend	63/64
2024	24	Masteral course	Girlfriend	64/65
2025	25	Masteral course	Girlfriend	65/66
2026	26	Work	Girlfriend	66/67
2027	27	Work	Get married?	67/68
2028	28	Work	Get married?	68/69

The life plan chart can be the beginning of a conversation between parents and teens about the latter's aspirations. And because these ambitions are charted on a timeline, the life plan allows the teens (and parents) to see objectively what is achievable and what is not, and gives the teens a chance to rethink their plans to make them more realistic.

A well-made life plan becomes a roadmap that teens can use as they make decisions as they mature. It helps them to see the future a bit more clearly, giving them insight into the kind of life they might possibly have.

Parents can help their teen make the life plan by asking them questions about:

Career:


What kind of work do you want to have when you are older? What do you want to be? What course in college do you want to have to prepare you for the kind of work you want to do? What are the non-academic interests that you want to pursue?

Relationship:

What qualities do you look for in someone you admire (your crush)? What physical traits, personality or interests would you like your ideal partner to have? When do you intend to have your first boyfriend/girlfriend?

As the teen answers the questions, parents can use this as an opportunity to give advice on when to have a boyfriend or girlfriend. We recommend that parents allow their children to make friends with as many people as they can. We also advise that exclusive romantic relationship be entered into in third year college at the earliest. This allows the teen some time to mature.

The life plan gives teens focus and direction, and more meaning to their actions. It allows them to align their current activities with their long-term ambitions while removing the ones that are not aligned. Having a plan helps teens to be more self-directed rather than parent-directed and allows them to be more motivated because this is *their* dream and not something their parents imposed on them.

So help your teen prepare a life plan. But do remember, the plan is not written in stone. It can be updated or modified as the teen becomes more aware of what he really wants in life. 

Email us at love.institute@yahoo.com.ph. For more information on preparing a life plan, you may refer to our book, *Teen Crush* (Don Bosco, 2011).

Faith Is Obedience

The story is told of a very good person who had just been admitted into heaven and was being given a tour of the heavenly mansions by St. Peter. They came into a beautiful room which had a strange feature. Hanging from the ceiling were objects that looked like human tongues. The new entrant asked St. Peter, "What are those strange objects? They look like human tongues!"

St. Peter answered, "They are really human tongues. They are the tongues of those who were fond of calling Jesus, 'Lord! Lord!' but did not obey the will of his Father. So, only their tongues were admitted to heaven. The rest went to hell."

Jesus Christ made it clear that not everyone who calls to Him, "Lord! Lord!" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of His Father (Matthew 7:21).

Faith is belief. It is trust and confidence. Above all, it is obedience.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Our faith must be translated into action. As St. James says, "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:17). But the actions that express our faith must conform to the will of God. It is such actions that unite us to Christ.

God has always required those whom He has favored with His grace to obey Him. He demanded obedience from our first parents. Sadly, our first parents disobeyed Him with terrible consequences for them and for us, their descendants.

The Lord gave us His own commandment of love, and told His disciples, "He who has my commandments and keeps (does) them, he it is who loves me."

Obeying One's Conscience

The person of faith will seek the will of God sincerely and do it. God has given each person a conscience through whose dictates he comes to know the will of God for him. But He has provided us authoritative guidance through the Scriptures and the teachings of the Church as well. Above all, he gives each person the interior light of the Holy Spirit.

We must form our conscience according to the truth and not merely follow our feelings or the opinions of others. We should ask God to lead us to the truth when the right course of action is unclear to us. When we have done our best to form our conscience, we can in peace do what our conscience tells us to do or not to do.

The person who honestly forms his conscience may be allowed by God to err. But God will set his steps towards the right path. We see this in the case of St. Joseph. Not knowing how Mary got pregnant without him having cohabited with her as yet, he decided to divorce her privately. But before he could carry out that decision (which was erroneous), God intervened and told Joseph in a dream that the child in Mary's womb was from the Holy Spirit. And so, Joseph took Mary into his home.

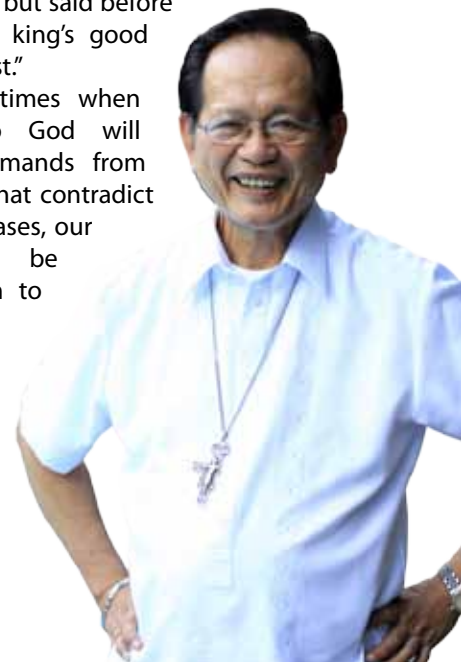
Disobeying Human Authorities

Obedience to God may mean disobeying human authorities when they demand us to do something that is contrary to God's will. The Apostles, when told by the Jewish religious authorities to stop speaking about Jesus replied, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29), and went on proclaiming Jesus even if it meant suffering and death.

St. Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England under Henry VIII, refused to sign an oath which he believed was contrary to God's will. He suffered death for his refusal, but said before he died, "I am the king's good servant but God's first."

There will be times when our obedience to God will be tested by commands from human authorities that contradict God's will. In such cases, our obedience should be to God rather than to human beings. 📧

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By Alvin Barcelona

L

ove is faithful, therefore undivided. If you love someone, you give that person your whole self.

But we do know that we do not and cannot love just one person. (Of course, I'm not saying that you can be unfaithful to your husband or wife, or that you can have two boyfriends or girlfriends at the same time. That obviously is unfaithfulness.)

My point is this. We love both our parents — Dad and Mom, and that's two persons already. Then, we love our siblings — brothers and sisters (including half-brothers or half-sisters, unless you're an only child of totally faithful parents). For

parents, aside from loving your spouse, you love your child or children, too. There are also your relatives — a whole lot of them, especially that you're a *Pinoy* — whom you all love so much. From great grandpa or great grandma to every *tito* and *tita*, niece and nephew, and down to every nth-degree cousin.

And yes, there's love for neighbors — from literal neighbors (who became "family") to schoolmates, workmates, church mates, and every mate you meet.

Then there's love for country, which may seem abstract, but should also be concrete, like loving our leaders and/or our constituents (before, during and after election period). And there should be actual love for our countrymen, especially in times of calamity.

And there's love for God, above all. (There's Mama Mary, and all the saints and angels.)

Now, that's a lot of persons — and beings — to love!

How can you possibly give undivided love that way? Maybe we should start clarifying that love being given away may not necessarily be love being divided.

Loving your children doesn't mean you love your spouse any less. Loving your community doesn't and shouldn't take away your love for the family. And loving your country need not sacrifice your love for God.

Love Divided.
Love Multiplied.
Love Unlimited!


Many say the secret is time management — how to make time for all those you love. It's loving a person one at a time and giving that person your undivided focus while you're with him or her, or them. And that it's also setting priorities — who to love more and love less at a given time, and of identifying what kind of love to give (agape, filial) to what kind of person.

I still believe that love is not like a cake that is distributed piece by piece until it's all gone and you have nothing to give.

I believe love is more like drawing water from a flowing river or a vast ocean that you can continue sharing to others because supply will never run dry.

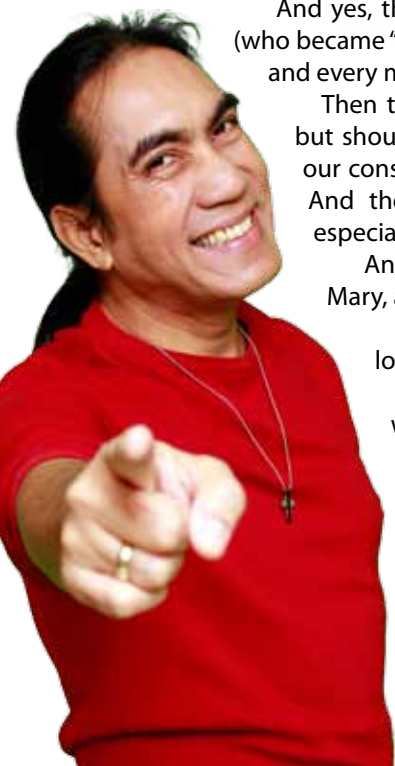
I believe we can and should continuously create more love within us because love shouldn't be a limited resource.

After all, we receive love from an unlimited source, God, whom we love back limitlessly, too.

So that love divided is actually love multiplied That makes love unlimited. 

It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13: 7)

Email Alvin at kpreacheralvin@gmail.com. Catch him at The Feast PICC every Sunday at 4:00 p.m. or at The Feast Marilao every Saturday, 6:30 p.m. at the Cinema 2 of SM Marilao, Bulacan.





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Serving God through LOJ events is one of Edwin's passions.



One Last Story

Lost and Found

After KCon 2012

By Edwin Marcelo

How could I have lost that piece of instrument that usually takes two men to carry?"

"How are we going to celebrate Christmas this year?"

My thoughts were going in circles. I tossed and turned in my bed. I could not sleep even if my body was dead tired from the Kerygma Conference 2012 that ended the night before.

How could I sleep when I faced the possibility of paying P130,000 for the Roland RD-700 keyboard that was lost during the egress? As head of the technical ministry of the whole event, I was responsible for borrowing the musical instruments for the conference.

While bringing back our equipment to the office after the event, I got a call from one of our staff, who told me that the crew from the supplier of the RD-700 was looking for the instrument. Only then did I realize that I had completely forgotten about it.

I immediately made calls to locate the instrument but since it was already late in the evening, I could no longer reach the others. The only person that I was able to contact was the guy from our main supplier for the opening ceremony. But I had to wait for the next day after he gets back to the office to check the instruments.

That same evening, I called up the supplier from whom I borrowed the instrument and gently broke to him the not-so-good news. I told him that I was sorry and that I will take full responsibility for it. As soon as we hung up, I started praying for dear life.

The following day I started making calls. I was literally begging the people I talked with to help me find the missing instrument. Somehow I felt confident that I would find it.

I also texted my wife and related to her my problem. When she asked me what I planned to do, I told her exactly what I said to the supplier. She kept silent but later on I learned she felt bad about it.

After three days of searching, I came to a dead end. I gave up the search. I was very sad and I actually cried. What pained me more was the reality that, if I indeed had to pay for the loss, my family would suffer in some way because of this incident. Our Christmas would be a lot different if that were to happen.

That night I called up my supplier and told him the bad news again. Although I was assuring him that I will take care of the loss,

my mind was trying to figure out how to fix it.

I didn't know God was thinking way ahead of me.

Miracle No. 1

What happened next totally blew me away. He said, "Edwin, forget about it."

I wanted to cry right then and there but because of instinct to immediately repay his goodness, I asked him how I could return the favor. He said, "Edwin, why don't we just enjoy the coming Christmas? Let's talk about it some other time."

You can just imagine the joy I had at that time. The man's goodness was unbelievable. I immediately told my wife about the turn of events and we thanked God for His blessing.

That night, after many sleepless nights, I was able to sleep soundly.


Miracle No. 2

Two days later, I received a call from the other supplier. He told me, "Sir, I have here a Roland RD-700, and it's not ours. This must be the missing instrument that you were looking for." It turned out that his crew packed up the instrument and did not realize that it was not theirs.

OK, the instrument was found, thank God, but some accessories were missing. I could handle that at least. It would be a lot cheaper than the whole instrument. I immediately called the owner of the instrument and he arranged for a pick-up.

Miracle No. 3

The following week, I was at The Makati Feast to serve in the music ministry. Before a practice, we usually have some sharings. I related to them my experience. After the practice, a friend approached me and said, "I have an old sustain pedal. I'll give it to you. You don't need to buy a new one." Wow! Talk about miracle number 3.

With the miracles God wrought in my life, Christmas 2012 was one of the best my family and I ever had! 

I pray that you receive your miracles in Jesus' name!

By Bo Sanchez

I PRAY THAT GOD LIFT YOUR TRIALS, heal your diseases, bless your problems and direct you to the path He wants you to take. I pray that God remove your fears and give you the courage to surrender your burdens to Him.

So place your hand over my hand, and let's pray with trust, together with our prayer team of intercessors praying for you right now...

This page is our Point of Contact, our spiritual connection.

Say after me...

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Lord, I surrender to You my worries and anxieties. I surrender to You my needs, my problems, my trials. I place them all in Your big hands. And I open myself to all that You want to give to me. On this day, I say yes to Your love, to Your blessings, to Your healing, to Your miracles. And Lord, specifically, I ask for the following miracles for my life...

I believe that You answer my prayer in the best way possible! And I thank You in advance for the perfect answers to my prayers. I also ask for the special intercession of Mama Mary. I pray all this in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen!

SPECIAL INTENTION FOR THIS MONTH:

Bless the readers of *Kerygma*, Lord. Lift them up from helplessness and hopelessness. Heal their shame and brokenness. Lift their sagging self-esteem. Fill them with Your love. Help them find their personal power and empower them to take charge of their life — the way You want them to. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Praying for you,



Email your prayer requests to me at bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com or write to me at Shepherd's Voice Publications, #60 Chicago St., Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines 1109.

