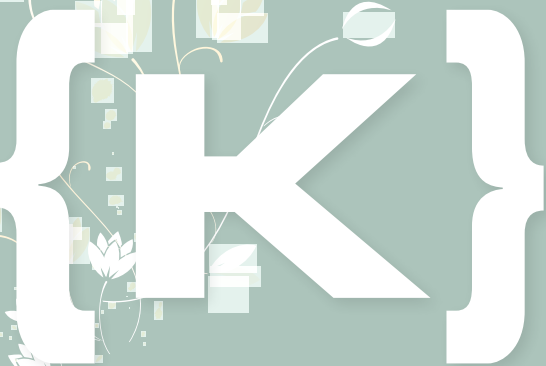


Inspiring You to Live a Fantastic Life



KERYGMA

No. 287 Vol. 24

April 2014

**GOD WILL USE YOU
IF YOU SAY YES**

**HOW TO START
LIVING IN HEAVEN
NOW!**

By Bo Sanchez

TO THE ENDS of THE EARTH

God Needs You to Proclaim His Word and Share His Love



Jonathan Yegawin:
A LIFE OF MIRACLES



JPaul Hernandez:
A Prophet to the Misunderstood

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“If you have not been faithful in handling worldly wealth, how can you be trusted with true wealth?” (Luke 16:11)

Here’s an interesting fact. Did you know that out of 57 parables in the Bible, Jesus spoke about money more than any other topic?

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“And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.”(Luke 42-44).

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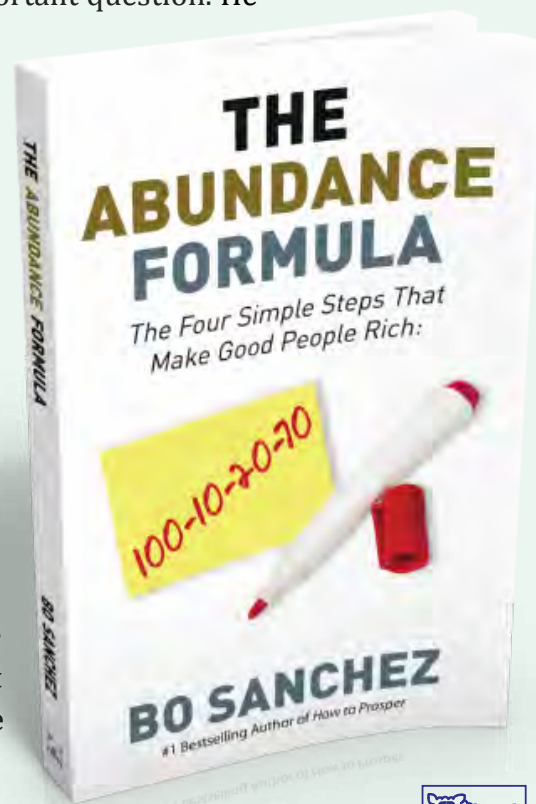
That’s 100/10/20/70.

The Abundance Formula teaches you how to build and grow your wealth so that you can bless and love more people.

For only P295, you get valuable wisdom on how you can manage your finances and become prosperous.

Don’t delay your blessing. Invest in your financial health and be the good and faithful steward that God wants you to become so that you will be able to receive more blessings and help Him bless more people.

Begin your journey to abundance today.



Order your copy today. Call (02) 725-9999 or visit www.shepherdsvoice.com.ph to order online.

Do you remember Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector? The small guy who had to climb a sycamore tree to see Jesus?

Allow me to twist the story (in a crazy way) to drive home a point.

One day, Zachy heard from his neighbors that Jesus was passing by their village.

Because he was short (the politically correct word is “vertically challenged”), he climbed a tree to see Jesus.

The strategy worked because Jesus looked up and saw this little guy on the branch of the tree. He called out, “Zachy, why don’t you invite Me to your house? Do you have some falafel and shawarma for Me?”

The little guy was overjoyed.

After talking to Jesus over dinner, Zachy stood up and made a big announcement. He said, “Master, I’m going to change my life. Starting today, I’ll pray every day. Not only that, to make up for all the religious duties I missed doing in the past, I’ll go to the temple four times a week!”

Jesus smiled, “That’s great. I’m happy that our little chat has moved you to change the religious area of your life. Any other areas you want to change?”

Zachy raised his eyebrow. “Uh, other areas? Like what?”

By Bo Sanchez

“Well, you’re the chief tax collector in this city. Has our conversation moved you to make changes in that particular area of your life?”

Zachy frowned. “Uh, what do you mean?”

Jesus said, “Would you like to share your wealth with the poor? And would you like to repay those you have cheated?”

Zachy glared at Jesus. “Hey, that area is off-limits to you. Meddle with my religious life, yes. Meddle with my prayer life, yes. But don’t meddle with my financial life!”

Obviously, that didn’t happen.


In the real story, Zacchaeus said, “Lord, I’ll give half of my belongings to the poor. And I’ll pay four times anyone whom I have cheated.”

Zachy asked Jesus to enter his house and his life. He then opened every room to Him. Not a single room was off-limits to Jesus.

My question to you: Is every room in your life open to God — your job, your recreation, your hobbies, your eating habits, your emotions, your thought patterns?

Or is one room still off-limits to God?

Submit that area to Him right now.

Be 100 percent for God. 

May your dreams come true.



Bo's outfit courtesy of Golden ABC/MEMO



BE 100 PERCENT FOR GOD

Kerygma is one of the magazines we have each month in school and I'm so blessed to have this mag. Kerygma really changed my perspective in life.

I started reading Kerygma when I was 13 years old. I was in third year high school then, and now I am already 16.

I hope that you will continue to inspire people.

God bless and more power!

Lorejyn Engcoy

Via Text

It's been months since I bought my first Kerygma copy and until now I'm buying new issues. Because of Kerygma, I became closer to God and I learned about the right keys to be a good servant and to be successful.

PB of Butuan City

I am 19 years old. I started reading this inspirational mag when I was 15. I was so blessed and truly thankful for this mag because of its real-life stories, and most especially to The Boss, my idol.

Through this mag I was able to stay strong and have faith in God, even though I suffered a lot in life.

Thank you and more power.

Rosemarie Patatang

Bohol

When I first read Kerygma mag, I was touched and amazed by its content, especially the articles of Bo, which I used in my teachings and talks in our religious activities in school and our church. Thanks be to God for having a mag like this.

Pinkie Javier

St. Jude Thaddeus Shrine

Lucena City

I remember reading the October 2012 issue of your magazine on discipleship. One of the lines which caught my attention was, "When you do something good for someone who can't repay you, the Lord will pay you back."

Having been an outreach volunteer for 11 years, I can say that I am living a life that is selfless and in accordance with God's will. I thank Him for using me as His instrument to help others. And He surely compensates it with tremendous blessings.

KM Macapugay

Via Text

I am an avid fan of Kerygma magazine. I'm always inspired by the stories. I pray for more blessings for you.

Asuncion Paler

Mantahan, Maasin City

I just want to thank God because through Kerygma my life has changed. I was touched by every story featured and I realize that God is always there to guide and love me. Just continue inspiring people. God bless!

Rio Desiedree Dacuyan

The Lord's Flock Charismatic Community-Cebu

(Youth)

Kerygma has been my favorite magazine since I saw it in the checkout counter of a store in a mall. I read it and since then I've been buying. The best issue that I've read so far is the issue on "Will You Break or Bounce?"

God bless, Kerygma. Thanks for the inspiring words and spiritual guidance for us.

Glenda from Mindanao

We Want to HEAR from YOU!

Send your message via email to editsvp@shepherdsvoice.com.ph, through text to 0923-378-4941, or by snail mail to The Editor at 60 Chicago St., Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines 1109.

You can also reach us through Kerygma Family. Simply log on to www.kerygmfamily.com. Or like our Facebook page and send your message there.

For subscription-related concerns, text or call Sarah Discutido at 0922-814-7031 or email subscription@shepherdsvoice.com.ph.



By Rissa Singson Kawpeng

TEMPER TANTRUMS

I'm not making excuses, but even saints have them

There are people who are cut out to be in customer service. They were born nice and sunny, and they can keep their cool even when they have an enraged customer in front of them. They can do this 24/7, 365 days a year, and smiling serenely even after handling 20 monster customers who just breathed fire on them.

Me? I can be nice and sunny. But I can also breathe fire. A friend of mine used to say, "I'm not nice every day." I can say the same for myself.

Nice and sunny works fine when you're a preacher and people look up to you to see the Lord. But fire-breathing and being a witness for the Gospel don't work well together.

There have been too many times when I lost my temper or spoke unkindly to someone in public and immediately wished no one would recognize me. My worst nightmare is that the person I just unleashed my temper on was a Feast attendee or a *Kerygma* reader. (Eeeek!)

One time, I took my then four-year-old to a big school to take an entrance exam. For some reason, they gave us a schedule that coincided with the dismissal of the *entire* school! Hundreds of cars were literally parked on the streets leading up to the school. Because we were running late, we got out of the car and walked to the school gate. Things wouldn't have been so bad if I were in my sneakers. But that day, because they were also interviewing us parents, I was dressed in heels. Aarrgh!

By the time we reached the admissions office, my daughter was covered in sweat and my patience had worn thin. The first thing I told the receptionist wasn't "Hi!" or "Good afternoon" but "Your school is like Divisoria! How can kids go to school safely here? We walked two kilometers to get here."

Hay. Me and my big mouth. And my bad temper.


Ten minutes later, the dragon in me had returned to its cave and I was back to my sunny self. Of course it was only then that I realized that this school was a subscriber of our magazine and the receptionist at the desk probably knew me from *Kerygma*. (Double eek!)

That's why I admire saints like St. Jerome, one of the doctors of our Church. Many of our saints are remembered because of their virtuous qualities. But not my dear friend, Jerome.

He was known for his sharp tongue when he confronted the enemies of God and the Church. He was famous for his bad temper but was just as quick to repent and ask for forgiveness. One picture depicted St. Jerome striking his breast with a rock. When the Pope saw this, he said, "You do well to carry that stone, for without it the Church would never have canonized you."

When I read the story of St. Jerome, I felt hope rise within me. Saints are real people like me. They sin. They get hot-headed. They get mad at others.

So what differentiates the sinner from the saint?

Not the number of times you've fallen or the gravity of your sin, but the equal number of times you repent and rise to love another day. 

"Come now, let's settle this," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool." – Isaiah 1:18

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

What to Expect This Month:

It's every aspiring author's dream to have his or her book published. Last year, Life Dream Books, our self-publishing arm, helped turn two people's dreams into reality.

In *What's Your Life's Masterpiece?*, Marianne Mencias showcased lessons she learned from 10 world-class Filipinos who have found their purpose for living.

The Doctor Is in the House by pediatrician Josephine Holgado, MD, DPPS, reveals nine easy-to-follow, practical guides to your child's health.

Both books are available at our website shepherdsvoice.com.ph.

If you dream of having your book published, ask us how. Email us at lifedreambooks@shepherdsvoice.com.ph.



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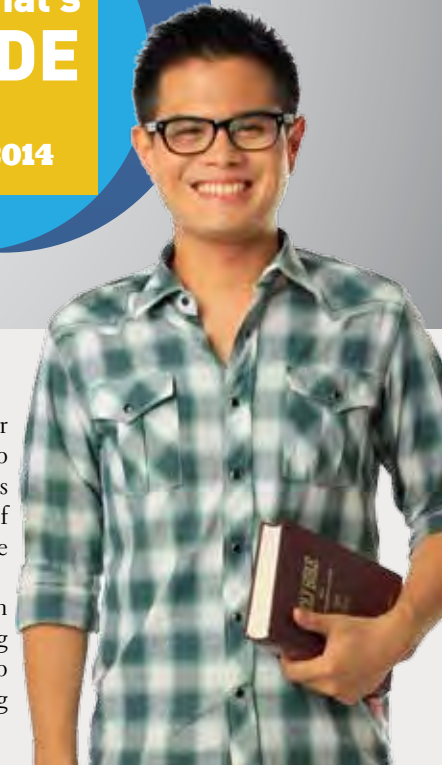
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April 2014



ABOUT OUR COVER MODEL

Mike Viñas has a passion to make Jesus famous by broadcasting Christ's life and love in creative, relevant and modern ways to those who are far from Him. Primarily, Mike lives out this vision as a dynamic preacher, worship leader, and Feast builder, leading Feast Alabang Town Center every Sunday at 9:45 a.m. in ATC Cinema 2. Along with this, he writes for *FiSH*, *All Stars* and *Didache*, all published by Shepherd's Voice Publications. He also appears in the online show, *Preacher in Blue Jeans*. Recently, Mike has found a new joy in making disciples of Jesus through leading small groups.

Professionally, Mike is an investment trainer of COL Financial, where he teaches people how to invest in the stock market. In line with this, he writes a bi-monthly article for the *Stocks Update eReport* of Bo Sanchez's Truly Rich Club. He believes that the ultimate purpose of wealth is to bless others.

In his free time, Mike cherishes being with family and friends — eating, laughing and inspiring one another. On his own, he enjoys listening to music and talks, playing the guitar, and reading books.

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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. 2014. 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.: (632) 725-9999, 411-7874, 725-1190. Fax: 727-5615 Email: editsvp@shepherdsvoice.com.ph. Website: www.shepherdsvoice.com.ph.

JUMPSTART YOUR BRAIN WITH A HEALTHY BREAKFAST



Naturopathic doctor Neal Barnard, author of *Power Foods for the Brain*, says that your brain is a function of what you feed it. Here's what you should eat to give your brain the food it needs:

- 1. Healthy carbs.** A good breakfast contains at least one healthy carbohydrate that is low on the glycemic-index scale and won't cause rapid spikes in blood sugar. Good examples are oatmeal and rye toast. Healthy carbs provide longer energy, giving your brain the fuel it needs to be creative and make good decisions.
- 2. Low-fat protein.** A vital source of protein are beans. The United Kingdom serve baked beans on toast. In Mexico, they have black beans as a breakfast staple. In the Middle East, many countries serve chickpeas as breakfast food.
- 3. Fruit smoothie and dairy alternatives.** Instead of coffee, make a fruit smoothie or drink natural fruit juice. Cow's milk is high in cholesterol and fat which can deplete your energy as the day wears on. There are non-dairy options such as soymilk, which is rich in protein, has very little saturated fat, and is known for its antioxidant properties. Rice and almond milk are good options for the lactose intolerant. Both are low in saturated fat.

Source: www.entrepreneur.com

Malunggay



HOW TO FOCUS BETTER AT WORK

Are you one of those who find it hard to give your full attention to work? Here are some points to consider as well as tips to help you make the most of your working hours.

- 1. When are you most productive?** If you're a morning person, you may want to work on a bigger project that takes more time and requires more mental exertion in the morning. If you are more productive in the afternoon, try getting smaller tasks done in the mornings.
- 2. No to multitasking.** Multitasking makes us less productive. Focusing on one task at a time is more effective than trying to do six things at once. Allot a time to check on work emails and phone messages, preferably not during your most productive time.
- 3. Leave work at work.** Keeping your work life separate from your life at home is one way to stay more focused during the workday. If you think, "I'll just do it when I get home," you are less likely to concentrate on what you need to finish during the day. Leave work at work whenever possible, and you'll find that you will get a lot more accomplished while you are actually there.
- 4. Drink more water.** Drink more water while making sure that you get away from the computer screen often, even if it's only to use the restroom. Dehydration makes you feel tired and you can't focus when you're tired.
- 5. Get more sleep.** Get eight hours of sleep. You'll be in a better mood and feel more energized the entire week and be able to work and focus better.

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

QUICK HEALTH TIP

Malunggay is one of the world's most useful plants. It is considered as a "miracle vegetable." Malunggay leaves are an excellent source of minerals such as calcium, iron and protein. It has high levels of vitamins A, C and E, which are potent antioxidants. Malunggay promotes good eyesight, digestion, facilitates bowel movement, and is a cure for stomachache. For its high calcium content, lactating mothers are advised to eat malunggay leaves to produce more milk. Malunggay contains the phytochemical niaziminin, found to have molecular components that can prevent the development of cancer cells. In the Philippines, malunggay is usually cooked with chicken as *tinola* and included in mongo soup dishes.

Source: <http://malunggayherbtea.com>

EARLY CHRISTIANS: A MODEL FOR DIGITAL AGE CHURCH



In a gathering of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Pope Francis gave his insights on the theme, "Announcing Christ in the Digital Age."

Inspired by the example of the Early Christians, he likened the faithful's experience of technology

today with the advanced Greek culture during those times.

"Already during the first centuries of Christianity, the Church wanted to face the extraordinary heritage of the Greek culture. Facing a very profound philosophy and an educational method of exceptional value, but soaked in pagan elements, the (Early Christian) Fathers were not closed to debate, but neither did they surrender to compromise with certain ideas contrary to faith. They knew, rather, to identify and assimilate the more elevated concepts, transforming them from the inside by the light of the Word of God," the Pope explained.

"Between the opportunities and the dangers of the network, it is necessary to 'examine everything,' conscious that we will find counterfeits, dangerous illusions, and snares to be avoided," he cautioned.

The Pope further said, "The Church is always in a journey, to search again for new ways to announce the Gospel. The contribution and witness of the lay faithful reveals itself more every day to be indispensable."

The presence of the Church on the Internet is necessary, especially for the youth who live in the digital environment. "It is indispensable to be present, always with evangelical style," the Pope counseled.

Using the Internet and technology as tools for evangelization is not enough. The announcement of the Gospel cannot happen apart from "authentic and direct human relationships," which then lead to "a personal meeting with the Lord."

Source: www.catholicnewsagency.com

St. Catherine of Siena

Born and Died: Siena, March 25, 1347 – Rome, April 29, 1380

St. Catherine was born the 24th child of her family. When she was six years old, she started seeing guardian angels and experienced a vision of Christ seated in glory with the Apostles Peter, Paul and John. At seven, Catherine vowed to give her whole life to God.

She became a Dominican tertiary, choosing to live an active and prayerful life following the model of the Dominicans. She continued to have visions of Christ, Mary and the saints.

St. Catherine was one of the most gifted theological minds of her day. Her letters and treatise called the *Dialogue* are considered among the most brilliant writings in the history of the Catholic Church. In 1375, Jesus gave her the stigmata, which was only visible after her death. In 1377, she persuaded the Pope to go back to Rome from France and when she died she was endeavoring to heal the Great Western Schism. She died when she was only 33 years old and her body was found incorrupt in 1430. She is one of Europe's patron saints.

Her feast day is on April 29.

Source: www.catholic.org



Real
Stuff

© the guardian UK

SHIPWRECKED MAN SURVIVES WHILE PRAYING PSALMS

A 29-year-old Nigerian survived for almost three days at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean while constantly praying a Psalm his wife mentioned to him during their last conversation.

Harrison Okene was the cook on the tugboat, *Jascon 4*, which was one of three vessels pulling an oil tanker. It capsized and sank about 32 kilometers off the coast of Nigeria in May 2013. He was in the bathroom when the boat sank 100 feet to the ocean floor. He was trapped in an air pocket, where he remained reciting a passage from Psalm 54: "Oh God, by your name save me...The Lord sustains my life."

In an interview with Nigerian newspaper, *The Nation*, Okene recalled that he began to invoke the name of God and that he was in a daze because the surroundings went completely dark. He thought that only a miracle would lead to his rescue. He endured the long wait by "reminiscing on the verses I read before I slept. I read the Bible from Psalm 54 to 92. My wife had sent me the verses to read that night when she called me before I went to bed."

Okene was found alive by divers who were inspecting the shipwreck three days later. A video of his rescue can be viewed on Youtube: "Divers Find Man Alive in Sunken Tugboat."

Source: www.catholicnewsagency.com

Saints-at-a-Glance





By Edwin Soriano

Edwin serves as the operations manager for Light Thursdays, a chill-out gathering where guests are treated to a night of great acoustic music and awesome messages from Light of Jesus preacher George Gabriel.



AN ENDING AND A BEGINNING

*The agony of a failed marriage, the grace of forgiveness,
and the joy of finding my one true love*

I had imagined this scene so many times in the past. I envisioned what it would be like to see my family and friends welcoming me as I walked down the aisle.

I knew how my heart would melt upon seeing the most beautiful bride in her stunning white gown. I knew that the Lord would bless me with a life shared with the woman I loved.

Little did I know that it would take a major detour on my way to meeting my one true love.

Glee

Mischi (not her real name) and I were college students at the University of the Philippines, Diliman when we first met. Many of our peers regarded us as an ideal couple. She graduated before I did and she was always ahead of me — in career, in maturity, in taking responsibility, even in wanting to tie the knot.

So it was a big milestone for me when I proposed to her. I felt I was taking things to a higher level when I started a business at my hometown in Baguio. Unfortunately, that put me 250 kilometers away from her.

She later broke up with me but we got back together after a few months. I thought she had discovered what she needed to discover while we were apart.

We got married in 2003. It was a beautiful wedding, one that our friends and relatives would talk about for a long time. We lived our lives together and pursued our careers. But at a certain point, I needed to let go of my job. I chose to study at the Asian Institute of Management.

I learned later that Mischi resented this. While we both wanted to study in AIM, I was the one who had financial support from my family. In contrast, she was the one who was providing

for her family and didn't have the luxury of taking one year out from work.

We never got pregnant either. I realized later that one fear preventing us from getting pregnant was the fear that I couldn't provide for our family.

After studying at AIM, I got an invitation to join a conference in South Africa. While I was there, I received and accepted a job offer from Intel Philippines.

I was excited to see Mischi and tell her stories about Africa and my new job. She was scheduled to fly back to Manila from her fieldwork in Davao the same day that I was flying in. But when we saw each other, she was preoccupied and distant. I brushed it aside.

Two days passed. Still no connection. So, on the third morning, I asked her before she went off to work: "What's wrong?"

And then she told me: She wanted to leave me.

What? Where was this coming from? The explanations I heard had to do with falling out of love, with me not being able to provide well enough, and other things.

For many months, we were living in the same house, in the same room, on the same bed. But our relationship continued to turn for the worse. I wanted to go for marriage counseling but she refused. So I went on my own to see a counselor for over a year as I struggled to make things work between Mischi and me.

With my work at Intel Philippines, I started to provide better for our family. But that wasn't enough

to earn her back. It was just a matter of time before she left our home. With a heavy heart, I gave her my blessing. She moved to an apartment near her office.

One Last Try

A month after that painful goodbye, I got word that Mischi had left for Canada to take further studies. I had a conference in the US so I planned to fly to Canada after to visit my estranged wife. It was my chance to show her that I would fly across the seas to win her back.

With a bouquet of flowers, some gifts and a love letter, I rang her doorbell. Nothing. I rang again. Still no answer. I rang it one final time. Then, from the inside, a female figure came closer in hurried footsteps and approached the door. For a split second, I felt the joy of a welcome. But the silhouette promptly turned around and walked away.

I lay the bouquet of flowers, my gifts and my love letter at the foot of the door. I said a prayer, took a deep breath, and walked away.

Growth

In 2007, I started attending the Feast at Valle Verde with my brother. It was always a blessing for me listening to the messages of Bo Sanchez.

I knew I just needed to work on myself. I took to writing, journaling, reflecting and reading.

I also learned to forgive myself.

That was the start of my healing. I began to forgive myself for my own wrongdoings and lapses. I started to forgive Mischi, too, for whatever real reasons she had for leaving me. I started to let go of the need to understand, to forgive even when I didn't understand. More importantly, I started to forgive even when there was no apology from Mischi.

Grace

Then one morning at work, I got an email from her. Her first few words hit me like a bus.

She has a baby.

I stood up from my seat. I punched fists into the air and stomped out all my energy and anger in an empty cubicle nearby. I went back to my computer and started reading the rest of the email. I read that her child was a few months old, and that when I was at her doorstep in Canada, she was a few months pregnant.

I went out for a long walk and called her. I wasn't sure what kind of hurtful words I would say.

She picked up my call. When she realized it was I, she went on the defensive. But what I told her was unforgettable!

I asked her, "How are you? Are you OK? Are you healthy? Is your baby healthy? Who's taking care of you? Is the baby's father able to provide for you?"

I felt her voice melt and her defenses go down. I felt my sincerity and love cut across any anger and hurt. In its pure form, I felt the love of one man for a woman.

We talked for more than an hour, like friends catching up with each other. We agreed to meet when she came home to the Philippines that Christmas.

I broke down after that phone call. I had forgiven a person

who had caused me so much pain. It was only by the grace of God that I was able to forgive.

A Final Goodbye

That Christmas, Mischi and I met. She asked me to come back to the relationship. Although I was seeing someone else already, I was still open to reconcile with her and even accept her child as my own.

But when I looked deeper into my heart and into the higher intentions, I felt that it was for the wrong reasons that she wanted reconciliation. Besides, too much trust had been broken.

I wished her well and said goodbye. I filed for both legal annulment and Church annulment in 2008. Our marriage was declared null and void in Church in January 2011.

Through the years that I was in depression and pain, I knew in my heart that the good Lord was preparing me for a relationship with my one true love, wherever she was!

Meant to Be More Than Friends

Back in 2008, when I was still with a major telecommunications company, I was asked to join a focus group discussion that brought together bloggers from different circles. Some of them were colleagues at work, one of whom was a smart and beautiful lady named Rezza Custodio. It was a casual meeting.

A few months later, I attended a Lenten retreat in the office. The preacher was Arun Gogna of the Light of Jesus Family. Towards the latter part of his talk, Arun asked the participants to pair up and share our reflections to his guide questions. He must have asked us to change partners more than six times.

After many switches, I found myself partnered up with Rezza. I didn't know she was in the retreat all along. Then Arun announced that whoever it was that we were partnered up with at that time would be our prayer partner from then on. That gave us a reason to meet each other again in the coming weeks.



The newlyweds say thank you to their well-wishers.



The Sorianos share the same life purpose and advocacies, one of which is the "Love Your Self" campaign for HIV testing, education and prevention.

Around that time, I was also attending The Feast already. It was still in Valle Verde. Bo Sanchez released a booklet on how you would live if it were the last days of your life. He encouraged us to gather a handful of friends to discuss the readings in the booklet.

I invited a few of my friends at the office, including Rezza, to discuss the readings and share our reflections. But it was the only Rezza who showed up during our scheduled lunch sharing.

It was in one of those conversations that we discovered how our paths had crossed in the past — at a singles retreat in 1998 and at a Christmas party.

From our lunch sharing sessions, I invited Rezza to The Feast, where she was astounded and deeply touched during worship. She said that she felt the presence of the Lord in a powerful way, as if she was being welcomed back home.

In 2010, I resigned from my job but Rezza and I continued to see each other because of The Feast and other seminars I had invited her to. I saw how aligned we were with our life purpose. We were both teachers, we were both learners, we both wanted to bless the world through teaching in one form or another.

From then on, we seriously pursued a deeper kind of friendship. We officially became a couple in December 2010.

God Blessed the Broken Road I Tread

Even as I was going through my annulment, I always knew that I was meant to be a husband and a father. I never became cynical of love, trust and commitment.


I was always upfront with Rezza. She knew about my marriage and the ongoing annulment. She didn't seem to have any qualms about me being married before. She knew I was sincere.

In September 2012, she had a scheduled trip to Singapore. One night, Rezza and her friends were out in a bar when she was called on stage. Then I appeared amidst the cheering crowd, to Rezza's total surprise. She thought all along that I was in the Philippines.

I sang to her a Christian song with this message: "God blessed the broken road that led me straight to you." Then I asked her to journey with me for the rest of our lives and she said yes!

We got married on April 6, 2013 with the blessing of our families and friends. At the altar, I looked up and thanked the Lord for guiding me through my broken road. I thanked Him for leading me to my one true love, 20 years after our paths first crossed.

Rezza and I continue to deliver corporate trainings, develop our marketing consultancy, and build our life coaching practice. We serve together at The Feast PICC and Light Thursdays, in the marriage preparation seminars of Discovery Weekend, and in various seminars both here and abroad.

God has brought me through adversity, through depression, through heartbreaks. And it is this brokenness that helps me value and nurture the relationship I have with Rezza each and every day. 

Edwin is a trainer, author and blogger. Read more inspiring stories of forgiveness, healing and happiness at www.edwinsoriano.com.



Am I stupid to still want my philandering husband back?

Dear
K

I'm a mother of two boys (four and two years old) and married for seven years. Two years ago, we were living a simple yet happy family life. I couldn't ask for anything more. My husband is a sporty kind of person and I let him be because that is what I believe makes him happy. We do not argue and fight when it comes to financial matters as we both have jobs — until a tragedy came into our life.

In late 2011, my husband suddenly changed. I discovered that he has another woman. I cried a whole lot and felt that I was breaking into pieces. I couldn't believe what he did to me.

I did everything to win him back for my kids. I don't want them to grow without their father, just like I did. I never begged for him to come back, but my actions did. I got angry, I cried, I ate my pride, but all I got was just a promise. He told me to just wait and that what he is doing is also for our family.

His other woman is six years his senior and rich, and they already have an eight-month-old baby. Though I knew all of these things, I still wanted to have him back.

Am I really stupid? A month ago, his mistress bought him a van because it was what he used to ask from me for him to come back home. I am not that rich that I can buy him a van at a snap of a finger.

Since the time he was given a van, his visits to us became infrequent. And that really makes me feel so sad. It's very hard for me to accept that he doesn't want to come back to us anymore.

Please help me. What should I do?

Yellow

Dear Yellow,

The ideal family setup is for the husband and wife to be together when raising their children. As you said, you grew up without a father and you don't want your young sons to experience the same. Thus, it must be so painful for you to know that your husband has another family.

I must honor you for wanting him back in spite of what he has done to you and your sons. However, you may need to realize that, at this point, he seems to be happy and content in the situation that he is in. The fact that he hasn't kept his promise proves this, aside from the fact that his visits have become infrequent. Maybe what you need to do now is to love him from a distance. He is committing a mortal sin by cohabiting with his mistress. It will not be good for your sons to think that it is totally acceptable for their father to have another family if you continue to want him to be with you while he is still in an illicit relationship. It will be tough but in the long run, it will be better for you and your sons.

If in the future he expresses the desire to be with you and your sons, you must set conditions. He needs to cut off his ties with his mistress. However, you must agree that he needs to support his child and spend time with him/her (without the child's mother though). The child must be in the equation as it is not the child's fault that he was born in an illicit relationship.

I encourage you to keep on praying for your husband. Pray that he will eventually realize that what he is doing is wrong and will return to you and your sons.

I will pray for you.

Reng Morelos gave up her corporate job years ago to become a full-time wife and mom. She supports her husband, Hermie, in his ministry as one of the leaders of the Light of Jesus Family and now as president of Shepherd's Voice Publications and Shepherd's Voice Radio and Television Foundation. She has been with LOJ since 1981 and once handled the single sisters of the community.



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 counselor. Pastoral counseling by telephone is 24 hours from Monday to Friday, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays. Face-to-face pastoral counseling is by appointment. For correspondence pastoral 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.

Through the generosity of God's people, the children of Tahanan ng Pagmamahal now live in a new home.

By Rey Ortega

Orphans and Abandoned Babies Have a New Home



The facade of the new Tahanan orphanage.

Outside, the sun shone brightly. The street was busy, as always, but more so because Christmas was near.

But inside the three-story duplex at 45 Dr. Pilapil St. in Barangay Sagad, Pasig City, there was overwhelming love that morning of December 10, 2013.

That sunny day, Tahanan ng Pagmamahal inaugurated its permanent orphanage with a ribbon cutting ceremony and simple fellowship. Francis Sanchez, youngest son of Bo Sanchez, Light of Jesus Family's head, cut the ribbon. He was assisted by his parents, Bo and Marowe. A child cutting the ribbon to inaugurate a home for abandoned babies and homeless children was a fitting symbolism of how our hearts should be — childlike enough to welcome and understand the children in our midst.

Aside from Bo and his family, dozens of guests, donors and benefactors attended the blessing and inauguration. Among them were *Kerygma* editor-in-chief Rissa Singson Kawpeng, Feast builders Eng Si and Jon Escoto, Pasig Mayor Maribel Eusebio, Pasig Vice-Mayor Iyo Caruncho Bernardo, some LOJ members, Feast attendees, and friends.

A Sanctuary of God's Love

Tahanan ng Pagmamahal, one of the ministries supported by *Kerygma* Family and by the members of the Light of Jesus Family, was founded in 2006 and is presently caring for 35 children and babies. With this new facility, the orphanage can now expand and almost double its capacity. The new building can accommodate 55 to 60 homeless children and abandoned babies. It is just a few houses away from Grace to Be Born shelter, another mercy ministry supported by *Kerygma* Family.

Envisioned as a sanctuary of God's love, Tahanan ng Pagmamahal provides its children a safe shelter, formal and informal education, basic medical care, values formation, training on good citizenship and caring for the environment.

All Tahanan children and house mothers attend The Feast every Sunday. The girls are members of The Feast dance ministry and are presently honing their skills to join the music ministry.

Adoption or Foster Parenting

To the extent that's humanly possible, the Tahanan trustees and management try their best to re-create a family atmosphere — not simply as an institution — where every child is made to feel secure and loved by their in-house caregivers called house mothers.


The board of trustees realize, however, that nothing could truly replace an authentic family and home. The management therefore encourages kindhearted individuals and families to either adopt a child or serve as a foster family.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has made the process of adoption or foster parenting as simple as possible and not as expensive as before. DSWD and Tahanan trustees both believe that every child deserves a right to grow up in a real home and not in an orphanage.

Sponsor a Child

To sustain its indefinite service to the orphaned children and abandoned babies, the Tahanan trustees invite everyone to partner with them in caring for the children through its "Sponsor a Child" program.

Patterned after a distant adoption program, an individual or family could take care of a child without physically admitting the child into their homes. All that's required of them is to donate P5,000 every month for the food and schooling of one specific child.

To visit the orphanage, donate or do outreach activities in Tahanan ng Pagmamahal, please contact Rey Ortega at 0917-816-4700 or 0922-859-7035 or email him at reylindo.ortega@gmail.com. 

Like any other event, the journey to the Kerygma Grand Feast (KGF) Asia 2013 proved challenging.

Weeks and even days before the event, ticket sales were low. Yet everyone in the KGF team remained faithful, especially when Pio Español, the District Feast Builder of Asia and Canada, told the ministry heads, "I am not worried about the low ticket sales at this time compared to last year because our target market are Filipinos, who are normally last-minute buyers. Plus, I know we have a big God who is going to create miracles."

True enough, God's miracle happened again on October 12, 2013. Singapore Max Atria, the event's venue, was filled with Filipinos and locals from Singapore and Malaysia for the second Kerygma Grand Feast Asia.

The program started with a glorious praise and worship. Guest worship leaders from Manila — Carlo Lorenzo, John Ben Rodriguez and Lean Tibia — were on hand to help lift the crowd into worship.

Powerful speakers graced the event, headed by Light of Jesus Family founder, Bo Sanchez, together with Pio Español, Alvin Barcelona and Arun Gogna.

The four preachers gave uplifting talks that focused on the theme, "Arise and Conquer."

Arun Gogna, Feast builder of The Feast Alabang, talked about "The Last Day on the Boat." He said that when you have given your best and things still do not work out according to your plans, all you have to do is open your heart to God's Word and follow Jesus — and your life will never be the same again.

Alvin Barcelona enlightened everyone with his talk, "Break Free from Past Guilt." He stressed that in order to have a breakthrough in our lives, we need to break free from our past. His inspiring words, "Your mistakes are no match for God's great plans to bless your life," left everyone hopeful.

"How to Live a Victorious Life" was the main focus of Pio Español's talk. Nobody wants to fail, but a number

KERYGMA GRAND FEAST ASIA: Arise and Conquer



By Veia Panturas
Photos by Kuchi Español
and Ping Silva

of people are afraid to fail. In his talk, he emphasized that victory is not a destination but a process. One must commit to grow daily, dream big, and give up something to go up, and in everything, glorify God. He said, "The degree of our sacrifice determines the degree of our victory."


Bo Sanchez spoke about "Detours." Trials, he said, are part of our journey towards our destination. It is part of God's plan that we learn, improve ourselves, and trust in Him. Detours also teach us to be humble and hungry for success and for God. He assured everyone that our detours lead to our destiny.

Attendees were inspired by Pio Español's trials in life, which he shared in the interview portion with Bo.

The healing session that followed blessed and healed a long line of people who needed restoration, comfort and prayers.

The Holy Mass presided by Fr. Michael Sitaram was one of the highlights of the event.

The following day, a victory dinner was held at the place of Jun Alde, Feast builder of Singapore SVDP and KGF 2013 head, to celebrate another victorious event for God's glory.

Once again, because of God's everlasting love for His people, The Feast Singapore and Filipinos from Singapore and Malaysia had arisen and conquered. 

For schedules and venues:

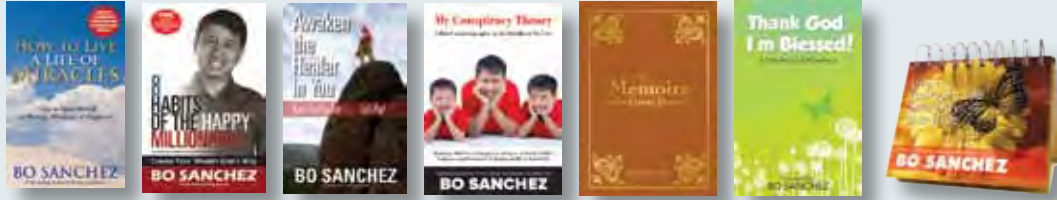
Feast SVDP, every Saturday, 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., St Vincent de Paul Church Cafeteria, 301 Yio Chu Kang Road, Singapore 805910

Feast EXPO: Every Sunday, 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Halls G & H, Singapore Expo, 1 Expo Drive, Singapore 486150

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Red and Gie always face life's challenges — and joys —
with prayer and thanksgiving to God.

It
Happened



Love God
with All Your Heart
Even if it has a hole in it

By Gie Feria as told to Alvin Fabella

You need to undergo open-heart surgery to repair your Ventricular Septal Defect (VSD),” my cardiologist told me that fateful day, August 13, 2012. Silence filled his small clinic after he let out the words. I had nothing to say. I just sat there, listening to him, watching his face, his every movement.

He continued, “The hole in your heart grew,” as he pored over the result of my 2D Echo (two-dimensional echocardiogram). His face was stoic. Then he said, “I strongly suggest that you get a second opinion and also see a surgeon.”

He had just confirmed what I was anxious about since I read the test results three days ago. I knew that my heart would need a procedure. I was hoping that it would be an easier option and not an open-heart surgery. However, after personally hearing it from the doctor, I realized that I had to face the procedure I feared the most.

My husband, Red, and I immediately went to the chapel of the hospital after we got the shocking news. We prayed for the coming battle we were about to face.



Gie remained bubbly even right after her surgery.

Finding a Hole in My Heart

I was only three years old when my heart condition was discovered. I was being treated for fever and cold when the attending pediatrician heard a murmur in my heart. He advised me to undergo further testing that included ECG. The test results revealed that I had Ventricular Septal Defect.

VSD is a congenital heart defect that indicates a hole in the divider of the two chambers of the heart. This wall keeps the oxygen-rich blood from mixing with the oxygen-poor blood. This

wall normally closes before a baby is born. With VSD, the hole does not close, which causes higher pressure in the heart or reduced oxygen to the body.

The doctor advised my parents not to worry. He told us that in some cases, the hole fully closes when the person with VSD turns 18 years old. He simply recommended regular monitoring and tests like 2D Echo. My father, also with VSD, did not undergo any surgery but lives a healthy and active life until now. My father’s healthy state made us believe that there was nothing to worry about my condition — then.

My parents raised me like any regular child. I was able to do most of my tasks at home and school. However, I avoided activities that were exhausting. I experienced chest pain, numbness on the left part of my body or joint pains whenever I got very tired.

My condition did not affect my outlook in life. I knew I had a physical limitation but it did not stop me from pursuing my dreams. I finished college with a degree in B.S. Hotel and Restaurant Management and was able to land a job in the culinary industry. By August 2007, I got married to my husband, Red. My life was doing well and my VSD was never an issue.

And the Hole Got Bigger

I had been working as a pastry chef instructor for more than two years when I decided it was time to check out other work options. Prior to filing my resignation, I decided to avail of the regular checkups that were part of my health card benefits. The checkup also included 2D Echo, which was important for monitoring my VSD. I got the results the following day and I was shocked when I read the findings.

“VSD with predominantly left to right shunt with Qp:Qs ratio of 1.82 to 2.09; peak gradient increase from 126 to 170 mmHg.”

I understood what the results meant because I had regular 2D Echo since I was young. The Qp:Qs ratio indicates how much blood flows from the left chamber of the heart to the right. A value greater than 2.00 is considered a large shunt (or pressure). This value was also higher than my 2D Echo more than a year ago.

The hole in my heart got bigger. Immediately, Red and I agreed to visit my cardiologist. I started to get nervous about what can possibly happen.

We were able to visit a doctor three days after I got the results. My original doctor was not available so we had to look for another one. There were three other patients in the clinic when we arrived. The waiting time made me more anxious. I kept thinking about what procedure the cardiologist might recommend.

Then I slowly felt God’s grace in the midst of the tense moment. I decided to hold on to God and put my trust in Him. I felt a little better as the doctor called us in. He asked me about my medical history. Then he got the 2D Echo results and told us his analysis as well as his recommendation for an open-heart surgery, but at the same time he said we should get a second opinion and also consult with a surgeon.

“Where can I find a good surgeon? Is this procedure necessary? Can we afford this? Will I be able to live a ‘normal’ life after the procedure? How will my parents react?”

These concerns flashed through my mind as we left the clinic and went to the chapel to pray.

God’s Love Through My Family

God certainly manifests His love to us through the people He surrounds us with.

My husband is a perfect example. He was with me every step of the way. I also felt God’s love when we talked to Red’s family a couple of days after my checkup. They helped us look for other doctors who could give us a second opinion. I also shared the news to my sister and brother and they likewise expressed their love and support.

However, I knew that my parents would be



Members of the Men's and Women's Group of Ligaya ng Panginoon visit Gie at home a few days after she was discharged.

skeptical about the open-heart surgery. They were also based in Malaysia, so talking about this sensitive issue remotely would be difficult. My dad did not undergo any heart procedure for his VSD, so I was sure that he would go against what the doctor recommended.

Red and I decided that it would be best to talk to them personally. It was a blessing that we were scheduled to visit them in a few days to celebrate my birthday there. This vacation was scheduled way ahead of recent events about my health.

Talking to my parents was top priority upon our arrival in Malaysia. Surprisingly, they took the news calmly as Red explained all the details. They agreed with the recommendation of the doctor. All the objections that I anticipated were not raised. I knew that this was all because of God's grace.

God's Hand at Work

We started to look for a heart surgeon after getting the support of our family. We got several referrals and one of the doctors we visited was recommended by a leader from Ligaya ng Panginoon, a Catholic Charismatic community. We scheduled our appointment with this doctor and prayed to God that he would be the "right" one.



Gie goes through the required therapy after her surgery.

I felt calm when we visited the doctor at the Philippine Heart Center. His experience and knowledge enabled him to explain to us the situation clearly. He shared with us the past procedures he did and how competent their team is.

Before leaving his clinic, I asked him how risky the procedure is. He simply replied, "It's still up to God. I am only an instrument. I always pray before the procedure."

Red and I considered his reply as God's confirmation that he is the right doctor. We discussed our decision with our families and scheduled the surgery in October 2012.

I also felt God's hand in the other practical aspects, such as the expenses involved in the surgery. This became a non-issue because, through God's providence and the generosity of our families, friends and community members, we were able to raise the required fund.

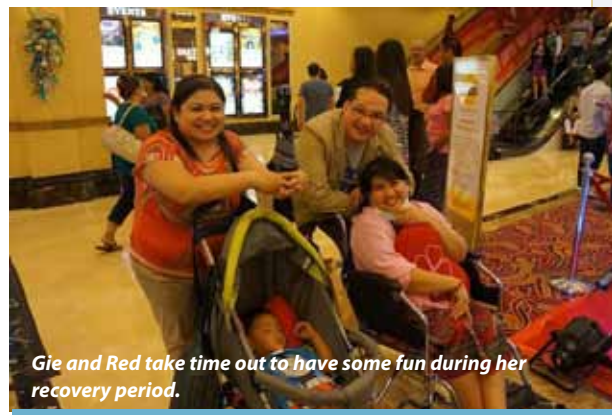
We experienced so many other manifestations of God's hand at work from the time I was admitted to the hospital up to my recovery.

Truly, God provides for all our needs because we are valuable to Him. This verse further confirmed God's love for me: "Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:30-32).

No Longer a Control Freak


My surgery proceeded as scheduled last October 24, 2012. It lasted for about six hours and, thank God, it was a success! I only stayed in the hospital for 11 days, then I continued my recovery at home.

My doctor told me that full recovery would take around a year so I will still experience intermittent pain in my rib cage area. Red and I decided that I should move to Malaysia with my parents until I fully recover. I got my clearance from the doctor and flew to Malaysia six months after my surgery. Recently, I decided to work as



Gie and Red take time out to have some fun during her recovery period.

a part-time chef with a Malaysian company that handles events organization.

I used to be a control freak. My experience taught me that I cannot control everything. Only God is in control. It is His will that we should seek and follow. Even when we experience trials, we should always "wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the Lord" (Psalms 27:14). 

Months after her surgery, Gie and Red visit Legoland in Malaysia, where Gie now works as a part-time chef.



Alcohol-free

Swish



By Bo Sanchez

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH


God Needs You to Proclaim His Word and Share His Love

Olivia is an introvert. That's her weakness. For the longest time she used that as an excuse not to serve in her parish. But when she met God in a personal way through a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, she was transformed. Oh yes, she's still the same quiet person. But God's love has opened her world and she is now His passionate servant, using what she is good at — writing — in letting people know His love and His promises.

At The Feast (the weekly prayer gathering of the Light of Jesus Family), you can find people who have colorful backgrounds — from greeters to music ministers to preachers. But what's the one thing they share in common?

They said yes to God — to love Him, to serve Him, to proclaim His Word and share His love to the ends of the earth.

Won't you say yes, too?

He's waiting. 

GOD
WILL USE
YOU IF
YOU SAY
YES



I'd like to introduce to you a woman named Rahab.

Who is Rahab? She's a prostitute.

Shocked?

The Israelites, under Commander Joshua, sent spies into Jericho to scout the area. Out of all the thousands of people in Jericho, God chose a prostitute to help them. (See Joshua 2:1-12.)

God chose Rahab.

And Rahab said yes.

That's it!

Think about it.

What if Rahab said, "Not me, Lord. I'm a bad woman. You can't trust me. I've done bad stuff you can't even imagine. This won't work. Why don't you talk to Liza, my neighbor? She goes to church every day. She doesn't have a tattoo on her arm like I do. She doesn't wear miniskirts like me. She reads the Bible every day. She plays Christian music on her iPod. And most importantly, she hasn't slept with 854 men like I have!"

Right now, you may be saying the same thing. You may be saying, "I'm not worthy. Let me clean up my act first before God will use me."

But that's not how God operates. Here's the truth: You can't clean up your act on your own. Just give yourself to Him, and both you and God will clean up your act together.

Here's one of my favorite passages: "God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong" (1 Corinthians 1:27).

Bad History? No Problem!

One day, I was reading about the ancestors of Jesus.

Because Jesus was Jesus, His genealogy was quite impressive. It had the heavyweights of the Bible in that list: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and so on.

But in that genealogy, inserted in various places were four surprising characters: Tamar, Bathsheba, Ruth and Rahab.

Tamar slept with her father-in-law. The story is so distasteful, I don't want to write it down here. (See Genesis 38.)

The second woman is Bathsheba, an adulteress. While her husband Uriah was fighting in the battlefield, risking life and limb, she was lying on David's comfortable king-sized bed making a baby. Not a very good wife, if you ask me.

Next was Ruth. She was a Moabite's widow. That may

mean nothing to you. But to the Jew, she meant bad luck. Let me explain a bit about the Jewish mindset. In their thinking, a foreigner was not saved. Not chosen by God. Not favored by God.

To top it all, Moab was a sinful place. It was like Sodom and Gomorrah. Plus the fact that she was a widow.

And finally, there was Rahab. A prostitute.

Oh, my gosh!

Four women. Not very good choices at all.

Here's my question: Couldn't God have selected better women to be in the bloodline of Jesus?

Perhaps a woman who didn't cheat on her husband?

Or a woman who didn't sell her body for money?

A woman who was responsible, disciplined and mature?

But that's how God operates.

If God found these four women good enough to become the blood ancestors of Jesus, then He can really use anyone.

God isn't interested in your background.

He's not interested about where you came from — He's interested in where you're going.

He's not interested on what you did — He's interested in what you're going to do.

He's not interested on how you've failed Him in your past — He's interested in how you'll serve Him in your future.

He can use me.

He can use you.

In God's equation, your past doesn't define your future.

This Is How God Works

I've always wondered why God chose Peter.

He was temperamental. When some soldiers came to arrest Jesus, very impulsively he pulled out a knife and cut one of the soldier's ears.

Yet a couple of hours later, in front of a lowly maid, all his guts vanished. The girl asked, "Aren't you with that Jesus guy? Aren't you His disciple or something?"

And this brave man said, "Jes... what? Jesus? Uh, I haven't heard that name before."

"No, I'm sure you're with Him," the woman said.

Peter said, "Gee, woman, you've got the wrong person. I don't know what you're talking about."

Let's review. Peter was temperamental. Peter was impulsive. Peter was violent. And Peter was a coward. And yet Jesus still chose him to be the leader of the disciples. In fact, he became the

first Pope of our Church. That's how God works. He chooses imperfect people all the time. What am I saying?

You have no excuse not to serve God.

You Have No Excuse

Go through the Bible and you'll be shocked to see others who were also unfit to serve God — yet ended up serving Him.

- Abraham was too old.
- Jeremiah was too young.
- Gideon was too fearful.
- Elijah was too ugly.
- Moses was too uneloquent.
- David was too frail.
- Deborah was too plain.
- Zacchaeus was too greedy.
- Mary Magdalene was too sinful.
- The Samaritan woman had too many husbands.
- Bartimaeus was blind.
- Lazarus was dead.
- Mother Mary was unknown.

And yet God chose every single one of them to serve Him.

Perhaps you have been giving excuses so you won't serve God.

- "I'm too bad."
- "I'm too sinful."
- "I'm too impatient."
- "I'm too selfish."
- "I'm too poor."
- "I'm too ungifted."
- "I'm too uneducated."
- "I'm too quiet."
- "I'm too sick."
- "I'm too young."
- "I'm too old."

But if God wants you to serve Him, your weakness can't stop His plan for your life. Your weaknesses, your faults or your sins don't disqualify you from God's wonderful plan for your life.

God Will Not Waste Your Weaknesses

Don't be discouraged by your weaknesses.

God will use your weaknesses to bless the world.

Just look at some of my friends who serve with me.

Pio Español had a weakness. He was a womanizer. As a married man, he was maintaining three girlfriends. Once upon a time, his marriage was on the brink of separation. But today, Pio and his wife, Bebot, have healed many marriages. (Once upon a time, he was maintaining three girlfriends. Today, he's maintaining a growing number of Feast areas — in Singapore and Canada and the entire province of Rizal.)

Roy Pasimio had a weakness. He had all the vices of the world. For many years, Roy would rarely be home. He'd always be out drinking and womanizing. God has changed this man. Today, you still can't find him at home. Because he has become a missionary. Roy, together with his wife, Rorie, go to different countries, building God's Kingdom. Roy started Mission Feasts in the US, London, Vietnam, Hong Kong and the Middle East, among other places.

Their weaknesses went away. But what about weaknesses that stay with us for a long time? Can God still use us?

Alvin Barcelona has a weakness. Fourteen years ago, he had cancer that almost took his life. Even if that happened a long time ago, sometimes he tells me that he still feels afraid that he'll die tomorrow. Some self-righteous person might ask him, "Alvin, where is your trust in God? How can you preach?" But that's his present weakness. Yet I've seen how God has used Alvin — in mighty ways — to bless people who have the same fears.

Arun Gogna? This tall, big man has a fear of flying. How could someone who has faith in God be afraid of flying? But that's his present weakness. When I flew with him, I felt his fear, and I was tempted to hold his hand. But that would look awkward. Today, this preacher combats his fears and — despite it — flies around the world proclaiming God's love.

My weakness? I had an addiction that lasted for 20 years. Thankfully, my pornography addiction is gone. But I have other addictions. I continue to battle with my approval addiction. Every day, I need to differentiate between "pleasing others" versus "loving others." (I have many more weaknesses. Give me an entire day to tell them to you.)

I wish I had more time to tell you about my other fellow preachers. Because all our leaders have weaknesses — and they're open about it. In fact, a very important credential for all our leaders is the ability to confess their weaknesses to others.

We Welcome Anyone in Our Spiritual Family

We accept anyone who wants to join our spiritual family, the Light of Jesus. Anyone can be a member — the wounded, the broken, the sinful, the immoral, the irreligious.

Why? Because Jesus didn't come to huddle with the holy. He didn't come to seek the saintly. He came to love the lost and save the sinner.

I believe God created the Church not for the perfect. He created the Church for the imperfect. (If you're perfect, you don't need the Church — or God for that matter.)

And here's something that shocks a lot of people: We accept *anyone* who wants to serve in our ministries — even people who don't have it all together. Because we believe serving has a way of healing you and making you grow.

For example, we accept people struggling with pornography, alcoholism, adultery, premarital sex or homosexuality in our various

ministries. Some of those greeting at the door as ushers, or some of those serving in music — they don't have it all together. Some are still broken. Some are still wounded.

But that's OK. The Church is *for* them.

One day, someone came up to me and said, "I'm not married to my partner. I'm separated from my wife. My partner is separated from her husband. We can't get married because our previous marriages haven't been annulled by the Church. But we want to serve God..."

I hugged him and told him, "Welcome! Come and serve the Lord with me."

I'll guide them to get those papers in order — and pray that they'll get married soon. But I'll make them servants today. Why?

I believe that it is God who will transform people — not me.

And transformation isn't an event but a *journey*. And I will respect that journey. I will walk with them in that journey of transformation.

(Note: Obviously, there are degrees of service. Not everyone can serve as a leader. Leaders will have to be a bit more advanced in that journey of transformation.)

But anyone can serve if he's willing to serve.

My friend, George Gabriel, loves to say, "*Ang walis, maski madumi, nakakalinis*" (A broom, even if it's dirty, can clean).

You're like a broom. The broom is dirty. But it still can clean.

Even if you don't have it all together, if you're still struggling with various things in your life, you can still serve God and be a big blessing to many people.

Say yes to God today.

He will do the rest.

My Lack Was God's Opportunity

I'm not just talking of moral failure.

Other failures don't disqualify you from serving God, too.

When my eldest son finished grade school, he

applied at different high schools and filled out application forms. He asked me, "Dad, did you have to do this?"

I said, "Yes, I did." I smiled, "I was rejected."

"Why?" he asked.

"Because I failed the entrance exam. And those schools only accepted black and white report cards. My report card was very colorful. They wanted a boring report card, not an exciting one like mine."


Why did God choose me? I had no credentials. I wasn't intelligent. I wasn't good in school.

Today, I realize I have no other credential except one: I said yes to God.

That's it.

And that was enough for God.

Have you failed in the past? And are you asking now if God can use a failure like you? All you have to do is look at me. I was a failure. I was not very intelligent. Yet God decided to use me.

If God can use someone like me, God can use someone like you. 

Email me at bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com.

BO'S ACTION STEPS

1. Identify your weaknesses.
2. Offer them to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to transform them into strengths. (For example, if you're addicted to pornography, ask God to heal you and transform you so that you can help others in the same predicament.)
3. Open yourself to what God will ask you to do for Him. When you hear Him calling you, just say yes and watch how He will move things — to heal you and use you.



By JP Paul Hernandez
As told to Marjorie Duterte



Prophet to the Misunderstood

Hey, I'm in Megamall, let's have coffee," said the text message that I received from Obet Cabrillas, one of the Light of Jesus (LOJ) Family's Feast builders.

A few hours later, I was pouring out my heart to him.

He didn't say anything. He just listened. He accepted, loved and believed in me.

It was a turning point in my life. He sat with me and saw that I had great energy but that it went in the wrong direction and had to re-purpose it. He is a great preacher but his making time for me made a difference.

I thought, "I want to be part of this mission, whatever this is." It was not even on my mind to serve full-time or become a Feast builder. I just wanted to serve God.

This happened in 2010, when I joined the Radical Training Course, LOJ's formation program for men, which Obet headed.

What's in a Name?

My mother was bedridden for six months when she was pregnant with me. She read the whole Bible during that time. I was named after her two favorite characters, Jeremiah and Paul, thus my nickname, JP Paul.

My dad was not that present when I was growing up. He was preoccupied with work and was involved in many organizations. I was a football athlete in grade school and my dad didn't get to watch any of my games. It was painful to see other fathers who were there for their children. My mom was also busy building her career, so I was left with my grandparents most of the time.

My parents separated when I was six years old but through my grandparents' intervention, they joined a Marriage Encounter seminar and got back together. My

younger brother was born and I was mad at him because by then he was being loved more than I was.

Young and Misunderstood

I was always being compared to other people. The negative words I received while growing up made me feel I wasn't good enough. My grades were always low and I kept falling short of my family's and other people's expectations of me. I was a failure.

Playing football was my escape. Then we found out that I had been born with only one kidney and I was asked to stop playing. I was frustrated because it was the only thing I liked doing and now I couldn't do it anymore. I was ashamed of myself and felt worthless.

Then when I was 13, I was molested in a department store. A stranger took me inside the fitting room and abused me.

All that baggage made me an angsty teenager. I turned to my *barkada* (group of friends) in an all-boys' school and the only way to prove my worth was having a lot of girls. Consequently, I broke many hearts.

My parents were part of the Bukas Loob sa Diyos community and they brought me there. At first, I attended because there were many beautiful girls, but surprisingly I found myself attending every week. I liked serving. But the problem was I was leading a double life. I was in a prayer meeting on Saturdays but on weekdays I was a sinful guy.

From Saul to Paul

When I was 15 years old, our family joined a Family Encounter. For the first time, I opened up to my father all my hurts. It was the first time, too, that I heard him say, "My son, I'm sorry, I love you."

That weekend, my stony heart started to melt.

I became head of ministries and groups in the community.

I gave short exhortations and talks despite growing up with a stutter. I couldn't speak properly and I was scolded because I couldn't deliver my message clearly. I practiced slowing down when I spoke so I could be understood. It was hard.

In 2009, I was mending a broken heart. Career-wise, I felt there was something missing. At the same time, I experienced family and community problems. I had so many unresolved issues. I was a broken man. At 5'10" and 185 pounds, I may appear to others as a tough guy, but deep inside I was crying for love. People didn't know that; they thought it was OK to hurt me because I could handle it.

During that time, I prayed, "Lord, I've been serving You for a decade and this is how You reward my love for You." I felt I wasn't blessed and I had many heartaches. I went back to my vices and backslid in my service.

Then I was invited to The Feast and to the Radical Men where Obet, just by accepting and loving me, turned my life around.

He asked, "What are you made for?" The talks during The Feast that time were about passion and potential. I realized the biggest thing

that I loved most was serving.

Obet said, "JPaul, there's a Feast that needs you. I want to send you. They need a good man."

In December 2010, I began serving at The Feast Ortigas. I started not as a speaker; instead, I would do whatever task they would assign to me, from ushering to emceeing to creatives.

As I enjoyed serving at The Feast, I realized I don't have to prove myself to anyone. God loves me as I am. He does not wait for one to be perfect before he could serve. He will place you in the battlefield and there He will mold you. That was how He made me better.

In 2012, Vic Español, Ortigas Feast builder, went out of the country for two and a half months. He wanted me to preach weekly for 10 weeks. After my Monday night talks, I was already thinking of my next talk for the coming week. Vic was instrumental in building me up as a leader. He asked me to join the LOJ's School of Leadership, which trains builders for The Feasts.

Being Jeremiah

For the longest time, I didn't believe in myself. Like the prophet Jeremiah, I was reluctant. I felt I wasn't holy enough, not good enough.

But like Jeremiah, who was the youngest prophet in the



JPaul with his parents, Paulette and Jerry, and younger brother Jon.

Bible, I was always the youngest person in the group — even in my youth ministry before and now as a Feast builder of The Feast Greenhills.

The Lord said to me, "I prepared you for the last 25 years — here's to the last 50. Work!"

Jeremiah failed so many times. He was depressed, but at the end of his lamentations he said, "You remain the same forever! Your throne continues from generation to generation..."

God brought me back to my original design — a loving person. I was tainted with a label, and I believed I was a bad person. But that wasn't God's design for me. I am a good man because I worship a good God.

Apostle to the Misunderstood

I can also see myself in Paul, who was called the "humbled one." He saw himself as little, not as great as the other Apostles, but without him, the Church would not have propagated.

He was the person for the unchurched. He was also misunderstood but his love for God and the mission was of a different class.

When Vic told me in July 2013, "O mag-build ka na ng Feast," I couldn't sleep. But the Lord said, "I've got this. This is mine."

I just know that when I hold my Bible, I declare, "Lord, this is what I'm made for."


I believe I was chosen to love the misunderstood, the outcasts, the hurting. I know how it feels to be misunderstood and I'm sure a lot of people experience that. I want to love them. I can love because I've been loved.

"Never give up on people because I'll never give up on you," the Lord told me.

Every time I go up on stage at The Feast, I pray, "Lord, let me love these people the way You want me to."

I want to do something revolutionary and innovative with Feast Greenhills. "The glory of God is man fully alive," St. Irenaeus said. It's the inspiration behind our slogan: "Being fully alive never felt this good."

I'm just doing what was done for me, trying to plant the seed. Just seeing a transformed life makes me happy.

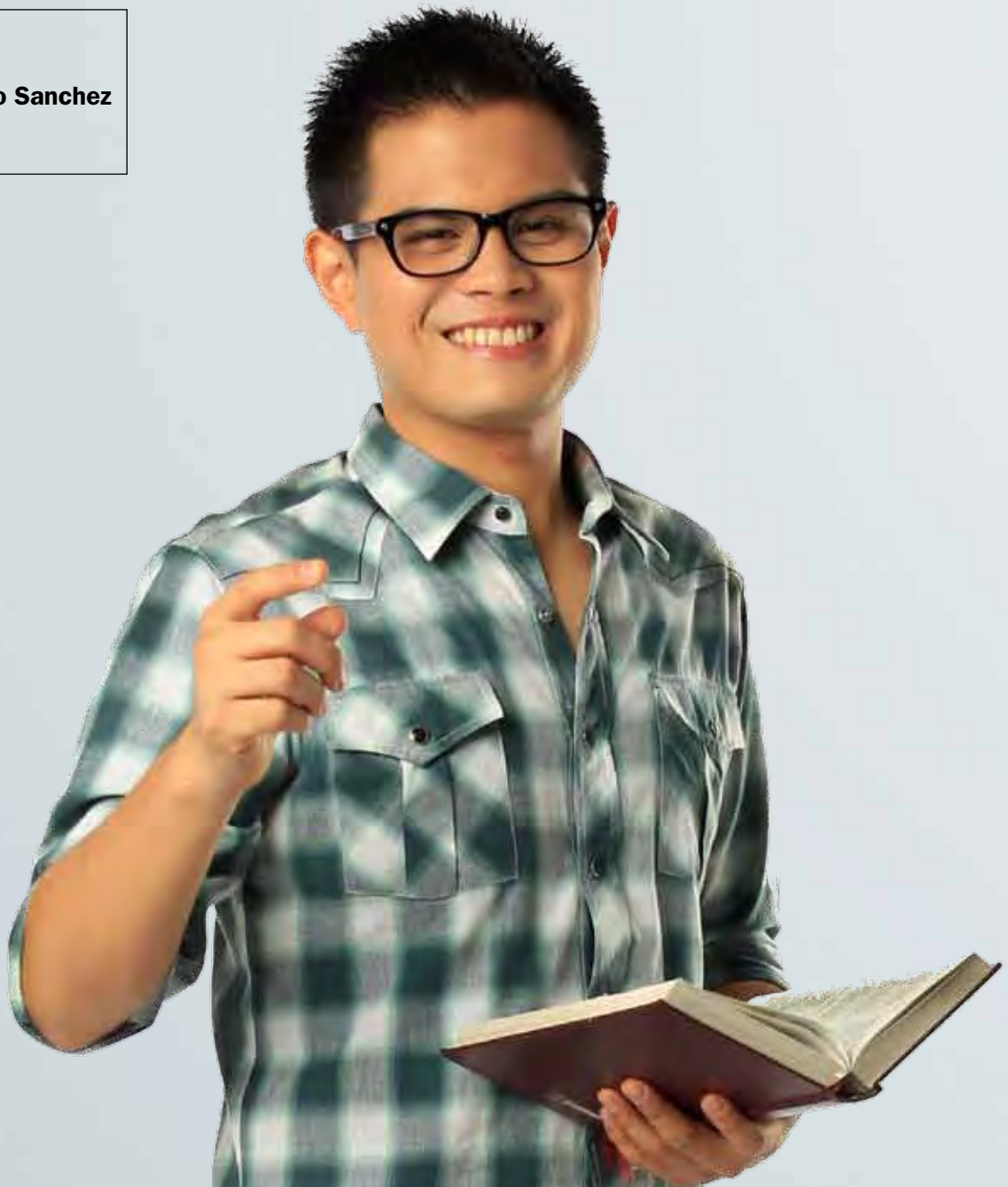
The task is big but the mission is simple — love God, love yourself, love people. I'm going to retire doing this. 



Like Prophet Jeremiah, JP Paul was a reluctant preacher.

**Special
Section**

By Bo Sanchez



HOW TO START LIVING IN HEAVEN NOW

Several months ago, God refreshed me. I was invited to give a retreat to a group of missionary priests in Mindanao. Believe me, these guys were the real Indiana Jones. But they weren't searching for earthly treasure. They would go to the farthest, the most dangerous corners of the planet, to find another kind of treasure: the forgotten person who needs their love.

These rugged men live in the most treacherous parts of the country. Four of their brother priests were already killed, some tortured. Yet instead of getting scared, they're emboldened to serve God even more.

Some of them receive death threats regularly. And escaping kidnap attempts is already a way of life for them.

I met priests who ministered in war-torn Jolo. One of them worked there for 13 years. He was already 74 years old, yet I still saw passion burn in his eyes. "I can die in Jolo," he said to me.

I met priests who lived in the string of tiny islands in Tawi-Tawi. One of them has been serving God in that place for 22 years, living with the indigenous people there — the Tausug and Samal (sea gypsies). Every day, these priests rode a boat to visit the few, very poor Catholics in those islands.

I also met priests who lived up in the mountains, serving the Manobo tribes.

I met priests who worked in slum areas in the city. One priest told me that he was visiting sick people in a squatters' area when, all of a sudden, he felt the cold metal of the nozzle of a .45-caliber pointed behind his head. "Click!" He heard the man pull the trigger. But by God's miracle, the weapon jammed. And that day, he lived to tell this story to me.

One morning, I saw these priests pray in the chapel. I observed how these priests loved to pray. They prayed with their heart. I guess when your life is in constant danger, you have no choice but to develop a deep prayer life.

And I noticed how humble they were. Let me explain how I know. It was my fellow preacher and Feast builder of Sta. Rosa, Jon Escoto, who gave the entire retreat. I just gave one talk in the program. So, before going there, I asked Jon, "What topic do you want me to give?" Jon said, "Give a talk on 'No Fear.'"

So when I arrived at the retreat house, not knowing yet the stories I told you above, I preached to them about "going out of your comfort zone and going into your courage zone." Later on, I realized how silly my talk was to them. Because here I was, living in the comforts of Manila — while they were out there in war-torn areas, living in their courage zones 24 hours a day.

But these priests — battle-worn and battle-scarred — listened to me like I was the brave one. A few of them were in their sixties and seventies (the oldest among them was 80), yet they sat in front of me like little children, drinking in my every word.

They were happy men.

Why? Because their hearts are filled with love.

And I believe their heaven starts now.

This is why I love giving my message today: Because to these missionary priests, no earthly reward is enough to motivate them to do what they are doing now. It can only be eternal rewards.

But not just any kind of eternal reward will suffice. For example, heavenly mansions and streets paved in gold won't motivate these guys. Halos and angel wings won't motivate them. For these modern Indiana Jones, they have only one great treasure, one eternal reward — and that is the Rewarder Himself, Jesus Christ.

They love Jesus. He is their Reward.

This verse has become their life: "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

It's Your Turn: Where Are You Living Now?

You're not a missionary priest in Mindanao.

Perhaps you're a call center agent in Manila, working hard so you can send your kids to school.

Or a nurse on night shift, working overtime, so you could support your mother's medical bills.

Or an entrepreneur, trying hard to prosper your business, so you could give extra benefits to your employees.

Or a father of two kids, playing with them even when you're tired, because you want to tell them how important they are to you.

Or a mother of three, working in the office by day and cooking and tutoring and cleaning by night, sacrificing your life for your family.

If you live a life of love, you're now living in heaven.

Keep loving. Keep serving. Keep giving.

Because Jesus is your biggest Reward.

You're an Immortal Being

It's a bit difficult to swallow that we are immortal beings because we *seem* to be dying already. We see its undeniable evidence whenever we look at the mirror. We see that some parts of our body are dying.

Look at your hair. Some of us started dying our hair many years ago. Denuded spots appeared very early and no amount of "reforestation program" has worked. Your theme song is "Shine, Jesus, Shine."

Look at your skin. A grandmother had her six-year-old grandchild on her lap. The little girl touched her grandmother's face and asked, "Did God make you, *Lola*?"

"Yes, God made me," the older woman said.

The girl then touched her own face and asked, "Did God make me, *Lola*?"

"Yes, God made you, too," grandmother said.

The little girl thought hard and smiled, "You know what, Grandma? I think God is getting better in making people."

Death is all around us.

Our friends die. Our relatives die. And their bodies get burned in an oven or get eaten by worms. Either way, their bodies disappear from the face of the earth.

But here's our belief: A part of you does not die. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies" (John 11:25).

Death isn't a dead end but a *doorway*.

Death is simply relocation. Death is changing your soul's address from one universe to another universe.

Believe me, this powerful truth — if you truly grasp it — will dramatically impact the way you live every single day of your life.

Rewards Ceremony

One day, Jesus said, "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:1). Jesus was saying, "Hey, don't try to get all your rewards on earth. There are more rewards in heaven."

I believe that there's a rewards ceremony on earth but the bigger rewards ceremony is in heaven. The Law of the Farm — that you harvest what you plant, and reap what you sow — doesn't only apply today on earth but also tomorrow in heaven. What you do in this world are seeds that bear fruit even *after* you die.

God Is a Gentleman

The Law of the Farm means that *you* choose where you want to go — heaven or hell.

Some people think that God brings good people to heaven and bad people to hell. Some people imagine God to be this celestial policeman that grabs us by the collar and throws us into the prison of hell where we will languish in eternal pain.

I beg to disagree. God is a Father. He created us to be one with Him forever. So heaven is His choice for you. Always.

But He won't force you to go there if you don't want to. The Bible says He knocks at the door of your heart. He won't barge in. He won't bulldoze His way in. He's the perfect gentleman.

One theologian said that people who go to hell are not forced to go there.

There will be no guards to drag them there in chains, while they scream, "Nooooooooo! Give me one last chance!" *They will go there on their own*. Every person who goes to hell will do so out of his own volition.

Let me put it this way: When we die, there'll be two signposts.

One points to heaven and the other points to hell. Some people, because of the hatred in their hearts, will choose hell.

Your Afterlife Is a Mirror of What's in Your Heart

When I was in high school, my friends and I went to Fiesta Carnival in Cubao. (During my time, that was the only place where you could ride a decent rollercoaster.)

Let's call my two classmates Ulap and Apoy. Ulap loved rollercoasters. He couldn't stop dreaming about it, couldn't stop talking about it, and couldn't stop riding it every chance he got. But not Apoy. He feared it with every ounce of his body. But on that day, Ulap dared Apoy. He said, "Ride the rollercoaster or you're one big chicken!" And Ulap, being a typical bully that he was, shouted, "Chicken! Chicken! Chicken!" a hundred times until Apoy finally agreed to ride the rollercoaster.

Which was a big mistake. Because Apoy couldn't even ride the merry-go-round without throwing up. For Apoy, an escalator was already too exciting.

So, when Ulap and Apoy rode the rollercoaster, I heard them shrieking at the top of their voices. "Wheeeeeeee!" and "Whaaaaaa!" both of them screamed. Except that Ulap was shrieking out of sheer delight and Apoy was shrieking out of sheer terror.

When both stepped out of the rollercoaster, Ulap was in heaven and Apoy was in hell. It was the same ride, but they had two very different experiences.

My story is an imperfect analogy. (Please don't take my analogy literally.) But I share it to you to emphasize one simple point: *I believe your afterlife will be a mirror of what is in your heart*. A loving person will feel at home in heaven. A loving person will feel at home with God. But a hateful, selfish, cruel person will feel tortured in heaven because he can't stand the presence of perfect love — that he'd rather go to hell — away from that perfect love.

3 Things That Will Happen in Heaven

Do you have future plans of going to heaven?

(No rush going there, by the way.)

I've never been to heaven, but from reading the Bible and the writings of saints and spiritual authors, let me describe three important things about heaven...

1. You'll Be Fulfilled Perfectly

Good News: I heard there'll be no dieting in heaven. You can eat what you want and you won't gain a single pound. You'll have the



perfect figure, the perfect skin, the perfect teeth, and the perfect hair. (But I doubt that there'll be sinful food in heaven! Ha, ha!)

Bald people will have their hair back.

People who have dentures will witness each of their 32 teeth resurrect from the dead.

Do you have pimple scars? Stretch marks? Cellulite deposits that rival the Central Bank's deposits? They all can't enter heaven. You'll have to leave them at the door.

Do you want to have six-pack abs? You can have 12 if you want.

And do you want a Ferrari? You can have 37 of them in different colors. (Though honestly, I doubt you'll be interested in these things in heaven.)

But here's what I know: Every dream you have will come true. Every desire will be fulfilled. Every need will be met. Every plan will be accomplished. Every talent will be used. Every potential will be realized.

Dreams Come True

When I was a kid, I wanted to be an astronaut. In heaven, I can make that dream come true. I can go galaxy-hopping in a blink of an eye. This morning, I can go to Jupiter. For lunch, I can go to Neptune. By afternoon, I can go to the constellation Andromeda. Tomorrow, I can go to another universe altogether.

When my friend was a kid, he wanted to be a rock star. Well, in heaven, he can fulfill that dream, too. From what I hear, heaven is a nonstop worship concert — so rock stars are needed to sing to the Rock of all Ages.

This is just my guess, but I believe that in heaven, there'll be no difference between thinking about our dreams and turning our dreams into reality. *When you think about it, you make it appear in front of you.*

Wealth Is Permanent

On Planet Earth, the rich today may not be rich tomorrow. The billionaires of today may be the beggars of tomorrow. But in heaven, you'll be rich permanently. Jesus said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19-20). In other words, there is no recession or inflation or economic collapse in heaven. And there is zero crime in heaven. Why? Because our treasure isn't gold or silver or diamonds. Our treasure is God Himself.

I love saying this: *The only wealth you keep is the wealth that you give away.* As long as you keep your wealth to yourself, it rots on earth. But if you give it away, you "wire transfer" your wealth to your future home in heaven.

Tears Are Wiped Away

In heaven, the Bible says, "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 21:14). No more sickness. No more disappointments. No more debts. No more trials. No more problems. No more conflicts. No more misunderstandings. No more hurts. No more worries. No more anxieties. No more fears.

There will only be love.

2. You'll Be Loved Perfectly

Throughout history, tens of thousands of people have reported near-death experiences that say that death is a doorway. But scientists will never accept these as proof of the afterlife.

Dr. Eben Alexander, a highly trained neurosurgeon, was such a man. He is a professor who taught for 15 years at Harvard University and he did *not* believe in these near-death experiences. He believed that all these stories were fantasies, produced by brains under extreme stress.

But in 2008, he contracted a rare type of meningitis and he fell into a deep coma. The part of his brain that produced thoughts and emotions completely shut off. He was virtually brain dead. After seven days of being a "vegetable" on a hospital bed, and as the doctors were thinking of stopping treatment, his eyes opened.

The fact that he recovered was already a medical miracle. But the bigger miracle was what happened during those seven days. When it was medically impossible for him to have any kind of thought or emotion, Dr. Alexander journeyed into a beautiful place of incredible peace. In that place, he felt loved. Completely, utterly, perfectly loved. He also felt connected to everything. But an angel told him that it wasn't yet his time, so he was sent back.

Dr. Alexander, the neurosurgeon and Harvard professor, believes that he went to heaven. And his experience was very similar to the tens of thousands of near-death experiences all throughout history. They contain common elements: overwhelming peace, beautiful light, the presence of an angel, or heavenly being, or God Himself.

But the most common description these near-death experiences give is that when they entered heaven, they were flooded with a deep sense of being totally, completely and perfectly loved. Dr. Eben said he heard these words again and again: *You can do nothing wrong; you're worthy of love.*

It reminded me of my favorite prayer: "I'm totally, completely and perfectly loved." I say it many times a day. It heals my body. It heals my emotions. It heals my spirit. Why? Because perfect love is the deepest need of my entire being. And I will receive it in heaven.

But love flows in two ways...


3. You'll Love Perfectly

Some people ask, "But Bo, what will we do in heaven? Won't we be bored there, wearing pajamas, sitting on white fluffy clouds, and playing our harps all day?"

I don't think so.

Who says we're going to do nothing all day? I believe we'll be fully engaged, fully occupied, fully loving humanity for all eternity.

That's why I believe that earth is a training camp for heaven. On earth, God trains you to love like Jesus. Because loving God and others is the only thing that you'll be doing in heaven!

Start loving now and you start living in heaven. 

Email me at bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com.

When J started saying yes to God, things began to fall into place.



A LIFE of MIRACLES

By Jonathan "J" Yogawin as told to Marjorie Duterte

I was in a foreign land, wanting to pray, but hesitant to bring out my *Didache* or rosary because I was in a Muslim country. Suddenly I glanced at the door and it struck me — there it was, the outline of the cross. It was as if the Lord was telling me, "I am here." Instantly, I felt His presence.

This happened in December 2013 when I was attending a coaching conference in Malaysia.

This is a far cry from how I started in my spiritual journey as a teenager. Even when I wasn't aware of Him, He has always been there — maneuvering things for me to get closer to Him and to fulfill His plan for my life.

Ad Jesum per Mariam

When I was in second year high school, I dabbled with the occult: horoscopes, mythology, white magic, candles, crystals — something that interested my young mind then.

One day, I saw on TV that a satanist had been caught. I got goosebumps because everything that he used, I also had. I gathered all my stuff, put them in a bag, and got rid of them.

A few days later, as I was cleaning up a shelf in our living room, I found prayer books, a book of the saints, and *stampitas* (little prayer cards). They belonged to my mom who was a former nun when she was younger. She had to go out for health reasons and was eventually given dispensation. She had already left the convent when she met my dad in Baguio.

I began reading my mom's prayer books. I got engrossed with the saints and their writings and I started reading the history of the Church and other spiritual literature. One of the very first books that I bought was the *Glories of Mary* by St. Alphonsus Liguori. I fell in love with Mary and, through her, got to know Jesus.

When I was in college, I was passing by a corridor of our school when I heard people singing. It was a Life in the Spirit Seminar. I saw some of my friends there. More importantly, there was food, and so I joined. This started my journey in the Charismatic movement.

Then and until now, it has been an on-and-off relationship with the Lord, committing then backsliding, then going back again. Thank God He always awaits my return.

A Stroke of Grace

In 2009, I was working as head of training of a multinational company based in Baguio. While

trying to deal with the stressful demands of the job, I was also discerning what I wanted to do with my life, wondering if maybe God was calling me somewhere else.

One day in November, I was walking in a mall when my head began to ache. I went to a doctor's clinic but the line was long. So I went to a dental clinic instead to check if my headache was connected to my toothache. Unfortunately, the pain got worse and I felt as if something burst at the back of my head. Then suddenly the left side of my body became paralyzed. The intern at the dental clinic rushed me to the doctor's clinic, where I stayed for a while until friends brought me to the hospital. Fortunately, my body returned to normal and I went back to work after a week's rest.

But at my first hour back at work, I had my second stroke. This time, both sides of my body were paralyzed. I stayed in the hospital for a few more weeks. Then another miracle happened — I was able to move again.

I finally took a sick leave and, because I had more time in my hands, I went to Manila to attend the Kerygma Conference. The theme then was "Dream Big, Win Big." To my surprise, I received a message from Obet Cabrillas, whom I had met while serving at the Spirit of Love Catholic Community. He invited me to be a campus missionary of the Light of Jesus Family. From then on, my prayer became, "Should I resign or not?"

I struggled with this decision because I wondered how I would survive in Manila. I was sick, would be jobless, and without money for my daily needs, but I trusted God.

True enough, He arranged things for me by providing me with a condo unit, and a part-time job with a company where I previously did consulting work. Everything just fell into place.

In March 2010, I moved to Manila but by April, I had run out of money. I was taking medicines that people in their 70s would take for their cholesterol and triglycerides, and I felt so weak. I cried out to God, "Lord, help me!"

After a few days, I was introduced to an alternative supplement and in two weeks all my vital signs became normal. By May, I was not taking any maintenance medicines. I had fully recovered.

I believe God had allowed everything to happen so that I can get out of the corporate life and be in His ministry. I started the Campus Feast at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines. I was also one of the first missionaries to support the opening of a new session of Feast Manila.

I knew in my heart that God wanted me to be here. I trusted the Lord that things will work out and He supplied me with what I needed. Everything was truly a stroke of grace.

Yes, Lord!

In January 2011, I was invited to visit Feast Alabang. By then, I had joined the Light of Jesus School of Leadership, not knowing that it was a school for Feast builders who are tasked to lead the Catholic prayer gathering of LOJ in different locations. Obet asked me if I wanted to serve as a worship leader in Bo Sanchez's Feast at the Philippine International Convention Center or as a Feast builder in Alabang. I felt that being a Feast builder was such a big responsibility and that I'd rather be a worship leader. It was a heart wrenching decision because I didn't know anyone there. But after praying about it, Bo said to me, "J, just do what God is telling you to do."

When I first attended a session of Feast Alabang, Arun Gogna, its senior Feast builder, was on stage. He said, "Welcome to the place of miracles!"

I thought, "Wow, maybe God really wants me to be here!" I felt His anointing of ease when the things that I set out to do as singles ministry head succeeded. People joined the activities even if they didn't know me.

I was also blessed with the support of Arun. I was surprised to learn that my parents had taken care of him when he went up to Baguio many years ago.

I realized that when God plans your life, He takes care of the details and one just needs to listen and obey. True to His leading, I became the Feast builder of Wednesday Feast Alabang (WFA) in June 2011 and Fifth Feast Alabang (FFA) in October 2012.

My decision to go to Manila and Alabang was all a risk. I placed my life and my parents' lives on the line, trusting that God will take care of me and of them and He has proven Himself faithful. From that decision onwards, I've been saying yes, doing His leading even if it seems crazy at times.



J's treasures: his mom Mercy and dad Jose.


Do It for Love

I want to lead with love so that others may have life.

Perhaps I have been prepared for this mission. All my experiences, being a professor and handling youth ministries, have helped me in relating with people and how the service was done. My corporate background helped me to be more mature and to deal with the world. My involvement in theater and public speaking prepared me for the stage and allowed me to communicate effectively. With coaching as my core gift, I want to effect positive change.

I do not deserve to have these things despite all my sins, weaknesses and failures, but God gave them to me. It's pure grace. It's mercy.

I am truly grateful and humbled when people come up to me and say they were blessed with my talk. I believe that I'm fulfilling His purpose. Seeing people benefit and helping change a life make it all worth it.

I see miracles happening every day. They may not be big but the miracle is that I am able to see them, just like the cross at the back of the door when I was in a foreign land. Indeed, Lord, You are here. You are with me. 



“ SOME MIGHT SAY THAT I'M TOO
YOUNG TO PREPARE FOR MY FUTURE ”

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TOO YOUNG TO
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Two years later, I continue to invest in good, strong companies and I am very happy to watch my money grow and to save it up for my future. Even if I'm still in high school, I want to be able to afford the things I want to have and be able to do the things I want to do someday and that's what I'm preparing for. At the same time, I still have plenty of time for my schoolwork, to play the sports that I love and to have fun with my friends and family.

Miguel Lee, 13
High School Student



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PHILIPPINES

By Michele S. Alignay, MA, RGC

Creating Alternatives for Young Kids

I'm bored! What else can I do?"

We often hear kids say these lines. While toys, multimedia devices, and the whole world are just there for them to explore, they still look for what else they can do. Many times, I see kids being hushed by adults by handing them the magic tablet. Instead of letting these tots move, explore and play, the screen becomes their pacifier to keep them still. Convenient to adults, yes.

But despite having all the gadgets and apps available to them, kids still say, "I'm bored!" This is a chicken-and-egg case. We allow kids too much gadget time for them to stay put. After which, they are still bored. Precious time for real play and development was lost to screen time too. It just goes to say that the longer children are exposed to digital media, the longer they cannot stand real-life activities later. Moderation and management are key.

Toddlerhood to early childhood (two to seven years old) is the crucial time for optimum development of children. This is also called the play age. At this age, children need to acknowledge and learn to make full use of their God-given time, talents and material treasures.

While it is easy just to plug them, kids need to balance digital time and real-life play. Parents need to deliberately make kids see the fun and value of varied daily activities. Easier said than done. This can be a challenge, but it can be done.

My son Migo, 7, used to question our rules on gadget use. We tell him, "If we allow you to watch TV or use the tablet longer, then you will have less time to play outside, play with your toys or with your sister, and do other creative fun stuff."

And so, while we do not rigidly plan our kids' day as to what they should do, we let them appreciate the value of real play. Creating alternatives means going back to the basics, like the play we had when we were kids. Consider the following factors in judging what else you can let your kids do:

Age. This is the best indicator on appropriate activities. Toddlers need face-to-face activities with adults. Let them walk around, play ball, build blocks, sort shapes, play peek-a-boo, engage in funny conversations, and learn names of things around them.


Preschool age is the fun stage where all they have in mind is play. While they play, they create and develop physically, mentally and emotionally. Let them play outdoors, ride bikes, play pretend games, read and story-tell, do crafts, write and doodle with big crayons and pencils. While we worry a lot with the mess and the safety, we cannot

buy the joy of being dirty, learning to do something new, and experiencing the real thing. This is also the best time for kids to develop their confidence and build the skills needed in knowing "I can!"

Interest and Skills. As our kids grow older, we need to note their growing interests and emerging abilities. As for my kids' varied interests, my son, Migo, likes to play outdoors, be active, play with cars and Lego blocks, while my four-year-old daughter, Maia, likes to dance, skip, do crafts, and play pretend. Both our kids like to read and chat, and so we give time for such activities daily. While we boost them in these areas, we have a good lead that the activities we are engaging them in are their interests.

Play and Development. Play is for kids as work is for adults. Accordingly, when children play, they build their own world where they create and imagine. They develop mentally, emotionally, physically and even socially. A mom of an eight-year-old kid asked me what else can her son do if he cannot have too much TV. I told her, "Let him play!" She replied, "*Huh, laro lang?* (Just play?)" Let us not undermine the value of real play for kids, as this is the big laboratory for them. It combines learning, fun, recreation, imagination and skill-building for the children, which can never be replaced by what all the gadgets and apps can do.

We do not need to buy them costly toys or all the apps available. They need us parents and caregivers to be there to teach and guide them through this stage and engage them in real-life activities. Through these, we can also let the children appreciate the blessings that God has given them through nature, through the home and other resources that they experience.

For more insights on this topic, get a copy of the book, *Growing Up Wired: Raising Kids in the Digital Age* (Anvil, 2013). I am blessed to be co-author of this breakthrough book. 

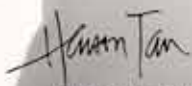
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Always Listening. Always Understanding.

By Rosanne Romero



SHREK

What heavy burdens are you carrying?

I was sharing with a friend some thoughts I had on Psalm 23 from the reading plan in *Laudate*. And she, in turn, started to share with me trivia that her pastor shared with them about sheep. He said that sheep are stupid and stubborn. I was giggling and rolling my eyes at the same time. What a combination. Never mind intelligent and stubborn. But stupid and stubborn? Trouble can't be far behind for the stupid AND stubborn.

Now, note that Psalm 23 opens with "The Lord is my Shepherd..." Uh-huh. So if He's our Shepherd, what does that make of us? Sheep. And what are sheep again? Stupid and stubborn. Hmm, that sounds like me.

You know how lions are whipped in a circus cage to do tricks? Or how dogs are trained to dance on hind legs? Or how parrots are made to talk? Well, sheep don't have any tricks. Not even one. They're so stupid they can get lost just as they eat grass.

That's what brought us to talking about Shrek, the sheep. I'd be surprised if you haven't heard of him yet. He became famous several years ago when he was found walking out of a cave after seven years. (Some reports say six years.) He was one of 17,000 sheep in a 27-acre farm.

See, Shrek had been brought out to pasture to graze. And he just kept taking one step at a time mindlessly away from the fold. And so no one saw how it actually happened, but he went missing for seven years!


Needless to say, seven years is a long time to grow hair. Or fleece. So during all this time his fleece grew without anyone there to shave it. When he was finally found and shaved, his fleece weighed an amazing 27 kilograms — enough fleece to make 20 large men's suits. Normally, sheep have a fleece weighing just under 4.5 kilograms to about 6.5 kilograms — maximum.

And so, for seven years, Shrek carried six times the regular weight of his fleece. Simply because he was away from the shepherd.

Besides Psalm 23, there's Ezekiel 34:31, where it says: "You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God," declares the Sovereign Lord.

Now this may be me stretching it, and the parallelism doesn't fit as snugly. But I liken Shrek to those of us who know the Shepherd but wander away anyway. When we move away from the care of the Shepherd, we end up accumulating burdens. Heavy burdens we were not meant to carry in the first place.

When Shrek was found, the shepherd took care of shearing all that fleece and it took only 28 minutes to do it... compared to the seven years he was lugging it around. And all it took was coming out of a cave.

If we just quit moving away and wandering into deep caves, and instead move alongside our Shepherd, our overgrown fleece, our self-imposed burdens, can be shorn by the Shepherd who knows our frame. 

"Come to me all you who are weary and heavily burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble of heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

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Interpreter Jane Hanjaya mimicking George's movements while translating his talk to the audience.

By George Tolentino Gabriel

K
Preacher

The Divine Interpreter

Last year I had the opportunity to speak to 5,000 Indonesians at the 16th anniversary celebration of the Heman Salvation Ministry in Surabaya. It was my first time to be in Indonesia — and my first time to preach with an interpreter. I had a blast.

I was told that I should pause every now and then so that my sentences wouldn't be too long and too hard to translate. So I played with the translator a bit by chopping up my sentences into random words and phrases while striking an exaggerated pose with every stop. What made it hilarious was my interpreter also paused and posed exactly when I would, even following me around on stage wherever I went just so she could copy me as best as she could. People were laughing the whole time I was joshing her, but later on, when I stopped toying with her, I saw her sincere effort and passion to make sure my message got across to the audience.

God has the same passion for us. He goes out of His way to communicate His love in ways we can understand. In order to do this, He sent His Son, Jesus — the Divine Interpreter.


On Christmas eve, His Word became flesh. I believe He did this to say that our love should not remain on our lips, but be manifested in action.

As He grew older, He showed us how to live. And take note, He did this as a man, not just as God. He literally demonstrated how a living, breathing human being — one who bleeds when pricked and goes hungry after 40 days — can live a life of love. He lent a listening ear to the troubled soul. He made outcasts feel like His friends. He sternly corrected His peers for their own good without sugarcoating. He obeyed His parents. He believed in people. He stood up for His principles even in the face of death.

And that was when He demonstrated the ultimate meaning of love — to lay one's life down for His friends. He even pushed it further by dying for His enemies. But before He took His last breath, He forgave those who hurt Him at the height of His pain.

This Lenten season, we remember how Jesus interpreted the love of His Father for us. Let's recall the people in our lives who were interpreters as well. And with that, pay it forward.

Is there someone you know who needs to hear God's voice? Maybe that person hasn't heard Him yet because of all the noise in this world. Or maybe he's heard Him but doesn't quite understand yet. Or maybe he needs to see it in action and not just hear it.

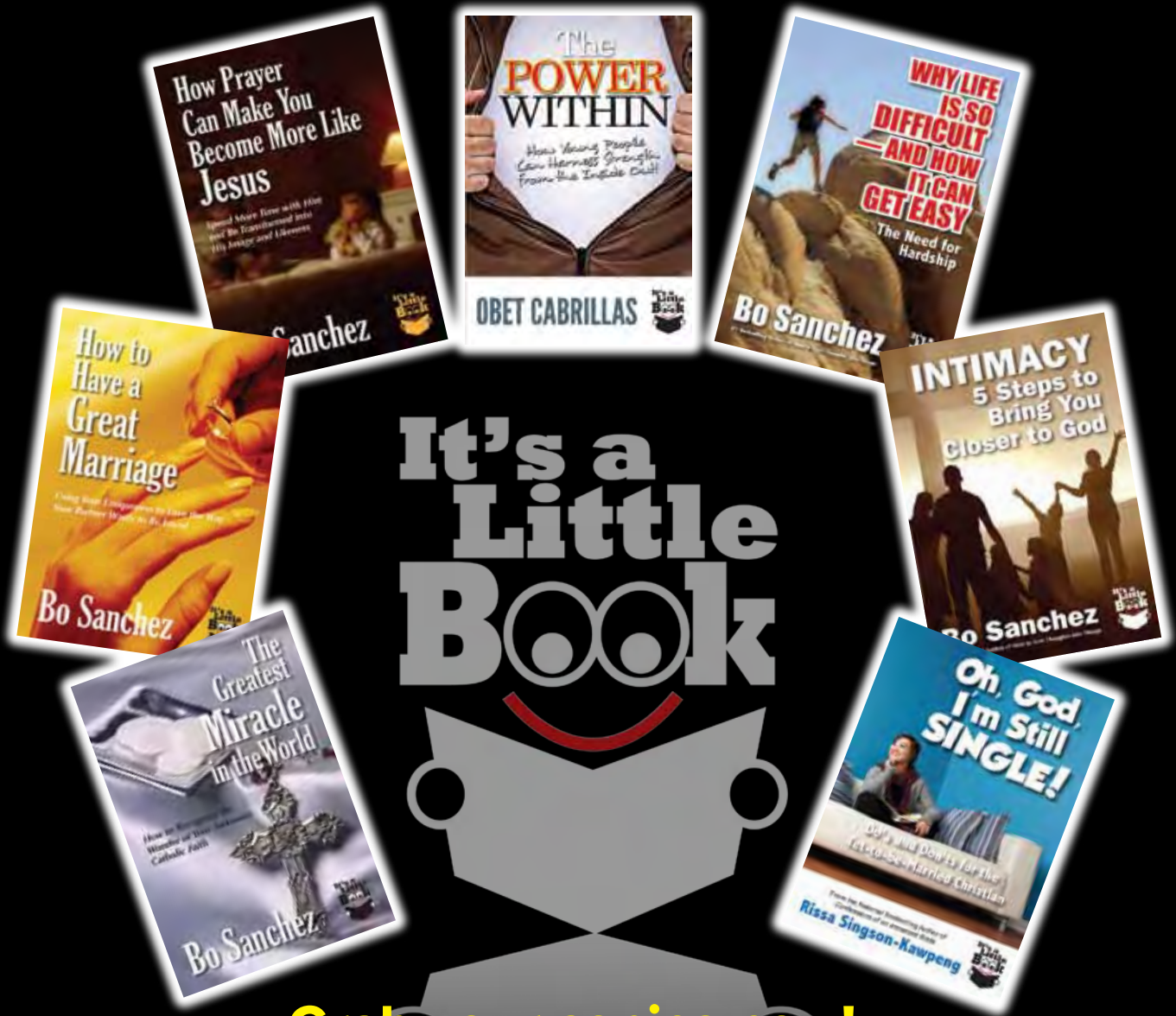
Who knows, you may just be the interpreter God needs. 

George Tolentino Gabriel is a full-time servant of the Light of Jesus Family who has been passionately communicating God's love through music, media and speech for over 20 years. He is the editor-in-chief of FISH, our award-winning youth magazine, the creative director of Shepherd's Voice Radio and TV Foundation, and the overall Feast worship director. He is also the author of the books, Love Life, named best youth book at the 2011 Catholic Mass Media Awards, and Live Life. But among all of his many roles, he is proudest to be called the husband of Dinah Chikiamco-Gabriel. Listen to him preach online at www.preacherinbluejeans.com and every Sunday at The Feast PICC 1:00 p.m. session.

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Keon, 3, and Yohance, 5, may not have come from the same tummy but God planned for them to be in the same loving family.

**One
Last
Story**

By Marina Cruz-Garcia

TWINS FROM DIFFERENT ORIGINS

People often told me that when I become a mother I will have twins. My mom and aunt are twins, and they say that the “twin” genes skips a generation. Since they are twins, their kids cannot be twins, but we, their kids, could have twins.

On December 11 of 2007, I got married to my husband, Rodel Tapaya Garcia, an artist like me. As newlyweds, we laid out our plans: to build our careers as artists, to save, and to have kids. We said we’d prioritize the first two, as the third one would be easy to do.

But when we thought we were ready to have a child, we realized it wasn’t easy for us.

I belong to a big family. My mom has four siblings while my father has 15. So you can imagine the high expectations on us.

When we were becoming impatient already, we went to a doctor. After some tests came the moment of truth. The doctor said, “You have polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) and your chance of conceiving is very low.”

It was a big blow for me. But since it was not impossible to have kids, we underwent some workups — but all to no avail.

I was feeling down, depressed and doubtful. I asked the Lord, “Do You really have plans for us?”

One day, in our studio, my husband and I were painting together. He casually asked the life-changing question, “*Pards*, (that’s how we call each other), what if we adopt?”

I paused before answering him. “Yes, I thought about that, too. If our goal is to start a family, why do we have to delay it?”

Immediately after our talk, I called an orphanage. I thought we were just going to choose a baby and then bring him or her home. But I was told to first apply for adoption through the Department of Social Welfare and Development, follow the necessary procedures, and submit some papers. Then a matching committee will match our child with us. The whole process, they told me, would take nine months to one year, sometimes up to two years.

After praying and learning about the process, we pushed through with our adoption plans, amidst discouragement from friends and family who said that we are still young and should be more patient.

Then came our very special day — October 27, 2009. We became parents of an 11-month-old baby boy. We were super happy and excited as new parents.

But after a month, we learned that God actually gave us not just one baby but two! I discovered that I have another one in my tummy!


While pregnant, I was very anxious — remember how twins run in our family? I thought, “What if I am having twins? Lord, I’ll soon look *losyang* (wasted) at my age!”

When I gave birth, it dawned on me that, indeed, God has given us twins — one through biological means and the other one through adoption.

Our two boys are now growing up healthy. Yohance is now five and our youngest, Keon, is three years old. And my husband and I are enjoying being parents to them.

I am so amazed at how beautiful God planned our family to be. Looking back, I am thankful we found it difficult to conceive at first because it opened us up to the wonderful gift of forming a family through adoption.

I realize that it’s true — we cannot outdo God’s creativity. He gave us twins and He did it in the most artistic, most unpredictable, and most exciting way possible.

Yes, we can make our own plans but God has bigger and better plans for us. And He is faithful to His plans. 

For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11-13)



Art time for the Garcias is a common bonding moment. Aside from being an artist, Marina is an advocate of adoption. For more info, visit www.awesomeadoptionsphilippines.com.

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

I pray that God lifts your trials, heals your diseases, blesses your problems, and directs you to the path He wants you to take. I pray that God removes your fears and gives 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 prayers 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. You formed them in Your image and likeness. You created them to love You as the ultimate goal of their lives. But the ways of the world have distracted them from their purpose. Many have distanced themselves from You because they are afraid You will reject them. Send them people who will give them Your love, Lord. Make them realize that You love them no matter what. Help them with Your grace to say yes to Your will for them. Grant them an unending desire to be with You in heaven by living their lives now in accordance to Your will. 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.