

華倫敦中華基督教會
Chinese Church in London

Baptism Celebration Service 2024

Youth & English Ministry



Testimonies

tng the next generation

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy universal church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Amen.

Romans 6:4–11

⁴ For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. ⁵ Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. ⁶ We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. ⁷ For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.

⁸ And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. ⁹ We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. ¹⁰ When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. ¹¹ So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

Anthony Tang

Croydon Congregation

I am grateful for the opportunity to share my experience with God in my life and to confirm my faith through baptism. Through God, I have found community and purpose in my life and I am thankful for his presence.

Growing up I did not understand the importance of church and would consider going to church as a chore and a waste of time; time spent which, at the time, I would have much preferred to stay at home and watch television or play games. The only times when I would really feel a connection to God would be during the camps which would make me feel closer to God and the other people there. With leaving camp, I would feel an overwhelming sense of faith, however this feeling would quickly fade over the week after.

The truth is for the longest time when I thought of God it would be with emotions of hate, anger and resentment. This is because during the summer of 2013 I lost my little brother. I had from the very deepest part of my heart prayed to God that my brother would be fine and return to us, however this was not what had happened, and my brother had passed away. This event completely shook my belief in God or the existence of God, because we were taught to believe that God was this all-knowing and all-powerful being that had a plan for everything. I thought to myself, "Where in his plan did he allow for my brother to leave our family so soon and cause my family so much pain and heartache?" While my family found peace and acceptance through God, I remained bitter and resentful for what had happened.

In the beginning of January this year, my Mum fell ill to a particularly severe case of the flu which impaired her breathing to a dangerous degree and she was sedated and put under intubation in the intensive care unit. Seeing her in this state deeply upset me and my thoughts returned to what had happened to my brother. I had gone home and for hours felt scared and alone with my thoughts of what could happen to my mum if she did not recover. Later that night, I was visited by uncle Howard and auntie Jada from church. They sat and prayed with me and helped me realise that although I had abandoned God, he did not abandon me. This allowed me to accept and turn to him for guidance. They told me how many members of our church community had gathered together in prayer for my mum, and it moved me that through God so many people would be connected to my mum; that she had a family in God that cared for her and prayed for her recovery. The years of hate and resentment in my heart for God had disappeared and it felt like an immense weight had been lifted. Thank you for all the prayers and visits to my mum from the members of church. Thanks be to God's grace

she would recover without issue and is now healthy again, and I am thankful to have God be a part of my life again.

I will continue to live my life knowing that God will never leave my side and will always be with me and I hope to give back to God and the community that helped me.

Cedric Tseng

Ignite Youth Group (Croydon)

Hi, my name is Cedric. I want to tell you about how Jesus changed my life and why I'm burying my old self and giving my whole life to Him today.

I was born into a Christian family and went to church since I was a kid. I was one of those kids who never took it seriously. Sure, I'd go out into the world and tell anyone I met that I was a Christian, but I never thought about what that truly entailed and what it meant to be a Christian other than someone who just went to church. I spent a lot of my time in church messing around up until the point I left Hong Kong for London.

I used to be a very angry and resentful person – I found it difficult to deal with things not going my way, and it was particularly hard to forgive people. This was because I was a rather arrogant person, perhaps from being rather “popular” at school in Hong Kong. This did not mix well with the fact that I was now the “new kid” at school in the UK. I kept my arrogance and lost my temper often, but I didn't really see it as an issue - it never had been, after all.

I started coming to CCI – Ignite youth group – in the summer of 2021. It was very new to me, not least because I was new to the country and didn't know anyone, but also because it was a very different kind of church to the one I went to in Hong Kong. The first year of my new life in the UK was one of the roughest years of my life. I would go to school, and no one would speak to me – the only place I really had any friends was in Ignite. I met a group of friends who were and still are very dear to me – in fact, I often think that I would have stopped going to church altogether if I didn't have that group of friends. It was through this community of people, who encouraged me to pursue God and understand what it meant to be a Christian, that I started to build my current relationship with Jesus. Ignite basically ignited my interest and passion to learn more about Jesus.

Looking back now, I can see the incredible ways that God worked and is still working in my life. I used to put myself above all else, even God, and He made me come back down to earth over time and realise just how great all His creation was. It started with some brutally honest conversations that the Holy Spirit drove me to have with my friends and leaders at church and at camps, which convicted me of some of the sinful habits that were driving me away from God.

In September last year, I was invited to go to my school's Christian union – Eltham College Christianity Explored (ECCE) – which, despite me having been at the school for more than

two years, I had never been to. I began to attend more and more, building a relationship with Christ along with both my leaders and my new friends. I truly believe that the Holy Spirit sent my friend to get me to go to ECCE - it was there that I was humbled thoroughly through getting to know Jesus intimately. Studying scripture made me realise just how ridiculous the anger and arrogance I carried with me was, and Jesus helped me offload that heavy weight.

I remember being at retreat this January, and we were doing a bible study on John. As we were reading John 10, verses 14-15 jumped out at me: *"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."* That was the exact moment I decided to give my life to Jesus. After all, if He proclaimed to know me and love me just as much as He and the Father knew and loved each other, then I really didn't have any valid excuse to not give my life to Him. He also willingly laid down His life for me, despite all of the sins I'd committed, all the times I had turned against Him, and all the times I had listened to the enemy and fallen. It was at that moment that I decided I wanted to turn around and follow Jesus.

From January until August, my faith and relationship with Jesus, although strong to start off, slowly degraded to the point where I was beginning to swear, fall into lust, and not put my all into serving Him. I even started having doubts about getting baptised. But in early August, I went to a camp called Revive, and during a prayer session the Holy Spirit came upon me and I fell to my knees and prayed. I prayed for forgiveness for my many sins and the many times I chose the wide, easy path of the devil. And I heard His answer - He said, "My son, you are forgiven." In that moment I felt so filled with love to know that His precious blood was spilled on the cross for me. It was this experience that cast off any doubt and led me to fully commit myself to getting baptised in His name.

Here I am today then, to – in the words of Romans 6 – bury my old self, to consider myself dead to sin and alive in Christ Jesus. To be baptised in Jesus' name is to be set free from the shackles of sin and death and serve Christ for eternity, and that's what I've decided to do today. I want to continue serving Christ and living in the way that He wants me to, glorifying His name always.

Charlotte Ho

Soho English Ministry

“May those who have witnessed our love see a glimpse of the gospel, for it is part of a greater testimony.” This is the vow I made four months ago to my husband, Carlos, on our wedding day in the presence of God.

Despite not growing up in a Christian household, I had the opportunity to attend a few Sunday school sessions at a young age. To little Charlotte, God was someone with superpowers, who can heal and defeat the evils; He is also an ever-present God who answers our prayers as long as we are good and say “Amen” at the end. Supposedly I wasn’t wrong, but little did I know that this was the beginning of my journey to discover that He is much more. Perhaps that was the seed He sowed in me, and He had been patiently waiting for this seed to grow.

My first ever prayer is still vivid in my memory; it was when my grandma was very sick in ICU with an acute stroke. Watching how the doctors broke the bad news to my family, I felt so helpless. Prayer came across as the only solution I had as a ten-year-old. The next day, as my mum’s phone rang, we all anxiously prepared for the worst. But then it came the good news of grandma stepping down to a normal ward. In shock, I couldn’t comprehend what just happened; all I knew was my desperate prayer was heard. Since then, bedtime prayers became a daily routine to me, no matter is sunny or rainy day. Attending a Christian high school later drew me even closer to Christ.

Fast forward to many years later to the time of university application, which seemed to be the most important aspect of life to me at that time. I prayed fiercely every day to seek out where God wanted me to go, believing that it would be His will for my desire to be fulfilled. As I thought my future would be perfect with God on my side, I started to face challenges of rejections and deviations from my plan. It is easy for one to lose faith when they are disappointed; I was no exception. But it wasn’t until university started that I realised this was the perfect plan He had for me all along. Being so fixated on what I longed for, I forgot the all-knowing God always knows and gives what we need and not what we desire.

Riding a bike without stabilisers for the first time is terrifying, but it enriches us when we overcome it; faith is trusting even in the presence of doubt. If my plan had worked out, I would most likely have never met my husband. Carlos showed me how beautiful it is to walk in constant communion with Christ, how to love Him with all your heart, all your soul and all

your strength. So here I am, standing in front of Christ and your witness, declaring Him as the Lord and joy of my life.

"A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." – Ecclesiastes 4:12. How wonderful and comforting to know that God is at the centre of our marriage. And from today onwards, this cord of three strands is going to be stronger than ever.

Dino Rai

Soho English Ministry

For a long time, I was stubborn and full of pride, refusing to believe in God. Growing up, my family wasn't Christian, and I always felt a bit out of place when I tried to follow my parents' religion. But for some reason, Christianity always made sense to me, even when I didn't fully understand it. The name Jesus Christ always brought me a sense of peace, but in my stubbornness I denied Him as my Lord. Instead, I decided to become an atheist, thinking that if I lived a good life on my own terms, it would be enough. But that path only led to emptiness. I felt hollow, disconnected from others, and increasingly sad and lonely. I didn't want to admit that my way of thinking wasn't working. I focused on worldly things, but nothing I did could fill the emptiness inside me.

The hollowness made me shallow, selfish, and self-centered. Those who knew me back then would say I wasn't the easiest person to be around. I always had something to prove and was never happy with what I had. When I was alone, I'd sometimes have thoughts of ending it all because I couldn't see the point of living—life just seemed meaningless.

Someone close to me eventually suggested that I try going to church, thinking it might save me from myself. At first, I was very hesitant. I didn't want to admit that I needed help, and I certainly didn't think church would make a difference. But I reached out to an old friend who's a Christian, and she was excited to invite me to her church. Even though I was still stubborn and skeptical, I decided to give it a try, mostly to disprove whatever I thought I would hear. Deep down, though, I knew it was something I needed to explore.

When I first started going to church, I wasn't really searching for God. I was just testing the waters, asking casual questions. But deep down, I had bigger questions that I was afraid to voice. One of my main worries was whether I could be saved—if it was too late for me. Then, one day during a service, the pastor talked about Moses. He spoke about how Moses, after committing a grave sin by killing an Egyptian, ran away from God and spent years in exile, living as a shepherd in Midian. Moses was 80 years old when God called him back through the burning bush, asking him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Despite his past and the long years of running away, Moses answered God's call and spent the last 40 years of his life serving God and leading His people.

The story of Moses made me realise that my stubbornness was actually rooted in fear—fear that I wasn't good enough for the Lord. In truth, I was running away from Him, just like Moses did after he sinned. Growing up, I had sinned countless times, and I carried the guilt

and shame of those actions with me. My stubbornness was a defence mechanism, a way to avoid facing the possibility that I might not be worthy of God's love. But hearing how God used Moses, despite his past and his fears, showed me that God can use even the most broken among us for His purpose. It was a powerful reminder that it's never too late to turn back to God.

Slowly, my heart started to change. The emptiness I used to feel was fading and replaced by a peace I hadn't experienced before. God had been waiting for me all along, and when I finally opened my heart to Him, I began to understand the meaning and purpose I had been searching for.

My journey with God hasn't been perfect. I still struggle with doubt—my mind likes to question everything. But I'm blessed to have a community of brothers and sisters in Christ who pray for me and support me. I wasn't sure if I wanted to get baptised, but a good friend once said, "It's better to run to the Lord as an imperfect person than to spend forever trying to be perfect and never knowing Him." That really stuck with me.

Looking back over the last two years, I never thought I'd be where I am today. I went from feeling lost and miserable to finding joy in talking about the Lord. I used to focus only on worldly things, but now I'm excited to share the Good News and even sing songs about God. It feels like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders. God saved me from myself, from my own stubbornness and pride.

I know I'm not perfect, and I probably never will be, but every day I try to follow in Jesus' footsteps. I'm learning, growing, and striving to be a better person, but I know I can't do it alone. It's the Holy Spirit that gives me the strength to change and keep moving forward. My journey with God isn't about being perfect—it's about walking with Him, even when the road gets messy and long. I hope my baptism shows others that you don't need to have everything figured out or to be perfect to start walking with God. It's a tough journey sometimes, but with Christ leading the way and the Holy Spirit guiding me, it's also a joyful and meaningful one. So if you're hesitating or feeling unsure, I encourage you to take that first step. You don't need to be perfect to come to God—He'll meet you right where you are, and the journey with Him is worth every step.

Gianna Chan

ALIVE Youth Group (Hammersmith)

I grew up going to church and attended a Saturday night kids program for about 4 years. I willingly went without really knowing why I needed to go (I probably went solely for my friends.) I learned about the miracles that Jesus performed, the bible stories, and memorised a bible verse once a week. However, I didn't really have a personal relationship with God; to me he was just someone that I heard about every week and sang songs about.

Then things changed when my family and I moved to the UK. Everything was different; the school, daily activities, the food... But one thing that didn't change was that my mum insisted that my siblings and I are still go to church. That is when I joined CCiL and started going to ALIVE youth group. I really hated going because I had no confidence speaking English, I didn't know anyone there, and half the time I didn't even know what they were talking about. It was until I met my really good friends that I stopped whining on Sunday mornings. Subsequently, I started listening to the leaders and really enjoying the time in ALIVE. However, through the discussions each week, I slowly realised that I didn't actually know who God is, and a desire to experience God grew in my heart.

Last year I went to my first Youth Easter Camp (YEC) – that is when I'd say my first encounter with God was. I eagerly wanted to meet God. Then, during a worship session, I felt God quite literally open and enter my heart. I was really moved and, as if there was a fire burning inside of me, I felt empowered by God that through him everything is possible. However, a few months after that everything went back to how it used to be, as my focus shifted to school and friends. Not only was I more distanced from God and church, I was lost as well. Everything seemed to be good in life; I got good grades in school, and my relationship with others was nice. But something was just wrong to me. I was anxious and the fear of uncertainty flooded me. I also started paying less attention in church, and tried to sneak out of ALIVE all the time, as I thought it was boring and it wouldn't do any harm even if I skipped it. And I seemed to care about other people's opinions over anything else.

Earlier this year, I went to my second YEC, and the verse in Colossians 3:2 reminded me that I should '*set [my] mind on things above, not on earthly things.*' Suddenly, all my fears were washed away and I felt relieved. I have peace. All this time, I cared too much about other people and not God, trying hard to meet the earthly standards and not the ones set by God. I realised that God is indeed the answer to everything. Even if you think you don't need him in life, you still do. God is love, God is powerful. How can I not rely on him?

Therefore, I decided to get baptised – I want to devote myself to God. In this brand new chapter of my life, now that I am a new creation, I hope that I will grow closer and closer to God each day, and that the Holy Spirit will guide every step of my life onwards.

Henderson Chan

ALIVE Youth Group (Hammersmith)

I grew up in a Christian family and have been attending church since I was born. I moved to London from Hong Kong with my family at the age of 9, growing up with CCiL helped me with a big part of life.

During my teen years, I didn't really take the Sunday talks to heart, going to church was just a normal Sunday routine for me - seeing my friends in church and gathering together once a week. Outside of church, I was suffering with lust massively and it was very hard for me, I was seeking for female attention most of my time and I didn't realise how bad this was then.

At one point, I was feeling really low so I decided to pray to God and ask for a change in me and He delivered. I've always loved going to Youth Easter Camps (YEC) and this year was definitely the most memorable camp for me. Singing and clapping to "Praise" by Elevation Worship united as a church family made me feel so safe. During the talks in YEC24, we were reading Colossians 3 and it was describing exactly what was happening in my life. "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. (Colossians 3:2)". It felt like it was a message from God telling me that I need to rely on the Holy Spirit to do anything which includes helping me take control of my own desires. I cannot let temptations control me.

I started to reach out to my youth leaders about my problems and praying more about it. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. (Colossians 3:15)". God is so wonderful how He can overcome problems, and even inviting people into my life to draw me closer to Him. God has never stopped loving us and I am very thankful for everyone God has placed in my life and His guidance throughout my journey which helped me become who I am today. The one who conquered death lives in me, so I will continue to worship, praise and follow Him eternally. Amen.

Isaac Kan

Graduate of 360 Student Fellowship (Soho)

I've known about God since I was a kid, and at any point in my life if you'd have asked if I was a Christian, I would have said yes. Looking back now though, I definitely didn't know what that actually meant.

As far back as I can remember, I knew that God is real and that He exists. That knowledge, however, didn't actually mean anything to me more than just an understanding of how the world is. I went to Sunday school, answered questions in Bible class, but I never understood the actual implications of Jesus' death. I knew it was true, but I just treated everything in the Bible as a history book, something that happened in the past but had no effect on anything I did now.

It wasn't until high school when I really realised what being a Christian entailed and what it really meant to have a relationship with Jesus. It started off with a spiritual retreat, which I only went to because one of my friends was adamant that I go. It was there, surrounded by people who took their faith seriously, that I realised there was more to Christianity than simply knowing that God is real. The other thing that really restarted my faith was going back to church. Again, I only went back because of my friends, but it was there that I actually learned about faith. Surrounded by a community of fellow Christians who talked about their faith and actually allowed their faith to dictate their actions, it really hit home that I was missing something.

Over the course of my time at university, I slowly grew to understand the love of Christ and how to live for Him (in a big part thanks to 360 Student Fellowship). By far the hardest part of this was learning to trust Him in everything. I had been so used to trusting in my own abilities and thinking that everything was in my control, leading me to a constant state of worry about everything, especially about my future. That slow learning to rely on God and trusting that He has control of everything was the hardest part, knowing that whatever happens, it is a part of His plan. This was especially true when first moving to the UK, coming to an entirely new environment with no idea what to expect. Looking back, watching how everything exceeded even my best hopes, really helped me see God's providence and his care for me.

Now, I'm still very much in that process of discovering what it means to follow Christ and what that actually means for daily life. I'm so thankful that God keeps seeking me out even when I don't know it, giving me opportunities to learn more about who He really is. Also, for the friends and family He has put in my life with whom I can continue to grow with in faith. It is

a slow and sometimes quite unsteady process, but I will continue to spend time with Him and in fellowship with fellow believers, to continue growing in faith and understanding, ready for whatever God has in store for me (and if not ready, to rely on God for that strength.)

Jason Zou

Truth and Grace Ministry and 360 Student Fellowship

As far back as I can remember, I'd always believed that there was a God out there, but that was about it. Growing up in Manchester as a gullible kid, of course I'd trust my mum about this great being in the sky who created the world, like a fact. As a family, we'd pray before dinner, we'd go to church every Sunday, we had crosses and bible verses on our house walls. But... so what? At the time, I thought those were just strange but normal things that most parents did. To me, church was just another building with people. It was never somewhere I'd choose to go to for many years. I thought, "If I had to be there, I guess I should make the most of it." I'd meet other similarly-aged, like-minded Chinese kids, draw faces over the characters in Sunday School booklets, and laugh at how cringe the actions to children's worship songs were. As soon as I was old enough, I'd choose to stay home and study instead. I'd still call myself a Christian because that's what my parents called our family, but my actions spoke a much louder reality.

In my teen years, I never really felt content with myself. I had to be the best at everything and pushed myself to believe that mediocrity was failure, yet never had a drive to be the best, making excuses like, "I could've done better if I actually tried," or "never mind, that's just not for me." I wanted to stand out against everyone else, looking down on those with "normal" interests, yet felt left out when I didn't have anything in common with other people anymore. Contradictory and overly competitive feelings like these resulted in someone who was complacent, elitist and judgmental, who grew jealous and bitter when his close friend groups achieved great things, who thought the world revolved around him. No matter how close people were to me, I saw everyone as an obstacle in the end. But no one could ever know about any of this. After all, who would want to spend time with a person like this? So, I'd try to suppress it all and instead show a false humility, selflessness and excitement for others; even then using these outward displays to manipulate and illicit certain responses from others for personal gain.

Fast forward to the first week of university where all these thoughts and feelings had peaked. I struggled to find any group that I could be friends with. I'd tell myself, "These guys are too smart for me," and "These guys are too cringe for me" as I took a step back from anyone I had just met. So there I was, sitting in my room, playing video games with my friends who were inevitably going to settle more and more into newer friend groups, leaving me behind. As I walked back out of my kitchen that evening, full of students whom I'd rejected in my mind, all having a great time together, I thought that I needed to do something. Scrolling back

through my phone, I saw two chats that I had just brushed aside, both inviting me to a London-based student fellowship called 360.

Surely, I couldn't give in to my mum who'd been nagging me my whole life to find a student fellowship when I go off to university, right? Surely, I wasn't desperate enough to try and mix with those who were way too passionate about this Christianity thing? I didn't want to let this period of complete freedom be held back by a strict list of rules set by someone whose existence I was now unsure about. So why did I find myself standing outside the door of the Soho CCiL basement at 6:30pm? Maybe it was the fear of making enemies by denying more opportunities. Maybe it was the promise of free food, something that my brother told me never to turn down. Alright sure, a one-off thing then. Except I found myself in the exact same place every Wednesday evening, eagerly waiting to be buzzed into the building.

As I learned more about God's nature week after week, I started reflecting on my life more and realising just how blessed I had been. The mornings that my parents prayed for me before exams, the moments that I had been delivered from potentially life changing danger, the times that things just fell into place perfectly. I realised that He had never given up on me. The two times that I went to a youth event called PHAT (Praise Him All Together) camp and the one year and a bit that I was in and around Manchester youth group before coming to university were both things I took only at face value, yet both were direct causes of me being at 360 and CCiL. I could then look back towards the present, proud to know that He was for me and seeing His love being reflected in the new friendships I'd made in church. So many other Christians, all struggling with similar and different sins, all confiding in each other and building each other up, and all lifting praise and glory to Christ our saviour.

I could feel my whole character being changed; a cycle of actively changing myself for God, and God changing me into someone who can understand and glorify Him better. I began to read the Bible beyond just the words and stories on the page. I'd choose worship music over my old emo-style songs, thinking more deeply about the lyrics and realising the effect that music had on my thoughts and mentality. I started to pray to God on my own accord. Whether it's crying for help and forgiveness, spilling my troubles and doubts, asking that He'd look over those in need of His provision, or giving thanks for the smallest things – it's always felt like there was someone listening on the other side. It was then that my rose-tinted glasses of nostalgia fell off, and I saw just how lost my old self was, how self-destructive my behaviours were, how painful it was to live that dual life. But God had told me to not get hung-up on faults of the past as I'd normally do; a second chance that I didn't deserve. He had revealed to me that He was more than just this fairy tale-like creator that I knew Him as growing up, and that I'd have the rest of my life to seek who He was beyond that childish view.

Faithful to promises, patient, genuine. He embodies everything that I have failed to be and may still fail to be. He's someone that I can come to without wearing a mask in fear of how He'd view me if He saw what I was trying to hide. I'm very much still far from perfect. This past year especially has torn me down to limits I never knew existed, allowing old habits and past cycles to creep back in. But "perfect" isn't the goal anymore, not that it was reachable to begin with. For once, I'm content with who I am: a child of God, striving to reflect Him, to live with Him, and to live for Him.

Kelly Lui

ALIVE Youth Group (Hammersmith)

I was born in a Christian family and I went to church every Sunday, praying before I eat and learning about bible stories like all the other Christians do. However, I was always scared of the dark, and I had dreams about Satan sometimes so I felt empty and insecure.

When I was about 8, I felt disappointed and got angry at someone, and I thought God could not help me so begged Satan to let me follow him. But after that, I felt guilty and apologised to God. Yet, I would still be insecure that God might not let me follow Him again. When I came to the UK, I wasn't close to God even though I went to church every Sunday.

One Sunday after ALIVE youth group, I remembered how I begged Satan to let me follow him and I felt really guilty so I told my family about it. We prayed together immediately. At that time, I really felt God forgive me and that I was closer to heaven than to hell. My mum always told us that when she has nightmares, she shouts God's name out in her dreams or prays to God in her dreams. However, whenever I have nightmares I don't do that in my dreams. So I prayed to God to help me remember Him in my dreams. That night, I had a really long dream where my brain was awake and I knew that I was in a dream. It was a nightmare where Satan kept following me and a person was trying to stab me, but I shouted out Jesus' name in my dream. Satan and the person couldn't even come close to me. God heard my prayer and responded to me when I asked. I truly felt God was here with me.

This year I went to Youth Easter Camp (YEC). During the camp I was really close to God. When we all prayed together, I felt the Holy Spirit fill the whole room and bring us all together. In one of the main talks, the speaker, Anna, told us about her testimony of how she went to China and saw a priest in a church healing people with back pain. At the time, she had back pain and asked the priest to heal her as well. Immediately, she felt the shorter leg, which was the cause of her pain, growing like an electric shock. Her legs were now the same length and she had to learn how to walk again. I was amazed by the miracle she experienced and felt God was there with us and would heal people by His power.

After that I wanted to get closer to God, so I started to read the bible everyday. I am now closer to God and not afraid of the dark anymore. During my small groups in ALIVE, we talked about "how to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit from God" and that interested me as I really wanted to receive this gift. We had a bible study session and read: "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). After that I knew I believed in His name and that I am a child of God. I felt happy and

decided to get baptised. Even now I still have dreams about Satan, but I know I can pray and shout out His name in my dreams. I don't feel insecure anymore as I know that the Holy Spirit is with me.

Konrad Cheung

Soho English Ministry

I've always believed in a higher power. This was peculiar, as I was not raised a Christian, let alone a religious household, but I have always had a fascination for exploring the question of our existence.

As a child, I was vaguely aware of biblical figures such as Moses, Jesus, and God, and I would often sing hymns at school and attend carol services. All the Christian traditions were in my periphery but I never truly understood the meaning of what it meant and I didn't have a heart to learn more about religion and faith.

In my later teenage years and up until the end of university, the foundations in my life became a mix of achieving the next personal goal and also a need to seek external validation from people around me. This mix was toxic. The former meant I would measure my self-worth on how well I performed in a given scenario such as through my undergraduate studies to my postgraduate degree, and the latter meant I would make reckless choices to impress 'friends,' which at times put both myself and those around me at risk of getting hurt.

Looking back now, it seemed like I was building my values and life on unstable foundations of sand. The goals for my achievements kept changing, and I could never truly impress those around me.

Following my graduation from university in 2021, I entered into my role as a product developer. A large part of this job was to project manage which started to grow my obsession with controlling aspects of my life.

My lowest point came during the height of the COVID pandemic when I received news that my gran in China had suffered a critical stroke. My relationship with my gran was very close. My Gran, who had cared for me in my earliest years, had instilled in me values that shaped my childhood. I recall the times she taught me how to peel an orange, tested me on my times tables, and reminded me not to waste food.

After hearing the news of her stroke from my mum, I remember crumbling emotionally. I had mixed feelings of helplessness, knowing that there was nothing I could possibly do being so far away, and anxiety from the thought of death's permanence. Achievements, external validation and all the other factors I used to build my life on were instantly irrelevant. At this point, I lost belief that I truly had control of my own life.

However, God works in mysterious ways. Not long after, a very close childhood friend opened up about his experience with God. I remember being particularly surprised since he wasn't the religious type but he seemed to be different from his past self. His faith in God seemed to have given him a sense of peace and at times, real joy. For background, he was typically a friend who wouldn't talk about his feelings, but when I met him this time, and looking back now, I saw that God had allowed him to open up his heart honestly with me about his journey to faith and described the multiple emotions before and after accepting Christ. I think this was when I truly witnessed God's work most vividly which led me to want to discover Christianity and ultimately took up his offer to attend the church outreach evening. Following this and towards the end of 2022, God slowly softened my heart and I started to attend Sunday services in hopes of learning more about the Bible and the gospel.

In April 2023, I joined Alpha to further tackle the harder questions to understand, such as "who is God" and "who is Jesus". During this time, I started to read the Bible almost every night, and would spend some late nights researching the historical and linguistic context of certain verses.

At that moment, I felt the presence of God guiding me to His word and to answer the tougher questions that were still on my mind, which led me to attend Church Small Group. Small Group was truly when God revealed Himself to me and where I started to come to faith. Small Group allowed me to openly pray with fellow Christians, understand the teachings of Christ, and helped me to develop a closer relationship with God. I remained committed to reading the Bible at night and would think deeply about the gospels.

Slowly over time, I developed a feeling of peace by drawing closer to God which I've not felt previously and has allowed me to lift up my worries and anxiety to Him and have faith that God has a path for me. During this time, I have witnessed God working in wonderful ways, such as seeing my Gran recovering back to full health, the joy of being surrounded by my CCiL brothers and sisters, and through my ongoing journey to grow closer to God.

I'm still trying my best to align myself with God's word, and I'm adopting more discipline in reading the Bible in hopes to live a more holy life and put aside past habits to glorify Him. There was no sudden moment that led me to instantly believe in God, but it was a slow process of God revealing Himself through the Bible and speaking with fellow Christians that has led me to believe in Him and accept Christ.

Now I can declare with conviction that I do believe in a higher power and that is God. Even though I am undeserving of His grace, He has loved me despite being a sinner and He has shown me mercy. I am truly blessed by God's grace, love and mercy.

As I get baptised, I have conviction in God's guidance and to not build my life on sand, but instead on the rock that is faith in Him, and will live in accordance with His plan.

Nelson Gong

Graduate of Ignite Youth Group (Croydon)

Like many other fortunate souls, I was brought up in the church, having attended Croydon's kids' church and, later, Ignite youth group. Throughout much of kids' church, I remember not taking anything particularly seriously and patting myself on the back whenever I finished a crossword first or recalled some detail from a Bible story. Naturally, at this young age I barely understood anything about the world and the concept of religion. Going to church on Sundays seemed natural enough to me at this point, and until about secondary school, I didn't question much and happily accepted any sweet treats that we would receive.

During secondary school, my smooth brain developed wrinkles and I started to think for myself. As your typical Asian, I wrongly prided myself on academics and 'being smarter' than others - thinking that my head just worked better than others. Whilst being academic is not inherently bad, priding yourself and your personality around it can break you when you don't do as well as you'd hoped, and is sinful as we don't own ourselves - God does!

In youth group, I distinctly recall challenging everything I heard and barraging the older people with questions. I had a mix of reasons for doing this - in part because I wanted to prove that I was 'smarter', but other times because of curiosity to learn more about God. I believe God used my scepticism to bring me closer as it led to further conversations with many others, which resulted in myself learning more about topics that caused a lot of my earlier doubts.

While my scepticism could only hurt people on Sundays, attending camps meant that this questioning could bother you for entire days (I sincerely apologise to any leaders that have had to deal with me - including my present self!) and I've been to my fair share of camps - eight of them to be precise - since 2018 - and in the first seven, I have been the sceptic, the doubter, the cynic.

Throughout most of secondary school, I focused my energy into academia in the hopes of becoming a rich software engineer. Many days, the moment I got home was the moment I started grinding programming questions in the pursuit of this money for the future, and I usually spent around 3-5 hours a day on this. During sixth form, university admissions were all that was on my mind. I wanted to be the role-model Asian, maximising my prestige and salary, so I applied to Oxford for mathematics and computer science in the hopes I could trump my peers.

The start of Year 13 was terrible, when the personal statements, admissions exams and mock exams happened around the same time period. I grinded everyday for many hours to get better at the admissions exam and did everything in my power to make my application as strong as possible to secure my dreamy future. The idea of God at this time wasn't foreign to me, obviously, but I never prioritised it over schoolwork. Due to my scepticism and contempt, I pursued worldly things, ignoring the message of Christ (see *Colossians 3:2*.)

Then, God humbled me and I so needed it. Rejection from the university I tried so hard to get into, even before the interview stage, was a real low point for me. Meanwhile, my two fellow computer science applicant friends were both doing really well in the admissions process (both got into Cambridge, and bless them for that) but for me at the time, I felt bitterness that my academic friends were going a step beyond, which made me feel dejected. At the same time, someone from church uttered a few words to me and I just burst out crying in public. This represents the state I was in. I'd often just cry, feeling sorry for myself.

After this period of bitterness (which lasted about three months), came Youth Easter Camp (YEC) 2024. I came expecting pretty much nothing as I normally do, but this time was really, really different. My small group clicked and we were blessed with a great small group leader - which may or may not have been set up. Alex was blessed by God and was filled with the Spirit and addressed the questions posed by my hard-hearted self.

On ministry night, I selfishly took Alex and talked it out for a few hours. Through God's love and grace, I was shown that I do believe and that I was blinded by worldly obsessions. My heart was opened and I understood the tenets of Christianity. I had always known of the gospel; I knew I was a sinner. But, I couldn't see Jesus - I didn't *know* Him, because I only *knew of* Him. God worked through YEC to help me 'wake up' - as was YEC24's theme. He showed me that I was His child and even though I was lost, He still wants me - and that is the *agape* (unconditional love) of God. From here, I changed my ambitions and life goals, and shifted my curiosity from a sceptical viewpoint to being curious in a passionate way and having an urge to learn more about our Saviour.

It took me a while to see that this was God's plan all along to bring me down - to knock me off my high horse and see how feeble I really was and how I had no right in thinking that I was better and deserved the best. For me, the sins of pride and greed took control of my life in the past. However, thanks to God breaking me down and softening my heart, He built me back up again. But, rather than putting my faith in myself and my own ability, to put my faith in God and rest on Him. I now take pride in being an uplifting presence (sometimes) and digging myself deep into theology, so I suppose I am a nerd after all.

After YEC24, there has been a massive shift in my priorities in life, putting a much larger focus on fellowship, discipleship and reading the word of God - doing bible studies daily with a friend - a habit in progress! I also make an effort to spread the word of God to my similarly sceptic friends from school and elsewhere. Even if I feel my efforts are being put to waste, I know that God is a miracle-maker and perhaps, someday, the seeds that have been planted may grow and flourish. I still struggle with pride and greed, but this has been massively diminished, putting much less weight on academics (maybe a bit too much, because I missed my university offer, but by the grace of God, my university let me in anyway). I am still working on being more humble - but I suppose it's easier when I realise I am in fact just stupid.

Something I didn't mention from the past was my role in the worship team. For about three years, I played music on my church's worship team, but at the start of Year 13, I stepped down because I realised that I wasn't worshipping - but playing music. However, after becoming a follower of Jesus, I rejoined back into the team, but this time worshipping God with my heart, rather than just playing out of enjoyment - and the joy of playing for Christ is far greater than the joy before.

My hope now is in Christ. And finally, a word of encouragement from this: God works genuine miracles - transforming the hardened hearts that belong to this world to compassionate hearts that beat for Him. Even if you are the world's greatest sceptic, who also happens to be one of the world's biggest sinners, God has not given up on you. He finds a way when there is no way and will bring you back home - to Him, no matter how long it takes. I mean take a look at me - 12 years in the works, but He did it. Through these years, God was always there, bringing me love and enrichment through people in Church; it's so easy to ignore these things like I had, but if you sit down and think about it, you'll realise the works and wonders of God and the love He has for you.

Rachel Lee

Soho English Ministry

Although having been to a Christian school from kindergarten, primary and middle school, I was not a believer or Christian. My family has never been religious and if anything, quite the opposite. My dad is an atheist with strong opposing opinions on what my siblings and I believed in. He often reminds me of the scientific arguments against Christianity and why God doesn't exist.

However, I was encouraged to go to church by a friend in school. It was a house church, something different from what I had experienced. My friend was persistent and I was curious. I was enticed to hang out with my friends after church on Sunday mornings as an adolescent, so I went. Despite learning about Biblical stories, singing worship songs and praying in school, I did not understand what it truly meant to accept God into my life and its importance. My friend who brought me to church, Jeremy and his family, has been a blessing to me coming to know God. They invited me to fellowship with them, read with them and learn more about the Bible together. Through them, I learned about God's mercy and grace and was able to witness a God-fearing and loving relationship that inspired me. I was encouraged by how they'd always put God first, prayed and trusted in His plans to pave the way. This convicted me to believe in Jesus Christ, to be saved by Him and to be forgiven for my sins. Over time, I knew that believing in Jesus Christ was the only way, even if it meant hiding my religious beliefs from my father.

After leaving school and Malaysia to attend University in Exeter, I was blessed to find a church community that were so kind, inspiring and left in me a hunger to crave and know Jesus Christ more. I wanted to get baptised but unfortunately COVID happened. Despite feeling stagnant at different times throughout the 9 years I've been a Christian, I can say that God has always showed me a path and led me through deep waters without me realising. He has paved my ways and I know that I can trust in Him fully. Even through my toughest times such as struggling with my mental health with anxiety and depression in university and wanting to drop out in my final year, God kept me afloat.

I was lost all over again after finishing my undergraduate degree; jobless, feeling anxious and depressed, tempted by the world, living with family and not going to church. I finally landed a job at a law firm and moved to London optimistically. However, things got even worse with my mental health due to my job. I wanted to look for a church in London but didn't know where to start. Fortunately, my co-worker, Fiona, reached out and invited me to CCiL where I felt so welcomed and blessed to find a church community again and met my husband. God

surprises me in the way that He works – even when I think He's not doing anything, He's always watching out for me in every chapter of my life.

Today, I've had the courage to tell my family proudly that I am a Christian. Getting baptised is my declaration of my faith and surrendering myself to God. I am ready to devote and commit my life to God, repent for my sins, bury my old self and be renewed through Christ Jesus. I want to be steadfast in my love for God and continue to journey in this relationship with Him.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." – Philippians 4:13

Valerie Chen

Ignite Youth Group (Croydon)

I grew up in a Christian family, but to be honest I didn't really do much related to God. For example, I would go to church and listen to the talks but I never really took them to heart that deeply. I would be willing to listen if someone told me things about God, but again I didn't take it to heart.

I first started to recognise how God works when we played a game in Ignite youth group; I fell over and somehow hurt the back of my left hand but my right hand wasn't injured. I then realised I had a concert that week and that if I hurt my right hand it would've been painful to play my violin. Talking to my mum also helped me realise that God doesn't always work the way you want him to, but he will always protect you in a way that's best for you – Him working in your life to help you get to know him isn't always in good incidents.

But what really changed me is Youth Easter Camp (YEC) this year. I didn't expect much when I went to camp this year because I thought it would be just fun like every other year and I'd forget about everything I learnt. But after hearing the speaker talk about how Jesus died for our sins, it helped me realise how much I actually sin and truly understand how it's impossible to be perfect. I realised how much it actually meant to me to want to get closer to God and follow him, so I asked my leader to pray for me: to not forget those lessons, not forget my experience at YEC, and to help me to stop sinning. I didn't think I'd ever be so happy to have people around me who helped me recognise that God is more than just someone I follow with a shallow understanding. The thought of getting baptised popped into my head in one of the main sessions, and had since been something I kept considering.

After YEC, I told my parents I was thinking about getting baptised, but also that I didn't know if it was the right time or not. My mum told me that we don't need to be perfect when we get baptised because that's not the point of baptism. She told me how God will help me overcome my sins instead of me overcoming them by myself. She also told me that I can pray to God if I don't think it's the right time yet. Those things have been stuck in my head ever since. I also asked my parents about their baptism experience and I still remember how my dad told me that the point of baptism is declaring your faith in God.

Honestly, just knowing how much God actually loves us and asking myself why I've been sinning this entire time has made me change. I stopped some sins that I realised I had and focused more on God. For example, I'd think of God most of the time every day, and I actually started reading the bible instead of having no motivation to read it. Since then, I

would read the bible every night and have my personal time with God. I would also thank him for anything that happened in my day and confide in him with my worries.

I also witnessed another incident that helped me recognise God's work in my life. My friend was in a relationship with someone and we prayed about it together. I prayed for her and the prayer really did happen, and she was able to distance herself from the person afterwards. God will always be there to help us down the path that is the best for us and the love he has for us is really unbelievable and much more than we can ever understand. He teaches us through the good and the bad times. In fact, there are probably many experiences that God has tried to use to teach me things, but sometimes I don't focus on them and miss the opportunity to learn.

I never would've thought that I'd be getting baptised at 14 (honestly, I thought I'd be older when I got baptised.) But God really is amazing and we'll never know what he has planned for us. Of course, I still have a long way to go and I still sin whether I know it or not. I believe getting baptised will be the biggest step I'll ever take to get to know God more as someone I want to pursue and have a better relationship with. I'm so grateful to God that he has surrounded me with many wonderful people to guide me to him, and I'll never forget how he has worked in my life from the start even after I take this step to get baptised. Praise God! Everything he does is for a reason!

Yanis Ho

ALIVE Youth Group (Hammersmith)

Hello everyone, I am Yanis and I am here to share my testimony. I struggled with what to write for my testimony because in my memory, I don't really think I have been through any dramatic moments in my life yet. But when I think deeper, there is so much to praise and confess about. So let me start my story...

I grew up in a Christian family where my family goes to church every Sunday. Before, the only reason I attended church was because of my parents. Due to their arrangement, I joined different church activities but I tend to only play with my friends during those activities. For me, previously, church was just a weekly routine along with some play time.

After migrating to the UK 3 years ago, I joined CCiL and I got to know new friends and continue my weekly routine. At that time, I thought I was a “good Christian” who always prays and knows all the bible stories... but apparently God thought I didn't know him well enough. Half a year later, I joined a bible study group, where I gained a deeper understanding of the bible. For example, the order and history of the bible and especially Acts which we've studied. I remember studying Paul's journey in Acts, however, some parts were quite hard to spot his message behind. Before the lessons, we need to pre-read those bible verses and discuss it with our family. Initially, I treated it as a piece of homework that I had to finish. But after a few more lessons and some facetime calls with my leader, Sinming, I slowly learned from each session. I began to put more effort into taking notes and trying to understand the message.

Meanwhile I had many doubts that are probably common, such as, ‘Did God make the universe?’ and ‘How do we know he really exists?’ etc... I clearly remember Sinming saying: “Because you need to have faith in him.” Such a short sentence has inspired me so much. I started to realise how foolish I was when I said I knew him well enough, yet was constantly sinning.

Therefore, I started to discover more about the mighty God and began to carry out actions from his words in real life. For example, to stop being lazy. This year, I did my GCSEs, which I think is the most challenging thing I've done so far, but it's also where I experienced God the most. During a weekend of the GCSE exams period, I felt very warm and welcomed by the church community where everyone encouraged me when I was nervous. Also, doing fellowship together really comforted me and I could feel my heart being pulled closer to God again. Meanwhile, through the GCSE exams, I noticed that I can't just pray when I need God, but I also had to be thankful for what we have, even if it's just for a meal.

Lastly, I want to share a bible verse from Acts 2:41 - *'Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.'* This bible verse tells us that you don't always need to be perfect to get baptised because we can continue learning after baptism, so don't let it become an excuse for you. In the future, I hope I can continue to put God in my first place.