

THE GOD OF *New Beginnings*



Jobless, depressed
and direction-less,
Lim Kang Yen

desperately needed a new
beginning in life. And that
was exactly what God
gave him, in more ways
than one.

I was born into a non-Christian family. My parents were very strict, and all three of us children were very obedient. But things took a different turn when I was 14. That year, my elder sister accepted Jesus as her Lord and Saviour, and decided not to participate in the rituals of ancestral worship anymore. Our father couldn't accept the fact that he 'lost' his daughter to a 'foreign God', so he threw her out of the house. Our aunt took her in. **The whole episode set me thinking and wondering who Jesus was and why He was creating such a ruckus in our family.**

A year later, my father made peace with my elder sister and even allowed her to bring us to church. I attributed this about-turn to her fervent prayers and the grace of God. At the age of 15, I gave my life to Jesus. But when I discovered the supposedly ritualistic lifestyle of a Christian (go to church, pray, read the Bible everyday), I decided that my former decadent ways were easier to live by. I spent most of my time playing softball and watching TV. Laziness crept in and my studies took a dip. Nonetheless, I still managed to get into university. But I had no interest whatsoever in Computer Science. Computer games, yes. But studying Computer Science?



It was a different thing altogether. I struggled in my studies. After four long years, I graduated with a degree that I despised, along with results that were abysmal.

Unfortunately, I graduated in 1998 – in the midst of the Asian financial crisis. It took me one and a half years to land my first IT-related job. I didn't enjoy what I was doing, so I didn't last long, and hopped from one job to another. Finally, in 2003, I decided that enough was enough; I started looking for jobs that were not IT-related. However, with my lack of experience and less-than-appealing results, job-hunting was tough. I sent out resumes to numerous prospective employers, but only a handful called me for an interview. **After a series of failed interviews, I slipped into depression.** My typical day went like this:

- Wake up at 12 noon to have lunch.
- Play computer games till 6pm, and have dinner.
- Watch TV till 12 midnight.
- Play computer games till 6am, and then sleep.

This went on for a 'good' 9 months. **Each day as I looked at myself in the mirror, I seemed to look**

more and more like the zombies in the computer games that I was playing. Life slowly ebbed away from me. I felt worthless and all my self-esteem went down the drain. There were times when I felt that suicide would be the best option to end my misery.

A divine encounter

Despite my difficulties, Jesus was far from my mind. I never once considered going back to Him. I deemed myself too unclean for someone as majestic as Him. But one day, he did something that would change my life forever. That day, when I awoke, a bright light was shining in my room. There was something strange about the light. I couldn't open my eyes. No matter how hard I tried,

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I simply could not get out of bed! I began to have flashbacks of my rotten past. A voice seemed to say, **"Kang Yen, it's time to get up and come back to Me". I knew at once that it had to be the Lord Jesus Christ.** I cried, made a commitment to stop all my vices, and gave my life back to Him. I asked Him to show me which church to go to. Almost immediately, the blinding light went off. There was no reply from Him. I got up in a daze, wondering if it was just a dream. I was at a loss as to what to do.

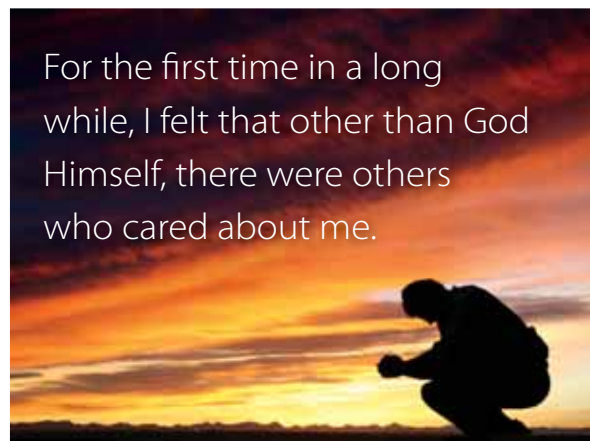
That afternoon, I received a phone call from an old friend whom I had not met in years. He invited me to his place, just to catch up. Since I had nothing to do, I went. He invited me to his church, Trinity Christian Centre. **Suddenly, I felt that same voice speak to me again: "Go".** I asked my friend why he thought of me that day. He said that he just decided to take the day off. He decided to call somebody

and that person just happened to be me!

My first visit to Trinity that weekend cemented my decision to come back to Jesus. The worship atmosphere simply overwhelmed me. I left feeling thankful that I had found a church, and more importantly, that I now had a direction in life. But God was not done with me yet. As Trinity Christian Centre left a positive impression on me, I visited the website upon reaching home. While surfing the site, I found out that the church was recruiting a web application developer. I did not meet the requirements, but decided to email them my resume anyway. After all, what is there to lose? That night, for the first time in nine months, I went to bed early. It was my most satisfying rest ever.

The next morning, I was awoken by a phone call from the church HR dept, asking me to go for an interview. Before the interview, I tried to read up on what the job would require me to do, but it was just too much to learn within a short time. I began to doubt myself. **Instead of making an effort to impress the interviewer, I told him that I had zero experience and know-how;** all that I had was a heart to learn. At the end of the interview, I left feeling the same way as I did after all my past interviews – dejected, disappointed and disillusioned.

A week later, I attended a Trinity carecell near my home. I wanted to know more about God, and I knew this was definitely one way to go about it. I told the carecell members about my situation and they rallied around me to pray for me. For the first time in a long while, I felt that there were others – other than God Himself – who cared about me. It was a wonderful experience and I decided then that I would go to carecell regularly.



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Amazingly, my carecell members' prayers were answered! I made it through three rounds of interviews. On 1 April 2003, I started work as a web application developer in Trinity. Out of curiosity, I asked the interviewer (now my colleague) why he had chosen me over the other candidates. What he told me totally blew my mind: He said that before he made up his mind, he prayed and **God showed him that among all the candidates, I was the one.** I was dumbfounded by his response. Simply put, he didn't choose me; God did!

The learning curve was steep but I found great joy in serving in the Lord's House. **I was surrounded by colleagues who cared for more than just the paycheck that they received every month.** I found renewed hope in life and yet deep inside me, I wanted more. And 'more' was on the way.

More on the way

My colleagues "match-made" me with a pretty girl who worked in another department. I liked Debbie but as we were very new to each other, we were not sure. So we decided to take time to pray. My district pastor advised me to write down my criteria of a life partner and pray over it. I came up with a list of 29 criteria (No kidding... and this was after I cut

down on some criteria to make God's job easier!) Meanwhile, Debbie was having serious doubts about me. After all, I had simply popped up out of nowhere; no history in church, no track record whatsoever. So she simply prayed that if I was the one, then I should, at the very least, attend Church Prayer Meetings. This was her basic requirement to show that I was serious about God.

Two weeks went by. We didn't keep in touch at all during this period. I was growing in the Lord but I wasn't satisfied. Church Prayer Meeting was around the corner and very innocently, I invited Debbie to join me. We met, we prayed, we chatted and found that we enjoyed each other's company. **I discovered later that she met all 29 of my ridiculous criteria (I kid you not!)** That was it. That sealed everything.

Five months later, we began preparing for our wedding. Our first task was to look for a home. We wanted to live in Clementi, to be near her mum. There were no new flats in that area then, so we had to purchase a re-sale flat. The only problem was, we would have to pay the above-valuation quantum in cash. The cash amount could easily be above \$10,000 and would strain our already strapped budget. But seeing that God was in control from day one, we decided to go to our knees to pray and fast.



A miracle came. Debbie's mum had a friend who lived about 400m away, and was looking to sell his 3-room flat.

When he knew that we were interested, he decided to ask for a fixed sale price, even before his flat was valued. In other words, if the valuation of the flat turned out low, we would have to pay dearly for this 'gamble'. We committed it to the Lord, felt His peace and decided to go for it. Lo and behold, the valuation turned out to be pretty high! **In the end, the seller kept his end of the bargain and we paid only \$2000 above valuation. Such a low amount was simply unheard of!** God came through and proved His faithfulness.

God continued to bless us financially. We 'recovered' all that we had spent on our wedding and our home renovations. We even had enough to go for a honeymoon to Thailand *and* a second honeymoon to six European countries a year later! God blessed us far beyond our expectations.

Princess dreams

Five months into our marriage, I dreamt that I was in an operating theatre, holding a baby girl in my arms. Three nights later, I dreamt that I was in my living room and there was a baby girl crawling around me. Now, my wife and I love children, and we were contemplating having children of our own. So I thought the dreams were just a natural expression of my own desires.

But a week later, I had a third dream. This time, I was holding the hand of a girl who was ready to go to school. I knew then it was the Lord speaking to us.

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Since it was definitely our desire to have a daughter, we decided to try for a child.

Six weeks later, my wife discovered she was pregnant! We were absolutely thrilled. But alas, our joy was short-lived. **Two weeks later, baby's heartbeat stopped.** We could not believe it. Unwilling to accept the truth, we asked for a week to pray and fast. We thought that perhaps God would somehow revive the baby's heartbeat. Seven days came and went, and our hopes were completely dashed.

My wife was wheeled into the operating theatre for the removal of the foetus. I waited outside, completely confused. It was the same setting as the dream I had, but it was turning out to be my worst nightmare. I couldn't accept the fact that God had given me those dreams, and in a span of two months, dashed my hopes. I felt like He was making a fool of me. When we reached home, both of us sat in utter silence. Not a word was spoken. Then all at once, we both began to tear, sob and wail. I wanted to stop crying, but the harder I tried, the harder I cried. That night was the longest night we ever had.

Picking ourselves up was the next hardest thing. Wherever we went and whatever we did, we were constantly reminded of our little one. We were leading a family carecell, and the irony was hard to swallow. Here we were, the only 'unproductive' couple, leading a carecell blessed with plenty of children! But life had to go on and four months later, we decided to try again.

At the start of 2006, in our office cell, we were asked to draw our prayer requests for the year on a piece of paper. Instinctively, I drew three stick figures – two adults and a child – to signify myself, my wife

and our future little one. **To make it 'harder' for God, I drew the St. Louis Cardinals (my favourite baseball team) winning the World Series Baseball Championship. They had not won the title in 23 years.** I drew it out of pure skepticism; I didn't think that they stood a chance. I showed my drawing to my colleagues and then promptly put it away.

A cruel joke?

Months went by and there was no baby. We went for a thorough medical checkup, and the results came as a shock. We had a lethal combination of poor quality sperm and a weak womb. The doctor told us that our chances of having a normal baby the normal way was less than 1%. It was a double-blow. The news couldn't have come at a worse time. **Our hearts began to bleed from within. Those dreams didn't matter anymore.** It seemed like God was playing a very cruel joke on us. (It didn't occur to us then that God already knew of our condition even before we did, and probably gave us the dreams to encourage us to believe for the impossible).

We didn't stop trying, but with each passing month, our hopes grew faint. A close friend recommended a Chinese sinseh who was supposedly a fertility expert. He took our pulse, gave us some medication and advised us to cut down on certain foods. We took his advice and his medication. Three months went by and still nothing happened.

We grew tired of waiting. **It seemed that the deep longing for a child was pulling us away from everything else that really mattered in life.**

Finally, we broke down and surrendered everything to God once again, asking Him for forgiveness for the times that we doubted Him and His goodness. Thereafter, we went back to serving Him whole-

heartedly again. We decided that we would love God and trust Him – whether or not we had a child. We never gave up trying but we were not disappointed when there was no news. **We came to the conclusion that child or no child, God was still ultimately a good God.**

A month later, God spoke to my wife to go on a missions impact trip, to minister to children in India. Even though the trip would mean taking a break in our trying for a child and in all probability, remind my wife of our deep longing for a child, we decided to be obedient to God. It seemed like the perfect way to start anew with God. So we paid up and my wife went for her training sessions for the trip. **Perhaps all God wanted was our obedience.** The trip never did materialise because my wife became pregnant again! We went from despair, disappointment and disillusionment to being deliriously happy. We cried again, but this time, it felt good. Words just could not describe our joy. The baby's gender was confirmed in the fifth month. No prizes for guessing correctly; it was a princess.

A dream come true

In the ensuing days, we went about doing what all would-be parents would do: going for regular check-ups, buying baby stuff, going for pre-natal classes and so on. My wife had a weak constitution and had to be in bed throughout the whole pregnancy. The church was very gracious to grant her leave. All in all, she took about two months' no-pay leave. When the 40 weeks were up, our baby had grown so comfortable in the womb that she refused to come out! She had to be induced. After one whole day of waiting, there was still no sign of the little one. An immediate Caesarean section was ordered. Once again, my wife was wheeled into the



same operating theatre where she had been two years back. **Things were happening just as I had seen in my dream; only this time it was not a nightmare.** When our little one was born, I took one look at her and I knew that she was more than we could ever wish for.

I waited outside the operating theatre for my wife to be wheeled out. The procedure was to take only half an hour, so after one and a half hours, I got seriously worried. God was putting my faith in Him to the ultimate test. I was all alone in the waiting area. I had no one to talk to, no one to depend on. I could only turn to Him, the living God who had helped me through it all. So I got on my knees and prayed. Finally, the door of the operating theatre opened. My wife had bled excessively due to a wound that was sustained when the placenta was removed. **I had nearly lost my wife, and I was to find out later that the hospital bill came to more than \$7000.** But it didn't matter. All that mattered was that God heard my cries and promptly set things right.

But God is not only in the business of answering 'big' prayers. Remember my drawing that I put aside? The conception of my baby was not the only miracle that happened to me in 2006. **That same year, the St. Louis Cardinals did become the World Series Baseball Champions – for the first time in 23 years.** (In the following year, they failed to even qualify for the playoffs!) I had sketched the drawing out of skepticism but God used it to make a point – that He hears and answers prayer!



But while God is interested in answering my prayers; He is more interested in how I respond when He doesn't. Life with God is not always a bed of roses.

While our pay as full-time church

staff is sufficient

for our living expenses, it is modest

by today's standards. I often ask myself, "What if I were to work outside and draw a much higher pay? Wouldn't it be great if I could splurge on this or that?" But there is just no end to this line of questioning. Would I trade everything that I have now for something else? Not in a million years!

I find it an honour and a privilege to be able to serve God in His House. I love the fact that God's Kingdom is extended and His people are blessed through my work. **Because of the global impact of Trinity and its missions programmes, everything that I do as a staff in Trinity ultimately impacts lives around the world.** That is mind-boggling, and it is all the more amazing considering how I had despised myself and my lack of technical skills. God has totally turned things around for His glory.

As we trust Him and serve Him, God continues to amaze us with His overflowing provision:

- *Remember that \$7000 hospital bill?* It was totally paid for by cash gifts from relatives and friends, with a lot more to spare.
- *What about the increase in household expenditure that comes with an addition to the family?* We received, from many sources, enough baby

clothes, toys, baby stuff and milk powder to last us for a year or two.

- *What about the lack of space?* Surely a three-room flat is too small for a growing family? **Two weeks after our baby's birth, we received news that our flat has been earmarked for HDB's en-bloc redevelopment programme.** Simply put, in four years' time, we would be staying in a new and bigger flat at little additional cost.
- *Perhaps I would need to hire a domestic helper to take care of baby since both my wife and I work?* That too has been taken care of. My mother-in-law rescinded on her previous decision not to live with us. To our surprise and delight, she has now moved in with us and takes care of baby.

The God whom we worship is in control of every situation! Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." There is really nothing that we lack. **Whatever I may lack financially, God has given me in ways that I could never imagine.** Everyday, whenever I look at my beautiful daughter, I am reminded of God's goodness. With each look, I ask:

*What have I done to deserve all these, Lord? I'm just a nobody who ran away from You, an exile. **But You took me in Your arms and You gave me life – life that I could never imagine, life that I can never comprehend.** You plan my life immaculately, and Your timing is simply perfect. You have given me a brand new start in life, a fulfilling job, a wonderful and supportive wife, and now, a beautiful daughter. You gave me far more than I dared to dream of!*

My life is living proof that God is a God of new beginnings. Looking back, perhaps the only thing that I did right was to come back to God. And that is all I needed to have a new beginning.