

**Graceland**  
CBCSD Newsletter #27  
July 18, 2021

*"But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of ... is a land of the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it... (Deuteronomy 11:11-12)*

**Words from the Editor:**

Life is a drama. In this journey, there will always be situations where people intend to follow their own script. However, we often experience merciful stories that surpass our own plan. A son was infected with COVID-19 but he suddenly improved before entering the emergency room; someone who always hated smoking became addicted before God miraculously set him free; a couple initially was reluctant to serve in Happiness Group before God unexpectedly called them. One by one, the plots turned... The theme of this issue is "Unexpected Script," and brothers and sisters share how God, the great screenwriter, changed their lives!

# Unexpected Script

## **New Coronavirus and New Coronation - A Covid Patient's Spiritual Journey**

**By Pastor Angela Fu, Central Campus**

My son entered my room, carrying in laughter as he chatted with me. Finally, I could appreciate the ups and downs he must have experienced during his sickness. When I mentioned that my body temperature would go up predictably as my body aches intensified, we both laughed.

I remembered kneeling down to pray when his blood oxygen level dropped to 89. I knew I had to decide on the next steps, yet deep down I was still in denial over what was happening. Pastor William had also prayed with me and shared this verse afterwards: "But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever. For what you have done I will always praise you in the presence of your faithful people. And I will hope in your name, for your name is good." (Psalm 52: 8-9)



I was hoping that I would remain faithful as God has already given us the promise of salvation. I felt peace within me, yet I was not quite sure I could deal with the consequences if I made any wrong decisions. In the end, the three of us drove to the ER.

Even afterwards, I worried. If he got admitted to the ER and the doctor wouldn't allow me to be there with him, would I be able to wait patiently at home? What if I would never be able to see him again? My heart was filled with terror and despair. "God! Please help me." I didn't dare to think any further. I was not sure if I could deal with such unknowns, but I still had to face it head on. I remembered the verse I shared with everyone during the joint campus prayer meeting a while back: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21) I felt this verse was ringing in my heart as if God was asking me: "Do you believe in me?" I know God wants me to dedicate the life of my child to Him. I would never be freed from the reign of fear if I kept clinging to the false perception that I was the one in control of my child's destiny. "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." When I heard this verse again, I surrendered. "Yes, God! I am ready to let go. Who do I have other than you?"



IN JESUS  
WE TRUST

Pastor William parked the car when we arrived at the ER. Right there in the parking lot, we shared what was going on in our minds and hearts and prayed one last time to express our gratitude and released our child to God's care. Ezra told us he was hungry right after we said our last prayer. We were dumbfounded! It was hard to believe how quickly our God acted!

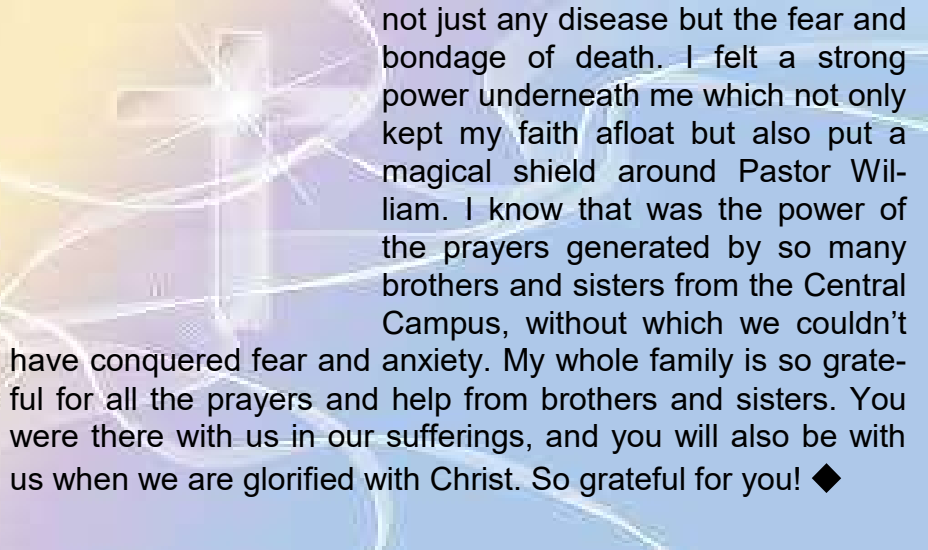


As we sat there recounting what happened, Pastor William told me that he too prayed at that moment and felt that God had not yet been finished with Ezra. And he also heard the verse "to live is Christ and to die is gain." I was in awe that God gave him the exact same verse. We smiled together, knowing that we made another spiritual connection from this adventure through the web of our lives' pathways.

When I got confirmation that I too had Covid, I was much calmer and didn't struggle or fear as much in the face of death. I wondered if I should go to the ER every time my blood oxygen level dropped to 91, but then the reading would return to 95 right after I prayed about it, as if God was teasing me. Our God was quite humorous sometimes.

One sister prayed for an immediate and total healing for me, and I found myself lying still in bed on many occasions thinking about God and waiting for Him to rescue me. I thought of the time my daughter fell into the water when she was still young. I didn't see her falling, nor did I know her whereabouts. After she was rescued, I asked her why she didn't shout for help, and she answered, "I was waiting for you to rescue me." What a blessing it is to be able to respond like a little child and have pure faith in our heavenly father. For the first time in my life, I waited patiently for God with neither fear nor anxiety, as if I were in heaven.

The lung infection caused by Covid poses a real threat to human lives. When we encountered COVID, we were not only travelling through the valley of death, but also experiencing God's faithful presence. What we conquered in the end was



not just any disease but the fear and bondage of death. I felt a strong power underneath me which not only kept my faith afloat but also put a magical shield around Pastor William. I know that was the power of the prayers generated by so many brothers and sisters from the Central Campus, without which we couldn't have conquered fear and anxiety. My whole family is so grateful for all the prayers and help from brothers and sisters. You were there with us in our sufferings, and you will also be with us when we are glorified with Christ. So grateful for you! ♦

## **How could it be?**

**By Pastor William Fu,  
North Campus Congregational Pastor**

It was the twelfth day since my son was infected with Covid.

I was driving towards the ER with Pastor Angela and our son. As I drove, I kept asking myself why his blood oxygen level would suddenly drop from 91% to 89% this morning, almost two weeks after he was infected. Why was his breath so fast yet so shallow? I got distracted by the dark clouds and unending showers in the sky. Moments later, it dawned on me that I

might not be able to see him again if he was admitted to the ER. I immediately became very anxious. When I saw light in the sky piercing through the dark clouds, the Holy Spirit reminded me of this song:



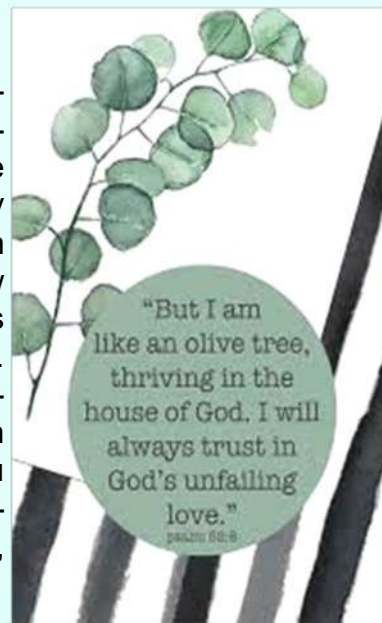
“River of life, river of joy, slowly flowing into my heart. I want to sing a song, a heavenly song. The dark clouds above my head and the sadness in my heart will both disappear.”

As I slowly approached the hospital, Pastor Angela asked me to pull into the parking lot, not the entrance to the ER. I was about to ask her why, but I didn't. Instead, I pulled into a parking space facing the hospital building just as she requested. Pastor Angela then said to me and our son very firmly, “Let's all quiet down and pray one more time for God's guidance to see if He really wants us to go to the ER.” Soon, I heard my son murmuring, “I am hungry.” How could it be? That was the first time he asked for food since he got sick with Covid. In our quiet prayer, the Holy Spirit used Psalm 52:8-9 to strengthen our faith. These verses were shared by Pastor Wanda in her recent Morning Devotion and by the Joy fellowship at the North Campus:

“But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever. For what you have done I will always praise you in the presence of your faithful people. And I will hope in your name, for your name is good.” (Psalm 52 8-9)

We left the hospital parking lot and went to get chicken nuggets for our son instead. How could it be? Whatever it might be, we were able to go home in peace.

Even though Pastor Angela also got infected with Covid subsequently, she too was able to cope at home and was 100% healed by the prayers, care, and help from many brothers and sisters. How could it turn out this way? I was safe and untouched by Covid. Praise be to the Lord for His healing power, protection, provision and mercy! I will always praise you in the presence of your faithful people. And I will hope in your name, for your name is good. ◆





# Self Directed vs. God Directed

By Main Campus Terrence Liu

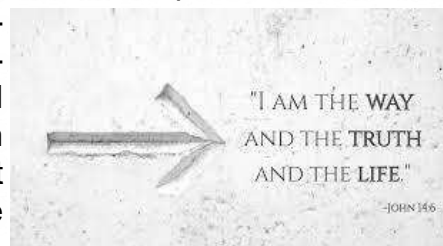


I had my last Children's Day festival at 12 years old, when my request that Dad quit smoking was granted. He quit after twenty more years of smoking. I disliked smoking since I was little, and I couldn't imagine myself possibly picking up smoking in my lifetime. However, our lives are full of the unexpected. Soon after I got baptized in San Diego, I transferred to northern California to continue studying. College life is colorful yet busy, and soon I strayed from church. Out of curiosity and under my friends' influence, I started smoking and became addicted to the thing I once wished that my dad would give up.

Even though I didn't smoke a lot, I still couldn't help smoking when I was stressed. I started to calm down when I faced the busyness of my work and life, and actively sought for meaning. Soon it occurred to me that I needed to go back to church. God saw my heart, and He was going to do new things.

During Christmas, I went back to China to visit my parents. Because of my stress from work, I hid in a neighborhood not far from my parents' house and smoked. Yet this time, my mom happened to run right into it. She stared at me in disbelief; ten meters apart, we caught each other's eyes and the air froze. My mom started worrying for me. She knew I disliked people who smoked, and she was worried that my stress was too much for me to the point of beginning self-destructive habits. I seriously promised to her that I would quit smoking.

After returning to the US, I returned to church. I confidently believed that I could keep my promise to my mom, just like how my dad kept his promise to me years ago. However, my story didn't end with immediate victory. Stress induced me to resume smoking. I was so disappointed in myself! In the meantime, a young relative of mine became alcoholic. He tried quitting many times, but in vain. There was even one incident where he got a DUI and was in the police station. His mom and I took him out at midnight. Soon, I heard a testimony from a pastor. He prayed for a person who had been in and out the alcoholism support group more than 20 times. He





prayed that God would bring discomfort to his body the next time he touched alcohol. The prayer really was put in effect, and he successfully abstained from alcohol. I didn't believe this testimony completely because I had a real alcoholic relative who had been tied up and addicted for a long time.

Unexpectedly, this testimony was just a preview from God for me.

I went back home and didn't even seriously pray; instead, I just talked to God directly. "I can't even keep my promise to my mom, so I definitely can't quit smoking. You are my God, so you come and help me!"

God listened!

The next time I smoked, the first inhale brought discomfort to my stomach. I rarely had any stomach problems, so I was not paying much attention, and finished that cigarette. That night, my body was in agony. But I was still hard-hearted, and believed it was just coincidence. I thought it was because my stomach was not right in the first place, and it just happened that I took a cigarette. So when I felt better, I lit up another one. This time, it got even worse. I thought at that moment, "It must be that the cigarette I got was from China!" So I went out and bought American-made cigarettes, and tried again. This time, it hurt so much that I couldn't even straighten myself. The more pain I felt, the more stubborn I was, and the more I tried. After several more tries, I got nauseated at the sight of a cigarette, and the impulse of picking up to smoke was completely gone.

At that moment, I realized I was completely free! From the bottom of my heart, I thank God for not abandoning or giving up on me. He not only regained my freedom for me, but also taught me that He's live and real! When I directed my life from the flesh, the outcome surprised and disappointed me: I could pick up something I disliked before; I could break promises that I treasured; I could be hard-hearted and refuse to acknowledge God. However, when I bowed down to God and depended on Him, He laid His sovereign hands on me, and directed grace unexpectedly! In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps! (Proverbs 16:9) ◆



## **Unexpected Script** **Interview with 34th Happiness Group Leader**

**By Jenny Chen, Main Campus**  
**Interviewed by Emily Xu**



For the 4th wave of Happiness Group, there were 34 groups to match our church's 34th anniversary, and the last group was set up just a week before it started. To learn about the prompting and setup God gave for this situation, we interviewed Jenny Chen from the group.

**Q: Did you participate the Happiness Group before? What was the experience like?**

**A:** I was deeply touched when the Blessed & Blessing Church from Taiwan came to our church, especially during Pastor Yang's message. Their methodology of spreading the gospel is like a mini-evangelical event where every single person is a preacher. Therefore, when the 1st wave of Happiness Group started, I was full of passion and joined without hesitation. We started a group which consisted of many engineers from HP and others. After the first wave, we basked in our accomplishment, filled with the great joy of leading people to know Jesus. However, we were also physically exhausted. Partly, it was because in addition to Happiness Group, we have our children with special needs at home; caring for two children with Down Syndrome is not an easy task. Meanwhile, in our happiness group, everyone had the mindset of





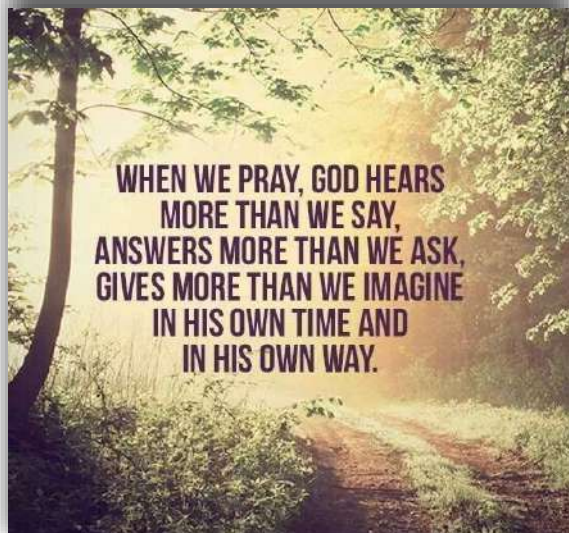
giving the best of the best. The gatherings were in-person and we put so much into the details, from gifts to food preparation. During that time, I was severely sleep deprived. So for the second and third waves, we didn't participate in the meetings but only prayed for the happiness groups. When the 4th wave started, we still didn't feel that God was calling us to join again.



**Q: Since you didn't feel the calling in the beginning, what changed your mind?**

**A:** It was an amazing experience. At first, we didn't do Happiness Group for the 2nd and 3rd waves due to our daughter having insomnia at the end of 2019, although we were still involved in discipleship training. She couldn't sleep one second at night, so I ended up not having enough sleep either. I became very weary and exhausted. At the beginning, I wanted to quit the 4th wave training as well. At that time, David, my husband, already had quite a few colleagues from HP who expressed their interest in the upcoming Happiness Group, so we were thinking about finding an appropriate group for them to join. Therefore, when the church was recruiting group leaders and coworkers, we didn't think of forming our own group at all. But God continuously knocked on the doors of our hearts for the next few days.

During the prayer meeting, Pastor Lam mentioned that so far, we had 32 groups, and as it was the 34th anniversary of our church, it would be great if we could have two more. Then the worship songs on that Sunday touched me deeply: "The Lord said to me, follow me," but at that moment, I was unwilling to



listen although it seemed that the lyrics were addressing me. The song went on, "I was still hesitant in my exhaustion, yet the Lord's calling didn't let me go; And when I answered yes, joy and light instantly flew out." We had been debating for quite a while; we were sure





that we couldn't lead a group this time, but what else could we do if not participate? The song's verse went on: "I build up the altar of dedication, Lord please give me the charcoal to train me, oh, Lord, you chose me because of your mercy, and I chose you to fulfil your wish." We have always been burdened with evangelism. Pastor Lam's sermon on "uncontained courage, undampened praise" again

knocked on my heart. However, I still didn't feel like I had the courage to take on that calling.

The climax of God's script happened during that day's discipleship training. Pastor Gong said that if you have just one BEST, you should come and lead a happiness group. That entire weekend, it was like God was continuously knocking on the doors of our hearts. Pastor Gong also said, "Our ability to serve is from God. The willingness is from us, and the ability is from God. As long as we respond to God's calling, God will certainly grant us the talent, the ability, the resources, and the opportunities." The last sentence was clearly fulfilled later in our experience. Then Pastor Gong put out an ad recruiting coworkers for his newly established happiness group No. 33. There were brothers and sisters who answered the call right on the spot. I remember I was a little deflated, feeling that God had closed the door for us to become coworkers. At that time, I was even hesitant to become a coworker, and even more so a group leader. That night, David was talking to me about his BEST friends again, so I suggested for him to speak to Pastor Lam. Our original plan when we talked to Pastor Lam was to have an informal mini group. Pastor Lam supported the idea and said, "You'll be the leader, I'll be the coworker." David gladly agreed and started looking for possible coworkers. Very soon, we had enough coworkers and we started prepping for the coworkers meeting. Then more brothers reached out to us to join. It was like a miracle! Quickly, it went from 2 coworkers to 4, then to 6, and eventually even to 12 coworkers. God's script is so different from what we could imagine.



**Q: So when you finally decided to form the group, were there any difficulties you had to face and adjust to?**

**A:** The week right before we started our happiness group, my mom broke her hips. However, when family members brought her to the hospital, they didn't get the diagnosis until Sunday.



Looking back, it feels like a trial for us. When I shared this news with our coworkers, everyone prayed for my mom. Pastor Wanda and Pastor Lam always made themselves available and always checked in on us about my mom's condition. Right before my mom's surgery, Pastor Wanda and Pastor Lam did a video call with my mom and prayed over her. I was very moved by that. You know, hip surgery is very complicated, but amazingly, all the details turned out to be exactly we had prayed for. The surgery was a great success. My mom could even start walking after three days. There were also other coworkers whose family members had encountered health issues; David and I prayed for them daily and we experienced God's healing hands over everything.

After this experience, I feel strongly that when we have just a tiny bit of faith and willingness, God shows himself in everything from coworkers to healing. It's like the Israelites when they crossed the Red Sea. They had to step into the Red Sea before they could see the water separate in front of their eyes. If I only start when I feel I am ready, I might never be ready. However, when we had just a tiny bit of willingness in our hearts, God was on route to do the rest. God does not call the qualified, but He qualifies the called. There are so many things that we aren't capable of doing, but God only needs our basket of five bread loaves and two fish, and He takes care of the rest and performs miracles. ♦



# An Awe-Inspiring Expedition!

By Ivy Lee, Cantonese Congregation

Interviewed by Vivian Chiu



Although this was already the second time Ivy served for the Happiness Group Ministry, she had never participated in a virtual setting, nor had she been a presenter of a gospel message! In the eyes of Ivy, it was a journey with twists and turns and also an expedition full of God's miraculous guidance and awe-inspiring moments from the Holy Spirit!

**Q: How long did it take you to prepare for the message?**

**A:** I didn't really keep track of it. But I can tell you it costed me quite a few sleepless nights mulling over the message.

For me, "giving the message" was totally beyond my level. Not only had I never done it, but I hadn't even thought about it! It was absolutely beyond my ability to handle. After learning about this arrangement, I was completely at a loss. I prayed for help from God and I also asked other sisters to pray for me. But I didn't know where to start. I am grateful for Maddy, who participated in the online "Happiness Group Chat Room," whom I asked for advice.

**Q: You got quite a bit of feedback from coworkers on the day of the rehearsal; how did you feel about all of that?**

**A:** My PowerPoint presentation at the time was not quite finished despite my painstaking efforts and the countless hours spent. There were quite a few kinks in the rehearsal as I was not able to practice and pace myself before-







hand. Pastor Ed and the other coworkers gave me a lot of feedback. I didn't feel bad or discouraged as I figured I would need to overhaul the presentation anyway. I knew that everyone was trying to help a rookie.

**Q: Did that affect your confidence at all?**

**A:** To tell you the truth, I didn't really have much confidence at the time. All I wanted was to serve and serve well for the glory of God.

**Q: What was the biggest challenge for you?**

**A:** In the beginning, Maddy taught me how to print out the summary of the message as well as the transcripts for Pastor Wanda's video clip. I read them again and again, but still didn't know where to start, or how to properly edit and make sense of all the materials at hand. I ventured into making my very first PowerPoint, tinkering around till I came up with a presentation! The other challenge was that I had to set aside some of my personal and familial needs and reprioritize so that I could slowly chip away at the editing of the PPT.



When some of the coworkers contacted me to check on my progress and offer their help, I was very grateful. However, I didn't know how to respond. This was my assignment and I had a lot of materials to work with already. I knew their plates were equally full, so I didn't want to burden them further with my assignment.



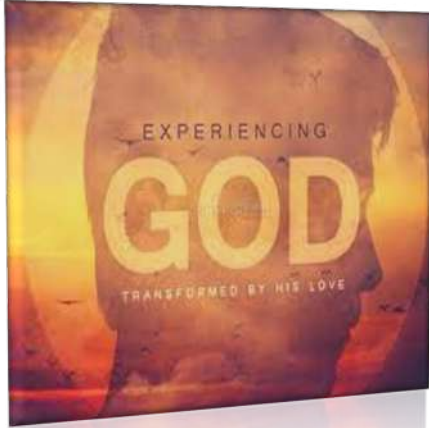
**Q: What was your approach to editing all the content and how did you accomplish it?**

**A:** I added a video segment based on Pastor Ed's recommendation which meant I had to trim or even delete some of the slides. After the rehearsal, Eddie was very helpful and gave me great advice on how to set up and highlight the key points.



However, when I sat down to edit, I realized it was far from an easy fix. I had a hard time concentrating and almost felt brain-dead...

I asked Eddie to help review the slides for me on a Friday night when there was no fellowship meeting. But I was not able to finish my part in time for his review. When others in-



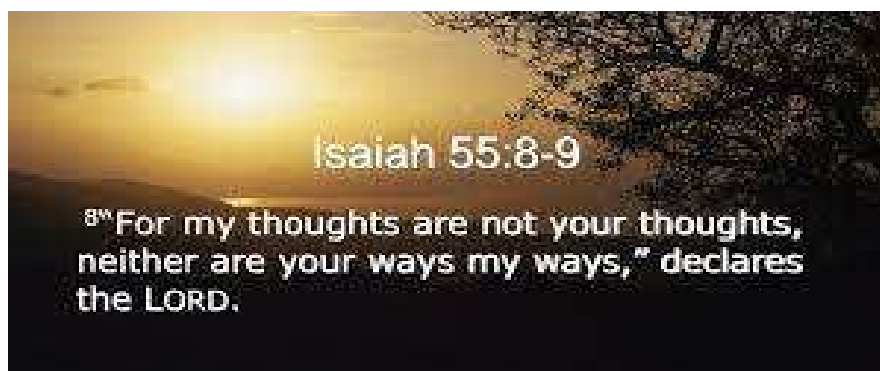
quired about my progress and offered help, I didn't dare to tell them the truth and instead asked Eddie to just get the two video clips ready for the meeting.

I don't know why, but my brain came back alive when the rest of the family was fast asleep. I was able to power through and complete

the PowerPoint presentation by 3 A.M. the next morning. I was so grateful and relieved to finally be able to get into bed! But I still needed to run it through and recalibrate the timing of the new presentation. I managed to get up an hour and a half before the meeting time and text Wai King as she had offered to help me practice the day before. She responded right away so I was able to have a quick practice run and get a handle on the timing despite some technical glitches. I was also able to make some last-minute edits based on Wai King's feedback. At the conclusion of the first meeting, the team gave me lots of praise. Kiky even called me with words of encouragement and valuable advice.

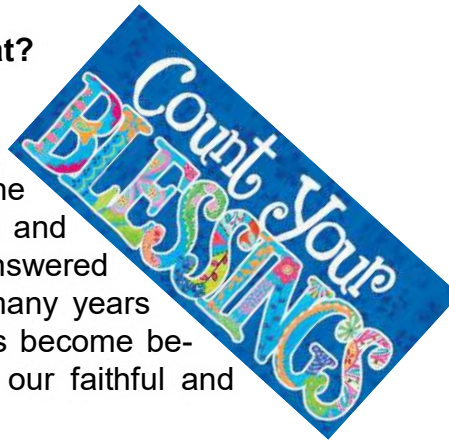
**Q: Have you ever imagined that God would use you to help two BESTs become followers of Christ?**

**A:** We've been praying all along that all BESTs would become believers of Christ, but I was not expecting for it to happen right then and there. Praise be to the Lord! That was the work of the Holy Spirit via the concerted effort made by Erica and Wai King.



**Q: How do you feel about that?  
How about others?**

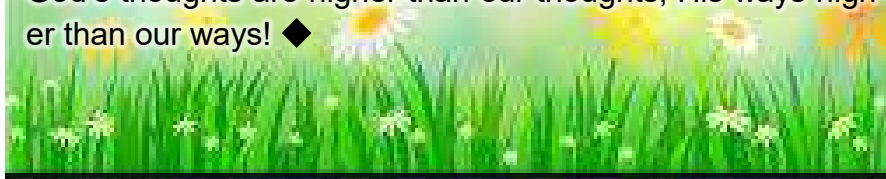
**A:** Everyone was super excited and encouraged to hear the good news! I was so grateful and happy for Peggy that God answered her repeated prayers in the many years past and finally let her parents become believers of Christ. Glory be to our faithful and loving God!



**Q: What's your biggest takeaway from this experience?**

**A:** I think it has nothing to do with my personal ability or effort and everything to do with the power of concerted prayers, God's guidance, and His timing. If it was not for the work of God Almighty, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the help from the team, I would never have accomplished anything given the kind of sleep deprivation and pressure I was faced with. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our group leader Pastor Ed and all the coworkers for their prayers and sacrifices. I was especially grateful for the constructive feedback and tangible help from the more experienced and gifted coworkers which played a key role in shaping the message I delivered for the Lord!

The "Super Happiness Group" that Ivy served in met at 10am and 8pm on Saturdays every week. She had to make major revisions to her presentation after the rehearsal on Thursday. Despite the huge pressure, Ivy maintained her humility and faithfulness. With the team's support and the Holy Spirit's guidance, she was able to complete the revisions which in turn touched the hearts of two BESTs to become believers of Christ. Hallelujah! This untraveled path was full of twists and turns as well as pleasant surprises! God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts, His ways higher than our ways! ◆



**Editorial Group Members:**

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