

2012
TESTIMONIES
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Special Parents Exalting Christ's Infinite Amazing Love

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Looking Forward, Climbing Higher

Albert Ng

October 2012 is the 11th anniversary of Special Needs Parent Support Group. I witnessed God is leading us throughout the years I participated in this group. Hereby, I thank you God.



Firstly, the church's pastors have supported our families. Especially Pastor Irene, her genuine care for the parents and her deep love for our children with special needs, are witnessed and experienced by many people.

Secondly, a group of caring brothers and sisters have been looking after our children faithfully every Sunday. This allows the parents to attend church worship without worries. This act of love can only come from God.

Thirdly, we continue to have new families joining our small groups. Originally, the group did not have enough core leaders, but God provided. Now there are more brothers and sisters serving together, united in one heart.

Looking forward to the future, may God give us vision and lead the group to the next higher mountain.

Love, Life-long Learning

Catherine Lo

「眼空蓄淚淚空垂，暗灑閒拋更向誰，
枕上袖邊難拂拭，任它點點與斑斑」

This was a poem from the famous Chinese classical novel 'Dream of the Red Chamber'. It described well how my life was once filled with doubts, fear, and confusion. I was unable to sleep, crying day and night.

By leaning onto God and giving all my burdens to Jesus, I no longer live in my past. Although my son is autistic, if we accept him, love him and care for him, we can also have a blessed family.

When my husband finished the “Love, life-long learning” workshop offered by the Men's Ministry of RHCCC, he came home and said to me, “We men must protect our families.” Ever since then, we have been getting along well and live happily together.

Language therapy was very effective for my son. By providing him with many options to choose, he becomes very happy. We always find opportunities to praise my son, this builds up his confidence in himself. Stay away from pollution, radiation, and live healthy!



I often pray: “Lord, please give me love, patience and a forgiving heart. Help me forget the past and try my best to go forward. I press on towards the goal. By doing so, I live in great harmony with my family.

There is Hope in The Lord

Donald & Florence Wong



“Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.”

Isaiah 40:30-31

Reminiscing over the past fifteen years since Justin was diagnosed with Autism/PDD, there are a lot of fond memories in seeing how Justin has grown and matured. Memories of

success stories are especially sweet such as learning to wash dishes, to ride a bike, to play the piano, or simply to hold a conversation over a telephone when mom or dad calls.

There are also many memories of laughable stories like learning to shave or when Justin threw a dozen raw eggs, one at a time, on top of our roof while our neighbors watched just because he decided he does not like eggs anymore. Or if we see anything missing in the house, we will look at each other and know that Justin has thrown it into the recycling bin outside the house. The most recent object that fell victim to Justin’s displeasure is the weight scale. He has been conscience of his weight gain since the doctor reminded him during our last visit.

There are also certain behaviors and situations we pray that will never occur again. Behaviors that we pray Justin will not get fixated on but outgrow as he physically enters adulthood. With Justin, anything that we ask him not to do, the chances are he will do it at least once to see what will happen. But we thank God that with each event, it is a learning opportunity for both Justin and for us as parents.

No doubt that it has been one long rollercoaster ride. With each peak, we are grateful for God’s provision. With each valley, we have come to rely on God for guidance and wisdom to help us through. Through these peaks and valleys that God has humbled us and has taught us to let God be God and let Him lead our lives. Through these peaks and valleys that we have come out stronger in faith to see God’s purpose for giving us the gift of a special needs son.

Justin turned seventeen this year and as we prepare him for post school stage in life, we hold on to our Lord’s promise of providing sufficient grace for us to weather new storms together, but we also look forward to seeing what the God of love has in store for us. We may not know what the next seventeen years will bring but we know and trust that our Lord will be there with us and helping us along this journey.



Finding my life mission through Ezekiel Fiona Goy



Just before the global financial meltdown in 2008, I reached a fork on my path: do I continue my fulfilling career in the technology industry or quit my job to help my son who has autism?

Ezekiel was only 3 years old but already displaying obvious traits of autism. He was verbal but most of the time, he just repeated words he heard from DVDs and his toys. At that time, I was a Communications Manager for the Canadian CEO of a Fortune 500 company. So, it became a clear question to me: do I help a CEO communicate or do I help my son communicate?

I prayed for confirmation, received it and with support from my husband, set my heart on my new “career”. My husband has been and is such an amazing blessing from the Lord. A born-again Christian himself, he supported my decision even though it meant he would become the sole breadwinner of the family. He also took on his fair share of parenting responsibilities so I would not collapse from the physical and mental exhaustion of my new job: “Therapist Mom”.

That is because the hours of my job were 24x7, I had to be alert in my waking hours because Ezekiel had pica (he would eat non-edible objects) and he was a “runner”, often wandering away from me when we went out. I had to be on-call during the night because he woke 3 or 4 times each night, sometimes being awake in bed 1 to 2 hours at a stretch. This new job was stressful and unlike my previous profession, success is not guaranteed even though I worked hard, was

creative during problem-solving and sometimes went over and above what I was supposed to do.

We prayed for God’s grace so I could have patience and wisdom to help our son in his development. And God was gracious to us! We enjoyed some success along the way: when Ezekiel stopped pushing me out of his world, when he came to hug me to get my attention, when we were able to sing songs together.

But there were also dark days when I was greatly discouraged because as Ezekiel grew up, I observed that the development gaps between him and typical children widened. God carried me through those days – the days where my time was spent trying to get his attention, trying to get him to talk to me, trying to stop problem behaviors, only to see new ones emerge.

I remember having conversations with God asking Him why we ran into long waitlists and why there are so many challenges in our lives. Even though I had been a Christian for a long time and my faith is relatively strong, I was still very disheartened at times. I prayed for grace to get through the day, I listened to Christian radio to get encouragement and I attended Sunday worship services for spiritual nourishment and to bring my burdens to the Lord.

God was (and still is) faithful to His promises throughout my journey. How do I know He is faithful? He sends whispers of assurance and supportive friends to lift me up. One day, God reminded me of a simple truth: When people are faced with troubles, their natural reaction is to pray for Him to take the troubles away. Instead of praying for my troubles to be removed, I should pray for strength to endure and overcome my troubles. I then understood what ***Isaiah 40:31 meant: “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.***

So, I did my best and trusted God to do the rest. I sought strategies from workshops, searched the internet for material and asked for advice from others. I worked with Ezekiel in many different areas: life skills, speech, occupational therapy, sensory integration, behavior management and social skills. I learned how to teach like a therapist so my son can learn better. I learned how to navigate the plethora of services and therapies available. I learned how to advocate for Ezekiel so he can receive the services he needed.

But though I did much, I had to constantly remind myself that Ezekiel's progress would come only as a result of God's grace, not as a direct result of my efforts. I know of other parents who did just as much as me, some who did even more, and yet they do not see the progress that Ezekiel was making. Only by the grace of God.

By and by, my "life's mission" became clear: to raise my child with autism to the best of my ability and to bless others in similar situations. God had put me in the world of autism so that I could help others and share with them not just strategies and knowledge I have gained, but more importantly to share with them the love and peace that comes from God. Because God loves them and their special children – He loves us all so much that He sent Jesus to die for us so we can have a relationship with Him.

Through this relationship I experience His peace that transcends all understanding, in spite of this crazy context of autism that I live in. And even though there is so much to do in my life, I am always energized when God sends someone / a family to me so they can pick my brains or use me as their sounding board. I am happiest when I can extend God's love by helping other families.

When we had our children, we dedicated them to the Lord and we pray they will grow up to be servants of God, doing His work and bringing Him glory through whatever they did. In Ezekiel's case, my prayer is that he will one day be able to share his faith with his friends, his community. And I know that if God can make the birds sing, He can enable Ezekiel to tell others what an awesome God He is and how He has blessed him and our family.



Firsthand Testimony

Joshua Ng

Hello, my name is Joshua Ng. This is my testimony about my interesting eleven years at church. So why am I here around 4000 people in Richmond Hill Christian Community Church?

Since 2001, when I was a baby, my parents brought me to this church. I was a gifted child, and I had special needs. I want to thank God for all my eleven years at this church, and I appreciate all the teachers and caregivers who have helped me throughout these years. Some of you have helped me every Sunday and some during the Noah fellowship. You have been motivating me to grow in the Lord.



I would like to give a special tribute to God for providing me with clouds of angels in my Sunday school classes, BGSB and ETC classes throughout Grade 6. To name a few, I would thank Auntie Wendy, Auntie Rebecca, Auntie Daisy, Ms. Dora, and Auntie Connie for supporting me in the early years. Special thanks to Mrs. Karen Tam who let me serve God at the N5/6 Boys & Girls serving group with my musical talent in piano.

From the Sparrows special needs band, I give thanks to Auntie Nancy, Pastor Irene, and Uncle Donald for leading the group. Even

though the other “kids” in the band are much older than me - teenagers and young adults - I enjoy being with my special needs friends. We have worked hard since the band’s first performance last winter and practiced every possible Sunday at 2 pm. We love chatting together because aside from playing music, friends are everything. Now it is about Christmas time in two months and the special needs Christmas celebration is coming quick. I hope that we have the best performance this year!

Everyone is different, even their special needs are different. No person is the same, not even a twin. Recently I learned that everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses. For example, I have good biking skills, but some people may not know how to ride bikes. Some of my friends are good at skateboarding, but I do not even do that because it seems more dangerous. I have also learned that no one is perfect, only God is. Through the many mistakes I have made, I have learned that God is gracious and forgiving. With this understanding I am learning to always trust God as He will lead me out of temptation. For example, I was tempted to buy a toy car, but it was too expensive, and I did not buy it so that I would not waste money.

I also appreciate my parents, who are the most important people in my life. They help me and support me, travel to many places with me, and equip me with many extracurricular activities. Most of all, they brought me to the Lord. They pray with me and do devotions with me. My parents are extra-patient with my special needs, and I love them.

I wish everyone good luck as I become a teenager and grow up, as it is difficult for me to maintain my self-control during this time. Please help me in the future during these times because I need encouragement.



God has All the Answers

Kitty Leung

Looking at the calendar, I just noticed this December is the fifth RHCCC Christmas party that we will be attending. I realized that Cougar and I have been in RHCCC for almost 5 years. I cannot believe Cougar is now 9 years old and he is in Grade 5 already.

When I returned to Toronto from Hong Kong, I felt extremely depressed and lonely when I went through my divorce and found out Cougar was diagnosed with Autism and Attention Deficit Disorder. Although I have lived in Toronto for over 15 years, I must start everything back at square one.

It was extremely difficult when we first arrived in Toronto. Cougar was not able to find the right school and no day care center would take him. He was not happy and extremely difficult. I am not able to take him to the public and not able to control his behavior. I am very scared to go out with him, so I stay home with him every day. I became very depressed, locked myself at home and did not want to talk to anybody. No family support and no friends around, I felt I was building a wall to ourselves and not able to come out of it.



Until I got a call and get invited to a special parent group “Heep Chi Association”, then I know I am not alone and there are parents just like me. That was when I found out from one of the parents that knew someone who lived close to me and able to take me to church. I cannot find any church in any area that is able to take special needs children. I am so thankful that we still have the ride.

Now I found a place where I can have a peaceful time to worship God while I know my son is safe and well taken care of. I know I am not alone anymore; God has already planned this for me. I just need to follow His lead with faith. With God’s blessing, I can see tremendous improvement in Cougar. I really want to take this opportunity to thank all the brothers and sisters who take care of

Cougar now and in the past. I am very thankful for all the love and patience towards him.

Now I am a stronger, happier mother who does not need to worry about anything because I know God has all the answers. I am learning from my experience and sharing my knowledge with other special needs parents. Hopefully, we can help each other out.

Change of Attitude

Linda Chen

Looking at the photos of my daughter growing up in church's Sunday school, I thank God for taking care of our family all along.



I accepted Christ in the Louise Program in 2006 and got baptized in 2012 Thanksgiving Day. During these 6 years, I questioned God's grace. Our daughter often uses self-harm or attacking others to express her emotional frustration. The conflicts between my husband and I on how to take care of our daughter had grown over the years and had affected our relationship.

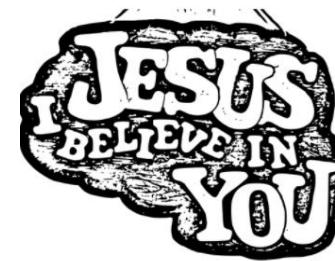
Everything is a lesson from God.

How to maintain harmony in family? It depends on how we connect with God's love, pray unceasingly, and insist on going to Sunday worship. God's Word inspired and changed me. Because of my change in attitude, my husband and I can take care of our daughter with a united heart. Brothers and sisters around us, Sunday school teachers, caregivers, Pastor Irene, and our daughter's therapists are all angels sent by God to support us. My husband attended three sessions of the

Men's Conference and his life has also been transformed. I believe it is all because of the work of God allowing our family to be filled with harmony and joy.

In the past few years, I have written two testimonies, but I felt this one is dearest to my heart. Besides being baptized, it is the 11th anniversary of the Special Needs Ministry.

We have grown together, giving thanks every day. The dedication of pastors and caregivers have helped many special needs families. Looking back in the past 6 years, God has led me go forward, gave me faith and courage. No matter what the results are, we must press on to take care of our daughter. From the first time I stepped into church until now, I can trust God without fear in my heart. May all the glory be to God.



Vessels of God

Margaret & Hong Keung Chow

In every stage of the growth of children, they have different needs, and they are all different. Children with special needs are no exception.

Back in 2005, when my daughter, June, was 12 years old and was still in elementary grade; her academic study, communication and independence skills did not seem to have any improvement. However, just a few years later when she was about to graduate from high school, we could see her maturing. She had really grown up!

In 2006, when I was preparing for a medical operation, I was very worried about all the housework and daily chores during my recovery period. After our family discussion and prayers, we started to train June to use the washer to wash clothes and use a vacuum cleaner to clean the house. Surprisingly, she learned fast and could complete the tasks well.

When she joined the summer program in Community Living York South, I needed to make special transportation arrangements for her since the program was from 9:00am to 3:00pm. Thanks to the Lord, some sisters gave rides to June, and she was home safely. During this time, she learned how to open the door with the house key and stayed home alone all by herself till 4:30pm when my son and I returned home.

We trained our two children, 17 and 12 years old, how to share the responsibilities and care for each other; not to be fearful about being left alone at home on PA Days or school holidays. They know if they have any problems, we are always there for them, it is just a phone call away.

When June was 17, the school arranged her to attend the credit class (a special program for special students). By then I really felt she was in high school, and she could study with the regular students. The school also suggested for her to join the "work program" (students were arranged to work 1-2

hours at places like Tim Hortons, H&M, etc.). Since she had the opportunity to join academic study, we wanted her to learn basic knowledge, and had a better foundation before she started joining the work program. We believe once she had acquired the basic knowledge, she will apply it one day in the future.

She also joined the Nexis Fellowship at church and met a few peers there. Every time she sings, she is very excited and happy. She would tell me what songs she has sung, and these songs were very sweet. We have our family worship at dinner time. One day when June led the prayer, she said, "Oh Lord, please bring Daddy home safely, remember Granny's health, and help me to study hard.... Amen!" We were so touched and praised her for improving in saying prayers. We are so glad she now knows how to pray and ask the Lord to guide her.

While June is growing up, we naturally encountered difficulties and disappointment. We, as a family, always prayed and asked the Lord to provide and help us, like what we learned in ***Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts, and your minds to Christ Jesus."***

The Lord is in control of everything. We do not know His plan and His time, but we know all His arrangement is always the best.

In the summer of 2011, my hands were wounded, and I was unable to work. By God's miraculous power, June managed to take care of all the housework and prepare dinner. Without God's ingenious involvement, we would not be able to see how June has grown up in His grace. We asked our Lord to guide her when she graduates from high school next year and continue to lead her path into the society. We also pray for all the children with special needs to be led and protected by God when they step into the community in the future.



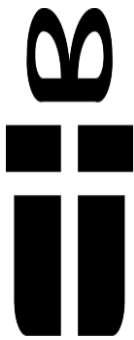
Thanks to our Lord for giving extra wisdom, patience, and love to the parents with children with special needs so that we have sufficient power and energy to take care of our children.



With faith and hope, also through prayers, we believe our children will be used to glorify our Lord.

Precious Gifts from God

Maureen Zhang



It was because of my second child that I was able to come to know God and trust in our Lord Jesus.

When I was young, the only education I received was about materialism and atheism. Any religion was just superstition. All along, everything went smoothly for me, being able to complete university and graduate school study. While back in China, I was able to work for a reputable foreign company and earned a high salary.

After immigrating to Canada, I was able to get a professional job promptly. Not long afterwards, my smart and lovable son was born. A few years later, my second son was born. I was so busy at work and enjoying myself that I never thought about Christianity nor contacting a church. I disliked people trying to talk to me about the gospel.

However, four years ago, when my second son turned 2 years old, he was diagnosed to be with special needs. I was shocked and devastated, questioning “heaven” to be so unfair. I tried to quickly calm myself down, desperate to seek cure remedies and explanations.

At the Early Year Centre, I met a mandarin-speaking worker. She is a Christian and recommended me to go to church.

From then on, I began to get to know God and the church. I clearly remembered the first time I went to church, the theme at Children Sunday school was “God made everyone special”. This lesson impacted me.’

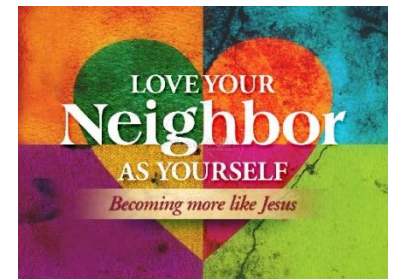
After going to church, I found out that Christianity is very different from my previous understanding since young. Before, Christianity came from a superficial one-sided view, with additional subjective ideas that lead to an inaccurate supposition. When I gradually get familiarized with Christianity through pastors’ preaching and small group discussion, I had new discoveries that touched my heart deeply.



Jesus said: **“Love the Lord with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind”**. I examined myself bit by bit and tried not to hold on to my ideal dreams, such as anxiously seek to own a luxurious home and car; appearing to be glamorous in front of

others; and tried to gain respect from them. Instead, I began to care more about my inner well-being, looking at my soul and spiritual state, thinking about the meaning of eternal life, what life is all about. Gradually, I realize a life driven by desire and need is ignorant and will eventually lead to death.

Jesus said: **“Love your neighbor as yourself”**. With love, life is eternal. At this moment, I want to mention about the special needs support group led by Pastor Irene. Not only do I get a lot of inspiration from this community, life experiences of brothers and sisters are real life support and encouragement to me. Some have children with health condition more severe than my son. But they still have peace and joy, all because of their trust in the Lord. Not only do they give me confidence and strength, but they also guide me to experience God’s presence in my life.



There is a Chinese saying: Humans can only do their best, but the final decision is from above. Children are precious gifts from God, I should accept them willingly. God has His plans. What we can accomplish in our profession is one thing, but how we can appreciate God's glory is another thing. God gives us life; it is not for us to count our earthly possessions but be able to serve and glorify Him.

My spirit has found a resting place after knowing God and relying on Him. Gradually I realized that I can only do my best for my child and leave all the rest in God's hand. For the future, I do not know whether God will give me a genius or a burden in life. However, I firmly believe that my efforts will add light to eternal life. The great blessing is that through God's arrangements, I came to know Him, getting close to Him and walking towards eternal life.

Thanks be to God, my family, pastors and brothers and sisters at church who give me care and guidance all along. May all the glory be to God.

Leading Me Go Forward

Peggy Kam

Our family began attending RHCCC when Milton was three. At that time, he had great difficulties engaging in Sunday school. He could not sit still, would not listen to the teachers' instruction, and lacked eye contact.



Seeing that his development is different from his peers, I took him to see a pediatrician. Because Milton was able to communicate verbally, the pediatrician initially did not identify him as autistic. The diagnosis was later confirmed when Milton was six, after a detailed examination.

In the earlier years, the church arranged to have brothers and sisters assist Milton one-on-one in Sunday school settings. Later, Pastor Irene organized a special Sunday school class, where children with exceptionalities can worship together. This arrangement allows me to attend worship services with peace, as I have no fear for Milton's safety. During Sunday school classes, he and other children also learn to read the Bible, sing praises, and do craft. This helps Milton enjoy the worship of God.



In high school, Milton attends a special education class. He develops life skills through assisting in the school library delivering newspapers, cleaning clothes, and organizing recyclable materials. Milton has a growing interest for the Chinese language. His Chinese language teacher instructs him with much patience, and often incorporates Bible reading and Bible story telling into his curriculum. In addition, he also likes to create artworks (as the one here) and do crafts. I am very

thankful that God has provided two supportive Christian teachers for Milton.

During the past 11 years, our Special Needs support group has encouraged one another through prayers. My family and I are blessed through this, and I trust that God will continue to guide my path ahead.

I greatly appreciate Pastor Irene and the caregivers for their support. God blesses you all!

The Position of our Hearts

P. Lumanau



2 Corinthians 3:1-6, 18 New Living Translation

1 Are we beginning to praise ourselves again? Are we like others, who need to bring you letters of recommendation, or who ask you to write such letters on their behalf? Surely not!

2 The only letter of recommendation we need is you yourselves. Your lives are a letter written in our hearts; everyone can read it and recognize our good work among you.

3 Clearly, you are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This “letter” is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts.

4 We are confident of all this because of our great trust in God through Christ.

5 It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God.

6 He has enabled us to be ministers of his new covenant. This is a covenant not of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life.”

18 So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.”

This Bible passage reminds us of the importance of having a humbled heart before God to serve Him as parents of children

with exceptional abilities. It is more important than our educational background, our parenting knowledge, or our life experience.

God will perfect our imperfection, but a heart attitude is a matter of PERSONAL choice. When we respond to God in HUMILITY, He will take us and use us where we are.

Let the Lord make us adequate before Him: rely upon Him and allow Christ to live IN and THROUGH and FOR us. He will replace our insecurity and pride with a quiet spirit of contentment. Inadequacy can be uncomfortable, painful, embarrassing, and sometimes invoke other feelings such as “can’t measure up” or “feeling like a failure”.

But there are blessings hidden in our insufficiency:

1. It drives us to God, to our knees in prayers
2. It relieves us of the burden of self-reliance.
3. It motivates us to rely on the Holy Spirit.
4. It gives God the glory and privilege to do great things with so little.
5. It frees God to use us to our maximum potential in Him.
6. It enables us to walk in contentment and quietness of the spirit.

Psalm 46:10 says, “Cease striving and know that I am God”.

God hates pride and egotism. The worst thing is for us to think that we can do it all on our own strength. The moment we start striving over anything, our contentment and joy in the Lord will evaporate.

When we acknowledge our weaknesses and say “Lord, you are going to have to do this, I lay it down and turn it over to you”, we are no longer striving.

We can have a sense of peace, joy, and contentment that are independent of our circumstances. This is truly the victory/freedom in Christ Jesus.

May this be a blessing,

I see God's Glory

Ben Liang

“O Lord, the God who saves me, day and night I cry out before you. May my prayer come before you; turn your ear to my cry. For my soul is full of trouble and my life draws near the grave.” Psalm 88:1-3.



July 16, 2012, 4:30pm

I visited my family doctor for my annual checkup report on this day. When the doctor told me that tumors were found in my small intestine, liver, and the lymph areas, and they have blood vessels, I felt like I had fallen into a deep abyss. I was then being transferred to a specialist for further examination. When my doctor tried to explain to me the nature of these tumors, I had a voice repeatedly talking to me, “that is impossible.... this is not real!”, I could not hear a word she had said, but only saw her mouth keep moving. I was just frozen without any response.

On my way home, seeing people passing by, when I thought of my wife and my 9-year-old autistic son, tears uncontrollably came on my face. I prayed, “Oh Lord! Please remember my wife's burden on her shoulders...” When I arrived home, I did not want my family to worry about me, so I hid my feelings and reacted as usual. But as soon as I saw my wife, tears almost burst out.

The next morning, I was awakened by a weeping sound. It was my wife whose eyes were all red. I was about to comfort her but withdrew my hands on a second thought. She cried to me, “What can I do? How can I take care of Jeffrey after you have gone?” I cried out without thinking, “It's time to go to see the lawyer for my will.” She then could not control herself crying.

I felt so lost when I started my day of work. Though my job is routine, living in the shadow of this bad mood, I could not even put a smile on my face. Even when I was busy, this feeling could not go away.

One day after dinner, I went back to my bedroom and found the Chinese Bible which has been covered with dust for a long, long time. In there I found a Sunday Service bulletin and the speaker's sermon was on ***John 10:29, “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.”***

Thank God for being our Father! This Bible verse acts like a glimmer in the dark, lightening up my withered soul. *“Yes, I still have a beloved and almighty Father who looks after me; and I do not need to face this illness myself.”* I then prayed to the Lord, asking Him to take my burden and to heal me; also, bravely ask Him to use my cancer to be a glorified testimony, especially for those non-believers from my wife's family. I, as well, asked God to release my wife's burden and to wipe her tears. I reassured myself in front of Him and picked up my daily devotion from then on.



The first few days during devotion, I have this voice blaming myself that I asked for God's help the very last minute and do not know if God will really heal me. However, the Holy Spirit has brought me to the books of 1 & 2 Kings, and 1 & 2 Chronicles. I realized God is a trustful God and He keeps His promises.

2 Chronicles 6:36-39 said King Solomon prayed for the offering of the temple, in his prayer, ***“when men sinned, for there was no one who did not sin, but when the sinners turned back to the Lord, God always forgave and blessed them.”***

These words not just answered my queries but also comforted me. The Lord once again let me understand Yahweh Roi (The Lord is my shepherd); Yahweh Shalom (God our Peace); Yahweh Rapha (the Lord who heals); El Sali (The Lord my Strength), Lord Ebenezer (The Lord is my ever help).

“The cords of grave coiled around me; the spares of death confronted me. In my distress I called to the LORD: I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice: my cry came before him, into his ears.” Psalm 18:5-6.

July 30, 2012, 8:30am

This day my wife accompanied me to the Sunnybrook Odette Cancer Center for an appointment with the cancer specialist. When the car got closer to the hospital and as soon as I saw the words “Cancer Center”, my heart sank. Why would I have to come to this place, I am still young?

When I got into the hospital, it was so crowded that the entire waiting room was full of patients. Everyone was anxiously waiting. Among them I could see some patients have already started with chemotherapy. They were losing hair, eyes were glazed and even showing pain on their faces. “I will look like them soon...!” The feeling of death was covering me again. I immediately prayed and asked God to take me out of this thought; then I started my daily devotion with the Bible app in my cell phone.



The verse for that day was from [Psalm 18](#), when I read ***“The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.”***, my heart felt the peace and comfort. The Lord had given me the strength to face this visit.

The doctor has firmly informed me, “There are 3-4 tumors in your small intestine. According to my professional experience, they should be neuroendocrine tumors and have spread to your liver and lymph.” To further confirm my condition, the doctor has arranged a series of tests for me. They included

the liver biopsy, scanning, and MRI. My wife has been so worried ever since she got into the doctor's office. When the doctor has finished the report, her eyes have already been filled with tears; but I was unusually calm and felt no fear or worry about my condition. I deeply believe that this burden has already been passed onto the Lord's hands and I should trust Him.

“The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.” Zephaniah 3:17

After the confirmation with the cancer specialist, my wife and I decided to tell the church about my condition and asked the brothers and sisters to pray for me. On August 5 after the Sunday Service, I talked to Rev. Sam Chan who immediately prayed for me. Pastor Irene, Pastor Gloria, and other brothers and sisters have also called to pray for us on the phone. Our Special Needs Fellowship and cell group members have also given our family the encouragement. Many times, during our gatherings they prayed for me. When Kitty heard about my situation, she even brought along her son to bring me the anti-cancer food ingredients and cookbooks.

Other than the caring from our church, my brother and sister-in-law also came from Los Angeles. They brought along the caring notes and prayers from their church congregation. My wife and I are especially touched by those sisters and brothers that we do not even meet. We constantly received caring and help directly and indirectly from people, this really encouraged us to fight with the cancer treatment. God uses the brothers and sisters' care and love to show His grace on us. He wants us to see, we are not alone; and He is always there with me.

At this time, there were a few tests that really worried me. I continually prayed to God to reduce my pain during the operation. When I laid on the operation bed, I felt like I was on the execution ground; but when I remember God's Words, then I was settled with peace. I also must thank God for hearing the prayers from brothers and sisters that I did not really feel the pain during the liver biopsy procedure.

This sickness is not just a physical fight against cancer, but a spiritual battle also. Ever since I put my cancer in God's hands, and started to do daily devotion, He reassured me, through His Word, that He is the only one God from Alpha to Omega. He is the Almighty and healer (***Exodus 15:2-26, "... for I am the LORD, who heals you."***, ***Job 7:9, Psalm 44:3, Psalm 91:3-7, Psalm 103:2-3, and John 16:33***, etc.).

These verses help me to get out of the darkness and fear, but to obey the Lord. Besides salvation, the Holy Spirit has also reminded me from the Bible verses that I am still a sinner and I need to repent. In the Book of 1 Kings, God has not forgotten what the Israelites had done in the High places. He let me see the consequence of sin (***Psalm 38:3-4***), and how to ask for His forgiveness (***Psalm 25:6-7, Psalm 32:5, Psalm 51:1, 2, 7, 10***, etc.).

Most important of all God is not only just, He is also merciful and compassionate (***Job 5: 17-18, Psalm 30:5***). When I was downhearted again, God gave me the story of Lazarus and there was a single verse (John 11:40) that reminded me to "glorify God". This became a booster of my faith which I had asked the Lord to use my illness as a tool to glorify Him.

"The Lord's right hand has done mighty things! The Lord's right hand is lifted high; the Lord's right hand has done mighty things!" I will not die but live and will proclaim what the Lord has done." Psalm 118:16-17.

October 3, 2012, 8:30am

After two months of different tests and anxious waiting, I revisited my cancer doctor. I wrote a letter to my church brothers and sisters when I came back from this visit. Here is my letter,

Subject: I saw God's grace

"Then Jesus said, ***"Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" John 11:40.***

Praise God! Through your continuous prayers, I can see God's healing and preservation. The doctor has told me that the suspected liver tumors had been confirmed as negative (no sign of cancer). But it is still not 100% sure about the ones in the intestines and lymph area which need further tests.

The next step is to do an intestine endoscopy test which is scheduled to be done on October 24. An operation will be followed around the end of November to get some samples out for testing. If the result is positive (cancer confirmed), the doctor will then give me medical treatment.

Both Selena and I now can see a glint of light for we were in the dark the past few weeks.

I gratefully thank all of you for remembering me in your prayers. The road ahead of us is still long, and please continue to pray for us.

May God bless you all.
Ben

P.S Though I have not fully recovered, God's grace is enough for me for I have already won the first battle. I still have a long way to go and all the challenges ahead of me, but I trust the Lord who will walk with me. May God help me to tell more wonderful testimonies to glorify His Name.

May the glory be for the Christ our Lord who loves us all!!

"Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation." Psalm 95:1



The Fruit of the Spirit

Angela Ann Kok

I AM THANKFUL to be introduced to the Special Needs Ministry in 2005. It was the year that transformation had started in my family.



Families with special needs children have become blessings to our family. My husband and I, along with our young children, grew in understanding more of His Word by integrating our lives with families with special needs children. Witnessing the turmoil in their lives, the tearful moments through difficult situations, have led us to understand more of the practical definition of the 'Fruit of the Spirit' proclaimed in His Word.



I AM THANKFUL to be part of a big church, with many people with different lifestyles but the same love for our Lord.

People in RHCCC interrelate to one another like a small Community. Our heavenly Father gives us the blessing to practice His Word in this small Christian Community. I am thankful to be given the opportunities to be part of the special needs caregiver team in both Sparrow and regular classes.

Sunday school is not merely a school to teach biblical knowledge in RHCCC, we are blessed with opportunities to plant spiritual seeds in our community. I, as a caregiver, have grown to understand and love the special needs children that were assigned to me. And I have wanted so much for myself, the other children, parents, teachers to befriend, understand and simply love one another by practicing HIS word. It is only through practices; we start to acknowledge the power of this small Christian Community -- to love and serve one another without boundaries and be part of this Christian Community that we can now call Family.

Thankful, Very Thankful!

Cindy Chor

Yes, 10 years already! It is just like the punch line of one of the famous Chinese episodes: "How many 10 years are there in one's life?" We experienced God's wonderful promises in the past ten years.

Over ten years ago, most of us did not know how to take care of our friends with special needs. We did not have any training nor experience! We prayed to our Lord, and we asked, "How can we serve them so that they can receive your great love as we do. Your love turns hopelessness into hopes, pains into praises, curses into blessings, despairs into encouragements!"



"Dear Lord, we are willing to try! Please give us strength and direction!" This was our prayer.

With the support from the pastoral team, deacons, and Pastor Irene of our church; a fellowship for the special needs families was formed! Through Bible studies, prayer meetings, witness sharing, workshops, training; supporting each other's needs, encouraging each other, crying, and laughing together, learning, and understanding each other, we steadily proceeded to our goals.

This fellowship attracted more families and friends with similar needs; and among them were brothers and sisters in Christ, and people with no experiences with Jesus. We encountered growing pains; and we shared tears together, but God comforted us; and His grace was upon us so that we could laugh through the storms.

Ten years passed by quickly, children became young adults! At every Christmas party, by seeing them participated in singing, worshiping, playing musical instruments, performing dramas etc., we appreciated the hard works of each member and the patience, love endurance from the parents. Seeing these young adults, we experienced God's promises as He walked every moment of happiness and sadness with us.

Apostle Paul speaks to us in **Acts 20:35** *"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"*



Another thing that amazes me is the love the parents have towards their kids. They are just absolutely committed to their children despite all the obstacles they need to deal with. This reminds me of how much God loves His children; He loves us so much that He even gave us His only Son so we can be saved.



I learn there is so much to be thankful for through serving in this ministry. I was quite surprised when once a sister said to me that "you are really a caring person" when she learned that I was serving in this program.

Give Thanks in all Circumstances Cecilia Wai

"Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (Thessalonians 5:18)



This Bible verse was included in Rev. Sam Chan's sermon on October 6, 2012, and it reflects what I have learned from serving in the Special Needs Ministry in the last few months.

We usually take a lot of things for granted, for example, our health, family, jobs, and friends. We feel we deserve all these privileges and forget to give thanks to our Lord for His blessings. We complain when things do not work out as expected and complain even more when these things are taken away from us.

However, I am constantly being reminded how blessed I am since I started to serve in a more active role in Special Needs Ministry in 2012. God really uses this opportunity to show me that He is always merciful even when I do not always have the faith – the programs are always well taken care of even when sometimes we thought we got more kids than we can handle.

I honestly believe that it was God's "idea" for me to serve Him through this role, for I do not know if I am especially gifted in caring for children. Nevertheless, it is my hope that one day more people will be able to see the beauty in these special children.

No matter what kind of challenges they face they are just the same as other kids in many ways – they love to play with their friends, they are full of curiosity and love to explore new things, and their faces just light up when we praise them for finishing a task. There is one difference though – their world is much purer than ours. They do not compare the kinds of clothes they wear or the grades they got from school; love and attention is what they really want. Sometimes friendships and trust just blossom between the helpers and the children right in front of my eyes. I always feel a sense of serenity when I take care of these children during the Special Kids Program.

Finally, I would like to thank Pastor Irene for all the encouragement she gave me, especially when I did not have enough faith. Also, helpers from the Paul Fellowship have contributed tremendously to making this partnership successful. They answer God's calling and take the time out of their busy schedule to come help looking after the children. May God's name continue to be glorified through this special ministry!



A Meaningful Serving Opportunity

Joseph Li



It has been a few years since I serve in Special Needs ministry. This ministry is very meaningful, and it is a channel to care for the community. In this ministry, I understand more about the parents' challenges and struggles; and learned the team spirit to share the responsibilities in caring for these children.

I am so glad and encouraged when I see these children grow up and be able to take care of themselves.

Seeing God's love

Lucy Lin

It is the love of God that led me to be saved by grace. His love brought me to the big family of RHCCC's special needs group. Within this big family, I have the chance to serve this group of children, but most importantly I found the lesson of love, seeing God's love in this special group.

Jesus said: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11: 28-30)



This is one of the reasons I walked into church. From then on, Lord Jesus carried my burden and walked with me every day. I also wish the families with special needs children will have the same blessings. It is not hard to imagine that families with special needs children have a lot more pressure than normal families. Although our efforts are limited, yet if we can help these families come to church and learn God's word during their 24/7 parenting cycles, it will become a huge blessing to

them. They will know that a loving God is always walking with them. This is my wish and original intention.

When I started coming to Special Needs Sunday School, I discovered that it is not simple. There is a lot to be learnt within this community.'

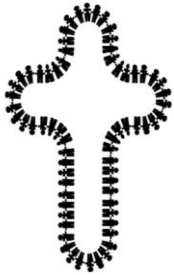
First, I must learn how to communicate with these children since most of them cannot use our usual verbal communication. Secondly, I must learn to cooperate within the team. Because of their uniqueness, some children can perceive some minor details that we cannot perceive. Sometimes a child's reaction can lead to a chain reaction in class. This calls for cooperation of colleagues and suitable adjustment to end such chain reactions. This is a challenge for me, but our heavenly Father is a truthful God. Looking back, leading me into this community is not because I can do something, but God wants me to see the wonders within this group just because of my little willingness.



Besides getting some related training, I can see a group of brothers and sisters living in God's love. Their love towards the children deeply touched my heart. Rev Irene Cheung and several colleagues have been working in this big family for more than 10 years. Sometimes they send out email to analyze a certain child's behavior earlier in the day and discuss how to prevent such things happening again in the future. At the same time, they have mutual discussion and encouragement. During staff meetings, they will analyze each child independently and search for best solutions for the child and family. Their dedicated love towards these children just shocked me as a newcomer. I can see that they act as a channel of love for Jesus, flowing into these families.

This love in turn flows out with God's energy to bless other families in the group. Wherever I see these parents bringing their children to our classroom with a smiling face, I really admire them from my heart. Many of them even take time from their busy schedule to support other special needs families. As the Mandarin speaking community is growing, they even lend a hand with their not so fluent mandarin.

They lead mandarin speaking people to RHCCC special needs family support group, to worship and into God's house.



All these years, I learned what true love is by seeing these families and members of this team. They come with Jesus' image and God's love, a perpetual love that never asks for any return. I understand why Jesus came to earth to bring God's love to us, explaining it through parables. I can understand how Jesus displays God's work among the weak (John 9:3). Seeing the innocent smile and prayers of these children, I can understand the goodness of God. I can also understand the verse ***"... whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."*** (Luke 18: 17)

We love because He first loved us

Odelia, Jim Yau & Catherine Sun

We started serving in the Special Needs Ministry about two years ago. Although we were assigned to different classes helping different kids, we have all witnessed God's faithfulness and love for the Special children, their family, and each of us serving in the Ministry.

We hope that our sharing below will provide mutual encouragement to each other for the spiritual journey ahead of the Special Children, their families, and our church body as a whole.



The Special Children Drew Their Families Closer to God

"Behold, Children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward." (Psalm 127:3)

Yes, thanks the Lord, children are gifts from God. Each of these children has a special mission to this world, regardless of whether they know it or not. No matter whether the Special Children meet the worldly standard of success, God has a special purpose and plan for these children in how they can glorify Him.

Just by reading the past testimonies, we saw how the stresses created by the Special Children have frequently brought their non-believing families to church and subsequently accepted Jesus as their Savior. For the believing families, the challenges in managing the daily lives have also gotten the family members closer to God, allowing them to experience His grace for the provision of wisdom and a peaceful mind to deal with the day-to-day problems.

The Special Children are Treasures waiting to be discovered

Despite the physical weaknesses and/or developmental delays, quite a few of the Special Children that we have come across have special God-given talents. Each kid has his/her own specialty. For instance, some of them have very good memories while others are good at music or other forms of art. It is a matter of how and when these treasures can be discovered.

Through our interaction with the Special Kids, we feel that a lot of them can and do wish to learn if we are able to invest time and energy with them wisely. As caregivers, we are thankful that God has listened to our prayers. He has guided us to find ways to explore the kids' hidden potentials and build a warm and trusting relationship with them.

The Special Children are our Role Models to become pure and genuine.

Depending on their character and at times physical ability, some of the children are more expressive while others are less communicative. Verbal or non-verbal, we can sense from their eyes, facial expressions, and physical actions that they enjoy our company. For those kids who like to sing, they do sing the praises with true conviction. They each have their favorite songs and some of them

even know each other's favorite songs. The kids are so pure and genuine. They are indeed our role model to become pure and humble as Jesus said ***"I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me."*** (Matthew 18:3-5)

The Special Children are God's vessels to show the world His unconditional love

From the parents' unconditional love for their Special Children, we see God's unconditional love for unworthy sinners like us. Due to the special physical and emotional needs of these children, their parents are really on standby 24 by 7. The frequently unpredictable behavior, triggered by environmental stimuli or changes in the mental state of the Special Kids, demands immediate but thoughtful parental responses. The tremendous stresses day after day, month after month and year after year are unimaginable. When the kids get into persistent problems, it is perceivable that some parents may at times feel a sense of frustration and failure too.

To the contrary, our Special Parents remain very patient, supportive, and loving to their children. They continue to find ways to help their kids grow physically, mentally, and spiritually. As caregivers, we always see parents come to drop off the kids in a lighthearted mood. Ninety minutes later, the parents come again happily to pick up their kids, inquire about how their kids have been, and leave the room with the same warm and natural smile. Isn't this a strong earthly reminder of how God has looked after all His children, no matter how weak and deviant we are?



Prayer Support

Last but not the least, may all of us continue to pray for the Special Children, their family, and the Special Needs Ministry to spread His truth, faithfulness, grace, and mercy to those who do not know our Heavenly Father yet. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Special Needs ministry, we put new lyrics to the song "Jesus Loves the Little Children" and turn it into "Jesus Loves the Special Children".

Jesus Loves the Special Children



Jesus loves the Special Children
He is looking after you
Tall and short, young, or grown
You will never feel alone
Jesus loves the Special Children all the time.

Parents love the Special Children
You are the gift of God to us
Healthy sick or happy sad
God is gracious aren't we glad
Parents love the Special Children all the time

Helpers love the Special Children
You are our church family
Active quiet sing or smile
You have shown us God's pure love

Special children love Jesus
Your blessings fill our daily lives
Kindness, goodness, peace, and joy,
In your presence we enjoy
Special children love Jesus all the time.



Our Faithful LORD Leading Step by Step **Pastor Irene Cheung**

God provided us with three caregivers and opened the door for us to start a special Sunday School for three boys with Down Syndrome in September 1998. One of them was Matthew and he is now 24 years old.

We now serve over sixty children, teenagers, and young adults from 3 to 26 years of age. Eighteen of them are in the Sparrows Sunday School and the rest are in regular worship services and fellowship.



These young adults are our Sr. Sparrows.

Our Parent Support Group started on October 20, 2001, with 8 Cantonese-speaking families. Now we have eight times more families divided into six small groups with Cantonese, Mandarin, or English-speaking families. God called some parents to lead in the Core Committee and provided six lay leaders to support and care for these core parent leaders and other group members.

Our serving team grew from three to over thirty caregivers supporting the students when they come to church on Sunday mornings. Brothers and sisters from Paul Fellowship continue for many years to support the children program when parents are meeting for the monthly support group gatherings.

Every Sunday evening at 11 pm, we pray to God wherever we are, seeking together His guidance to plan for a life with quality and dignity for our children, especially those who are growing into young adulthood. They need career training and development, day programs as well as a home of their own in a community when they can no longer live with their parents.

God is faithful and He continues to guide and provide. We are now

- in contact with a few organizations serving people with developmental challenges for cooperation in providing training for parents and caregivers, running day programs, etc.
- in the initial stage of networking with other churches that share the same passion to serve special needs families.

We praise You LORD, our sovereign and faithful GOD. We pray for Your mercy upon each of our families. We ask for faith, good health, wisdom, patience, and strength for the parents. We seek your guidance and provision to expand our mission to develop the potentials of each of the children you bring to our care and take steps to support the parents to plan for their future. Please give us the opportunities to reach out to more families with your love and gospel. In Jesus' precious Name we pray, AMEN.



2011 Christmas Celebration

你們看那天上的飛鳥，也不種，也不收，也不積蓄在倉裏，你們的天父尚且養活牠。你們不比飛鳥貴重得多嗎？（太6:26）

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? (Matthew 6:26)



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