



NEWSLETTER
July 31, 2022



You're Already Blessed

PERHAPS some of you are thinking, “Brother Bo, I’m not yet blessed. I’ve been praying for P100,000 to pay my debt. But I still don’t have P100,000...”

First of all, blessing means more than money. Absolutely much more.

Remember what we shared last week: *The biggest blessing is Life with the Blessor.*

So, if you’re living with the Blessor, you’re already blessed.

Second, you may not yet have the money, but believe that God has already given you everything you need to earn that money. Trust Him.

You’re already blessed.

Today, we’re going to dive into the colorful life of Jacob.

I know God will speak to you today.

Have an empowering Feast today!

May your dreams come true,

Bo Sanchez



LETTERS

Prayer Time!

IN Luke 11:1-13-- last Sunday's Gospel-- Jesus is asked to teach the disciples how to pray. And He begins with this most fundamental lesson: that good prayer always begins not with what we want or who we are, or what we've done. Good prayer always begins with who God is: Father-- in the original text, *Abba*—a loving, perfect, intimate Father.

That's according to Fr. Albert Garong in his homily in last Sunday's Feast Mass. He said knowing Jesus' teaching changes the way we pray. How? Answers start on *page 3*.

Come to think of it, how should we *really* pray?

In today's Feast Talk, our founder, Bro. Bo Sanchez, says *You're Already Blessed*. So, does that mean we don't need to ask anything more from God? Bro. Bo answers the question by pointing at the experience of Jacob, *page 1*.

Bro. Bo and Feast Builder and Preacher Bro. Didoy Builder explored more answers on how to receive the blessings we want—this time through the experience of Abraham, Jacob's grandpa. Read on, *pages 12-28*.

You might be saying we're giving answers based on the experiences of ancient people who lived thousands of years ago. Do those answers still work today, in this our digital tech realm? Okay, we get present-day experiences from the members of two members of the Mercy Ministry we have been featuring in our past four issues, the Light of Jesus Pastoral Care Ministry. Part 5 starts on *page 29*.

How about you? How do you *really* pray?



Glory,
Randy Borromeo
Media Ministry
Executive Director





FLASHBACK! **JULY 24, 2022**

Holy Mass



FR. ALBERT GARONG
on the Gospel: Luke 11:1-13
Jesus' Teaching on Prayer

Excerpts...

DO I look fresh? Because I just came from a vacation—humble brag, hashtag blessed: Nagbakasyon kaming magkakapatid-- I had a vacation with my siblings. We went to various places. Do I look tanned? Hindi naman siguro-- Maybe not. Yabang! Boast!

But you know, my love tank is so full right now because I just came from a vacation. You know, the thing is, among us four siblings, I'm the only one single. I'm the only one without a child. So, what happened was during the vacation, they elected me as the official yaya-- nanny-- of their children.

They said, "Anyway you're single. You don't have children. Please do us this favor."

Parenthood or Priesthood?

So, most of the time, I was the one accompanying my nieces and nephews wherever we went. So, I memorized the ins and outs of Tom's World and Time Zone. I couldn't use my iPad so much because they were using it. They're watching whatever they're watching, and so on.

Nakakapagod din pala 'no? It's tiring, isn't it? I realized parenting is tiring. Ang hirap pala maging magulang.—It's so difficult to be a parent!



It made me appreciate becoming a priest.

Tiring as it is, taking care of the kids also led me to discover the joy of parenthood-- especially the joy of being able to serve or provide for the needs of these little ones.

Isa lang ang inaanak ko sa kanila-- I am godparent to only one of the children. But because one calls me Ninong, all of them call me Ninong. So, I am obliged to be Ninong to all of them.

One kid handed me a bottled drink, and asked, "Ninong, please open this. I opened the bottle, gave it back to the kid, and then he gave you that smile as if you're a Superman. You tie their shoelace and do whatever they need, and I felt so much joy in being a provider—in being this guy that they can turn to for whatever they need. Ang sarap sa pakiramdam. It feels so good.

This is the consolation of being a parent-- to be able to serve the people you love, especially your own children.

In today's Gospel, Jesus is asked to teach the disciples how to pray. And it's so wonderful that He begins with this most fundamental lesson, with something crucial and essential: that good prayer always begins not with what we want or who we are, or what we've done. Good prayer always begins with who God is: Father-- in the original text, *Abba*—a loving, perfect, intimate Father.



What's In God's Name?

In Israelite culture, my brothers and sisters, the name of something lets you know its essence. That's why the Israelites really held on to the names they had for God: Elohim; Creator; El Shaddai; Lord Almighty -- and my favorite: *Jehovah Jireh* meaning *God provides*.

All of those titles or names for God made the people know and understand that this is who God is. So, imagine the significance of Jesus suddenly declaring that you can call God with another name—*Father, Abba*. He sums up all the previous names of God into one: the loving Father.

How does that change things?

Let's look at God being a provider-- *Jehovah Jireh*. Sure, He is a reliable provider-- He has everything we need. But adding the element of being a *tatay*, a *father*, we now see a God who provides with a smile on His face, a God who's happy and delighted to attend to our needs, to listen to whatever it is we are praying for. A God who's not just reliable in His duty to provide, but a God who's actually happy, who's smiling, and enjoying every opportunity He has to take care of us-- and that applies to any other title. It all comes down to God being a father. And now that Jesus gave us this name—*Abba*-- it changes everything.

It changes how we pray. One time, someone told me, "Father, I bought groceries but I lost my place in the line. I think I prayed only 9 Hail Marys out of 10. So, my prayer was not effective."

I appreciate the sentiment, and I'm not mocking you if you're like that. It's a good thing-- but also, we have to ask, "Are you praying to Abba, to the Father? Or are you praying to a God who says, "Your prayer is not complete. You mispronounced the words. Repeat!"

Is that the God you're talking to in your prayers? Would you rather talk to a God like that? Or to *Abba*?

Or, "Father, I'd long been praying this novena, but you've not given me what I'm asking for. Are you mad at me?"



‘Harassing’ God

Again, what kind of God you’re talking to? Who’s that other God in your prayer? Is He a God who is rationing His graces and blessings? Who’s waiting for you to be perfect before He’ll bless you? Or is that *Abba*, the loving, intimate father?

See, it changes how we pray. And most important -- and I hope it changes *why* we pray-- because we want to spend time with *Abba*. It’s no longer about getting something. It’s no longer about getting what we need.

But because you pray and you find Someone on the other side who delights at your presence-- and you want to enjoy that.

Showing up for prayer becomes a blessed encounter, a gift. It’s no longer an obligation, not a requirement. I hope when you go to Sunday Mass, it’s not because you are obligated but because you’re excited to meet Jesus in the Eucharist.

In the Gospel, we’re being told to be persistent in prayer. It’s the same thing. We’re not being told to harass God like, “*Kulitin natin si Lord hanggang makuha natin yung gusto natin.*-- Let’s bug God until we get what we want.”

It’s not that God will say, “Naku! Naka-25 novena na ito. Sige na, sa iyo na ‘yan.-- This guy has already prayed 25 novenas. Okay, I’ll already give you what you are praying for.”

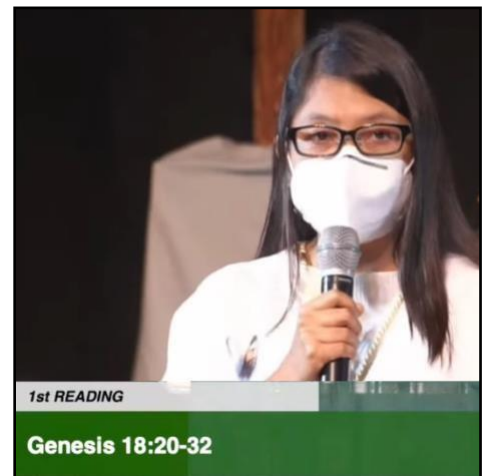
No. When Jesus said to be persistent in prayer, it simply means to be persistent in showing up-- that you show up no matter what. Regardless of your state, of what you’ve been through, who you’ve been, or whatever—you show up. Because regardless of what awaits you, in prayer, it is a loving, merciful *Abba*.

Reading I: Genesis 18:20-32

...³⁰ Abraham said, ‘I hope the Lord will not be angry if I go on: Suppose there are only thirty to be found there?’ ‘I shall not do it,’ he replied, ‘if I find thirty there.’

³¹ He said, ‘It is presumptuous of me to speak to the Lord: Suppose there are only twenty there?’ ‘I shall not destroy it,’ he replied, ‘for the sake of the twenty.’

³² He said, ‘I trust my Lord will not be angry if I speak once more: perhaps there will only be ten.’ ‘I shall not destroy it,’ he replied, ‘for the sake of the ten.’





Our Prayers Are Heard

So, you show up and you persist in prayer. The more you persist in prayer, the more God has a chance to mold you into the person He wants you to be and to actually give you the best gifts.

Now, there is the perfect Father.

The Second Reading tells us about the perfect Son. And that's also important in prayer.

Why are our prayers important? It's because prayers are united by Jesus into His own sacrifice. Remember, for the Israelites, only the perfect offerings were acceptable to God. In a way, that's true until now. But we're guaranteed that our prayers are heard because the Perfect Offering had given Himself: Jesus.

And so, all our prayers He takes with Him and makes Himself the offering.

Finally, at the end of our Gospel, what does Jesus say?

“If you then who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will God the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”

Jesus identifies one gift: God gives the Holy Spirit. In every prayer that we make, in everything we ask for, the first gift is the Holy Spirit-- the gift that bears fruit, the gift that enlightens, empowers, strengthens us, and allows us to persevere in prayer.

Reading II: *Colossians 2:12-14*

¹² You have been buried with him by your baptism; by which, too, you have been raised up with him through your belief in the power of God who raised him from the dead.

¹³ You were dead, because you were sinners and uncircumcised in body: he has brought you to life with him, he has forgiven us every one of our sins.¹⁴ He has wiped out the record of our debt to the Law, which stood against us; he has destroyed it by nailing it to the cross;



God Takes Care of Our Prayers

Whatever you're asking for, it always comes with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

See the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit-- all working in prayer.

And if there's one thing I want to leave you with, it's this: we often think of prayer as something that we do for God. But if we look at our Readings today, we will see that even our prayer is something that God is taking care of. The Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit evolve around Him.

Prayer is not something that we do for God. Prayer is simply our way of connecting, of putting ourselves into that eternal relationship of love and mercy -- Who is the Trinity.

So, my dear brothers and sisters, why do we pray?

And more important: Who do you pray to? Do you have a more fruitful experience of prayer?

May God bless us all.



Responsorial Psalm

Ps 138:1-2, 2-3, 6-7, 7-8

R. (3a) Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.

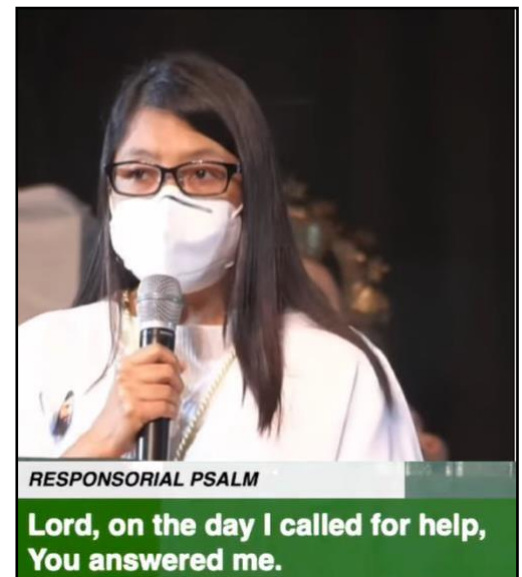
I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart, for you have heard the words of my mouth; in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise; I will worship at your holy temple and give thanks to your name.

R. Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.

Because of your kindness and your truth; for you have made great above all things your name and your promise.

When I called you answered me; you built up strength within me.

R. Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.



Worship!

EXHORTATION

JHONN JAVIER:

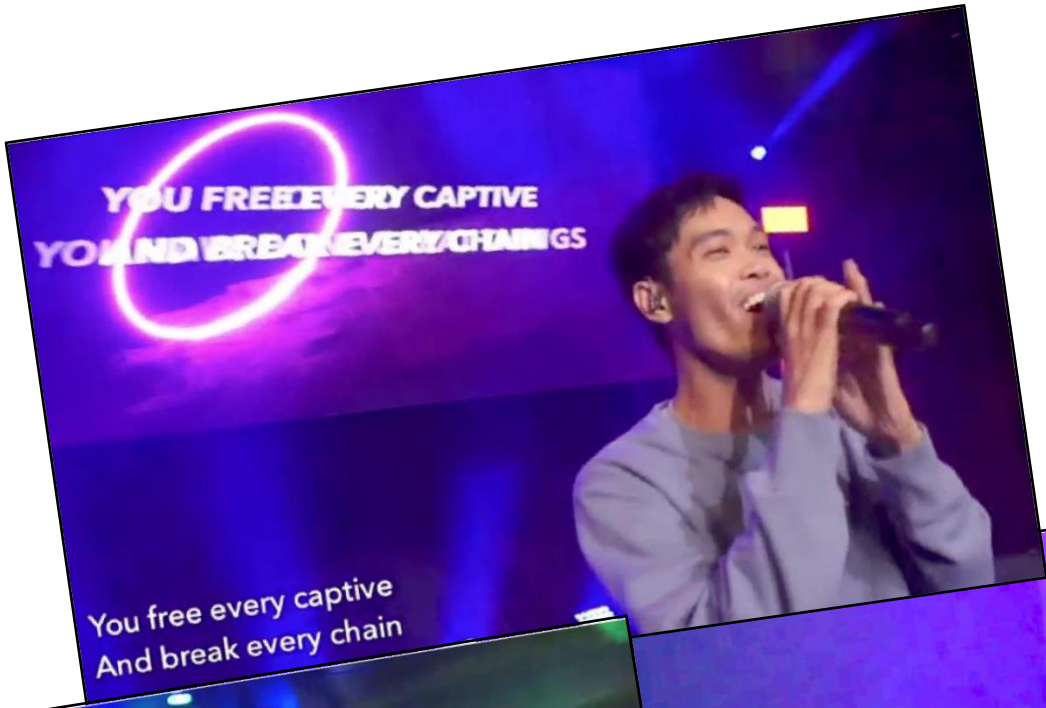
Thank You, Jesus! You're so good!
You've always been good.

As we come into Worship, let us remember how God has been so faithful to us. He's so faithful, right? *He is*. He's the God of miracles, the God of joy, the God of peace, the God of love. He is good in all things, and His Name is beautiful, His Name is powerful and we're going to declare that today as we come, in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

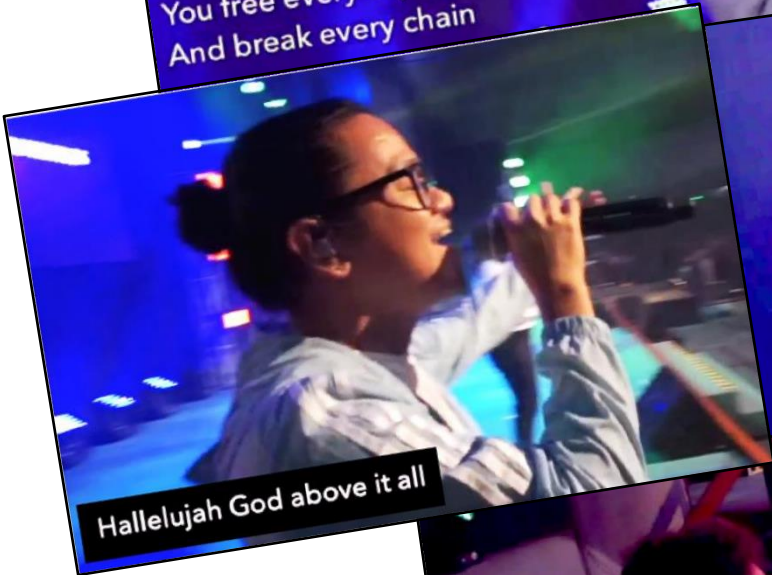
Father, we thank You for Your Presence here. We believe, God, that You are here with us. So, we honor You, we worship You in Spirit, in Truth. We declare that Your Name is powerful over all things, God. Every burden, every worry, every fear, God, we surrender them all to You because You are sovereign God.

Thank You, Jesus. Amen.





You free every captive
And break every chain



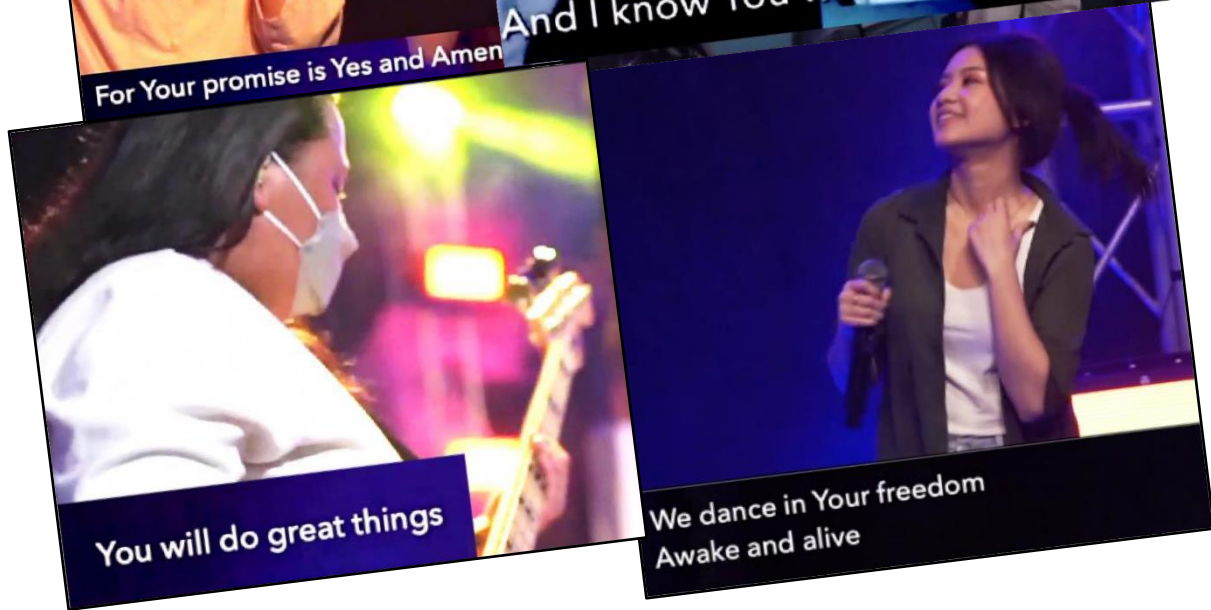
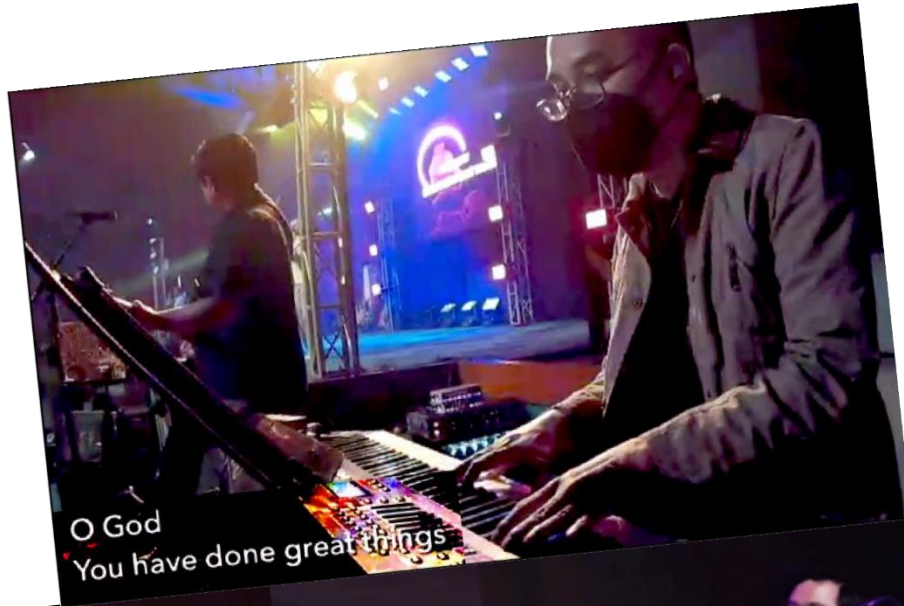
Hallelujah God above it all



O Hero of Heaven
You conquered the grave



Hallelujah God unshakeable



Talk



Talk 5:



BO SANCHEZ: I want you to say this with me:

“You never graduate from trusting God.”

We never graduate from trusting God. There is no point in your future where you say, “Trusting God, kayang-kaya ko na ‘yan. Been there, done that. That’s something I’m an expert in.”

There is no point in your life, in your future, where you say, “Yeah, I’ve handled that already. I’m okay.”

Because I believe for the rest of our life, we will always struggle with trusting God. And that’s okay. It really is. I don’t care if you’re 300 years old following the Lord, or you have four Ph. D.s in Theology from Rome. You know, you will still have a battle with trusting God.



**WE DON'T OBEY GOD
BECAUSE WE DON'T TRUST HIM.**

My belief is trusting God is so important. Why? Because our obedience to God depends on it.

We don’t obey God because we don’t trust Him. That an obedience problem is always a trust problem.

5 Lessons To Be Happy

Let me take a pause and tell you a story.

I attended a birthday party in my neighborhood.

The birthday celebrator is very young—only 95 years old. She is a woman who had a stroke 30 years ago. So, for the past 30 years, she has been stuck in a wheelchair. And so, she should have been miserable. But when I entered the gate, she had this beautiful smile, waved at me, and said, “Bro. Bo, I’m 95 and I’m happy!”

And so she started telling me her life story. Sitting beside her was so beautiful and so wonderful to listen to.

And I was able to pick out five lessons about why she is happy.



LESSON 1

GIVE AND EXPECT NOTHING IN RETURN.

1. Give and expect nothing in return. I mean, I preach this, right? But listening to a 95-year-old woman say that—“give without expecting anything in return” —I really believe that a lot of people are in pain and it is useless pain. Why? Because they give with expectations. And so, that was refreshing to hear.

LESSON 2

SEE BLESSINGS EVERYWHERE.

2. See blessings everywhere. I was talking to her and in every sentence, she said, “Thank You, Lord, Thank You, Lord.” On and on. Grateful people are happy people. Yes? You know what? My belief is that grateful people are not only happy people. Grateful people are rich people. Because wealth is not measured by how much money you have. It’s measured by how grateful you are.

LESSON 3

PUT PEOPLE OVER THINGS.

3. Put people over things. She was not materialistic. She would say, “You know, I’d rather help people. You know there are so many people who are suffering more than I am suffering.”

LESSON 4

PREPARE FOR YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE.

4. This, whoa, this surprised me. She prepared financially. She did. For 40 years, she was a schoolteacher. And with her sister, she kept on saving. Her sister is 80+. They’ve been retired for the longest time. They’re just living off the interest of their investments. Ang galing. Very good.

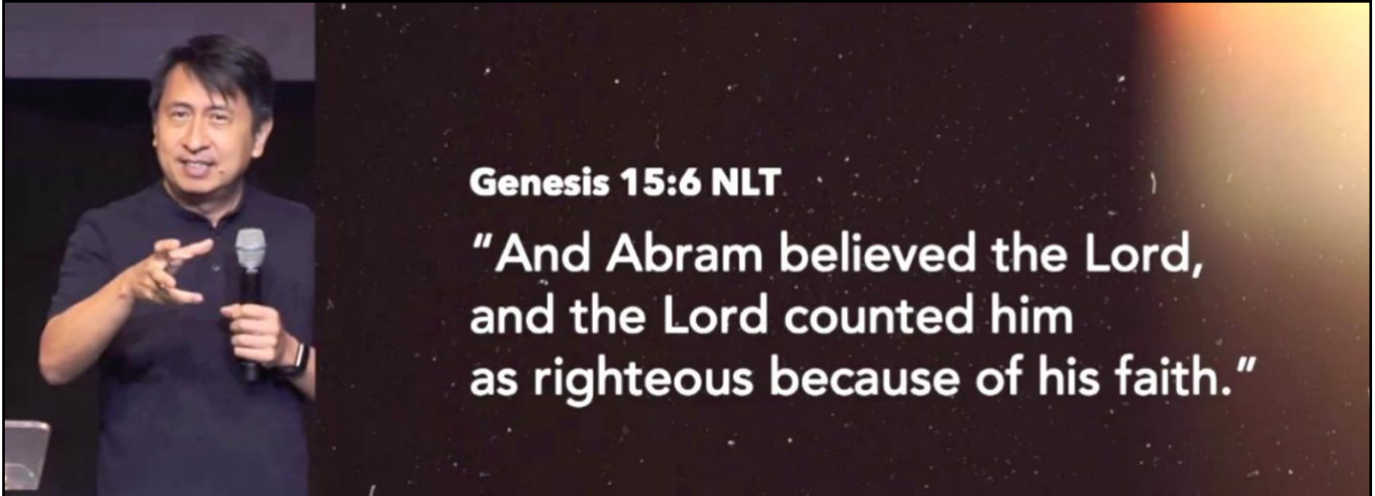
LESSON 5

LET GOD KEEP YOU COMPANY THE WHOLE DAY

Being a financial teacher, I was saying, “Wow, these things work!”

5. She lets God keep her company the whole day. Stuck in a wheelchair--30 years--what does she do? She told me, “You know, Bro. Bo, I pray. I pray for others. So many people to pray for.”

She trusts in God. If there’s an old person that you meet and that old person has been following God, sit beside that person and you will hear story after story of how this person knows God and knows that He is trustworthy. Not because the person read a book but because the person experiencing God’s trustworthiness.



And so, we go to our series today. Welcome to our series on *Genesis*. Welcome to this particular talk about this guy, by the name of Abram, who later on becomes Abraham. And according to *Galatians*, according to *James*, according to the New Testament, in Genesis 15:6, he is described as a man of faith.

Are you familiar with the song *Father Abraham*?

Father Abraham, has many children, many children has Father Abraham.

I am one of them and so are you. So, let us praise the Lord.

You know, we look at Abraham and say, “Good guy, a holy man.”

Yes? But when you examine *really*-- not just read a children’s book about Abraham-- but *really* look at the Bible and read the story, this is your reaction: “Huh, si Abraham ba ito?—Is this Abraham?”

He cheated. He lied. He raped Sarai’s slave. Yes! He’s a humble man but he’s a horrible man. But then the Bible says he was a man of faith.

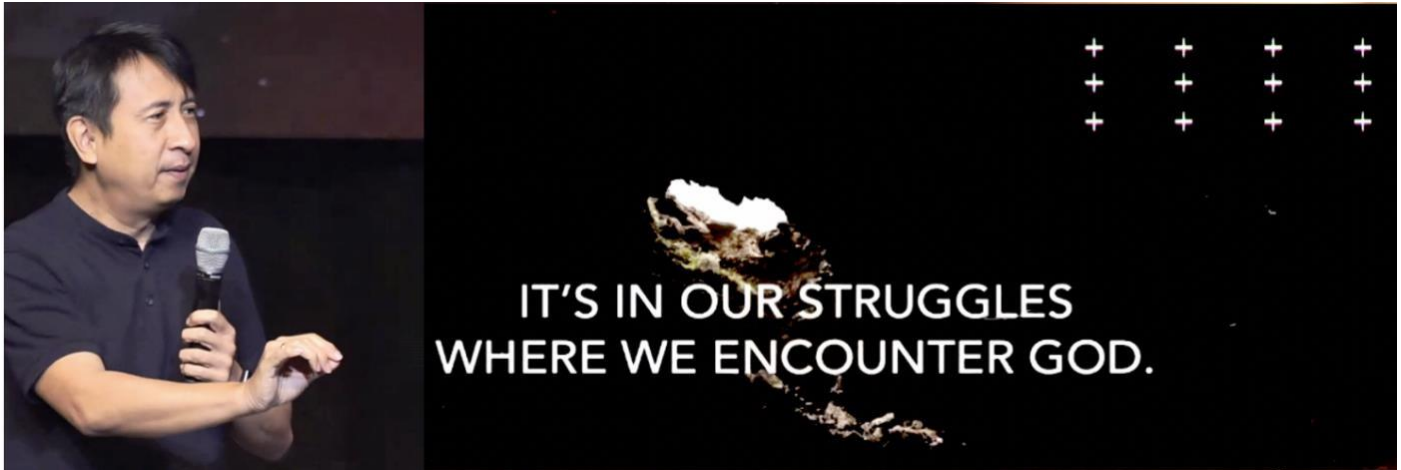
How is that? It’s very, very confusing. You read the story: Seven times, God shows up in his life. And the *Genesis* author highlights the fact that God shows up.

One time, He appears in the trees of Mamre. *Mamre* in Hebrew means *sight*.

And then another time, God appears to Abraham on Mount Moriah—that place where Abraham sacrificed Isaac—supposed to be. Guess what *Moriah* means? *Moriah* means also *sight*.

MAMRE
MORIAH = SIGHT

It’s like the *Genesis* author was trying to say Abraham kept seeing God. He failed here, he failed there. He did this horrible thing. He messed up his life. And yet God insisted on showing up for him.



You know, when you read the Old Testament now—I've been reading it for 40+ years-- but every time you read it, you're just like, "Whoa!"

You know, when people say that the Old Testament God is a God who's cruel and a God who's really punishing... and then the New Testament God is a God who is now gentle and now kind... That's totally wrong!

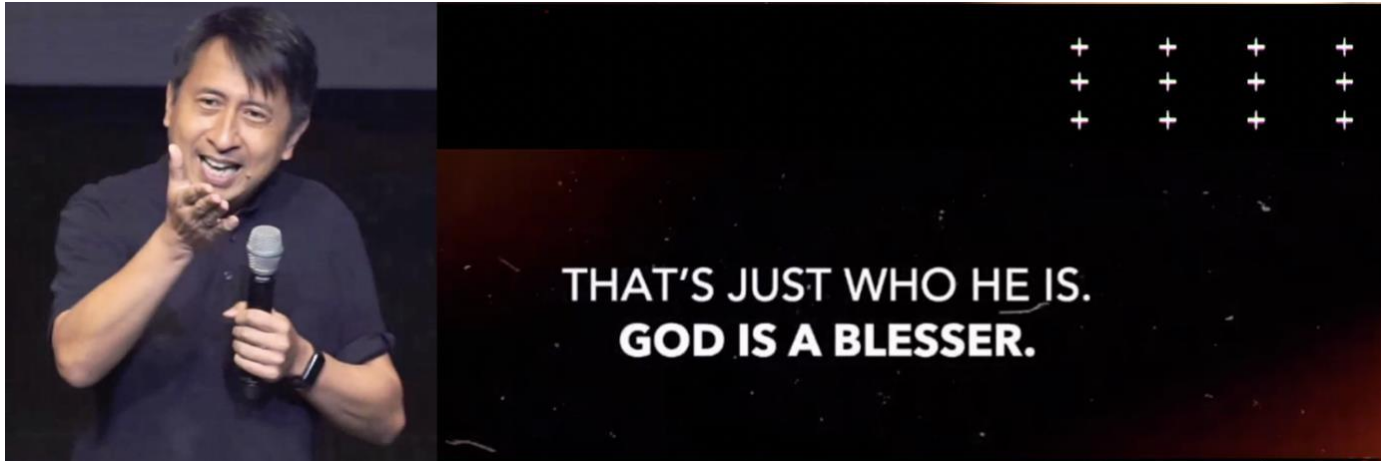
Because if you read the book of *Genesis*, the story of Abraham, you'd wonder: Why would God deal with this man who fails so many times and yet God is there showing up Himself for him?

The first encounter of Abraham with God was a very dark period of his life. His father, Terah, died. And then his brother Haran died.

And then Sarai, his wife, was barren. During that ancient time, in that ancient culture, if you did not have children or descendants, you were a nobody. And it was during that dark time, that struggle in Abraham's life, that's when the first time God appears to him. Why?

It's in our struggles that we encounter God. It's in *your* struggles that you encounter God.





So, this is what God tells Abraham:

Genesis 12:1-3 NIV

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. ² I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others.

Genesis 12:1-3 NIV

³ I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

Why this? Why this special call? Why this very special blessing-- that he will become the blessing of many nations? Is it because Abraham was *good*? No. Is it because Abraham *earned* it? No. Is it because Abraham *deserved* it? No.

The reason God blesses Abraham is *God is a blessing*. That's it. It's *He*.

And so, my dear friends, I just want you to know *that*. Why will God bless you? Why does God always show up in your life?

I love looking back at my life. You know, 50+ years of looking back and seeing how God showed up in my life – despite my failures, despite all my sins, despite I'd been messing up my life with my wrong, stupid, foolish decisions— God was still there showing up.

Showing up. I see Him, I see Him. Why? It's not because I earned it. It's not because I'm good. It's not because I'm deserving.

But because He is a blessing. He cannot help Himself. He cannot stop Himself. For you, too, He will always show up. He will *always* bless you.



Genesis 12:3 NIV

All the families on earth will
be blessed through you.

DIDOY LUBATON: As Bro. Bo said, when we are in the struggles, that's when we really encounter God. I will show to you Abraham's struggles—just like you and I have struggles.

But Abraham's struggles were very, very particular. Bo was saying Abraham was a man of faith. Yeah, that's really good. Some parts of the Bible even call him a friend of God. But sorry to say, he's a jerk. Yeah, and I have the hard part of saying that to you.

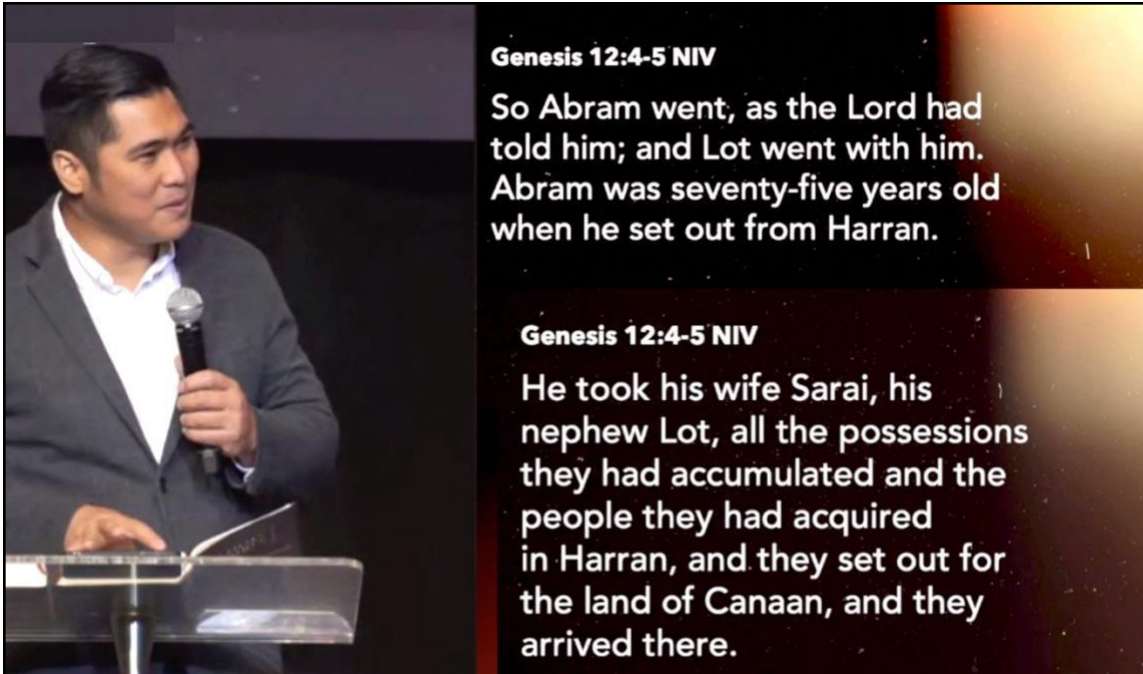
We need to read the Bible without our rose-colored eyeglasses and we need to see what the Bible authors, the *Genesis* authors, were really trying to say. But first, let me echo what Bro. Bo said earlier.

God blessed Abraham so he could become a blessing. And there's a purpose – He wanted Abraham—you and I—to be a blesser too—as we read in Genesis 12:3 (*above*).

And it did not come without pain. The encounter of Abraham with God was through pain—losing loved ones, his wife being barren. And yet, even in his pain, God had a purpose.

Even in your pain, God has a purpose. And what is that purpose? To bless you, so that you can bless others too.

If you notice, week per week, we're trying to show the Bible story and see the purpose of the authors. As we mentioned in last week's talk, everything is connected. There are patterns and there are hyperlinks. We cannot fully understand the story of Abraham without relating it to the other parts of the Bible.



Last week, we talked about the Tower of Babel. And you know, when the people of Babel rejected God’s call for them to spread all throughout the Earth, God chose one man – Abraham— to respond to that call. And in Genesis 12:4-5 (*above*) that’s how Abraham responded.

Abraham responded with trust. Followed with trust, followed through the call of God, and, “Okay, we will go.”

And you know what Abraham did? He did not build the tower for his glory. He built an altar. So, unlike the people in Babel, he trusted God.

Point of reflection: When we follow God, there are fruits, beautiful things in following God. Yes? Are we building altars, or are we building towers?

But you will see: Life is not just a linear thing. When you start following God, everything is beautiful, everything is nice, you’re good. No. It’s an everyday struggle. Trusting God is sometimes not easy. Trusting God is also a slap on the face – you did this wrong thing and yet you say you trust God? It’s hard.

Abraham, again and again, failed to trust God – that’s why I was saying earlier that he was a jerk. There was a lot of disobedience. And as Bro. Bo was saying earlier, disobedience is a lack of trust.

And I’ll share with you some of Abraham’s failures along the way. Despite being blessed by the Lord-- He gave him blessings-- that he will have descendants, he will have this land, and he will be the father of many nations-- and yet, he committed disobedience. He had, failures one over the other-- and they were very, very bad.

Abraham's Failures



When God told Abraham to leave his country, He gave him specific instructions to bring only his immediate family. But what did Abraham do? He brought along Lot, his nephew. And this nephew caused a whole bunch of problems for Abraham. Lot's men quarreled with Abraham's men. At another time, warlords kidnapped Lot—Abraham had to go to war to rescue him. Later still, Lot ended up living in Sodom, the wicked city.



Lessons:

FIRST, WHEN YOU DON'T OBEY GOD, PEOPLE SUFFER.

SECOND, PARTIAL OBEDIENCE IS STILL DISOBEDIENCE.

THIRD, YOU NEED TO BE CAREFUL WHO YOU BRING IN YOUR JOURNEY.

you or they can also break you. You don't have to look at the people around you. I'm talking about daily choices. What do you follow? Who are you always calling up? Choose your travel buddies well. We're on a life journey—Yes? It will matter who you are journeying with.

First, when you don't obey God, people suffer—even you, people around you, people you love.

Second, partial obedience is still disobedience. If it's not full obedience, it is still disobedience.

Third, you need to be careful who you bring along on your journey-- your travel buddies. Because they can build

FAILURE 2

HE THREW HIS WIFE UNDER THE BUS.

Okay, that's an idiom and I have to explain it. When you throw somebody under the bus, that means – in Tagalog, nilaglag mo ang isang tao—you do something harmful to a person to gain an advantage for yourself.

In the story, a huge famine swept the land and the Israelites had to go to Egypt:

Genesis 12:10 NLT

Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.

If Pharaoh finds out that Sarai is my wife, he'll kill me to get her. But if I tell him she's my sister, he'll treat me well."

Self-preservation is a very powerful force indeed. And it was cowardly of Abraham to throw his wife under the bus.

That's not *trust*. Just a chapter ago, God promised Abraham many descendants. Yet at a drop of a hat, to save himself, he threw his wife under the bus--thereby throwing away God's promise too.

But you know what? God kept on showing up. God kept on intervening:

And Pharaoh returned Sarai to Abraham.

I repeat: When we sin, we cause people around us to suffer. Abraham's original calling was to be a blessing to the nations-- but because of his disobedience, he brought a curse upon Egypt. Terrible. This is Abraham we are still talking about.

Genesis 12:17 NLT

But the Lord sent terrible plagues upon Pharaoh and his household because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

**WHEN WE SIN,
WE CAUSE PEOPLE AROUND US TO SUFFER.**



FAILURE 3

HE RAPED SARAI'S SLAVE.

Before I say more about that, I must point out: Rape is rape – it's wrong. Okay?

After many decades of still having no child-- Sarai was barren, remember? -- Abraham and Sarai were desperate. So desperate, they took matters into their own hands. The problem is, when we take matters into our hands, that *is* the failure. Sarai told Abraham to take her servant Hagar and have a baby with her.

There's parallelism here—there's a pattern. Abraham and Sarai--Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve saw the fruit and Eve told Adam, "There's a fruit—let's take it." And then the fall of man. Yeah?



Abraham and Sarai saw the fruit: Hagar, child bearer, potential child.

And then Sarai told Abraham, "Take her so we can have a child."

They took matters into their hands. They did not trust God—that God will provide the descendant. And because of that, Ishmael was born—Abraham's firstborn. It was fine at the start. But you know the story: Sarai became pregnant and had Isaac.

And then came the problem. Abraham and Sarai now have Isaac. What are they going to do with Hagar and Ishmael?

Which brings us to Failure No. 4.



FAILURE 4

HE LEFT HAGAR AND ISHMAEL TO DIE.



Now that they had Isaac, Abraham and Sarai had no more purpose for Hagar or Ishmael. They wanted to get rid of them. Horrible. And so, Abraham and Sarai abandoned Hagar and Ishmael in the desert. They left them there to die.

It's like a series of horrible decisions Abraham was making. And he was being called a man of faith. A friend of God. A hero of our faith.

But again, God showed up. God intervened and saved Hagar and her son Ishmael from the wilderness. And God gave them the same blessing He gave to Abraham.

Looking at the story of Abraham, I remember my wife, my daughter -- and my three-year-old son, Hosea. Hosea is Hosea—a toddler. What do toddlers do? They build Legos and they break them, right? They eat and they mess themselves up. Yes? And what happens? The mother, the carer, comes, cleans the children up.

Toddler. He doesn't know what he's doing. And yet the mother always cleans up after her child—like God always cleans up after our mess. Do you relate to that?

Like Abraham, sometimes, you have your tantrums and sometimes you just keep breaking stuff. Sometimes you are missing the point-- and yet God still shows up in your life, saves you from your mess, even puts into the pain a beautiful purpose.

The culmination of Abraham's story was on a mountain. Bro. Bo mentioned it earlier. It's a mountain called Moriah. And again, *Moriah* is *sight* in Hebrew—because that was where God was showing up again.

And after his disobedience, and all the catastrophes he caused to himself and to others, Abraham finally learned to trust – with a question mark.



God gave Abraham a test. He asked him to take Isaac on a journey and Isaac would become a burnt offering—a sacrifice. It is one of the craziest parts of the Bible.

But walk with me, and I'm sure you'll be asking: How does a God like that who promised that this couple would have descendants -- and yet ask that their one and only child be offered as a sacrifice? And that was intense. Yes, even in that ancient culture, that was so unheard of. Actually, the Bible says God hates human sacrifices. That's what their neighbors were doing in their pagan religion.

But in the law of Moses, God said human sacrifices were detestable to Him.

Please do not take this literally. What we're trying to say here is that the test was so intense. Why? Because it was intensely dealing with Abraham because of his intense stubbornness. He did not trust God's promise. It was God's grave response to Abraham's grave failures. And this is where you will see that God kept showing up. This is also where you will see Abraham started trusting God. From the very start of the test, we will notice in the Bible that Abraham's trust was finally growing and pushing through. He trusted God that his son will live.

So, let's look at the Bible verse:

Genesis 22:5 NLT
"Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the servants. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."

"We will come right back." Expectant faith. Abraham knew. He saw it in His word—and he believed it that he and his son—together-- would come back. He believed that he would go home with his son. You know, his trust in God was growing. He believed that God would make a way—God would provide.

GOD WAS INTENSELY DEALING WITH ABRAHAM BECAUSE OF HIS INTENSE STUBBORNNESS.



In Genesis 22:7-8, the boy, Isaac, asked his father: “But where is the sheep for the burnt offering?”

Genesis 22:7-8 NLT

“We have the fire and the wood,” the boy said, “but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?”⁸ “God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son,” Abraham answered.

What was Abraham’s response to Isaac? *“God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son.”*

That is trust.

This is crucial. Abraham wasn’t just climbing up the mountain thinking, “Oh, where is it going to come from? Oh, no, I’m going to sacrifice my son.”

No. He was climbing up the mountain -- the mountain of *sight*. He knew God would show up, so he told his servants, “We’ll come back. We’ll be back.”

He was climbing up the mountain not with blind faith. He was climbing up the mountain with expectant faith—with reasonable faith. His trust was growing based on the repeated experience—again and again—that despite his failures, God continued to show up.

Oh, my, Lord! Thank You, Lord!

Even with the terrible decisions that he made, God still showed up. You never graduate from trusting God.

And when Abraham reached the top, there it was—God really provided a ram for the burnt offering. And so, Abraham called this place:

YAHWEH YIREH = YAHWEH WILL PROVIDE.



Remember, Fr. Albert mentioned it earlier in his homily. Yes! And on Mount Moriah – the mountain of sight—God will provide. You never graduate from trusting God.

It is not something that you say, “Been there, done that. I’m okay.”

No. In whatever season and whatever phase of your life—you know, just like in Abraham’s case, the testing will come to us. But I hope the *trusting* will continue. You will keep on seeing God still in whatever season, or time in your life. He will show up.

Will you see him? Will you be there recognizing him?

Trusting God is *really* hard—especially when the signs are not there, especially when your human nature wants to preserve yourself. But when we look at Jesus—Jesus wasn’t in self-preservation. He was in self-sacrifice—so that others may live.

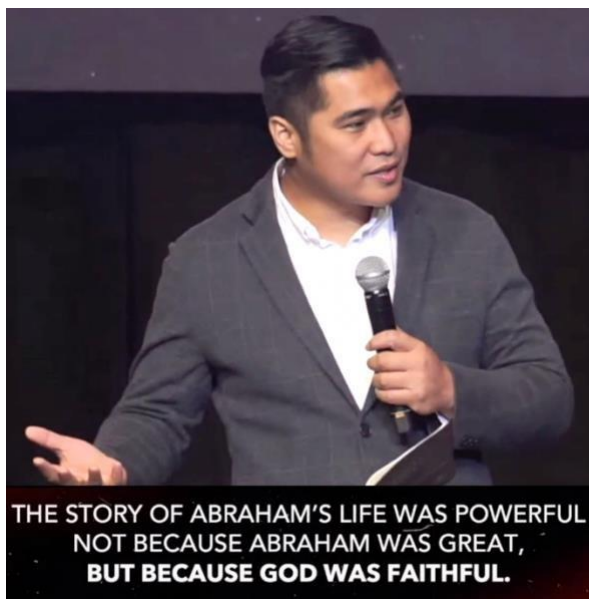
So, step by step, one day at a time, we get to grow our trust in God more. And so, remember that every time that God shows up in your life, you know that He is trustworthy. You can give your full trust in Him. Why?

Because He is ever-faithful—again and again. No matter what happens, God will show up.

Are you in that crisis now? Are you in a difficult situation? That means you are climbing the mountain of sight. That means keep on climbing, keep on struggling, and trust that God will show up. God will meet you. God will give you what you need. God will provide for you.

Not according to how we want Him to show up, but according to how He wants to show up again and again.





The story of Abraham's life is very, very powerful. We do not agree with his failures. No, no, no... But the point here is the power of Abraham's story is not because of Abraham. But because of that powerful God who remained faithful to him, no matter what.

Oh, yes, thank You, Lord.

God remained faithful to His human partner. Even if Abraham was a jerk, even with his grave failures.

I know I am a jerk too. Oh, my Lord.

It's already July. Mid-year already. How was the first half of your year?

Like Fr. Albert, do I look tan? I just came from a vacation—from a beach.

I actually thought about it. I had a mid-year pause. I did re-think, I looked back at the past six months-- not too far because I'm going to get overwhelmed. Yeah? But the past six months, they were all right. Not the best that I could have done. Yes?

You know what I bookmarked in my mind? I remember that when I failed to show up for my wife, when I did not have time for my kids, God made a way. When I was praying for this financial blessing-- even if I did not work on it— God still provided what I needed.

If that is happening in my short history, in the next six months, I'm going to trust Him more. Not because He will eventually do something about it. No. But because I want to become like Him. Trustworthy.

He keeps on showing up, keeps on loving despite everything. Keeps on forgiving, despite me being such a jerk. When I look at myself in the mirror, I'm not that confident—because I'm just looking at myself. But if you ask me now, reflecting on this talk, I look at myself --and I see *pogi*. Ha-ha.

Seriously, I'm not seeing just Didoy anymore. I look at myself and I see a husband, and a father, and a medical doctor, and a preacher, and a friend, and many, many more. I am wearing many other hats.

What I see is the faithfulness of the Lord. I can only do all these roles, and I will keep on doing them— not by my own power but by God's Power.

Your life can be powerful too not because you are powerful but because of the Power and the Faithfulness of God, *Abba*, our Father. Amen.

Let's worship God today. When we look at Abraham, we look at him, and go fast forward to Jesus, the Lamb of God.

If you go to the present-day Jerusalem – I'd been there—you will discover that just a few meters from Mount Moriah, the very site where Abraham found the ram, that is the place where Jesus, the Lamb of God, was crucified. That's how connected the events all are. Abraham acted on self-preservation—he threw his wife under the bus, he took matters into his own hands, he left people in the wilderness by themselves. Jesus was not like that.

Abraham showed us self-preservation.

Jesus showed us self-sacrifice.

My friend, God knows that we are weak. He knows that we fall. He knows that sometimes, trusting is not easy. But He was so determined to restore us, to take care of us, to heal us—that He bound Himself. God became man, became part of that human

experience—even death. He hung on that Cross—that dirty Cross—so that He held the worst of our failures in His body. And He even showed up after His death--through His Resurrection—so that we too will rise with Him. We are not doomed to fail. We are blessed to rise with Him. God does not ask you to trust Him blindly. God asks you to trust Him completely. And if you come here not trusting God yet, this is the time that you can just declare, “Lord, okay, I will try again.”

Today, as we come into prayer, look back into your life—short, medium, and long term. See that He keeps showing up despite your failures. Despite your differences, your struggles, your difficulties, despite your sins, God keeps on showing up. He is trustworthy—even in your worst failures. He never leaves you. He is always there. So, thank You, Lord Jesus, for Your faithfulness.

Lord Jesus, unlike Abraham who always acted in self-preservation, You are showing us self-sacrifice. Lord, You showed up even after death. You resurrected so we can rise with You. And so, Lord, right now, thank You. Thank You, God for you always provide. You always save. Thank You, Lord, for always showing up in our life—even in our worst failures you never leave us. Thank You, Lord. Thank You, Lord, Thank You, You Lord. I trust in You.





BO SANCHEZ: And maybe you feel like Abraham today. Because you have stumbled, fumbled, faltered, failed, and sinned. And so, if you want to declare that you want to start trusting God, if you feel that you're tired, tired of just taking matters into your hands, and insisting your way, now is the time to tell Him that you trust Him. Maybe this is the first time for some of you to make this kind of radical decision. Come, make this decision with me.

Or some of you, you've been making this decision again and again. Let's do it now.

If you can, lift your hands and then say this prayer with me:



Jesus, I'm like Abraham. I've failed so many times. And I am ashamed of all my failures. And yet if I look back at my life, I will see that you kept on showing up. You kept on saving me. You kept on blessing me. And so, Lord, I give up. I give up to Your Love and I declare that today. I follow You and I trust You. And I want to trust You for the rest of my life. In Jesus' Name. Amen.



MERCY MINISTRIES

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish and will have an eternal life. –John 3:16



PASTORAL CARE CENTER PART 5

Back to Mission-- Unexpectedly

By JUDITH

I AM Judith. I am a solo parent to my 17-year-old son. The Light of Jesus Family has been my family since I was 17 years old.

The LOJ Pastoral Care has been my ministry since its early years at The Lighthouse, the LOJ headquarters at 60 Chicago Street, Cubao, Quezon City, then the Maya Building on Montreal, also in QC, then back to Chicago St.



At the time, I was also at the height of my career as a financial planner in a reputable insurance company.

Yes, I was enjoying a single life in the sales industry, serving in LOJ community and parish ministry.

My life dramatically changed when I welcomed motherhood at 36 years old— as a solo parent. Being solo in the plight of childbearing was challenging in all aspects of my being.

With God's provisions and my earnings, I was able to go through all my pre-natal needs, hospitalization, caesarian delivery, and other nursing needs of my son -- with help only from my family and close friends. That's because I did not tell my struggles to my LOJ Family, extended relatives, or colleagues.

Soon as I recovered from the caesarian delivery, I went right back to work. I didn't have a nanny for my son so I brought him along when I went to work-- from my prospecting, closing a sale, client services, attending seminars and meetings. I was multi-tasking-- as a mother and a provider.

My generous and motherly agency manager offered help to get me a condo unit and a car to ease my burdens as I started building my life with my son. But I politely declined the offer, thinking that I would be tied up with work which would limit quality time with my son.

I just followed her advice to hire a nanny who would take care of my toddler while I do my work.

Setbacks

Everything seemed well-- until transition struck our company. My agency manager left-- she transferred to another company. The transition affected me badly, as it led to a series of setbacks for me.

First, thinking that our company was no longer stable, some clients pulled out their investments.

Second, yes, I lost clients. Actually, I could not join my agent manager when she transferred to another firm because I'd pledged loyalty to my clients. But my clients could not stay with me.

What broke me to pieces was that point when my clients lost confidence in me, questioning my integrity-- and as a result, discontinued sales from me.

I took it by heart and decided to end my 15-year career as an insurance agent.

Third, as a consequence of my reduced sales, my savings depleted. I tried independent selling— peddling various brands. But the income was not sufficient-- especially with the growing needs of my son, then already schooling.

Earning less was the lowest point of my life. It was heartbreaking for me not being able to provide well for my son.

So, fourth, I developed low self-esteem-- poor self-worth. Stress choked me, affecting my mental health. At the time, I also had skin allergy and it worsened.

Fifth, I had conflicts with very close relatives. I had no peace-- only too much deafening noise.

And sixth, distracted by my series of concerns, I decided to go on leave from the LOJ Pastoral Care ministry.

Rescue

With those setbacks, I would have been a wreck. But by God's merciful grace, at the same time I was suffering, my faith was deepening-- as I continued to attend faith gatherings of our Light of Jesus Family, where I heard inspiring, encouraging talks about Jesus' unconditional love.

So, I held on to Jesus for strength during my trying times.

At the time, I brought my son to school. So, from there, I passed by a nearby church for morning Mass and praying the Rosary.

And yes, through those spiritual nourishments, the Lord rescued me from the pit of my trials.



e/s

God Really Cares

Indeed, the Lord never leaves us. He wakes us up each day with miracles. He sends good people, each with a generous heart, sharing their blessings to us.

I can well say this because receiving blessings from God through His people has been my experience for years.

Allow me to give you an amazing example of how I experienced that God *really* cares.

One night, a friend called me up, informing me that one of our sisters in Community—let’s call her Jullie-- passed away. So sad with the news, I remembered the last conversation I had with Sis. Jullie.

Actually, it was a mistake. She inadvertently sent me a text message, inviting me to attend the annual retreat of the LOJ Pastoral Care for the pastoral carers. But little did she know, technically, I was not supposed to attend the retreat because I was on leave from the Ministry for almost five years already.

I told Sis. Jullie so, and I remember, she told me, “Maybe it is the Lord telling you to come back.”

I answered, “Soon, maybe?”

Then, at that moment, I remembered another sister—let’s call her Mely-- who also passed away few months ahead of Sis. Jullie. Sis. Mely regularly called me up, giving me updates about the Ministry.

Sis. Mely never got tired of asking me to come back, to continue my service, and I would just say, “Soon, maybe.”

These two sisters close to my heart, who patiently invited me back, had left me-- without seeing me serving again in the Ministry.

Now, at the wake of Sis. Jullie, I happened to meet again my fellow pastoral carers-- after many years that I’d been away. Bro. Vic Español, longtime LOJ member and Feast Ortigas Builder, also happened to be there—with his wife, Sis. Ditas, directress of LOJ Pastoral Care.

We said “Hi” and “Hello,” exchanged pleasantries and updates on the Ministry.



Back to Caring

Then, Bro. Vic and I had a heart-to-heart talk. He told me that the Pastoral Care Ministry lost two of its faithful servants, sadly leaving one after the other.

Bro. Vic said there must be at least one immediate replacement and he and Sis. Ditas had no idea who, until they saw me-- unexpectedly.

Bro. Vic requested me to try coming back, and he asked me to join the Carers' Growth Seminar (CGS), a refresher course for pastoral carers, then to be held in January 2017.

I attended the seminar and from there, my journey as a pastoral carer has continued. I am back for good -- and even better-- for the Lord equipped me with sweet victories from my battles.

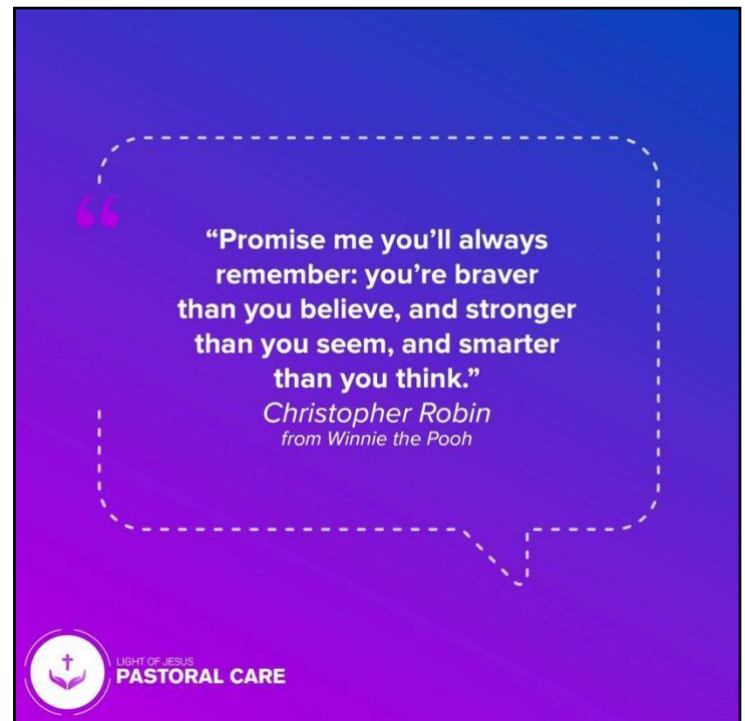
Today, I continue to serve as pastoral carer. I've been working from home-- meeting my clients online-- since March 2020, the start of the lockdowns to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19).

In every client session, I've learned that more than helping others, it is I who is being helped.

The brokenness I hear and feel from others has helped me deal with my own pain, sorrows, and difficulties. The aches of my past helped me to understand where people are coming from, and to show compassion listening to other people's cries.

As a pastoral carer, I also learned about self-care, to appreciate and value my worth—that I am God's masterpiece.

That's Pastoral Care—God's merciful way.





BLESSINGS

PASTORAL CARE CENTER PART 5

Fear to Faith

By MAYANG

HI, THERE! Call me Mayang.

Before I joined the Light of Jesus Pastoral Care Ministry, I was not really good at communicating with other people. I simply had so low self-esteem that I terribly feared talking with people--especially about their concerns.

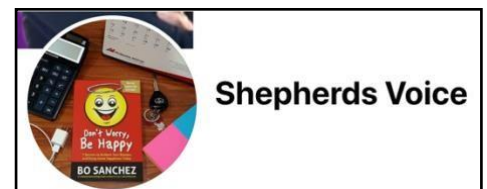
Thankfully, I found out about the Light of Jesus Pastoral Care Ministry. Here's how...

Though I had low self-confidence, I've been blessed to have this desire to serve people in need. When I was a teenager, I used to be a missionary, evangelizing residents in communities in need, sharing with them the teachings of our Lord Jesus.

Coming from a poor family, I dreamed of landing a job, earning a regular income ---- but at the same time, continue being a missionary.

And my dream would come true.

You see, I learned about the Light of Jesus Family and its founder, Bro. Bo Sanchez, from my cousin, Clarisse Isidro, who's an LOJ member. Learning I needed a job, she referred me to the Shepherd's Voice Publications (SVP), LOJ's spin-off media ministry.



I started as a volunteer staff in SVP's Marketing Department in 1995. The staff warmly welcomed me, and at once, I felt Jesus in them.

Then, I became a regular employee in SVP's Circulation Department.

Yes, dream-come-true! In SVP, I received regular income. What's best, management allowed the staff to go on community outreaches. So, I'd been able to freely continue my advocacies.

More Mercies

At SVP, I learned about the LOJ Pastoral Care Ministry, and my officemates encouraged me to serve as pastoral carer. To qualify, I took up the Basic Orientation on pastoral care.

Later, however, I had to resign from SVP. In 2000 I went through a delicate pregnancy. So, I decided to quit working to focus on my family.

In the next ten years, I gradually recovered from my ailment. So, in 2008, I decided to go back to SVP. At the time, there was no vacancy for personnel there. But there was one at SVP's sister media ministry, the Shepherd's Voice Radio and Television (SVRTV) Foundation.

SVRTV took me in as full-time worker for one of the ministries under its care, the Kerygma Family (now called Feast Family), Bro. Bo's online, borderless faith gathering, then headed by his sister, Sis. Tina Galvez (*right*).

While working at SVRTV and the Feast Family, I continued my Mercy advocacies.



I visited Grace To Be Born, our ministry for women in crisis, to pastor the mothers and pray over the babies.

After a few years of serving in Grace To Be Born, I shifted to our He Cares Mission for Street Children.



Together with Daryl Tamon I served at the Sinag Tala religious organization. We guided the mothers and their kids there to live a Christian life. It was a joy in my heart to serve these people who are in need of love and affection.

Every time I said goodbye to them, I saw to it to hug especially the kids. It was my way of telling them that God loves them and that they deserve to be loved.

And the Caring Continues

Also, during my stay at SVRTV, I served as a volunteer pastoral carer at the LOJ Pastoral Care Center.

In August 2020, I had to resign from SVRTV for health reasons.

Also, 2020 was the start of the Coronavirus Disease Pandemic. At the time, my family and I were living in Cubao. To follow Pandemic quarantine protocols, we moved back to our house in Cavite.

Still, I decided to serve in Pastoral Care, to continue my service for people God called me to take care of.

Since I've been dealing with my clients, the Pastoral Care ministry has gradually helped me get over my fear of talking with people. I know now how to relate and communicate with other people.

I can say that I'm happy being with my co-pastoral carers. *Above right*, the happy servants of the Ministry led by then Directress Sis. Ditas Español (*extreme left*).

Being with my co-pastoral carers is a joy because I can be myself--being transparent, with no walls and no shame at all.

This is how God has healed me, transforming my fear into faith. Yes, as I help people to heal of their weaknesses, I am also healed of mine. For all of us have been well blessed by the Number One Pastoral Carer of all—our Lord Jesus.



LOJ Pastoral Care Center

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FAMILY

Thank You!

The Feast Family, now organized as the Feast Mercy Ministries, is a spin-off ministry of the Light of Jesus Family founded by Bro. Bo Sanchez, earlier named as Kerygma Family, a unique online, non-physical, borderless, international community of friends who support each other's personal growth.

Partner beneficiaries of the Feast Mercy Ministries flourish because of your generous support.

Thank you for being with us. We pray that you find your daily source of inspiration from the resources that we send to you. We pray too that you may consider giving to The Feast Family. No gift is too small.

Thank you very much in advance for your gift. Our prayer is that God will continue to reward you as you give.

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Thank you for the Love. Your monthly donation helps us continue extending support to our Light of Jesus spin-off organizations, including our partner beneficiaries. Your gift will sustain our operations and, we hope, help us reach out to the persons our Lord has called us to make disciples and give them renewed hope.

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He Cares Mission provides shelter for street children.

Pag-asa ng Pamilya Foundation gives scholarships to poor students.



Jesus Christ Cares for Cancer provides financial assistance and pastoral care for indigent cancer patients.

The Light of Jesus Pastoral Care Center ministers to those who are emotionally and spiritually wounded.



H.A.I.L. MARY is acronym for Healthcare Assistance for Indigents and Lepers of Mary, adopting the Blessed Mother as the patroness of its mission to eradicate leprosy in Abra within 8–10 years.



The Light of Jesus Disaster Recovery Ministry provides evacuation assistance, relief goods, financial aid, and other of calamity victims.

LIGHT OF JESUS FAMILY
DISASTER RECOVERY MINISTRY

The Light of Jesus Prison Ministry brings Jesus to the Correctional Institution for Women to give them hope for a new life of dignity.



needs



Anawim Lay Missions Foundation provides a home for poor elderly who have been abandoned by their family and have nowhere else to go.

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FAMILY ONLINE NEWSMAGAZINE

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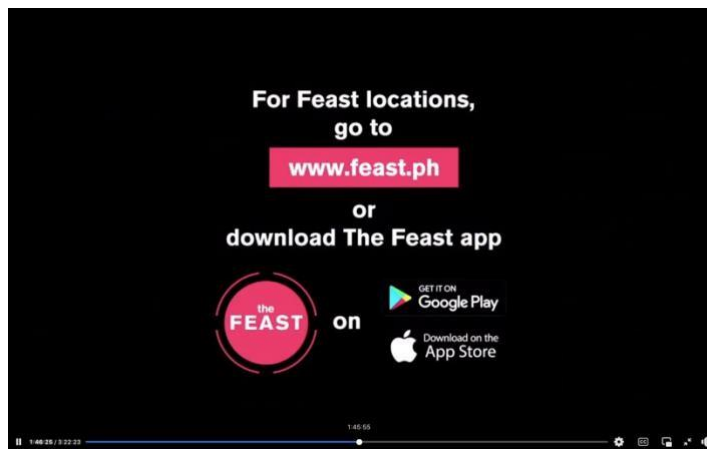
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Go and make disciples of all men.
— Matthew 28:19