



BAPTISM TESTIMONIES

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you,
not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an
appeal to God for a good conscience, through
the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 3:21

FEBRUARY 2023

4 Things You Need to do to Receive Jesus Christ Into Your Life

- 1. ADMIT your spiritual need. “I am a sinner.”**
- 2. REPENT and be willing to turn from your sin.**
- 3. BELIEVE that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.**
- 4. RECEIVE through prayer, Jesus into your heart and life.**

**PRAY
SOMETHING LIKE THIS FROM
THE SINCERITY OF YOUR HEART**

Dear Lord Jesus,

**I know that I am a sinner.
I believe that you died for my sins.
Right now, I turn from my sins and open the door
to my heart and my life. I receive your forgiveness
and ask you to be my personal Lord and Savior.
Thank you for saving me.**

Amen

CHRIS OTA

My name is Christian Connor Ota. I was born on July 25, 1996. For many of those who know me, I like to go by the name Chris. Obviously, I did not know who Jesus was coming out of the womb, but I had the opportunity to grow alongside a twin brother and a family that loved God. I got dedicated in Palos Verdes Baptist church as a child. I then attended Sunday School as a pre-school student. I did not know the Gospel until my mom recited it to me as I went to bed. I was seven years old at the time. It was an awe-inspiring moment to finally know who the man in the glass-stained windows of church was. His name is Jesus, and He is God's Son who came in human form to die on the Cross. He did not just die and remain in a tomb. He rose after three days! I would have everlasting life and forgiveness of my sins when I prayed to receive Him in my heart.

Not until late elementary school and middle school did I understand the severity of my sins. Sure, I had learned the 10 commandments in early childhood, but I would soon realize how fallen human nature is. I had sins such as lust, pride, coveting, and false witness that would carry all the way until struggles I have today. Did I have Christ in my heart? He was there, but he was in a deep corner, isolated by my loneliness. My youth pastor would reach out to invite me and my brother to Friday night Youth Group at church. In a small group at church, my pastor would illustrate the Gospel to me in a devotional booklet called Growing in Christ by Navigators Press. Ideas such as fellowship and dedicating my life as a servant-leader of Christ became clear to me. I would allow Christ to re-orient some of the academic goals and shape my personal, social, emotional life spheres. I would go on a short-term missions trip (STEM) with a group to Tohoku and Osaka, Japan in 2011. Then, I would get baptized in March 2013. I would go on another mission trip to Osaka, Japan in 2013.

Being saved by grace – a process called sanctification – became reality to me throughout college. I would leave old sins behind and live for my Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ. One challenge I encountered was meeting a branch of Christianity called the Latter Day Saints. After eating a meal with them, they brought me to their temple. They tried to convince me of joining what they call ordinances of family and priesthood. I learned what it means to bear up my cross when they asked me to deny my first baptism as inauthentic and join their priesthood. The Holy Spirit led me away from this group. Now, I can rejoice fully knowing that Jesus Christ is my One and Only Lord and Savior. I believe that there is no other name in heaven by which I can be saved, as announced in Acts 4:12 (ESV).

The reason I am here today is not a commemoration or renewing, it is simply because I want to declare that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. I was moved by Pastor Gary's message last week that sometimes all we need is to say two words I believe. The first time I got baptized 10 years ago, my testimony was centered on my life prior to receiving Christ Jesus because I was ashamed of my sins. I am here today with confidence. I believe that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior, King of Kings, Lord of Lords. I am redeemed not because of what I have done, but because of who He is.

I do not only do this today, but I also go out in the streets and pier to proclaim my Savior as well. Pastor Dan's message, Made to Move helped me get on feet to share the Gospel more in my household, with family members, neighbors, at work and at the pier. I go out with the LifeGuard ministry here at SBCC in hopes of helping people come to know Christ as My Redeemer. I preached my first message on the StreetSide this past weekend! This 5 minute message was on Isaiah 53 (ESV)– “a man of sorrows and rejected by men” coupled with the Gospel and some verses from John 3 – iterating that whoever believes in Jesus shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Praise be to God, Halleluiah, Amen.

MICHELLE PAIK

I was born into a Christian home. As far as I can remember back, I knew in my heart that Jesus died and resurrected for my sins and I accepted Him as my Lord and Savior. I was confident in His love for me, and felt His love and presence. I can even recall back to the age of 5, where I would have daily conversations with Him; He was like my imaginary friend. I still have very vivid memories of riding the swing, trying to reach as high as I could so I can try to be closer to God. Growing up, our family had to move around a lot. From the US to Korea, back to the US and back to Korea. We were moving almost every 2 years. While there were always changes in my life, God was my constant. Each time I had to adjust to a new school, new church, new neighborhood, new friends, over and over again, it was God who gave me comfort and strength. It was His love that was never changing and I always had a friend that was by my side. I had a strong and intimate connection to Him.

One day, at the age of 12, my dad decided to leave his successful career and go into missions full time. This was God's answered prayer for him to serve in the ministry. This meant a big shift in our family overall and also meant that he was away from home most of the year, with few visits throughout the year. Having many changes throughout my life were expected, but my dad's absence was one that was hard to accept. On one hand I was so proud of Him for following God's calling and truly admired him for his bravery and sacrifices. But on the other hand... I really missed my dad. To me, the latter outweighed the former. To me, at that young age, I became resentful that God took my dad away. But in each of these moments of sadness and anger also came a tremendous feeling of guilt. How could I be upset that he's serving God? It was a constant battle I struggled with in my heart. Yet, I was never one to act out and be rebellious. I still went to church, still prayed, still obeyed my parents, and lived the "good Christian girl" life, but not with the right heart. It

wasn't the heart of longing for God as I did as a 5 year old. I struggled to find comfort in Him as I had in the past. I continued on for years of living as a passive, lukewarm Christian.

One Friday Night Worship in college, the praise band started singing the song "I'll Obey". "I'll obey, and serve you, I'll obey because I love you, I'll obey, my life is in your hand...". In that moment as I sang these words, I couldn't hold back my tears. I have been telling myself that my spiritual walk was fine since I never doubted my faith in any way. But I realized all these years I have been holding back from Him and my heart has been closed off in pursuing a relationship with Him. I also have been holding back in serving at Church because the idea of serving scared me. When my dad started serving, it turned our life upside down. I guess unintentionally, this was my way of rebellion. But somehow as I sang this simple song, I felt a tugging in my heart asking me to "obey and serve". I also felt ashamed for being bitter for what I thought I had to sacrifice all these years. A life without a dad around, which pales in comparison to God's ultimate sacrifice, His own son Jesus, so we can have eternal life. I repented for closing off my heart to Him all these years and for all my sins. That night, I chose to follow His calling to "obey" and started serving at church. As I became very involved, somehow through serving I was able to re-open my heart to connect with Him again. And somehow through opening up my heart to Him, I found healing.

God's presence has always surrounded me. Even during the time I stopped pursuing Him, He continued to pursue me and demonstrate His unconditional love for me. There were countless times where His fingerprints were all over overcoming the most challenging times in my life. From multiple terrible car accidents and injuries to managing anxiety and depression, from unforeseen school circumstances to unexpected work opportunities... He has always watched over me and been so good to me. God's

presence comes in many forms. Some are through unexplainable miracles, some are through sending unexpected messengers to remind me of His love, and some are through simple songs. Despite all my sins and flaws, He chose to love me and forgive me through Jesus' blood. So on this day, I want to outwardly profess that I choose Him. I choose to have Him be the center of my life as my Lord and Savior and follow Him because "my life is in His hand".

KENNETH PAIK

I grew up in a Christian household, where I went to church almost every Sunday for as long as I could remember. However, growing up I felt like I went to church for the fellowships and because my mother wanted me to, instead of my actual beliefs. So when I left for college, I stopped going to church, as I did not have my parents forcing me to go and I was able to find friends through other outlets. However, one day one during my junior year in college, one of my closest friends in college, asked me out of the blue, if I wanted to go with him to his church. And I said yes, either because I didn't want to tell him no, or, unknowingly at the time, God was working in me. Either way that following Sunday, I just remember being very impressed with the message, the pastor, how welcoming the church was, and how easily I got along with the people at the church. It made it easy for me to keep going back. I joined their turkey bowl and softball teams, got plugged into a small group, and started to hang out with my church friends more and more. Then the following summer, I attended the end of summer retreat. One of the last nights at that retreat, there was an evening service, where there was a moving message, then a call for people to accept Christ. And all I remember, is getting this physical sensation, feeling filled up, and then crying uncontrollably. One of the pastoral staff saw me, and came over and started praying for me, and talking to me about what I was feeling, how the Holy Spirit was talking to me,

explaining to me the real truth of Jesus' sacrifice, how all my sins are washed away, and the riches of eternal life with him, he then asked me if I accepted Christ as my savior, in which I answered without hesitation, Yes. Since then I have felt God's presence in all aspects of my life, with me finishing college, getting into and finishing grad school, finding my wife, my 2 kids and everything else in between. Through it all, the good and the bad, when I ask for him and even when I turn my back on him, He always finds a way to be there for me.

KAT SUNIA

As I was a person who grew up to believe in God, but not knowing or following Lord Jesus, it was just as it is written. We cannot walk by our own flesh, decide with our own flesh, and walk "thinking" life is going to go right or better by my own decisions. My thoughts and intent were that if God is in me, I believe in Him then we are to do good before Him. I found that it was not exactly correct. As the God I believed in was not all in the right directions I truly believed, there was so much wrong in me with my attitude or better said the betterment of the goodness of attributes in my life. I needed to be freed from my uneasy heart of judging others, anger, and most importantly, patience.

As my marriage struggled for nearly the entire time while married, I didn't see many issues as I was so busy raising the boys, the boys we were blessed with. Visioning my past on many levels, I tried to do my best as a wife and mother but also trying to step it up to do more as a super mom. Then, as most have heard including myself, all marriages have differences and we must work with them as well as make each other better to grow. As we began to have children, I did my duties to care for the children by overseeing their schedules of medical, education, sports, and added personal care as needs came along. I pushed some of the marriage issues aside, especially when I thought it was not going

anywhere to better us. Ignoring may not have been a good choice, but brought peace at the moment. Yes, my husband was present as a family man, doing his part to provide for the home, focusing everyday as the man, husband and father as he went off to work each day. He then decided when our boys were in their younger ages as in the elementary to middle school grades to become a high school football coach, where we discussed it and it was decided that if this was his heart, then do what his heart desired. Coaching went on for over 10+ years till we found our marriage struggling a bit more. I too became challenged with medical issues as my body broke down, through surgeries and in elevated pains. I managed while the kids were still young to fit my medical appointments into the family calendar. Some of the events in the marriage were much tougher and I was doing my best to deal with them all through attending my emotional therapy sessions. I even consulted and we as a couple made marriage counseling a priority at times, but that failed time and time again. I personally wasn't giving up as although I was not yet a Christ Follower, I came into the marriage for the very reason to love and let love grow! My lack of knowledge to better or find a way to enhance the situation in life that we were walking came to me as if it was a battle that appeared as if the walls were caving in and as if I could no longer climb or even crawl up a very low mountain. It even crossed my mind as, "Where is the safe zone that is to be available to express our differences, truthfully?" I felt so alone, so low of who I was, that to not be able to talk with my husband to get clarity, stop the confusion, and to come to a conclusion for the better. I kept telling myself as to why and more so why therapists seemed to always bring up separation and divorce! So, to just turn away to do my best to ignore or block my thoughts of the troubles and difficult directions just continued. I could not see better for us, so it seemed better to calm myself but it still was locked in my heart. I felt that trying to find a positive walk, path, and hoping to breathe a bit better about life was not doable within myself. Why was happiness so hard to obtain? So, I quit this last marriage therapist, too. Finally I came to realize that there had to be a better walk, a better alternative to a therapist, and getting the "truth" to my own madness. This was one of many times I had thrown in the white flag to look at giving up and try to push it aside to forget about it as that is what I thought was what life was about, which was do it or forget it! My mind kept flashing as if getting out was the best

solution, but what type of out was I looking for? I again told myself I was not a quitter and surely I was not showing my kids that quitting was an option to any fix.

Then, as my kids were the most important individuals and little people in my life, I turned to focus more on them every moment of my life, to ensure to build their foundation for life ahead and teach them to be more protective of themselves. I began more closely to follow up with their teachers, seeking their needs with their education. I even sought every summer, to look into tutoring to build their foundation to make it better and stronger in every element as in math, science, writing, reading, and to give them some fun because they all loved water. I want them to know and walk that they don't need to rely on anyone in life but always stay connected as brothers! I put them in 6-week straight swimming lessons on top of all their summer academic growth! Funny thought to mention is the fact that they didn't even know that these swim lessons were a part of their "learning" as they found fun looking forward to these classes. Above all, they became pretty good swimmers at that! Then, they were placed into the parks and recreations program to be on the youth swim team, not to become olympic swimmers but to add more fun to their summer time away from regular school! At least that is what I thought they would think. Well, there were a few days that they didn't want to go to practices as they knew it was more work than fun, but they did it and got the experience. The better of this experience they received, they even became greater swimmers as they learned techniques and enhanced styles for swim meets. But today, they are grateful for all their lessons as they have advanced in their lives which they know would not have happened without these lessons in their early lives. For me, I wanted to build me like I was doing for them. As I took them to make them better, this made me a greater sideline or poolside mom! Not exactly what was good for me, but I used the time to wait upon them, while reading articles and searching the internet on what I was struggling at home. I was also up late at night while everyone was asleep, and up early to get my family ready to go for another day, never looking at what I could have as "me time" as the boys were young and we had nobody to help me with them. I'm not angry about raising my boys, as this is what a mom does and my heart is totally in it for us.

As a family, we attended Christian churches but not on a regular basis or any one specific church continuously to make it home or feeling totally welcoming to grow with Him. What was imagined to be getting grounded better with God, was hopeful. Our kids grew up visiting and listening to services but they were never fully driven to seek God as well as I never grasped it the way God would have wanted for this family. I personally found and wanted God's grounding for me to get to know Jesus. Then for my kids, I did want them to know God better so we can have a mutual topic, to allow me to be able to converse with them to build their knowledge and relationship with God. It was even agreed to raise our kids Christian. There were reasons beyond my full understanding that fogged the thoughts as parents to this path that lacked commitment to making God first in our little family's lives. God should have been the biggest walk, adventure, and path but as I learn more today, it's not too late and is never too late for Him!

As I began my walk in November 2021, as I felt God tugging at my heart to seek Him or driving me to search for the truth, I had no clue how or what to do or even why! I went on the web, looked for churches and service hours which many were closed due to Covid. I knew I did not want virtual as in person is what I know I needed! Even a hug from a real person to reassure me! As I started from the very first church on my own, the pastor's wife after service pointed at me sitting in the second to the last row of the church as it was letting out, and I turned around behind me to see nobody, so I pointed at myself with the gesture as if she was calling upon me? She started nodding, "Yes!" So, I walked over to her and she immediately told me that I was in some sort of dismay and she felt my heart. She said, "What is going on in your life?" As it began to explain while starting to sob, she asked if I believed in God. After a little bit of her questions, I started to spill my heart and expressed that I was here to seek Lord Jesus, as I don't know Him! We talked a little more and she asked all her ladies from her women's ministry to come over. Then she took out her Frankincense Oil from her bag, rubbed it on my forehead and they all began to pray to release the chains that were holding me down in life. This I believe became the very beginning of seeking Jesus. God kept driving me as I even attended three different Celebrate Recovery Programs as I didn't know what I

was looking for, but to seek Lord Jesus and to build my knowledge of who He was and how he was connected to God! I knew the Celebrate Recovery was conducted in church settings, they even read the serenity prayer but as I participated and went a few months, I found it to not really be church driven to my expectations but this did not stop the lost person in me as I kept searching. I was reading, searching and writing bible verses 3-5 hours a day when I woke up! It was like an obsession but knowing that God found a very lost sheep and it was me with the hunger for Him!!

Fast forward, visiting and speaking to church pastors, leaders, members to 8-different Christian churches, I was not giving up!! I was praying desperately to Lord Jesus whom I began to grow in the bible from readings but still I was not connected. I gradually began to understand some of what I was reading as God was helping me to understand bits and pieces of the bible. Lost a bit with so many characters, places and offsprings, it drove me to want to know more and why. I was looking in google to build my search to help me break down the bible verses with better meaning to understand and to see if I truly was a good woman, wife and mother! I called upon a very good and trusted friend, Ms. Lajuana in early April who is Christian and I asked for help with learning about Lord Jesus through the bible. She said, "Yes, I'd be honored!" My dear friend started bible study with me at the end of April. We began with the book of Matthew.

Then, as my search for a good church continued, I found SBCC online. I read about Pastor Gary and what the church is about. I prayed and decided to send a message online to inquire.

On July 15, 2022, I had gotten a reply from Pastor James from SBCC regarding my email message. I was ecstatic to hear from yet another pastor as I was still seeking to find a church or where I could get grounded! We connected with a phone conversation where he invited me to the very next day's service, Saturday, July 16th! I sat in on Saturday and then returned on Sunday, as I didn't know it was the same but it

was all good as I got to meet Pastor James for the first time and he introduced me to Lisa Mikami. I met with Lisa for coffee a few weeks later and we had a very good and valuable talk about Lord Jesus.

Fast forward again, Lisa invited me to the Women's Ministry. I attended the last few sessions of 2022. From here, there was a questionnaire for those looking to become disciples. I knew I was too new to be a disciple but Lisa encouraged me to apply. I had to come home to type in my answers to the questions as there were only a few lines to complete and I needed more to explain myself as a new person to Christ. I submitted my form to Lillian Yoshimura, Director of Women's Ministry by email just under the cut-off date in early October 2022. I was so surprised when I received an email that I was "chosen" to learn more about Jesus through the Learning in Faith Together, discipleship program! Wow.... me in just a few months of attending SBCC and in just a few more months of learning about Lord Jesus! Of the few verbal acceptances to other Christians before the discipleship program of making Jesus my Lord and Savior in my life, I made it official in the signed agreement and confirmation in writing as a Discipling Covenant with Lillian Yoshimura on Oct 21, 2022. I am a C-H-R-I-S-T-I-A-N and believer in Lord Jesus!

Since accepting Jesus into my life, He has been transforming me everyday! My heart has been filled with the Holy Spirit and as I pray for directions from God, I have made it a duty to ask for forgiveness from those I may have wronged in my life. I started without truly seeking Jesus but was at the very start of my walk to finding Him. It's with true amazement that God had begun to place me on a stronger path without truly knowing He already found me to begin to work on His values for my good. I had made a few calls to make apologies and begun to ask for forgiveness, while praying to God for direction. I started to write a list of who I have wronged through my past, even if it was little.

Then I began writing my letters to each person that truthfully deserved my apology with understanding and in turn I asked to be forgiven. With all that in mind, I prayed upon this path for my continued walk and I have given it all to God of my forgiveness from the core of my heart. I understood that my heart must die completely to fill with the goodness of the Holy Spirit.

This is my start of cleansing. I have come to understand to be a good and better Christian as I have sinned. I must do this because Lord Jesus shed His blood for me and as I continue to transform, I must do my part to cleanse my heart of the past as well as doing my part as I continue each day ahead of me. As a true believer in our Lord Jesus, I have prayed for each person I have contacted through this walk of forgiveness. As truthful believers in our Lord Jesus, it is up to each of us to accept Him with an open and loving heart to walk with Him in His likeness.

As I make my public announcement of accepting Lord Jesus into my life, I will do my best to walk by faith with Lord Jesus. As I am still learning everyday of our Lord and Savior, I continue to fill the goodness in prayers to ask to continue to conform my heart.

Today, I live with knowing that the Holy Spirit in me gives me a better relationship to very special moments in my life. God is keeping me hungry for His Son Lord Jesus and I know that what time I share in my life on earth will make me stand out just a little greater, bring joy to our Heavenly Father and especially give me that special ride with the brightest lights upon me when I am called home!

Because of Lord Jesus, and what truth I have come to know, I no longer need to live or dwell upon what is negative in life that comes to me. It is written in John 15:18, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you."

I am forever thankful to God for driving me to understanding Jesus' walk, allowing me to apply, and to continue to achieve greater VICTORIES in my life. I know with the work I must do everyday to apply it from my spirit that now dwells in me, I will forever please God as He too will never forsake me. To have the knowledge in truthful understanding, putting on my Armor of God and my continued transformation will only allow more gifts of victories in my life. Lord Jesus, I come before You and I will follow You!

EXPLORE

Explore all the ways to get connected
at South Bay Community Church

MEN OF FAITH

1st and 3rd Saturdays at 9am
carlton@southbaycommunitychurch.com

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

2nd and 4th Saturdays at 9am
lillian@southbaycommunitychurch.com

YOUNG ADULTS

2nd and 4th Fridays
youngadults@sbcc.live
Follow @sbccyoungadults on Instagram

COLLEGE MINISTRY

Saturdays at 7:30pm
college@southbaycommunitychurch.com
Follow @sbcccollege on Instagram

YOUTH MINISTRY

Evolution (Middle School) - Fridays at 6:30pm
Legacy (High School) - Sundays at 2pm
sally@southbaycommunitychurch.com
Follow @sbccym on Instagram

KIDZKREW & NURSERY

Visit southbaycommunitychurch.com/kidzkrew
for details
mandy@southbaycommunitychurch.com
Follow @sbcckidzkrew on Instagram

LIFEGROUPS

Small groups
dan@southbaycommunitychurch.com

TUESDAY NIGHT PRAYER MEETINGS

Tuesdays at 7pm

BIBLE STUDY

Wednesdays at 7pm
Register at southbaycommunitychurch.com

CARING CRAFTERS

1st and 3rd Saturdays at 9am
To sign up, contact
caringcrafters@southbaycommunitychurch.com

UKULELE

Fridays at 6:30pm
To sign up, contact: Alan Hamada
rhamada@sbcglobal.net

YOUNG AT HEART

1st and 3rd Tuesdays at 10am
To sign up, contact: Larry Higashi
iluvbruins@yahoo.com