

From the Ordinary to the Extraordinary



Like a ripple effect, our lives can have a significant impact on others. How do we live our lives? Are our lives influencing others for His glory?

By Pastor Ivan Leung

Some members of our pastoral team attended the Canadian Pacific District Staff Retreat in January 2009. One of the seminar topics entitled *"Spirituality and the Ministry in the Two Halves of Life"* spoke to my heart in a special way. The speaker explored the reality of the "Two Halves" of life. He introduced the concept of two circles of our lives: the first one is the "Circle of Control." The speaker emphasized that there are many things beyond our control in the first half of our life, including health; therefore, we

should trust God in all things. The second one is the "Circle of Influence". The speaker pointed out that it is time for us to influence and build up other people's lives in our second half of life, because we would have matured after experiencing many challenges and training during the first half of our life.

When I listened to this speaker sharing, I thought of our church theme for this year: **Building God's People To Reach Our Neighbours**. The emphasis is on building up

people: Caring for unbelievers, nurturing new believers, training disciples and developing spiritual leaders. Building up people is our church's core value. More importantly, building up people is Jesus' desire. How can our lives impact others' lives?

We may live very ordinary lives, but an ordinary life has the potential of being transformed into an extraordinary one, capable of significant impact to others. When a life is touched by Christ, it will be changed into a vibrant life, which can ultimately impact many lives. Paul says, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." (I Corinthians 11:1) We can find numerous examples of individuals whose testimonies have influenced many.

Lucy Ching

Lucy Man Fai Ching was blind at a young age; she could only rely on her fingers to explore the world. Despite her obstacles and various hindrances, because she depended on God, Lucy Ching had transformed her life into an extraordinary one. In 1975, she was honored as one of the Top Ten Outstanding Youths in Hong Kong, and was later awarded MBE by Queen Elizabeth II and received her honorary doctorate degree in Social Sciences from the University of Hong Kong.

In her book, *"One of the Lucky Ones"*, Lucy Ching wrote: "I don't know what my future would be, but I am well aware that life is full of adver-

sity, especially for a handicapped person. However, I do believe that if I look up to my God, seizing every opportunity my Heavenly Father gives me, and doing my best, He will assist me. There are no disappointments in life: when we trust God, we will never despair.”

Ms. Ching never forgot the message from a sermon she heard, which mentioned that God would not have expected the one who was given 1 “talent” to perform the same duties as the first servant with 5 “talents”. (Matthew 25:14-28) God's Word reminded her that she must not complain about not being able to see the world, nor compare her life with other able-bodied people. She strongly believes that if she trusts God, relying on His grace and strength, and working wholeheartedly on God's work, she can live a meaningful life. Lucy Ching's life testimony have indeed touched and built up many lives around her.

Helen Keller

Another example that illustrates how an ordinary life can be transformed after being connected to God is the life of Helen Adams Keller, a renowned educator who was both deaf and blind. Once, while giving a speech at a university, Helen Keller was presented the following question: “What kind of person is the most pathetic?” Without hesitation, Helen Keller replied, “The most pathetic person in the world is someone who has sight, but has no vision.” This answer reflects the depth of Helen's Keller's life experiences.

When Helen was 19 months old, she became so sick that she lost her sight and hearing. In spite of her disabilities, she persevered and learnt English, Mathematics, Biology, and History. Eventually, she graduated from Harvard University and

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became a world famous writer. She stated, “I thank God for my handicaps, for, through them, I have found myself and my God. In my heart, I had discovered music and light.”

Because she frequently read her Braille Bible, many Braille dots had been worn down and smoothened from constant use. She testified that she loved the Bible, because the Bible could comfort, inspire and help her understand that the things of this world that could be seen were temporary, but what could not be seen were eternal. Helen Keller's ordinary life became extraordinary after her encounter with God. Her life became rich and substantial, and her words motivational. She once said: “Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the joy of overcoming it.”

Fanny Crosby

Fanny Crosby, a famous hymn composer in the 19th century, lost her sight when she was only 6 weeks old. All she could see was total darkness. However, in her unblemished heart, she could see the light of the cross. She was willing to praise the cross, considered a shame by many, till her dying days. Hence, she wrote the hymn *Near The Cross*, with such a line: In the Cross, in the cross, be my glory ever; till my raptured soul shall find, Rest beyond the river.

Although Fanny Crosby could not see with her physical eyes, her spiritual eyes were wide open. God

used her in a great way, and she composed over eight thousand hymns. All her hymns express God's grace and mercy, which have touched many a heart. Fanny's life, in spite of her physical handicap, became extraordinary, the moment after she was connected to Christ. Although she lived in darkness, her spirit was filled with light. God's light not only illuminated her, but through her life, it also illuminated many others.

Reflecting the Beauty of Our Lord Jesus Christ

In our daily lives, we can find many wonderful testimonies of how a life in God's hands can be transformed for His Glory. Even a life full of severe physical challenges can be changed into something extraordinary, after encountering Christ. We can live life to the fullest, influencing others around us.

Brothers and sisters, during the New Year, let us make a resolution to strive to know Christ more, follow His example, so that our lives can reflect our Lord, enabling us to impact and build up others for His kingdom.

**Blessings,
Pastor Ivan Leung**