

PARTNERSHIP

Christmas Joy and Year-end *Gratitude*



Cultivating Missional Pastors,
Equipping Lay Ministers to
Strategically Engage Asia's Harvest

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Dear Friends of BTS:

“Christmas Joy and Year-end Gratitude”

With 2025 drawing to a close, we invited our students to share their reflections on the past year: what have they been most grateful for in 2025? Or, as Christmas approaches, what are some fond memories they have of Christmas in their home countries?

Here is a selection of their contributions, shared with their permission. Four of them shared their recollections of how Christmas is celebrated back home, while eight of them shared heartfelt appreciations of their experience as students of BTS.

I can sense how deeply several of our overseas students miss their families and local Christmas traditions. Wungthem shares that he misses the “comfort of family voices” and longs for the “sound of neighbours laughing” in the glow of the bonfire while stars glitter over the village church. Although far away, such memories are comforting as they “wrap” around him “like a blanket”. For Tokini, Christmas is a time when “our loved ones come together to worship the One who first loved us” and reminds us that Christmas is “much more than a tradition... it is a sacred day in remembrance of our Christ”. Truly, the joy of Christmas is all about the coming of our Saviour, however we choose to celebrate it.



As for their high point of this school year, most of the students chose to focus on their gratitude to God for how they've been blessed. Joel, a graduating MDiv student from Myanmar, highlighted the amazing provision of God. When he learnt that a donor had graciously committed to cover all his tuition fees and even provide for some of his monthly needs, that "unforgettable moment" filled his heart with "overwhelming gratitude and a deep sense of God's providence". Others recall how grateful they are for the loving environment they've enjoyed at BTS: Tian Xi relishes Tuesday mornings when everyone is invited to enjoy a local breakfast together with faculty, staff and classmates. Ma Zhenshi recalls a memorable outing to Pulau Ubin with her mentoring group, while Ren Enci fondly recalls the meticulous care that awaited her on her arrival in Singapore as a new student of BTS. Many reflected on the theme that BTS has been a 'home away from home'. Two graduating students perhaps sum it up best: "At BTS, I found a new home – where I am loved, renewed and shaped to become a new person more mature in God" (Edna), and, "Coming to BTS, I discovered a real and loving family. Here I was given space to grow freely and think independently." (Jal)

Glory to God for what He has done in the lives of our students, faculty and staff this year.

*Be blessed during this season
of joy and gratitude,*

Dr Ho Chiao Ek

President



The Most Distinctive and Unforgettable

Christmas

CELEBRATION



原谦逊

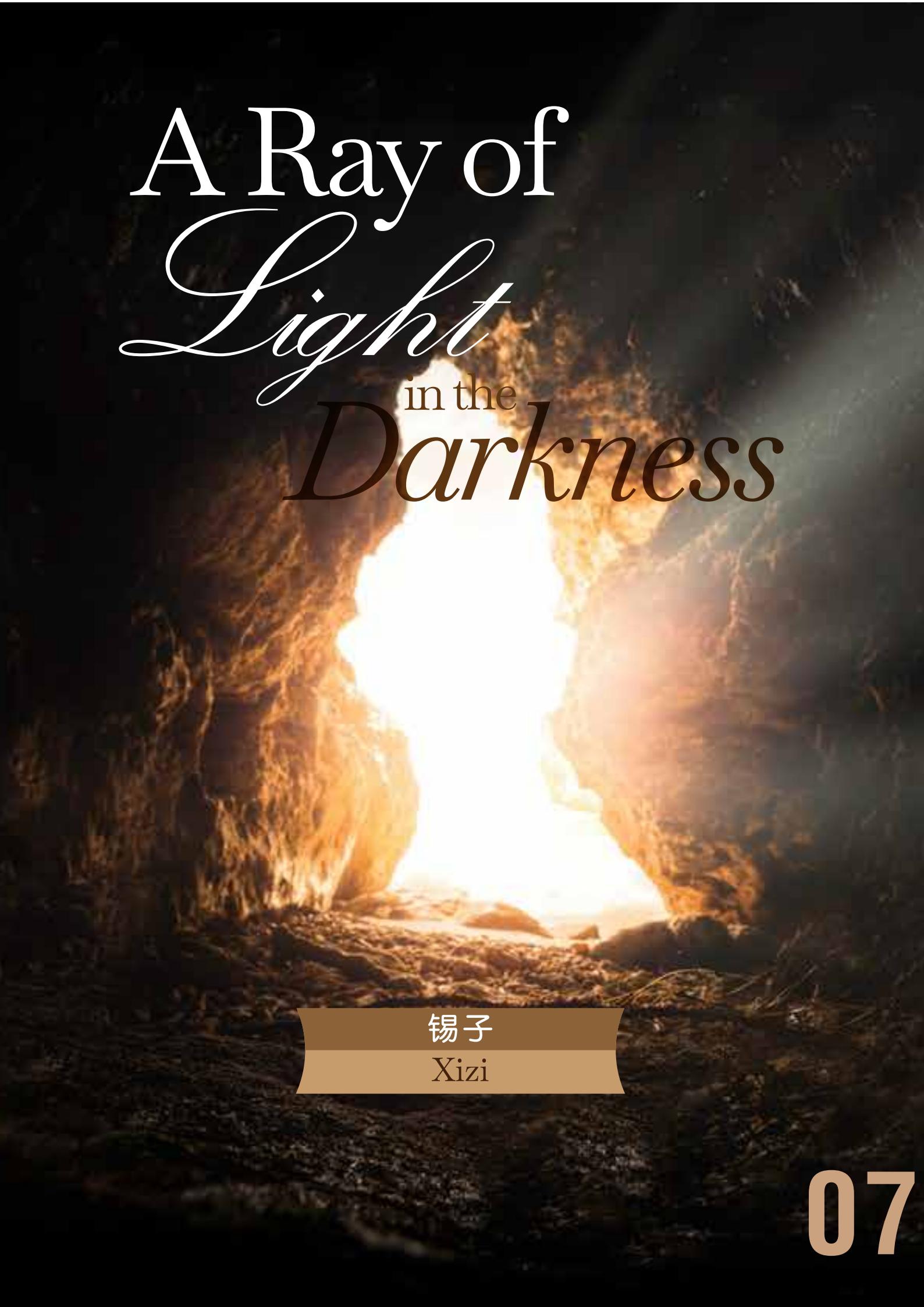
Yuan Qianxun

05

The most distinctive and unforgettable Christmas celebration I have experienced thus far occurred during the three years of lockdown imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time, I was still studying at my first theological college. Due to the pandemic, everyone was confined to their homes, feeling rather depressed and anxious. Our study group prayed, we were moved by the Holy Spirit and all received the same Scripture passage: Hebrews 10:25, 'And let us not neglect meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another.' Thus, we initiated that online Christmas celebration.

Though constrained by the lockdown and a short lead time, which meant it was difficult to prepare thoroughly, we gathered virtually to sing hymns, read Scripture, encourage one another, and share testimonies. Spiritually, it proved exceedingly rich and full of thanksgiving. As the Apostle Paul declares in Romans 8, particularly verses 38-39: 'For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Yet, we were acutely aware that even as we worshipped, many fellow believers could scarcely hope for even such a modest gathering. This made us all the more grateful for this hard-won, extraordinary Christmas celebration.





A Ray of *Light* in the *Darkness*

锡子

Xizi

07

In the cold winter of December 2023 when all Christmas celebrations were banned, a pioneering businesswoman partnered with the church to co-host a Christmas Party with the theme of 'Love' in a small town an hour away from the city. The event received an enthusiastic response from business owners, who eagerly signed up for roles in the performance. More than a hundred people attended. Together we sang hymns, listened to an elder tell the story of Jesus' birth, and even enjoyed live performances by Christian musicians in a wonderful atmosphere of love and joy.

There was a lasting impact as the seeds of Christ's love quietly sprouted. Several Christian business owners joined church Bible study groups, faith seminars, and marriage retreats over the next two months. Two Christian couples found local churches for Sunday worship, and one seeker even joined a gospel course.

Indeed, it was a ray of light in the darkness: "The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world." (John 1:9)



Spread Love



任恩赐

Ren Enci

09



From the very first day I arrived in Singapore, my heart was filled with gratitude. From the moment we left China, a senior travelled with us, helping with luggage, customs, buying MRT cards and more. After arriving at BTS, another senior thoughtfully guided us, accompanied us for medical check-ups, helped us get SIM cards, and even treated us to a meal. On the way back to our dormitory, yet another senior accompanied us home.

The teachers also warmly welcomed us and helped us arrange administrative matters and church internships. From home to abroad, the whole journey was filled with companionship, which gave me great peace and helped me adapt quicker. I am very grateful for the seminary's thoughtful arrangements to help us settle in. I hope that in the future we will have the opportunity to help new students and pass on this love.



“Hey, let's have
breakfast
together!”

田喜

Tian Xi

11

One of the happiest moments of seminary life is Tuesday morning breakfasts with our teachers and classmates. Everyone takes turns to prepare different kinds of food. This not only allows us overseas students to experience the wide variety of Singapore food, but also beautifully illustrates the seminary culture of being one body in Christ, where teachers and students love and support one another by sharing life together.



The **BIGGEST**

Surprise

刘子立

Liu Zili

Since arriving at BTS, I have experienced countless blessings. These constant graces truly fill me with profound gratitude. Among them, the most memorable moment occurred on the day of my first Friday mentoring group meet-up, which happened to be my birthday. During the gathering, I received a surprise from the group members—a cake adorned with a burning candle was suddenly brought out, and I was deeply moved. I cannot quite pinpoint the reason why; perhaps it was because I was still feeling tense and unsettled in Singapore, or maybe because I never imagined that a group of strangers would quietly organise such a loving gesture for me. In any case, my emotions were deeply stirred that day. It also allowed me—usually a guarded and reserved person—to open up more fully as I experienced the genuine presence of love. Even now when I recall this moment, I still feel deeply moved. I am truly thankful to God for allowing me to experience such kindness within the mentoring group.



VOICES

Never Cease

周清心

Zhou Qingxin

Two years of study have now concluded. I give thanks to God for establishing a firm foundation of truth within me through the work of the seminary: each lesson has become an anchor point for my life. I thank the teachers for their pastoral hearts, not only imparting the essentials of exegesis but also tenderly supporting our spiritual journeys. The prayerful intercessions, the exhortations during meals, the greetings received in times of sickness, and the comfort offered in times of worry have all been etched with the warm light of faith. Both the teaching and the informal times of laughter have embodied ‘the peace that comes from Christ’ as expressions of love and warmth. May the Lord anoint the seminary and remember the teachers who have been faithfully and humbly nurturing their students.

Gratitude in the *Ordinary*



麻真实

Ma Zhenshi



If asked what I am most grateful for this year, I would say without hesitation: our day trip to Pulau Ubin.

On the day itself, the sun shone brightly. Sitting in the boat, feeling the sea breeze and listening to the waves lapping against the hull, I felt the fatigue accumulated from studying and interning draining away. Once we arrived, we rode bicycles or walked around taking photos while enjoying the beauty of nature, followed by carefree chats over cold drinks. This unhurried yet heartfelt connection made it hard to leave. We reminisced about childhood dreams: we were aspiring artists, teachers, writers, or we wished to master diverse skills... Within these simple, unreserved conversations, we revisited life's myriad possibilities, while quietly unlocking the shackles that had bound our hearts.

Come evening, as we feasted on grilled meat, we couldn't help but repeatedly mention how delicious it was. Our mentor asked, "Why does eating grilled meat bring such joy? Does it make you think of home?" Initially, we thought it was because the quality of the meat was superior to what we were used to back home. Yet, upon reflection, it was less about the food's flavour and more that this ordinary outing kindled a longing and anticipation for 'home'. This 'home' is nothing other than 'being in Christ's love' – a bond transcending nationality, race, class and status, forged through genuine mutual care. We are grateful for this simple yet precious life experience, which will become a source of strength as we move forward.

Echoes of a Village Christmas

Wungthem Zimik

As Christmas draws near, my heart aches for the countryside where I grew up. The city around me glitters with light and music, but it all feels strangely hollow. I close my eyes and picture the fields back home, shrouded in winter mist, and remember the smell of pine from the branches laid across the courtyard. Even the silence there had its own melody, broken only by the church bells ringing softly across the valley. I remember how early we began preparing for Christmas. My mother would prepare rice cakes, and the kitchen would smell of freshly baked bread. Neighbours would stop by with baskets of fruit and homemade cakes; each gift simple, yet full of love. Those small gestures are what I miss the most. On Christmas Eve, our whole village would walk under the starlit sky to the church, carols echoing across the fields.

After Christmas service, we would gather around a bonfire, singing songs, telling stories and sharing food until the night grew quiet again. It was a celebration not of noise or glitter but of closeness, warmth and faith. Here, far from home, Christmas feels like a shadow of itself. There are decorations and gifts, but not the heartbeat of community or the comfort of family voices. I long for the sound of neighbours laughing, for the glow of the bonfire, and for the stars over our village church. Yet, even from this distance, the memories wrap around me like a blanket. They remind me that the true spirit of Christmas lives not just in a place but in the love and traditions we carry wherever we go. Far from home, I feel Christmas longing with a hollow heart, but I hold home in my heart under the village stars; a Christmas I carry with me.





CHRISTMAS IN MY HOMELAND:
Rest in *Christ*
and Reunion in *Faith*

Tokini Awomi

Standing on the plains of Nagaland, surrounded by hills, lies Dimapur where I come from. Christmas in Dimapur means cold air and ears and red noses sighted at every corner. It is the most significant and awaited day, at least for me and my family. It encourages us with shared community, laughter, joy, traditional food, and most importantly, gatherings in church to worship our living God starting from the first week of December.

Christmas is a time when family bonding is paramount. Many nights are spent in prayer meetings and fellowship over barbecues, sitting around the bonfire and chatting with a black tea in hand. There is a tradition of all the cousins getting together, which I hope will continue. Most of all, Christmas is a time when our loved ones come together to worship the One who first loved us: it is a time to remember, honour and reflect on the act of our Saviour and Creator coming down to His own creation to redeem it as an act of love and submission.

Christmas is much more than a tradition or a practice that came in with the missionaries – it is a sacred day in remembrance of our Christ, where we find, and will find, our ultimate and final rest.



God had opened
the *way*
for me
when
there
seemed to be
no way

Joel

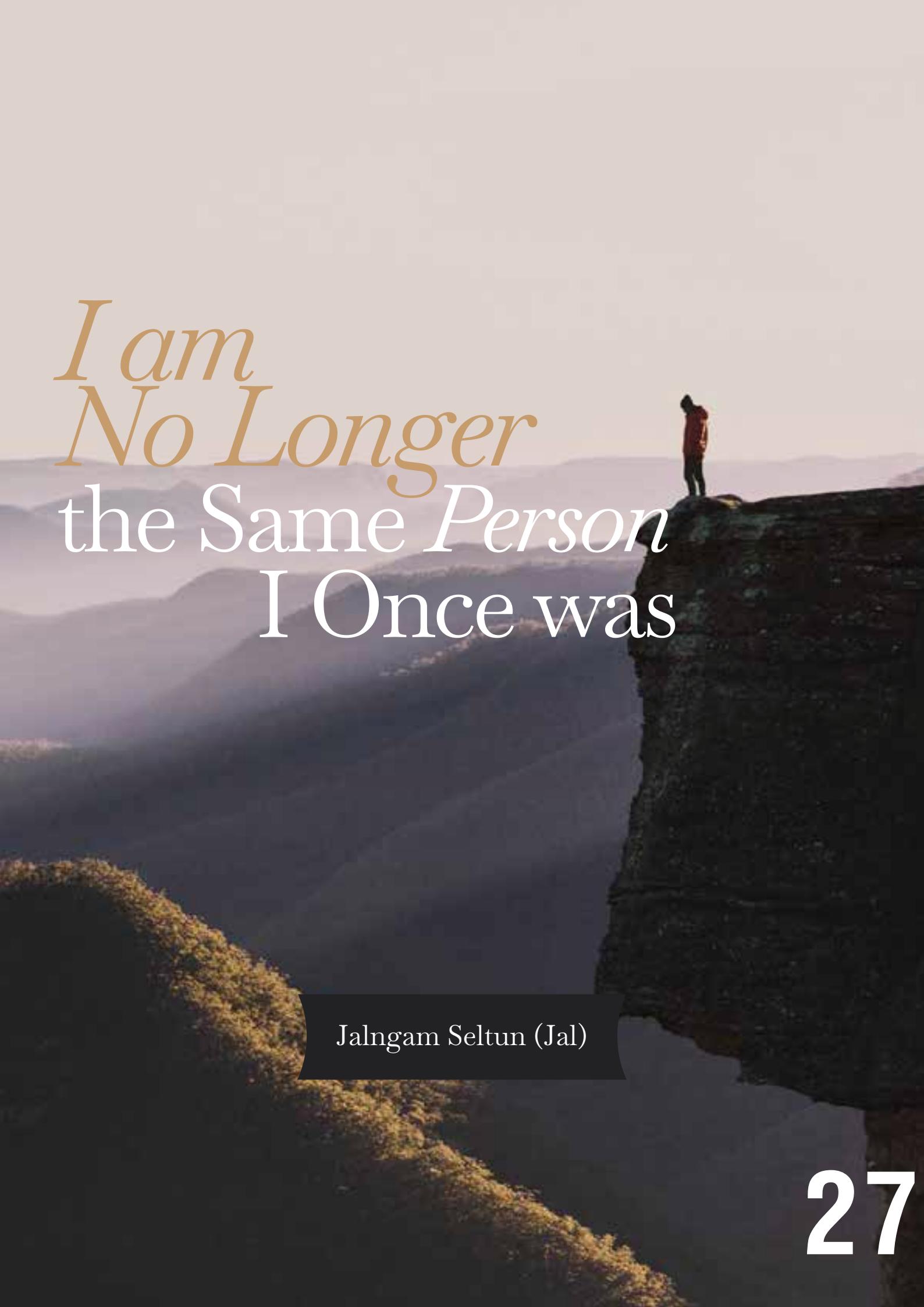
One of the most unforgettable moments in my journey at BTS was when I received the news that a donor had graciously committed to cover all my tuition fees and even provide for my monthly needs. That moment filled my heart with overwhelming gratitude and a deep sense of God's providence. As a full-time Christian minister in Myanmar, it was always going to be impossible for me to support myself financially for theological studies in Singapore. My monthly salary back home is so limited that it hardly suffices to meet my family's basic needs, let alone the costs of an education abroad. Therefore, hearing that someone was willing to invest in my calling was not just financial support—it was a powerful reminder of God's faithfulness and the generosity of His people. It encouraged me to continue my studies with renewed commitment, knowing that God had opened the way for me when there seemed to be no way.



*This Journey
will Always Remain
a Special Part of
my Life*

Edna

I am deeply grateful for the sincere help and encouragement I received from teachers and friends during my time studying at BTS. Their friendliness and enthusiasm were a great comfort to me during the days away from my family. At BTS, I found a new home – where I am loved, renewed and shaped to become a new person more mature in God. I remember the mentoring times when sometimes the whole group laughed and joked around, while at other times they calmed down and shared the pressures and real worries in their hearts. It was in those moments that I felt a degree of empathy and prayer support that I never thought I would experience. As a result, I learned to be more open and more humble, and also understood how to listen and share with everyone. What I am grateful for is not only the happy and sad memories we share, but also the quiet change in myself. BTS has been a place where I have grown in Christ, and this journey will always remain a special part of my life.



*I am
No Longer
the Same Person
I Once was*

Jalngam Seltun (Jal)

I grew up in an environment where harsh discipline was shown more often than love and care. Without realising it, my worldview was shaped negatively. I came to believe that people were critical, unreliable, untrustworthy, judgmental, prideful and unjust. I felt I always had to meet people's expectations, prove myself, and defend my worth. This left me with a sense of fear: fear of disappointing others, fear of taking risks, and fear of making decisions.

However, Baptist Theological Seminary (BTS) has proven me wrong. Through the genuine love and care I received from the faculty, staff and students, I learned to be myself, to grow in confidence, and to see that I am truly loved. Coming to BTS, I discovered a real and loving family. Here, I was given space to grow freely and think independently.

Although I may not be able to recall every academic lesson, my time at BTS has profoundly transformed me mentally, emotionally and spiritually. I am not claiming to be fully changed, for transformation is a lifelong journey, but I can say with certainty that I am no longer the same person I once was. I thank BTS for being a family to me.

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