

F+BC TODAY

UNLEASHING THE GOSPEL

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F+BC

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MAIN SERVICE

| Physical & Youtube |
Sundays 8:45am / 11:15am

YOUTH SERVICE

| Physical |
Sundays 8:45am

SUNDAY SCHOOL

For Ages 3 to 12
(Preschool to std 6)
Physical Classes
8:45am / 11:15am

Living Water in a Thirsty Land

I called my wife from the office, "The company is offering me an expatriate assignment in Qatar. Should I accept the offer?" She answered, "Sure, but....where is Qatar?" That was 19 years ago.

The small peninsular country of Qatar is in the Persian Gulf and borders the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It may be well-known today, but it was not so back then. In January of 2004, after 12 years in

a remote town in the conservative Islamic state of Terengganu in Malaysia, Clementine and I made the decision to move our family to a conservative Islamic nation in the Middle East with our three young children, Rachel, 9; Caleb, 7; and Rebekah, 1. Like Abraham, we moved without having any assurance of what lay ahead. As Christian parents, our utmost concern was how we could raise our children in the fear and knowledge of God



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in a very conservative Muslim country. Would we find a church? Would we find a Christian community? How long do we want to stay?

As a conservative Islamic country, the government of Qatar prohibited the building of churches or temples. After making some inquiries, we were told that there was a church meeting in a villa around a neighborhood, but there was no address.

We drove to the neighborhood on our first Friday (Friday & Saturday are weekends in Qatar), but we couldn't locate the "church." (There was no WAZE or Google Maps back in those days.) We tried again the following Friday, and we managed to locate it when we saw a group of people walking into a villa. From that day onwards, Grace Fellowship became our home church in Qatar for the next 16 years.

Qatar has relied heavily on foreign workers since the very beginning of the country's development. In the mid-1990s, a few expatriate families gathered weekly in a home for a small Bible study group. As the number of expatriates grew, so did the small bible study group, eventually forming the church we know and love. Grace Fellowship was later registered as a non-profit organization in the USA, but the leadership could not register the church with the Qatar government even with the support of the US Embassy. As a result, the church was unable to "do business" in Qatar, such as opening a local bank account or sponsoring a full-time pastor.

Grace Fellowship has many similarities to early churches during the time of Acts. We were constantly being monitored by the government, who did not sanction our gatherings. We don't have a church building, and we don't have any full-time paid clergy. The church is led by qualified men serving as lay-elders. Grace Fellowship faced many challenges, but it strived under God's protection and care. The church body grew to several hundred members made up of over 60 nationalities at one point. We had three services on Friday because of space constraints in the rented villa. Even though the church was made up of expatriates who stayed for an average of 3-5 years, God continuously brought in mature, gifted, and faithful Christians to serve His church in various ministries, from the pulpit to the classrooms.

God answered our prayers. Our children attended Friday School and the AWANA program from the get-go and moved on to the youth group upon entering secondary school. As parents, we prioritized church attendance over social activities, emphasizing the importance of worshiping God and a time of fellowship with other believers.



Over the years, our kids had the privilege of being guided and mentored by many godly men and women that God brought to Grace Fellowship who were integral in their walk with Christ. They served in different church ministries and eventually found their niche on the worship team and in the youth group. We, as a family, also took opportunities to serve God and His people whenever we could. Such opportunities influenced our children's independent decisions to continue serving their local church communities in university and into adulthood, which Clementine and I are grateful for.

Even though we lived in a country that was not ours and was away from our own families in Malaysia, we never felt isolated or lonely. Often, people asked, "How are you and your family able to stay in Qatar for so long?"

The answer is simple: God gave us a big international church family at Grace Fellowship that helps, supports, and encourages one another, spiritually and in everyday life. God sustained us with His grace.

Living in Qatar also gave us new insights into the Arabic cultures that we could never experience through watching documentaries or reading books. The Arabs are very proud of their race and generally strong-willed. They still maintain their tribal mindset, but they are very hospitable to strangers. Many of them are very open to talking about religion. Several of them tried to convert me to Islam, and those occasions also opened the door for me to share my Christian faith with them.

Before we left Qatar to come back to Malaysia in August 2020, a brother asked me an unexpected question, "Do you have any regrets?" His question caused me to ponder. I took my family to Qatar not knowing what to expect. God blessed us above and beyond what we had asked for. We sought the Lord and He brought us to Grace Fellowship. He brought many Christians from all over the world into our lives, and they helped my family and me grow in our faith. We never expected to have the opportunity to know so many brothers and sisters from every continent of the earth. God also gave my family and I many opportunities to serve Him and His church in a land that was unknown to us. Yet, through the unknowns, God was and still is a steady anchor, providing and



caring for us. Clementine and I were able to raise our children in the fear and knowledge of Jesus Christ with the support of many faithful brothers and sisters, who are like parents to our children. Yes, I could have done a lot of things better, but no, I don't have major regrets.

No matter where we are on planet earth, God always has a remnant of people who are faithful to Him, even in places we least expect. If we seek God's help, He will lead us to His people.



By Victor Ong

Victor is the leader of Newlife Life Group



PrayerSpotlight

Prayer for Sri Lanka

1. Pray for God's mercy on the people of Sri Lanka to deliver them from the depths of their darkness to the light of His kingdom. Pray for God's provision of the resources they need to help the country recover.
2. Pray for the Lord to work in the heart of the new government of Sri Lanka – make the right decisions for the people and not be driven by greed and power.
3. Pray for OM and Christian organizations working in partnership with local churches will bring glory to God as they distribute aid and assistance. Pray for open doors and hearts as they share God's love.
4. Pray that the Sri Lankan church will find ways to connect and share the good news of salvation. Pray that the church leaders will have the wisdom to lead the Church during these trying times.