



Does faith sustain us through challenges?

Binu Thomas^a

^a Research Scholar, Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong, India

Faith that can move mountains is evident throughout the Bible—even in settings where geographical and material scarcity is widespread. Caring for a child with disability can be an immense challenge; yet, in the midst of these difficulties, a steadfast faith in Jesus provides strength and hope.

As part of my research on the effectiveness of strength-based interventions in improving the psychological well-being and resilience of caregivers of children with disabilities in the remote, hilly terrains of the lower Himalayas, I met Ms. X, a woman in her late sixties, living below the poverty line. Her life paints a difficult picture of struggles: her home is located 20 km away from the nearest town with basic amenities and medical care, and she must travel on foot due to a lack of transport facilities and difficult terrain. She struggles daily to care for her adult son, who is chronically mentally challenged.

One example of her challenges occurred one day while visiting the local NGO centre, which is several kilometres away from her home, where she brings her son to a monthly medical camp organized by a mission hospital for his medication renewal. During the visit, he wandered off. Despite her fragile condition, she trekked 20 km on foot to search for him, only to repeat the journey after a local villager found him in another part of town, and she had to bring him back home. Such challenges compound her daily burdens, highlighting the scarcity of resources like roads, transport, and communication facilities in her community.

Among the ten participants I interviewed before implementing the strength-based psychoeducation training, Ms. X's story stood out. Having embraced Jesus as her Savior, her resilience is fuelled by faith, even as she navigates a life of isolation and multifaceted challenges. Her husband left when the children

were very young, and she now shoulders the care of a 25-year-old, mentally ill son. Her only income is the little money sent by her other son, who works far away as a cook. The entire village blames her son for all the misfortunes, further isolating and ridiculing her family. Yet, despite these overwhelming challenges, Ms. X remains remarkably hopeful. Her ability to discuss her troubles with emotional detachment and unwavering hope left a lasting impression on me.

Since publicly accepting Christ as her Saviour posed many challenges, and because of religious persecution, she was very guarded in her conversations. Upon probing about how she could stay positive in the midst of all the challenges, and over time as our conversations deepened, she revealed that every hardship was met with an affirmation of her faith—Jesus is in her life, and He is her hope. Two quotes from our conversations illustrate her remarkable spirit:

"I cannot sleep peacefully at night because my son may run away, but I stay awake and thank God for my son."

"The entire village is trying to do bad things to send us away from our home because it is a prime area, and they need our land, but I trust in God."

Another striking aspect of Ms. X's story was the natural manifestation of gratitude. Even before any formal strength-based intervention, her heart overflowed with gratitude—fuelled by simple, yet profound, experiences. Her gratitude, coupled with her unwavering faith, enabled her to hold on tightly even during the darkest valleys of her life. This resilience is a testament to her faith in the power of Christ.

From my interaction with her, I learned that the qualities modern positive psychology seeks

to cultivate—joy, hope, compassion, gratitude, and resilience—are already given to us by God as divine gifts when we embrace faith in Him. In a world where people are searching for every possible way to find peace and happiness, the only way to attain that is through Christ. While she has no church community to provide spiritual or emotional support, she remains strong in her faith solely through her personal connection with God.

“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

— John 15:11 (NIV)

On a personal note, I was deeply moved by these observations as they resonated with my own experiences. When my son was hospitalized—undergoing multiple brain surgeries (seven, in fact)

and enduring a stroke that significantly impacted his abilities at that time—the peace that surpasses all understanding enveloped us, filling our hearts with a joy that defied our circumstances. This personal encounter with divine peace further reinforced my belief in the transformative power of faith during times of crisis.

In conclusion, Ms. X’s story is a powerful reminder of how faith and gratitude can sustain individuals amid severe hardship. It also reminded me of how important it is for us to share the good news with those still in darkness so that they, too, can receive the peace, love, joy, and hope that our Master has promised.

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

— John 16:33 (NIV)

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