

## **The Writing of God's Love Letter**

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I belong to a family of Seventh-day Adventists in Indonesia. My father was well-accepted in the community for his enduring faith and for upholding family values as a faithful Adventist Christian pastor and father. We grew up without TV and other sources of worldly entertainment. Reading Bible and books were our every day's practice. I started studying medicine with the hope that one day I would be an Adventist medical missionary, enabling me to witness among Muslim community and make a difference for God.

My plan was changed when I was in my third year of study. I was asked to write examination on Sabbath at the secular medical school where I was enrolling. I brought this problem home and consulted with my family. With their advice and prayer, I decided to shift my course to pastoral study and theology at University of Advent Indonesia (UNAI) without any hesitation. This had given me the opportunity to meet my future wife and a wonderful partner in ministry.

Being born in Adventist families and in Asian context for more than 30 years ago, we did not really have much time to socialize between opposite gender as it was somewhat considered improper. I was also very careful and selective in looking for my prospect life partner. I always expected her to be a God-fearing person who demonstrated His divine character. She must have an inward beauty that would last for eternity. Marrying someone was more of God's inspiration and His guidance for me.

I met Christine Marion Mangoal, my future wife, when we were students in UNAI. I noticed that she was another child of God who had come from a reputable Adventist family. She also demonstrated her great respect and honor to her parents. I wanted our relationship to start right from the very beginning and with God's blessings, so our way of getting close and intimate with each other was the writing of journal that we have been faithfully keeping as our couple's tradition. The content of our shared journal was not about our love story and how it got started, instead, it is the love story of God towards His children narrated in the Bible.

I am thankful to God that Christine and I have the same belief and attach the same values in marriage and relationship. We both know that our way of living and interacting in this institution of God is very important to our spiritual journey. In the book of Genesis, we are reminded that marriage and lifetime companionship are God's design to serve the true purpose of life as well as His

mission. It is an intelligent way of our Maker to sanctify His children, molding them on fitted character for heaven. The preparation in receiving eternal gift of salvation and experiencing everlasting togetherness begins right here on this earth. Thus, sitting side by side and writing God's words with our hands is our normal way of interacting with each other in a silent but purposeful way.

Marriage relationship and our real interaction with one another began from the time we started writing the Bible verses. We felt destined for us to spend our lives together and God's impression upon us that we were the only choice for each other. It was, I strongly believe, because of the spiritual bond from writing and sharing God's word together in a regular manner. Even after marriage, whenever we feel there is incompatibility and challenges, we never allow self-seeking interest to get into our relationship and set us apart. God controls and guides us through His words and the inspiration we receive from reading them. 2Timothy 3:16-17 say, *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

Over the years of Bible writing experience, we have found great joy and true happiness in making it our routine. We can testify to everyone how God's promises in the Bible are felt and experienced endlessly in our lives. We strongly believe that it is God's original intent that His children in all relationships, husband-wife relationship for one, will learn to develop resiliency and rise above the differences, proving that God's unconditional love is real and effectively working in His children's lives.

The first Bible writing in Bahasa took us eight years to complete it. We have learned so much of God's intended plan for marriage and how we could rightly define and realize the added value God has for this institution. God has intended it to be a great blessing to both of us and we indeed feel it every time we start writing. The more we copy or write God's words, the more we are charmed by His words. His words of love, promises, strength, comfort, and empowerment etch deep into our hearts.

Both of us have started writing the Bible in English language this year (2019) and have planned to complete it soon. Bible writing continually opens more opportunities to connect and reconnect, be in each other's presence, read to and hear from each other. We believe that a couple who pray together will remain strong in their marriage relationship. This is our way of keeping our family to continually experience God's blessings and allow ourselves to hear Him

speaking the language of love to us directly every day so that we may also replicate the same love to others by beginning with our very own family!