

Sam Kian Sang's Journey with Malaysian Care

by Santha Oorjitham

Sam Kian Sang and Malaysian Care have a relationship that goes back to the 1990s, after Sam was sentenced to natural life imprisonment for illegal possession of a gun in 1988. It was through Malaysian Care's ministry in Kajang Prison that he came to know Jesus Christ and accept Him as his Saviour. After Sam was granted a royal pardon and released in July 2016, he moved into Malaysian Care's Rumah Petros for a few days, as he adjusted to his new life.

Over the past two years, Sam has continued his theological education. He now works at Sahabat Pudu, which is run by the Full Gospel Assembly. At the drop-in centre, he serves the elderly, the homeless, ex-prisoners and substance abusers. Sam and his friends have also set up Care Station, a non-governmental organisation to help drug addicts, gamblers and troubled youth.

"Sam's been doing a lot of ministry and rebuilding his life," explains Martin Balhetchet, the leader of Rumah Petros. "He looks more positive and is very enthusiastic in doing street ministry. He's been sharing his testimony at many churches, sharing the gospel with ex-prisoners and being a friend to them."

Sam has now published a book about his experiences, *Kajang Redemption*, available at Pustaka Sufes and Canaanland bookstore. "I wanted others to know that people like me can be changed by the grace of God," he explains. "And I hope it will inspire and encourage people. I want people to know what life was like in prison."

The following excerpts are from his book:

"...I had very little contact with Christianity before I entered prison and whatever I knew of the "foreign religion," I brushed aside. I acted tough on the outside, but deep inside I was searching for something more to life. One day, not too long after I entered Kajang Prison, I was invited to participate in weekly gatherings organised by Malaysian Care.

I was curious about this bunch of Christians who taught the Bible. I asked myself, "What can this God do for me?" I had worshipped many different gods before but none of them was able to help me. Could this Jesus do something to set me free? I decided to check it out. So every Tuesday and Sunday, I would attend the meetings. After all, I had plenty of time in prison to while away.



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When Sam Kian Sang walked out of Kajang Prison in 2016, he turned to Malaysian Care for a short-term home. COURTESY OF STAR MEDIA GROUP



Rumah Petros leader Martin Balhetchet helped Sam Kian Sang adjust back into society in 2016, which included a stroll around Chinatown. COURTESY OF STAR MEDIA GROUP

This went on for 12 months. In that time, something was stirring in my heart. Finally on February 15, 1992, in my own prison cell, I made a decision to ask this God of the Christians to take control and change me. Kneeling down, I prayed, “God, I believe that your Spirit is present here, even in prison. I know I deserve to be punished for whatever I have done in the past. God, please forgive me. Thank you, Jesus, for dying for my wrongdoings. Thank you that after three days, you were raised from the dead, giving us true hope that there is life after death. Now I want to acknowledge that Jesus is my Saviour.”

That was my turning point. I felt peace like I never had experienced before, and my life took a 180-degree turn. I began reading the Bible from cover to cover. I managed to read the whole Bible four times in a year. Someone had given me a bilingual Bible earlier and when I first began reading it, I was skeptical about the miracles that Jesus performed. For example, He changed water into wine and also fed thousands of men with just a few loaves and fishes. But after I

came to know Jesus, I prayed for wisdom to help me understand scripture.

...I also started sharing Bible lessons with my fellow inmates who had accepted Jesus as their Saviour, and even baptised some of them. People in prison could see the difference Jesus made in my life. The change was a gradual process, but the peace in my heart was real and permanent!

...I found new purpose in prison and my life took on a new dimension. I was no longer resentful and angry. It was a spiritual transformation.

...I was already 59 years old when I was released, having spent 28 years in prison...What would I do with myself and my newfound freedom?...With the help of Malaysian Care, arrangements were made for me to stay in Rumah Petros, a halfway home for former prisoners. The first thing I did was to visit my family members to renew our ties. They were happy to see that I was a free man.” ■

■ *Santha Oorjitham is the newest member of the Policy, Advocacy and Research team.*