

MY LIFE STORY – Jack (January 2015)

My name is Jack. I feel like a child of the world. I was born in Vancouver but half of my life has been spent elsewhere. People who are in similar situations to me have said that while their family culture might be yellow and their current culture might be blue – they feel neither yellow nor blue – they are green. Sometimes you just don't feel like you belong.

My early years were spent in the jungles of Ecuador with ex- head hunters. My early school years were spent on the Texas – Mexican border where I was the only one of my ethnicity among my friends. My children were raised for 18 years in Kenya, East Africa. I've tasted the cultures and foods of dozens of people. Sometimes I feel like I don't fit in any one place in the world as it is.

Yes, I have a job and a family and people who care about me. Yes, I have a safe place to live and I have enough food to keep me satisfied. Yes, I've figured out how most of the world around me works to meet my needs. But, from the time I was young I've lived feeling there is something more.

I first tasted that something more through stories my parents read to me when I sat with them each evening before saying my prayers. I tasted that something more through the community I was exposed to each Sunday and in the clubs I attended through the week. I tasted that something more through teachers who shared their lives with me.

You'd think I lived the perfect life. My brother and sister have been through several marriages, but I've been married for 37 years to a great woman. I have my PhD and have enjoyed learning all my life. The one thing that has snagged my heart is the twin pillars of trying to be more and do more.

With my training, I found myself thinking that I could help others beyond the help of most people. I got overwhelmed and overinvolved until someone gave me words of life that I still cling to. "There is only one Savior and it's not you."

I realize as I live this life that my Creator has designed life to keep me desperately dependent on Him. He made me with limitations so I would have to trust Him in the things I face. He surrounded me with challenges to show that my strength would have to come from Him. He did that for me and for every other person made in His image.

Sometimes I feel like I'm a slow learner. When I first came to Canada and started school, on the first day, the teacher hit me with a ruler because I wrote left handed. I didn't understand the math being taught and had to meet with a tutor. I

find it tempting to always think that I'm not smart enough or good enough and that I need to work harder to prove myself.

I'm reminded that God's grace is a gift which is life giving. I'm reminded that it's what Jesus did for me and not what I did for Him which makes the difference in my eternity. I'm reminded that I need a community to support me in the journey of my transformation. Change takes time.

I'm glad Jesus didn't call me to another religion. He told me to love God with all my heart and all my mind and all my soul and all my strength and to love my neighbour as myself. It takes a pretty amazing day when I can even try to pull that off by myself. He's constantly working on changing me and setting me back on my feet when I fall short. He says that He'll never leave me nor forsake me. I count on that as He keeps molding and shaping who I am.

One of the good things God continues to do is to bring people into my life to remind me of how broad His love and grace are in me and in others. Every person's life is a reminder of what He is doing in bringing the world back into a right relationship with Him. I'm part of that piece as I learn how to love and be loved by a variety of people.

Some people are good at creating anxiety in me. Especially power people. I like to be liked and I like to be good and not get on the wrong side of people. If people don't care about me it takes time for me to refocus and realize that it's God's care for me that ultimately matters.

It's easy for good people to shut their hearts off to others. To think that they can protect themselves by keeping life orderly and organized around them. It takes a lot of energy to live like that and it's really tiring.

I'm learning to trust God one day at a time. I look back at what He's brought me through. I look ahead at what He's promised. And I am trying to remember to apply that truth to what I'm facing right now. Some days are better than others.

One scripture that encourages me is Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Believe it or not, I'm a pastor of a church of people who come from over 40 nations. Every one of the people in our church remind me of how incredible God's love is because every one of them has a unique story of how they met Jesus and learned to follow Him. They teach me more and more about how big God's love is and how great His plan is.