A Twist in My Australian Tale

Jonathan Yee Loong 22 May 2018



'Good afternoon, this is your captain speaking. We welcome all passengers aboard Flight QR 1370 scheduled to leave at 12.40 Cape Town to Doha en-route to Perth Australia.' Those were the words I was meant to be hearing ringing out over the loudspeakers from a confident and decorated pilot aboard an Airbus A380 on the 4th of April 2018. I'd begun my visa application process a month before my departure and was told that I need not worry, that I would receive my visa before my departure and I had more than enough time.

> It was 10.40am and there I sat with no visa!

Lesson #1

As a South African passport holder, apply for a visa to Australia far before the scheduled travel date.

On the day of my visa application appointment, I left the visa office with butterflies in my tummy and filled with excitement, reality set in that it was 'go, go, go'. I would soon be off on my first outreach in 7 years, ready to do battle alongside the legendary Will and Pam Marais and team, and with an opportunity to advance His kingdom. I would even possibly get to feed a kangaroo or 2 and stroke a koala during my time abroad.

However, the 4th of April arrived (my departure date) along with a twist in the tale when my plans

were dealt a serious curveball. It was 10.40am and there I sat with no visa! Bags packed with nowhere to go.

I needed to make a call: either I had to cancel the flight, as it was 2hrs before departure, in order to retain the flight and pay a penalty to move it to a later date, or lose the flight completely. Needless to say, I chose to use wisdom and cancel the flight and pay the penalty. On my return back to my office, after processing my disappointment, I received notification 2hours later to say that my visa to Australia had been granted.

“WHY LORD, WHY?”

In that moment, I could choose to melt down or I could stand back, pay the penalty for changing my flight, and ask the question, ‘God, what do You want to do?’

> What seemed like an eternity… turned out to be God setting me up for something far greater.

Lesson #2

If Jesus is Lord of my life, He is Lord of my life in the good and in the inconvenient things too.

I am happy to report that I chose to smile and surrender to His process, but unfortunately, no other flights were available and I was told that the only available flight was on the 12th April (more than a week later). Surrendering to His plan and will for my life, I waited patiently for an extra week. What seemed like an eternity (and a bit like a dress rehearsal), turned out to be God setting me up for something far greater.

Come the 12th of April, I boarded my flight, thankfully with no hiccups, eager to ‘get the show on the road’. I proceeded to the very back of the plane where I was seated next to a gentleman in his late 40’s. With nowhere to go and hours to kill, we engaged in conversations about what it was that we both do, where we were heading and why we were heading there. I shared my life story and it turned out that he knew one of the elders from Joshua Generation Church (the church where I fellowship), that they had grown up together but he hadn’t been to church in years and our conversation opened the door to him saying that he knew he needed a church family.

I extended an invitation to him to, on his return to SA, make the call to bring his family to church. I look forward to seeing him walk through the doors of one of our congregations and worship alongside him and his family. At the end of the flight we parted ways, but we have since chatted

to one another a few times and, on his return to South Africa, we will be meeting up again.

> Our hearts were knitted together in a very short space of time.

Lesson #3

The harvest is ripe, so if I believe that I carry the truth of Jesus, it will mean I share it with those who don't know Him.

Fast forward to my arrival in Australia. Wow, our time with the churches was amazing. We first headed to Perth, and although my time with Heart City Church was brief due to my delayed & shortened trip, the time was filled with many late nights, much laughter, some tears, and new friendships made. Our hearts were knitted together in a very short space of time.

We then travelled on to Adelaide, to one of our Four12 partnering churches, Impact Church. The guys in Impact grew very close to my heart in a short space of time. I stayed with an amazing family headed by a loving father named Greg, a dedicated mother named Rowena, and two powerful sons named Jon and Daniel, who have hearts of gold and treated me like an older brother. They have a daughter too, who I unfortunately never got to meet. Greg and I sat up till the early hours of the morning, sharing about God's goodness and what He is busy doing in His church and people. I love these guys very much and am so thankful to them for making my stay in Adelaide so memorable.

Martin and Carrie-Ann Stockdale, who lead the church, opened their hearts to us and hosted us like kings and queens. I thank them for the opportunity to share in what it is that God is doing amongst them. I'm so glad that we are able to partner alongside one another, to see His kingdom advance.

> But one thing I do know is that when we go to advance His kingdom, we always come back feeling richer.

We are often challenged by our leaders to go and obey the great commission. Sometimes it's a sacrifice, sometimes things don't always go as planned, sometimes it costs a little. But one thing I do know is that when we go to advance His kingdom, we always come back feeling richer. For me on this trip, it meant gaining new family and friendships that have become a part of my inheritance into eternity, and being moved forward and provoked into the more of God.

As we partner in the gospel with new churches and as we advance His kingdom, may His passion burn inside of us and may His beautiful bride represent His kingdom well.

I leave you with 1 Philippians 1:5-7: ‘Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion unto the day of Christ Jesus. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God’s grace with me.’

It was a privilege to partner alongside the team from Four12 and the churches we visited. I look forward to seeing some of our new Australian friends at the Four12 Conference in South Africa.