



## God is a Source of Hope Even In Our Greatest Struggles

### Audio Version: God is a Source of Hope Even In Our Greatest Struggles

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by Jason Law

***A single mother and her son find purpose and hope in God and the caring community He brought into their lives.***

When times are difficult, it is easy to tunnel-vision into our problems. Imagine, however, if you were a single parent responsible for raising a child with a debilitating condition.

For one single mum, Miyumi Yanagi, and her son, Jonah Michio Tan, it has been a real journey of faith. Recently, I got to know their story through a Zoom press conference. What is remarkable in their story is how instead of burrowing into their fate, they looked outward and grasped hold of hope.

Miyumi, a Christian who attends SIBKL, shares, "Throughout all the moments of having to look after Jonah, including finding him a school, the book of Psalms has always encouraged me. The verses in it reminded me that I am not alone, that God is watching over us." Psalm 23 with God's assurance that He will take care of all our needs stood out particularly.

Theirs is a story full of challenges but also an uplifting one about the spirit of enterprise and optimism. It is also a hopeful one of a Christian community coming together to help their fellow believers in need.

#### **Jonah and Jonah Bakes**

Little Jonah Tan was born on 23 December 2014, with a rare condition known as skeletal dysplasia. Seven this year (2021), Jonah who is of Chinese-Japanese heritage is loved and cared for by his mother, Miyumi. His 5-year-old younger brother, Jamian is also a bright and cheerful kid.

*Jonah with his little brother, Jamian*

Jonah's growth and development has been hindered by his condition all these years. He is only 96cm for his age and can barely walk more than five meters before he tires out, not to mention that he cannot climb up even the stairs. This makes it impossible for him to attend normal schools or even schools with special classes for disabled children.

Children with skeletal dysplasia and their caretakers must take extra care in everything they do. Their bones can be fractured easily. Indeed, the intensive care that is needed renders even the educational opportunities which shape the child's future something to be considered carefully.

Yet, despite these difficulties, an assurance from the book of Jeremiah was a constant encouraging reminder to Miyumi. In Jeremiah 29:11, God promised His people through the prophet Jeremiah that despite the trials they had to go through, He had plans to prosper them and to give them hope and a future. 'I believe that this applies to everyone that God loves. It gave me strength and became a promise I claimed for Jonah.'

Jonah is a vibrant and precocious boy. He enjoys the simple pleasures of life, delighting in dancing and the wholesome hobby of baking. Miyumi shared that this interest in baking had been evident in Jonah from a very young age. 'Even when he was very young, he would come into the kitchen when I was baking, and he would try to help. Of course, at that age, he couldn't help much but it was obvious even then that he loved baking,' she said.

*Jonah helping with baking*

*Chinese New Year Cookies sold by Jonah Bakes*

God inspired Miyumi to build something out of this, and that was how *Jonah Bakes* (<https://www.jonahbakes.com>), the e-bakery, was born. He also brought a Christian friend, Josh Lim, who helped her build the website for the e-bakery. Miyumi shares that the recipes for the cookies sold there were inherited from her mum. While Jonah is too young to bake the cookies on his own, he helps his mother with them.

Some of the more popular choices among their regular customers are the chocolate chips and gingerbread cookies. For the upcoming Chinese New Year, they even have some special selections for sale, including Salted Egg Cornflake Cookies, Peanut Cookies, Lucky 8 Vanilla Cookies, and Pineapple Tart Cookies.

'Because of Jonah's condition, there are not many options in the job market for him. God inspired me to build something up for Jonah, and through *Jonah Bakes*, I wanted to encourage and teach him not to give up on his dreams. I also wanted him to develop a sense of responsibility and give him an avenue to release stress,' Miyumi expressed. Through the revenue generated by *Jonah Bakes*, funds would be channeled towards Jonah's education.

### **Miyumi's Hope for Jonah's Education**

Even though *Jonah Bakes* offers a measure of hope for Jonah's future, like every mother, Miyumi wants a fair chance of education for her son. However, while Jonah enjoys playing with other kids, it is difficult to find a suitable school for him.

Miyumi had been in touch with a government school that offers the Integrated Special Education Programme (PPKI) classes which are tailored to children with special needs, only to find that because the children in the classes were hyperactive and autistic, they may not know how to interact with Jonah. An accidental push may cause Jonah to fall and break his bones.

The story of *Jonah Bakes* as well as Miyumi's search for an educational chance for Jonah made the headlines towards the end of 2020. It caught the attention of Pastor Robert Wong and other members of the FGA Cheras church, as well as the NGO, Love Cheras Care Services (LCCS). God opened up the hearts of Pastor Robert and LCCS and they then reached out to the mother and son and helped to connect them with a learning centre, where Jonah is currently on a one-month trial.

"The learning centre is assessing how comfortable Jonah is in the new learning environment, and we will wait for the results and decide where to go from there," Pastor Robert shared. He added further that the members of his church have a heart for single mothers and want to help Miyumi and her son.

Love Cheras Care Services (LCCS), an NGO engaged in community services, has offered to sponsor 50% of the school fees for January. Every month the fees amount to RM450. Miyumi expressed that she is willing to consider homeschooling if the learning centre does not work out.

*Jonah and Miyumi's story caught the attention of Pastor Robert Wong and other members of the FGA Cheras church*

"I have received so much encouragement, guidance, prayers, support, and words of blessing from so many brothers and sisters in Christ that I can't thank them enough," she shared.

#### **Hopes to Build *Jonah Bakes* as a Platform**

Miyumi conveyed that she felt very blessed that God has brought people into her and Jonah's life who have helped them to set and build up *Jonah Bakes*, as well as to give Jonah a chance at education.

'We are very blessed to have *Jonah Bakes*. Because of this, I want to use it as a platform to help others in a similar situation as mine. We want to conduct baking classes to help other disadvantaged children who are interested in learning how to bake so that they can use the skills in their future. I hope that it will be a platform where we can help each other. Currently, it's in the planning stages but we want to make it happen. God has always answered my prayers, not in my desire, but His".

*Jonah Bakes* is currently looking for a suitable venue and helpers for the baking classes. For more information about *Jonah Bakes*, including how to contact Miyumi or order their cookies, you may visit their website at <https://www.jonahbakes.com/> (<https://www.jonahbakes.com/>)

#### **Romans 8:28 – New International Version**

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.

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