

## A farewell message from Susan An

If I could have picked the bible verses to be read at my ordination, it would have been 2 Corinthians 3:2-3. It is one of Apostle Paul's letters to the church in Corinth. Even though he was the one who told them about Jesus, he had a difficult relationship with them, and they were questioning his qualifications as an apostle. In response to a call to prove his worth as an apostle, he says:

"<sup>2</sup>You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. <sup>3</sup>You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts."

I came across this verse in my final year of training as a pastor. It resonated with me deeply and it became the verses by which I aimed to be a minister. As a pastor, one day, I will stand before my Saviour and give account for each and every one of you. I don't know if you've ever thought of yourselves as a recommendation letter. But how you have led your lives, the decisions you have made and your heart for the Lord will actually be a reflection on me and others that have had the privilege of ministering to you.

My hope and prayers, was that I always pointed, guided and showed you Jesus. That whatever I said or did encouraged you and led you to be closer to God. It is a task that I felt the weightiness of and took very seriously. Because I need to answer to God.

But I'm nervous as I share this with you today – because I know that I haven't always done that. Even with the best of my intentions, I know that I've disappointed and hurt some of you. I know that I may have caused you to stumble. But the only reason why I continue knowing this is that it's not about me, but Jesus. I know he is sufficient to cover all of my deficiencies. I pray that he has covered up all my deficiencies.

Having said that, I am so proud of each and every one of you. I am so lucky and privileged to have been able to call myself your pastor. You invited me in to your lives. Even in my deficiencies you were generous and kind. You were patient and indulgent. You laughed and cried with me. You shared your struggles and pains. You shared your joys and celebrations. You prayed with me, you prayed for me. At the face of life and death itself. In the midst of your greatest pain and sorrow, you invited me in and allowed me to share the most intimate of life moments with you. I want to thank you all for that.

I can't think of better letters of recommendations. I can't think of better people I can show off to my Saviour. It was a joy and a privilege each and every day.

As I leave you, it's with great sadness – but I leave with every confidence that I leave you in the hands of the most capable team of pastors and support staff I've ever worked with. These fellow workers in the gospel with me are so gifted and so capable – but most importantly they all love Jesus and you so much. I'm not anxious at all as I leave you with them.

But moments of testing will come for all of you. I wish I could say this wasn't the case but our Lord himself told us that there is great cost to following him. So a day is coming when you would question if following him is worth it. If you hadn't made a mistake in giving your life to him. In that moment, I do hope and pray that all that God and Jesus has done in your life would be enough for you to not go down that path. That you would be persuaded at the point of no return to hang on to him. But if that isn't enough, please think of me and all the leaders that have ever pastored to you. You are our letter of recommendation. We took great pride and sense of responsibility. Please don't give in.

Even though I leave, I hope to see all of you often. But I probably won't be able to see you as often as I would like. I may lose touch with some of you. But that will be due to circumstance, not due to lack of love and care. And I won't ever stop thinking of you. Either when our Saviour returns, or when I get to heaven, I long to see each and every one of you. I long to hear that no matter what opposition Satan threw in your way that you persevered. I long to sit down with each and every one of you and hear all that has transpired after I left. How faithful God was. How much God grew you in wisdom and grace. Be there with me – a place where there is unlimited amount of time for catch ups; a place where there is no goodbyes; a place where we will see our Saviour face to face at last. That is my prayer as I leave. Thank you. It's been an honour.