

Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these things. Isaiah 40:26

In my youth, I often found solace on my front porch, gazing into the black, starless sky.

I didn't fully understand why that view brought me such peace—but it did. I looked up to avoid looking down or around. Looking around, my innocent eyes searched for a father who never appeared. Looking down, I saw the harsh realities of gang violence, drug use, and prostitution. I looked up to escape the destruction that had consumed my community.

What I didn't realize then was that my upward gaze was a response to God's quiet invitation—to see beyond my immediate surroundings and recognize His sovereignty over all creation.

So I kept looking up.

When the man I loved more than anyone abandoned me—I looked up.

When my brother lay in the emergency room, on life support for months—I looked up.

When my mother worked herself into exhaustion, and anxiety overtook her—I looked up.

When the father I never knew died from devastating drug abuse—I looked up.

When gang violence nearly claimed my life—I looked up.

When I found myself halfway across the world, alone after joining the Army—I looked up.

When I fought in a war I couldn't fully understand and feared daily for my life—I looked up.

When I was confined to a mental institution, broken by PTSD and ready to give up—I looked up.

When my marriage teetered on the edge—I looked up.

And in that gaze—my heart opened.

The Holy Spirit filled me with a new life, finally answering the question of why I had looked up for so long.

I looked up because I needed a Savior. And that time, I received Him.

Through His grace, He moved in my wife to buy me a daily devotional overflowing with His Word. That book became a turning point. For a full year, I immersed myself in Scripture—and the Great Counselor began to teach me, rebuke me, correct me, train me, and heal me. While I read God's Word, His Word began to read me. And I felt the depth of His love. I started to believe—I truly was His son.

Our relationship grew from discipline into devotion—into prayer, church, fellowship, and service.

And I became a Follower of Jesus Christ.

Now, when I look up, I see Jesus.

When I look down—I see Jesus.

When I look around—I see Jesus.

Everywhere I look, He is there.

And I understand, at last, what God was showing me from the very beginning. *Samad Green*

As the Focused Living staff and board, we've spent the last year looking up—praying for an apprentice.

Praying for a man whose heart has been overwhelmed by the grace of God.

And through remarkable circumstances, God caused Samad's life and ours to intersect.

It didn't take long to recognize that God had answered our prayer. He had brought us a new ministry partner.

Thank You, God, for Samad.

Prayer:

Father God, thank you for lifting our heads, softening our hearts, and opening our eyes. Thank you that one day we will be able to see Jesus face-to-face. Until then, Father, I pray that we will all pursue a focused life. In Jesus' name, Amen.