

Saving Grace



TRUE JESUS CHURCH

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Introduction

“We are born wet, naked, and hungry. Then things get worse.”

– Author unknown

Indeed, the innocent joys of childhood quickly fade as the harsh realities of life begin to surface. Some have described life as simply replacing one worry with another. Occasionally, these worries pummel us to the ground: illness, unemployment, depression, loneliness, the list is endless! In dire circumstances, people often wonder, “Does anyone care? Is this the end? Why me?” It seems many people have asked the same questions, but has anyone ever found the answers?

In fact, many have found the answers in Jesus Christ. They have found peace in difficult periods and joy in times of loneliness. In this book, they share their own experiences of God’s saving grace; Jesus has delivered believers from the troubles of this life and has given them hope for the next.

And just as Jesus has given hope to these believers, He can do the same for us. Jesus Himself states that He “has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Only Jesus can fill the void in our hearts. He can deliver us from our problems, mend what is broken, and grant us true peace.

The experiences shared in *Saving Grace* reveal that Jesus knows our troubles, weaknesses and needs. The answers to our problems lie within our relationship with God. He gives everyone a hope and a future by bringing us into the fold. Many have already discovered the saving grace offered in Christ. Come and experience God’s saving grace today in True Jesus Church!

Coming to God

I

1. My Heavenly Father Found Me

Author: Alice Jung

Location: El Monte, California, USA

WELCOMED HOME

I will never forget the day the Holy Spirit came into my life. It was the summer of 1986, and the end of my second year in college. I never thought I would go to New York City by myself, much less to a church. Yet, there I was, in True Jesus Church at Queens, New York.

At that time, I lived in a small college town in central Texas. My family had been atheist, except for my mom, who had just begun a new interest in the True Jesus Church. With my mom's encouragement, I had merely two encounters with the church prior to my trip to Queens.

I was not comfortable with the way people prayed at the church. Yet, these first contacts with the church led me to wonder about this God that they preached. I was impressed by how they always used the Bible as their reference to answer all my questions. I also had felt warmth during one of my prayers.

However, it took a miracle for me to actually want to go to New York to attend a special spiritual event there. Going to attend a spiritual convocation, where the entire day is packed with prayer sessions and sermons, can be very boring and intimidating to someone without any religious background, like me.

Therefore, I had originally planned to stay at the church for only a couple of days so that those youths that I had met in Texas can take me out around N.Y. Then, I'd be on my way to visit a friend in Boston.

We can make our own plans but God may have something very different in store for us. I remember how the brothers and sisters in

Queens welcomed me as soon as I arrived in N.Y. and made me feel so much at home. In fact, I felt like I had come home even though I knew only a couple of people there. I sensed a strong attraction from the words I heard during the sermons, and from the love the brothers and sisters showed me.

An amazing thing happened. During the afternoon prayer of the second day, I was praying to God to help a sister who was having a severe headache. Shortly after I knelt down, I felt my whole body become very warm again. The heat began to travel down from my head to the rest of my body. Following, I felt my knees bump up and down against the wooden floor, as if a force had repetitively lifted my body a half inch above the floor and quickly lowering me down again.

My immediate thought was, “Oh, no, there must be an earthquake.” But I remembered that there are no earthquakes in the East Coast. Therefore, I concluded that it must be because I was too tired from kneeling so long for the last day or so. I quickly shifted my position in an attempt to stop the bumping but to no avail.

Next, with my eyes closed, I saw a great bright light cylindrically shine upon me from straight above. I believed that that light connected me directly with God. At the same time I saw what must have been the glory of God, and my hands began to shake up and down. My tongue moved in a different way than the “hallelujah”s I was trying to repeat—producing a sound totally foreign to me.

After I was enveloped in this wonderful light for perhaps ten minutes or so, I felt that my right hand was holding someone else’s hand. In fact, it was a man’s hand, large and coarse to the touch. I was totally shocked. I had to open my eyes to look, despite the preacher’s encouragement of not “peeking” during the prayers. I wanted to know whose hand I was holding.

Then, seeing that it was still my very own left hand, something let me know that it was Jesus holding my hand. All of a sudden, tears poured down from my eyes. I did not understand why I was crying, but I remember the immense joy and peace that flooded my heart at that very moment. Words cannot describe the amazing feelings that went through me all at the same time. Finally, my Father had found me! I felt as if I was a little girl who was so lost for so long that she even forgot that she was lost. Then, the loving Father finally took my hand

and led me home. The love of Jesus totally overwhelmed me, filling the “holes” that was in my heart, holes that I did not know was there. I had never felt such a sense of satisfaction in my life before. I knew that from then on, I’d never let go of His hand.

After I got up from that prayer, I learned that I had already received the Holy Spirit. All the brothers and sisters that had prayed for me were very happy for me, and they encouraged me to receive baptism at the end of the spiritual convocation.

This meant that I’d have to stay longer than what I had originally planned, and I’d have to inform my friend in Boston of the change. I was sure that she would be very disappointed.

At first I did not want to make any kind of commitment as serious as baptism. Although I did not know much about the Bible at the time, at least I could tell that being baptized meant that I’d be committed for life. As I kept procrastinating on making a final decision, many of the youths prayed for me. And finally, the night before the baptism, God let me know through a miraculous way that I should receive the baptism.

EMPTINESS FULFILLED

After I went back home, I did not know how to live as a Christian going forward. No one at the church knew what kind of a person I was before, although they might have gotten a hint from my appearance.

What did I look like? I prided myself on being “unique.” I had my hair cut extremely short on one side so that my big earring would be prominently displayed, while I left the other side of my hair long, draping in front of my face, nearly covering one of my eyes. I loved wearing different kinds of hats. And on cold days, I’d wear a black trench coat.

In one of the pictures I took in Queens, I had a red hat, red boots, and a big paperboy bag. I enjoyed getting other people’s attention by dressing up very differently than others. Although I did not understand at that time, I realized later that all my “strange” appearances were only displays of a very empty heart.

In the past, I resorted to music and dancing to fill the emptiness. I lived on music videos and I blasted music from the stereo. Whenever I could, I would go to dance parties or clubs. I was so well known

among the people I used to hang out with, they even elected me to be the president of an Asian-American social club on campus.

But the strange thing was, the more I surrounded myself with people who enjoyed loud music and dancing, the more empty I felt. That void in my heart was so severe at times that I could almost feel the pain physically. To numb the pain, I went to more parties and clubs to find some sense of satisfaction.

In this pursuit of “happiness,” my grades suffered tremendously. The school put me on probation. I had no sense of purpose or direction in my life. I thought dancing was nothing evil. It was nothing like drinking, smoking, or using drugs.

I reasoned that it was simply a nice way of exercise. I considered myself a very moral and “good” person because I had many friends. But I did not know that I had become very proud, selfish, and rebellious.

I did not want to talk to anyone who did not seem to meet my standards. I did not want to speak Chinese because I concluded that I did not want to waste my time with people who did not know the way of the American life. I was wasting my parents’ hard-earned money on my own enjoyment and not taking school seriously. I would not listen to my mother’s pleas for me to come home early at night.

I must thank God that He found me before I had the chance to start with addictions outside of listening to music and dancing. It is very likely that I may have ended up in the path of substance abuse, because I was so lost in that aimless life of mine. Even though my parents did not know all about what was happening to me, our Father in Heaven already knew. He stretched out His loving hand and grabbed hold of mine. And just why did Jesus want to touch someone as wicked as I? That is something I would never understand.

TRANSFORMED BY GOD’S LOVE

What I do know is that once I received the Holy Spirit, God took away my desire to listen to loud music and to dance. Somehow, I did not need any of those things that used to stimulate me.

In place of the dancing, I just wanted to read the Bible and pray. In place of the pop songs, I just wanted to sing hymns to praise and thank God. I decided that I did not need any of my party friends any

more. Instead, I looked forward to Sabbath every week so that I could be around God's people.

I had such a sense of peace and joy in my heart that I no longer minded being alone. I was content with sitting quietly in my room reading the Bible or singing the few hymns I just learned. The old me was terrified of being alone. That was why I kept the speaker volume at the highest setting, in an effort to drown away that awful loneliness I felt when I was by myself.

I also noticed that I no longer needed to wear strange-looking clothes to attract people's attention. I was happy to go out with whatever old t-shirt and jeans I had in my closet. I began to consider buying some skirts and dresses that I could wear to church. Up to that point in my life, I did not own anything feminine like a skirt or dress. I began to let my hair grow long.

The changes in me puzzled my family and even myself. No one had actually pointed out to me what I needed to do to live as a Christian. However, the Holy Spirit Himself guided me and moved me to do things that were pleasing to Him. The Spirit also taught me lessons of humility, obedience, and selflessness.

GOD CAN TRANSFORM LIVES

It is truly amazing what the Spirit of God can do to totally transform someone's life when He chooses to. All that is required is our willingness to be open to Him and have a simple and humble heart before Him. I've learned how powerful the Spirit of God can be. He guided me to Himself, even though I've tried to run away from Him thinking I did not need God.

When God's Spirit came into me with might, I could no longer deny His existence. I learned for the first time that my greatest sin was denying my need of God. I thought that I was in control and that I could handle my life.

But I was finally convinced by the love of Jesus as He held my hand and let me understand how much He cared for me. Because God satisfied my empty heart with His spirit, I gained a new sense of hope and direction. I no longer wanted to live for myself. Instead, I wanted to give my life to my Maker, Savior, and Friend.

There are innumerable accounts where God totally transformed people's lives, and it is possible for anyone to experience a transformed life today. All that is required of you is for you to recognize your need, make every effort to read and listen to His words, and have a simple and humble heart. Jesus is always ready to transform your life into a much better one.

But the question is: "Are you ready?" 🗨️

2. Finding God

Author: Caroline Ho

Location: Miami, Florida, USA

GOD IS IN AMERICA

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I testify. My search for Christ began when I moved to the United States.

When I arrived in Miami, Florida, the first thing I noticed was how much more civilized Americans were compared to the Chinese. Even though Chinese history reached farther back in time, Americans were able to progress and develop much more efficiently. As I considered this, I also concluded that their success was the result of their religion.

Americans seem to entrust their national welfare to God. Their faith in a higher authority to protect and guide them is evident as they ask that “God bless America.” The four words printed on the United States currency serve as a declaration and reminder that it is “in God we trust.” So I guess God gave this nation abundant blessings.

While exploring America, I also began to look for a church because I could see that this God was with His people. The problem wasn’t my determination but the multitude of churches in the United States. Not knowing which church was the right church, I prayed to God to lead me to where He dwelt.

We know that if we want to eat real Chinese food, we go to where Chinese people gather. There are only two places in America where you can get really good Chinese food—California and New York: the two states most heavily populated with Asians.

This was the “guide” I relied on when I needed to find the right church. Since Christianity came from the West, it seemed most logical for me to turn to the West. So the first church I visited was a

Catholic Church. The floors were marbled, the windows were glass stained, and the choir sang angelically.

Then I went to a Baptist Church, a Presbyterian Church, and many other denominations. They generally had large congregations, and everybody ate buffet-style.

One day, I read a report that identified the State of Utah to be the safest state in the country, so I thought about the Mormons. The next day, I encountered two Mormons on bicycles. They gave me a Mormon Bible and I started to read from it. For about a period of six months, I also studied with the Jehovah's Witnesses.

In the end, I returned to the Catholic Church because I found their services to be the most reverent. I was serious about my search for God and I didn't want to give up the opportunity to find Him.

FINDING SPIRITUAL FRIENDS

On one encounter, someone told me that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, and when you receive it you will speak in a different tongue. I couldn't sleep that night because I thought, "If this is true, then God is a true God and not imagined!"

I was eager to get in touch with someone who had received the Holy Spirit. Who could such a person be, and what makes this person especially loved by God? But the discouraging notion that, among thousands of Christians, only a few will receive it disheartened me.

Whenever I met a Christian, I would ask if he or she spoke a different tongue. If their notion of the Holy Spirit differed from mine, I would stop listening to them.

In July 1992, one of my friends came for a visit. The night she arrived, I went to meet up with her at another friend's home. It was then that she introduced me to a friend of hers. This friend, Brother Lin, told me how his wife and her whole family were very devout Christians. They had been members of the True Jesus Church for the past two years.

At the time, his wife was still in Taiwan, so I requested that he ask his wife about the Holy Spirit the next time he spoke with her. He said, "I don't need to ask—I know that the Holy Spirit is true and that

we will receive it if we ask.” But I remembered that only a few out of thousands have the Holy Spirit, so I thought his answer was not right.

When I got home that evening, someone had broken into my house and turned everything upside down. All my wedding jewelry had been stolen. When the police left, I sat in the garage and cried. If I had not stayed at my friend’s house and talked about the Holy Spirit, this would not have happened.

A couple of months after the burglary, I recovered from the shock and returned to the subject of the Holy Spirit. When I finally met up with Brother Lin’s wife, Sister Lin, she told me that the True Jesus Church baptizes in living water. She emphasized that they pursue after the Holy Spirit. She turned to the Bible for evidence of the Holy Spirit, but when I asked her why living water was essential to baptism, she didn’t know how to answer me.

When I got home that day I opened the Bible, and the first page that turned up was the baptism of Jesus Christ. I was really moved because I don’t believe in coincidences—I believe this was the guidance of God.

I decided to attend service with this sister and her husband. Between the three of us, we had only one hymnbook, but we sang and prayed together. At the time, the three of us did not have the Holy Spirit. In prayer, we said only “Hallelujah.”

MY CONVERSION

In May 1993, a pastor from California and a few brothers and sisters visited my house for the first time. That was also the first time I saw and heard what the Holy Spirit was all about.

One month later, we held another service at my house. I really wanted to be baptized, but the True Jesus Church encourages truth-seekers to wait until they have fully accepted and understood the Truth before receiving baptism.

During that service, I could not concentrate on the sermon because all I could think about was receiving baptism. The minister then turned to Acts 22:16:

“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

At the end of the service, I decided to bring up the matter even though it was too soon to ask for baptism. Thank God, they agreed to baptize me.

There was a spiritual convocation coming up in Tampa, Florida, where I was to receive baptism. I was told that a spiritual convocation offered a good opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit because it is three days long, and you can listen to sermons and pray throughout the day. Furthermore, there will be ministers present who will lay hands on you and pray for you.

Going to Tampa created much strife between my husband and me. At the time, I was in the first trimester of pregnancy, and since I miscarried before, the physician told me that I had to be bedridden. My husband would not let me go, saying that I'll have to bear the consequences alone if I put my unborn child in jeopardy.

But I decided to go because I thought, "Life is from the Lord. If my heart seeks after Him, He will not let me suffer a miscarriage." Carrying that determination, Bro. Lin, Sis. Lin and I drove to Tampa, Florida, to attend the spiritual convocation.

The place of worship was a small office that accommodated about twenty to thirty people. It was a bit cramped, and with my pregnancy, I had a headache and couldn't concentrate.

That night, I started to bleed and my stomach was in great pain. When I called my husband, he was very angry and ordered me to go back home immediately. I crumpled into tears.

Everything was unfamiliar to me, and having sought after God for so long, He still didn't protect me. I risked the chance of another miscarriage, and He still did not care. This God is too hard to please. I didn't know what else I had to do to show God that I really wanted to draw closer to Him.

The next day, the pastor brought a few brothers and sisters to my motel room to pray. I prayed very hard for the Holy Spirit, putting all my worries aside. All I could think about were the sins of my past. Things that I had long forgotten flooded back into my mind, and I was deeply aware of what a sinner I was.

After the baptism, we drove back to Miami, and I received the Holy Spirit the next day. Thank God!

VISIONS OF COMFORT

While we were in Tampa, a sister saw a vision during one of the evangelical services.

She first saw me dressed in white, holding a naked baby. After that, she saw a faceless figure dressed in white with two wings coming to hold the baby, and the baby was now dressed in light blue.

Two large tears trickled down the child's cheeks. Then, the hands disappeared and the child was suspended in air against a white backdrop. A third pair of hands came back to hold the baby, but the face of the hands' owner was indistinguishable. The next day, another sister saw the identical vision, but they both did not tell anyone because they did not want to testify to a large group of people.

These visions took place during the spiritual convocation when I was only six weeks pregnant. It was only after I had endured a difficult labor that I understood the visions and became deeply convinced that this God is a living God.

The person in the first vision was me, and I was dressed in white because I had been cleansed through baptism. At first I was holding my child, but then I disappeared from the picture and another pair of hands held the child. The baby had two teardrops because I was to endure a very difficult labor.

After I gave birth, I hemorrhaged for many months. The doctor said that I could not care for my child nor do any housework. So for the first few months after I gave birth to my baby boy, I was unable to take care of him or my husband, and I felt so helpless.

I know now it was because I could not care for my baby that the angel's hands came to hold him—comforting me that God will take care of everything.

In the last vision, it was I who returned to hold the baby. When I went to Tampa to attend the spiritual convocation, I sat in front of the sisters who saw the visions. I had run my hands through my hair, and the sisters recognized that it was the exact same pair of hands that returned to hold the baby. The fact that I came back to hold the baby meant that I would recover.

Whenever I think about this, I am greatly encouraged. Soon after my recovery, I was able to get out of bed and take care of my family. The doctor said I couldn't deliver any more babies, but, because of the vision, I chose not to have my tubes tied.

In 1995, I went to another spiritual convocation in North Carolina. There, I asked God for another baby, and He gave me a girl.

Thank the Lord that, in the process of finding Him, He has guided and protected me. He affirmed for me that this is the true church. He never appeared to me in all the other churches that I visited.

I thank God for leading me to the church that He prophesied, and I am filled with joy for having received the Holy Spirit. I also thank God for making me a mother. When I see my child, I see the love of God in my life.

After I became a mother, I understood more deeply the immense love of Jesus Christ. May all glory be unto the Lord God. Amen. ●

3. Overcoming Evil Spirits

Author: Susan Lane

Location: San Jose, California, USA

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I testify. This is a testimony about how my parents brought our family to believe in Christ.

Like most typical Chinese families, my grandparents were Buddhists, and their beliefs were passed on to my parents, as had been done for many generations. But neither of my parents were practicing Buddhists.

Then one day, my mom's aunt told her that she went to this temple where there were real gods. Many people who had gone to that temple had received spirits from the gods.

So as not to offend her aunt, my mom carpooled to the temple with her aunt and some other friends. When they got there, my mom saw people who were possessed by the spirits, and they would talk about the past or about their previous lives.

After the gathering at the temple, when they were about to leave, they realized that the driver had locked the keys in the car. One of the passengers in the car who was also possessed by the spirits pointed her finger at the key hole, and she chanted some incantation and made an upward motion with her finger at the door lock. The door lock automatically raised and unlocked itself. From that moment on, my mom became a very fervent Buddhist.

My mom realized that there was more than just earthly life, and that there truly was a spiritual realm with spirits and gods. So, from that day on, she devoted herself to Buddhism.

A DEVOUT BUDDHIST

My mom purchased any Buddhist book that was highly acclaimed in the Buddhist society, and she would study them closely, literally following its instruction word-for-word.

She memorized all the chants and bought all the religious articles, including chanting beads, which look like rosaries, and robes. She had chanting beads of all sizes and robes of all colors for the different ceremonies and chants.

She even dedicated one of the larger bedrooms in our house as a miniature temple. The bedroom contained a shrine of all the different idols and became the place where the family would do all the chants.

My mom chanted very religiously every morning and night. At that time, I was very young and did not go to school. However, I remember that my mother would make my siblings do their morning chants in front of the shrine even when they were late for school.

Aside from the chants, my mom also followed the Buddhist guidelines and teachings very closely. She was very active in donating to the temples, participating in their events and activities, and sponsoring the monks and building funds.

We also had to follow the Buddhist calendar and abstain from meat on certain days. I remember that there would be about twenty days of the month on which we had to abstain from meat.

Believing that every living thing had a spirit or soul, we would open the door and scoot the spider or cockroach out every time we found an insect in the house.

Although my mom was such a devout and fervent Buddhist, she never really felt peace in her heart. All the chanting and participation in the temples never really fulfilled her. However, at that time, she did not think much of it.

Then, in 1980, we immigrated to the United States. Being such fervent Buddhists, we couldn't possibly put the idols in the luggage. So, to show our respect, each member of our family hand carried one idol.

Now, when I say hand carry, I don't mean putting the idols in a carry-on bag and putting it in the overhead bin. I mean, we literally held it

in our arms and put it on our laps during the flight. We didn't even care that people were looking at us funnily.

RECOGNIZING THE EVIL SPIRIT

When we arrived in the United States, my dad got in touch with one of his old colleagues, Brother Ke-Chi Chen, who was a member of True Jesus Church. Brother Chen and his wife would repeatedly ask us to go to church, and being Buddhists, we naturally declined.

One day, Brother Chen told us that they were having family service at their home and again invited us. This time, my parents said yes because they didn't want to offend Brother Chen, especially since we've turned down so many previous invitations.

My parents also figured that the service was at Brother Chen's house rather than at church, so it should be okay. However, to minimize contact with the Christian community, none of us children went.

The family service began with a sermon, after which everyone knelt down to pray. Again, not wanting to offend anyone, my parents also knelt down. But instead of praying to God in the manner instructed by the speaker, my mom prayed to her Buddha. She simply asked the Buddha to bless her and show her the way.

The next morning, my mom began to hear a voice, very clear and distinct, talking to her. In the beginning, the voice told her that it was one of the good Buddhist spirits and my mom should be honored to host it. Thinking of the spirits at the temple to which her aunt took her, my mom believed this spirit. My mom believed that the spirit had come to her after all her fervency.

Initially, the spirit would just say simple things like, "Your son will be coming home late today." But gradually, the spirit started to bad-mouth each member of the family.

The spirit would cause many misunderstandings and arguments in our family; it was as if it was trying to turn each member against the others. Slowly, my mom began to realize that this was not a good spirit but an evil spirit.

FINDING HELP IN THE WRONG PLACES

My mom told my dad of her suspicions and my dad agreed. Immediately, my entire family drove to Eureka, which is north of San Francisco, where there was supposed to be a very famous monk and a temple of many Buddhas.

The monk was very famous in the Buddhist society and he was well-known for having many powers. The first thing the monk told us was that each member of our family had to become his disciple.

There was a discipleship fee and since he was like a celebrity in the Buddhist society, the fee was quite high. Nonetheless, my parents faithfully agreed.

To become his disciple, we each had to take turns to kneel in front of him and recite certain chants. When it came to my parents' turn to kneel in front of him, he took a stick and started hitting my parents on the shoulders with it.

He claimed that he was rebuking the evil spirit and casting it out that way. After the ritual, my mom told the monk that the evil spirit was still there. The monk told us that once we got home, the evil spirit would depart.

The monk also asked us to donate \$100,000 for a temple fountain. My dad informed the monk that he didn't have that kind of money ready, but he wrote a check for a few thousand dollars as deposit.

When we reached home, my mom's situation worsened. Not only would the evil spirit badmouth each member of the family, it would not allow my mother to sleep. At best, she would be able to sleep for two hours each night. Whenever she was about to fall asleep, the evil spirit would lift and drop her limbs to keep her awake.

The evil spirit not only spoke to her but controlled her body, too. Frequently, the evil spirit would make my mom run around the house in the middle of the night, screaming and shaking everyone up, making sure that no one else slept.

When people called, instead of saying what she wanted to say, the spirit would use her mouth and say something else. For example, when people called for my dad and he wasn't home, they would ask

when he would return, and my mom would say something like, “It’s none of your business.”

During all of this, my mom was very lucid. She knew what she wanted to say or do, but it was like she had no control over it. You can also imagine how my mom looked, too. Here was a person who was chronically getting no more than one to two hours of sleep. When people looked at her, they would get scared.

It was really a very terrible time for my family. We asked for advice and sought help everywhere. As long as someone said, “Hey, this temple is very famous” or “that monk is very powerful,” we would go.

It didn’t matter whether it was in the United States or Taiwan. We flew back and forth, just hoping to find a cure. The routine was always the same. The monks would ask us for money with the promise that my mom would be healed.

However, after giving them the money, my mom’s condition remained the same. At one point, my dad also considered the possibility that maybe there was no evil spirit and that my mom was a schizophrenic.

He even tried to hospitalize my mom at a mental institution. After two full days of observation, the doctors could not find anything wrong with my mom and released her.

So, all this happened for over one year, during which my family had no peace. My mom became very scared. We tried everything and nothing could help.

RETURNING TO THE TRUE JESUS CHURCH

My mom began to think, “Is there really no God who can stop this evil spirit?” Then, she remembered the Holy Spirit from Brother Chen’s family service.

My mom figured that maybe the Holy Spirit can kick out her evil spirit. So she contacted Brother Chen’s wife and told her about her situation and that she would like to go to church with her. It so happened that a spiritual convocation was about to begin the next day.

My mom warned Brother Chen’s wife of her fear that the church members would be scared because my mom did look quite scary.

Brother Chen's wife simply replied, "Don't worry. True Jesus Church sees a lot of these cases and we have cast out many evil spirits."

It also happened that the church encouraged people to lodge at church during the spiritual convocation week, so my mom packed up her things and went.

On the first day, the pastor who led the morning prayer laid hands on my mom, and she could hear him speak in tongues. Although she could not understand it, it was a phrase and it sounded like it was rebuking the evil spirit.

The afternoon prayer was led by a different pastor, and when he laid hands on my mom, the pastor also spoke in tongues and said the same phrase. After this experience, my mom began to put faith in God. Here were two different pastors at two different times, and yet, they were saying the same phrase to the evil spirit.

That night, when it came time for bed, my mom started to panic. She was afraid the evil spirit would keep her awake, and since it wasn't her home, she couldn't get up and walk around.

As she was thinking this, she dozed off and the next thing she knew, there was a sister ringing the bell and saying, "It's seven o'clock, time to get up for morning prayer." My mom could not believe it. It was the first time in over one year that she slept from night to morning, and she was able to sleep soundly for the entire week of the spiritual convocation.

Then, on Saturday night, the pastor asked my mom if she would be interested in getting baptized the next day. Although my mom was beginning to sleep and was feeling better, she told the pastor that the evil spirit was still inside her. But he told her not to worry and that the evil spirit will usually depart after baptism.

Putting faith in God, my mom agreed to be baptized. The night before baptism, the evil spirit became very angry. It refused to let my mom sleep. It just kept talking to her, and it would lift up my mom's arms and legs and drop them to keep her up.

But my mom was not dissuaded. She relied on God and kept praying in her heart. Finally, morning arrived and she was baptized. After the baptism, we never heard from the evil spirit again.

In fact, to show how dramatic the change was, just about one week after the baptism, my parents met with some of their friends whom they saw practically every week.

My mom had not seen them for two weeks because of the spiritual convocation, and her friends were all amazed. They kept asking my dad which miracle doctor my dad took my mom to visit. And of course, my dad told them the testimony.

My dad is sixty years old, and even till this day, whenever he recalls this testimony, he cannot tell it without crying.

Truly, there was a time in my family's life when we had no hope. It seemed like we exhausted all options. But, in God, there is always hope, and it reminds me of a song I once heard, "Promise of Joy." Here are the lyrics to one part of the song:

There is a rainbow in every teardrop.

There is a peace in every storm.

There is a stream in the desert.

Yes, there is hope in the Lord.

May all the glory and praise be unto His name. 🗨️

4. Finding Hope and a Purpose

Author: Wun-Chiao Cheung

Location: Queens, New York, USA

NEVER HAPPY

Before I came to know Jesus Christ, I was a typical teenager. I went to school every day and hung out with my friends after school. I cursed, gossiped, told a lot of lies, and more. I was a very wild and active person.

But because my family was very strict, I wasn't allowed to do many things that my peers were doing. I lied so that my parents wouldn't find out that I had disobeyed them. After telling one lie, I would have to tell more lies to cover previous lies.

My family had a lot of problems, and one of the worst was my parents' fighting. They constantly argued. Because this was the environment I grew up in, I was never really happy.

Another reason why I wasn't happy was because I felt that I was the only child who wasn't loved.

In traditional Chinese families like mine, sons are favored over daughters, and this is especially true for a firstborn son. So between my older brother and me, I always felt slighted. Since my sister was the youngest child, she was always taken care of and protected.

As the middle child, I always ended up taking care of chores and other household matters while bearing the brunt of my parents' frustrations. I started to believe that my parents hated me and that they took care of me because it was their responsibility and not because they loved me.

I didn't believe in God because I felt so much suffering, sadness, and depression because of the fighting and unhappiness in my family. I often

took refuge in the bathroom because that was the only place where I could cry. I would just look at myself in the mirror and shed tears.

When I was in high school, I was so depressed one day that I thought about committing suicide. I was crying nonstop in the bathroom and thought that, since my life was miserable and every day was just the same as the previous day, I should just end things right away.

But I didn't go through with it because I worried that I would have to go to the hospital if my attempt failed. I didn't want that to happen so I just went on with life because there wasn't anything I could do to change it.

A PLACE I COULD BELONG TO

In the summer of 2002, my cousins from New Jersey came with their parents for a visit the way they had done every year. But this time, they started to preach to us.

Our family followed traditional ancestral worship, but my cousins had recently been introduced to the True Jesus Church. They told my sister and me that we should believe in God because He's great. But every time they preached to us we would say, "No."

As a Gentile, I just couldn't believe the words they preached. I was a teenager who would use God's name in vain and laugh at religion because of the preconception that God could never be truly real. I always thought that I would never believe in God or be a churchgoer.

Despite our refusals, they invited us to attend Student Spiritual Convocation in August. I didn't go because it sounded strange to me, but my sister went. When she came back, she seemed different—I got the feeling that she wasn't a part of the world anymore but already belonged to God.

I asked her what she thought of it, and she told me that she liked it and that it was fun. Our relationship improved from that point on, and we became close like sisters usually are.

I started to be more interested in going to church, so my uncle came and drove my brother, my sister, and me to Elizabeth Church in New Jersey for Sabbath service. On that first visit, I saw a lot of youths there who were all so friendly. I felt that I could belong to this place, too.

Before the morning service started, a sister explained prayer to me because visitors often got scared by it. I wanted to see what it was like

before I started to pray, so I looked around at the beginning. I wasn't scared at all like the sister had warned me about. Rather, I thought it was amusing.

Nonetheless, I innocently followed her instructions on how to pray. I thought that it was a nice experience because I was somehow able to express the deepest thoughts and feelings in my heart that I could never tell anyone. From that time on, I continued to pray often.

My sister and I attended services regularly at Elizabeth Church after that first visit. My uncle drove out to New York every Friday night so that he could bring the two of us to church on Saturday morning with the rest of his family. In April 2003, I was baptized into the True Jesus Church.

THE ONLY TRUE CHURCH

After baptism, I began to see the importance of God and His commandments. Every week I couldn't wait for Fridays and Saturdays to come because Friday night was rest, and I really enjoyed going to church on Saturday.

I thank God my parents weren't opposed to my and my sister's going to church. My relationship with my family improved because I saw how my suffering had built up a strong character. I also reminded myself that I shouldn't blame my parents and that I should forgive them now that I had found the truth.

A few months after I was baptized, I started to get really busy because I was preparing for college examinations in addition to studying for school. Eventually, it became difficult for me to observe the Sabbath every week. It was especially difficult because I had to wake up early on Saturday to go to church in New Jersey.

I didn't know what to do because I heard in religious education classes and in sermons how important it was to keep the Sabbath, but commuting so far every week was very hard. During my senior year in high school, I suddenly thought of looking up True Jesus Church online. I found out that there was a True Jesus Church in Queens, so I asked my dad to drive me there one Sabbath.

I knew that it was wrong to worship at another church because members at Elizabeth Church had explained that we were the only true church. For some reason, I thought that they meant that Elizabeth

Church was the only true church. So even though I had found Queens Church, I wasn't sure that it was okay to observe Sabbath there.

I told myself that I would leave if they didn't do things the same way as in Elizabeth. As the service progressed, I saw how everything was the same. I found out soon after that "only true church" referred to True Jesus Church and that there were many locations around the world.

DETERMINED TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

My sister and I started to attend services at Queens Church instead of Elizabeth Church. By that time, I had already been baptized for about one year, but I still hadn't received the Holy Spirit.

When my cousins came on a visit, they suggested that we pray together. Only one of my cousins had the Holy Spirit at the time. But while we were praying, I heard two voices speaking in tongues.

I was very surprised, especially when I realized afterward that my sister was the other person with the Holy Spirit. I didn't know that she had received it. When she confirmed that she had received the Holy Spirit, I started to really pursue it because it reaffirmed to me that the True Jesus Church was the true church.

I thought about attending the National Youth Theological Seminar (NYTS) in 2004 because I would have a lot of time to pray and study the word of God. However, I was afraid that my parents wouldn't let me go because they didn't like the idea of my staying overnight somewhere else.

Also, I would have to fly out to California, and I knew that they wouldn't like my traveling so far on my own. I decided that I would ask for permission to go the next year because I would be a year older and they might be more open to letting me go.

Over the next few months, I felt very moved every time I turned to read the Bible during sermons and in religious education classes. I felt my faith increase and my depression lessen as I learned more about the Bible. I was particularly encouraged by Matthew 17:20:

So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."

So I started to pray a few months before I asked my parents about going to NYTS. I prayed to the Lord knowing that if He could move mountains, He could help me go to NYTS. Thank God, when I asked if I could go to NYTS, my parents said it was okay. My faith increased after this because I saw how my prayers were answered.

MY MISSION AT NYTS

Before going to NYTS in 2005, I made it my mission to receive the Holy Spirit by the end of the two-week seminar. I felt so close to God and wanted to do a lot of work for Him, but I couldn't do much because I didn't have the Holy Spirit. So I told everyone at Queens Church that I really wanted to get the Holy Spirit this time.

It was already more than two years since I received baptism, yet I still had not received the Holy Spirit. I had heard many stories of other members' experiences, how some had received it on the very last day of NYTS, how some people prayed for forty years before receiving it, or how some received it the very first time they prayed in church.

I was so determined to receive the Holy Spirit at NYTS that year; I fasted every day and prayed with all my heart in every prayer session. It felt like the hardest thing I had ever done.

At the end of the first week of NYTS, some members from Queens came to cook for the participants. One of the sisters asked if I had received the Holy Spirit yet. I was feeling a little discouraged, but she comforted me and told me to keep trying.

I knew that the Queens members and my group members at NYTS were praying for me, so I tried not to be so down on myself. I thought that if I continued to be downhearted that God wouldn't give me the Holy Spirit.

In my prayers, I thought about the creation:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (Gen 1:1, 2)

I thought how I was like the earth and filled with darkness and God's Spirit was hovering over me but not yet in me. I knew that it was my pride that hindered God's Holy Spirit from entering into me because I

always used my own strength to make it through life. I needed to let go and understand that it was God who controlled everything; God was the one on whom I could rely and place my worries and burdens.

This struggle for the Holy Spirit was a test of my faith, and I told God that I wasn't leaving NYTS without the Holy Spirit. I wanted to go to heaven with the brothers and sisters. I wanted to go together with them to see our Lord.

The day before NYTS ended, a pastor's wife told me that I was very close to receiving the Holy Spirit and that all the pastors agreed that I just had to pray a little harder and I would get it. So I was even more encouraged after that.

I prayed to God that if He would give me His Holy Spirit, I would serve Him for the rest of my life. I would give Him my all because I owed Him everything.

After the morning prayer of the last day, a pastor told me that I had received the Holy Spirit. I hadn't noticed my tongue moving, so I didn't think that I had received it. I told a sister that I wasn't sure because I didn't notice anything different when I prayed, but she told me not to doubt because God might take the Holy Spirit away if I doubted.

I went up to the front to pray during the concluding prayer of NYTS. I decided not to doubt but to believe that I had the Holy Spirit, and I felt my tongue rolling. I knew that I really had received it. I was so thankful and filled with joy.

I am now a very different person compared to who I was before coming to Christ. I used to shed so many tears and was constantly unhappy. But now I understand that for Christians, even though life is not easy and sometimes we shed tears because of our suffering, we still have hope.

Without God, I wouldn't be here today. I felt so lost in the past—I didn't know what would happen to me, and I had no idea what my future would be like. Now I know that there's a purpose for all of us. As for me, my purpose in life is to serve my Lord, my Master.

I have experienced so much grace from God and am very comforted knowing that there is a Creator who understands me. I used to feel that no one could ever understand my pain and suffering because

they weren't in the same position as I was. But now, whenever I pray, I know that God is there and He sympathizes and knows exactly how I feel when I cry out to Him.

Knowing that God understands me gives me strength to live day by day. I have nothing to fear because God has already told me that He is my God and will be with me. 🗨️

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isa 41:10)

5. How I Found My Spiritual Family

Author: Molica Nol

Location: Pacifica, California, USA

HAPPY ON THE OUTSIDE

I was born on April 16, 1993. My mom was sixteen years old and my dad wasn't even there for my birth. Soon after, he was put in prison for shooting someone, and my mom wanted to give me up for adoption. Thank God, my grandparents fought for me and became my guardians. It is because of them that I can be here in True Jesus Church and have brothers and sisters in Christ.

Growing up without a father figure was hard for me, and I struggled every day because I didn't have anyone to look up to. As I got older I started hating my life more and more. I really thought there was no point to life.

When I entered high school, my depression got worse. Every single day I would repeat in my head, "I want to kill myself." I felt emptiness inside my heart, and I thought that there was nothing that could replace that emptiness or fill it.

I hated my life with a passion because high school was difficult—I felt like no one cared about me, everyone had boyfriends or girlfriends, and I wanted to be cool, but being cool didn't make me feel better.

During my freshman year I would always sneak out and party to try to find happiness. For that short moment I always felt like I was on cloud nine, but really I was making a fool of myself. And I never felt truly happy.

My partying and depression became worse. I seemed happy on the outside but inside I was slowly dying and darkness clouded my heart.

Loving people and trusting them were hard for me. I thought that everyone was out to get me; I was always paranoid about telling anyone anything.

I transferred to a new high school in January 2008. I was worried about it at first because I had to make new friends, but it turned out to be okay—except that everyone that I was friends with was into drugs and alcohol. At the time I thought that it was normal for teenagers to use drugs and drink, so I wasn't worried that it was wrong.

LOSING HOPE

After a month at the new school, I found out that I would be moving across the country to California after the school year ended to live with my uncle. I saw him maybe twice a year and barely talked to him. I only knew that he was a pastor and traveled a lot. I didn't see the point of living with someone who's never home.

Knowing that I was moving for sure made me completely lose hope for everything. I didn't believe that my life would get any better. I always looked on the negative side because it seemed like everything had gone wrong my whole life and I was never happy.

I became depressed whenever I thought about the move, and when I told my friends that I was moving, none of them believed me. They didn't care because they thought I was joking.

Everything turned bad for me: my school, my friends, and my family. I was failing in school because I never wanted to go, and I never paid attention in class. My friendships ended because they were people I should never have trusted in the first place. My family was never close like a real family—it was a broken home where everyone was either partying or gambling, and no one was ever around.

By the end of the school year things got so bad that I wanted to kill myself and suffer by hurting and cutting myself as much as I could. I kept telling myself, "I'm nothing, I'm stupid, I'm worthless, and no one cares about me." I didn't care about anything or anybody, even the people that loved me.

As school was about to end, I thought about committing suicide by jumping off a bridge because I thought that was the easiest way to

die. But someone made me realize that there's more to life than waiting for death.

One of my closest friends, who is like a sister to me now, said, "Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending." It really taught me that even though I couldn't start my life over again, I could start new today and make a different ending for myself.

EXPERIENCING GOD

I was ready to start fresh once I moved to California, but I actually felt more sad because I lost most of my friends, and I couldn't see my family as much as before.

But when my uncle brought me to True Jesus Church, I felt the love of the brothers and sisters. Even the members who couldn't speak English would put in the effort to say hi whenever they saw me. Never in my life have I met such nice and compassionate people.

I enjoyed going to church and learning about the Bible. I discovered that God is a great God, and His love is manifested in the brothers and sisters in church. Whenever I stepped into church, I felt peace in my heart that I had never known. It's a feeling I can't describe.

My life changed completely in the summer of 2008 because I experienced God for the first time in my life. It was the most heartwarming feeling ever.

The National Youth Theological Seminar (NYTS) was held in Northern California and I got the chance to visit a few times. Whenever I visited I would participate in the prayer sessions, and through the longer prayers I realized that I really wanted to change my life and receive the Holy Spirit.

The first time I heard people praying in tongues I thought that they sounded crazy. But I came to understand that the Holy Spirit was a gift from God and that I could be a different person if I received it. I was pursuing the Holy Spirit in all my prayers because I really wanted to stop being unhappy.

After Sabbath service during NYTS, a sister asked me to pray with her and the rest of the students attending NYTS. I replied "no"

because I didn't want to pray for some reason. I just wanted to go home. But it wasn't time for us to leave, so I ended up praying with them.

When I knelt down I felt peace and joy come back to my heart. I realized that I needed to pour out my heart to God because He listens to our prayers. I was finally ready to let go of my past and tell everything to God because I knew He cared.

As I prayed, I didn't pray only for myself but also interceded for other people because I knew that I wasn't suffering as much as they were suffering. I felt a warm breeze, and I could feel the Holy Spirit move in my body. Then slowly I was speaking in tongues and I finally felt God's love and warmth upon me.

After the prayer ended, tears of joy continued to run down my face. I knew that God understood what I had gone through and had listened to my requests. My heart was finally calm. It was a feeling I couldn't describe, but God's words could:

Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Rom 5:5)

FINDING MY SPIRITUAL FAMILY

A few days after NYTS ended, the Student Spiritual Convocation (SSC) took place at Garden Grove Church. I was really excited to go because it was my first time attending, and I wanted to spend time with God and pray for my cousin who hadn't received the Holy Spirit yet.

One night at SSC, it was really hot and the air conditioner was broken, so we had to open all the windows during the evening prayer in the chapel. Afterward I felt really dizzy, and as I was walking back to my seat I could tell that I was about to pass out. So I sat down on the closest pew and tried to breathe correctly.

Someone asked me what was wrong, but I couldn't hear clearly. Then one of my counselors brought me into the side chapel and laid me down and made sure I had enough water. She started to hum my favorite hymns, and it was the nicest feeling at the moment.

Soon more people came into the room and I could hear them talking, making sure I was okay. Then they began to pray for me, and I felt the room fill with the Holy Spirit. As they finished praying, I was able to get up and go to my room and sleep. I was touched by their love

because they took time to pray for me when they could have been doing other things.

I was sad about leaving SSC when it ended. Even though I had only spent a few days with people I had never met before, it felt like I had known them for years. We all bonded as friends and as a spiritual family. This was the family I had been searching for my whole life.

I really learned a lot from the other students at SSC. They taught me how to relax and just be a kid for once. They also taught me how to love because they showed me so much love, and they told me that it's because of God's love that they can love.

There was a Bible verse we read during SSC that really touched my heart:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.
(Gal 5:22, 23)*

It really moved me because this verse teaches us that if we have the Spirit of God, then we can have all these qualities, which God Himself has. Through SSC, I finally found the path I had been looking for, and I discovered that it's the path of salvation. I went home with a calm and pure heart, knowing that God is my Savior and is the author and finisher of my faith.

EMBRACED BY GOD

It is through God's grace and mercy that I was baptized at Pacifica Church a few months after SSC with three other members of my family. I truly believed that True Jesus Church was the only church that could save us. I knew there was only one true God, and He was the God whom we worship and to whom we prayed.

In my prayers during the spiritual convocation before baptism, I made sure that I had repented for all of my sins. As I repented, I felt that the burden that had been weighing down my heart was finally lifted. It felt like I was walking on air. I knew God was listening to my prayers.

When we arrived at the baptismal site, the water was just above freezing and the wind was so cold. My uncle told me I had to be the brave one and enter the water first. As I entered the icy-cold water, I was repeating "hallelujah" in my heart.

My sinful body was submerged in the water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. As I slowly got out of the water, I felt warm. God had just washed away my sins, and it felt like He was embracing me with His arms.

Since then, my family has noticed that I have changed so much as a person. My biggest weakness has always been anger. I struggled with it every day because the smallest things were enough to anger me. When I became angry I didn't think before I acted or spoke, so I often hurt people's feelings without knowing it and yelled or punched things in my way.

But after coming to Christ and receiving baptism, I realized that none of these things would solve my problem. When I am angry or frustrated, instead of acting out right away, I am able to take a step back and think to myself: Is that what a Christian would do?

Living in a house where God is our priority shows me that our family helps us understand what's wrong and right and whether the choices we make are according to God's will. I have learned that I need to rely on Him whenever I start to get angry. What helps me the most is knowing that God is there for me and won't give up on me no matter what.

Weaknesses can be a way for God to show the grace, understanding, and mercy He has for us. I drew close to God through repenting of my sins and changing the direction of my life. Through His love and mercy I have found my spiritual family and a calm and peaceful heart. Most of all, I know now that God will never leave us hanging when we need Him the most. 🗨️

6. The Doors of Salvation Were Opened for Our Father

Author: Vuthy and Ha Nol-Mantia

Location: San Jose, California, USA

On July 10, 2005, at the age of 59, Frank Mantia would be born again, not of his mother's womb, but of the redemptive blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Vuthy and his wife Nhatha ("Ha") were blessed to witness their beloved father's baptism just two months before he passed away. They write this testimony in loving memory of their dear father and brother in Christ.

They were an odd father and son pair plodding arm and shoulders hooked into the waves. Vuthy is a tall and slender young man of Cambodian descent, while his father, Frank, was a shorter, Sicilian man with a rounded, hefty figure. Frank's wife, Joyce, nervously watched as he staggered into the water. It was a warm and sunny day in Boston, but the Atlantic Ocean was frigid all year round, and about the last thing doctors would advocate to a cancer patient in Frank's condition, was to go for a dip.

But thank God, the baptism was performed without difficulty. Frank came up from the waters, gazing momentarily into the heavens with both hands lifted in praise to the Lord. Father and son walked leisurely back to the shoreline bearing gleaming smiles, while the chorus sang hymns in melodious harmony with the rolling ocean tides. We are so blessed to forever keep the memory of this day.

ITALIAN FATHER, CAMBODIAN SON

Frank Mantia was born in Parlemo, Sicily on March 22, 1946. Vuthy Nol was born 26 years later in Swhy Seasapon, Cambodia on March 6, 1972. They would both cross the oceans to the U.S. with their families at age 9, settling in the Boston area of Massachusetts.

One afternoon in November, 1983, Vuthy and his friend were playing hooky from school because they didn't have the five dollars required to go on a class field-trip to the Museum of Science. The two boys came across a produce market where burly men were tossing piles of pumpkins into the dumpster. The idle boys asked if they could help. When they had finished the job, brash little Vuthy went inside to talk to "the Boss." "Hey Mister, can I have a job?" The Boss looked at the skinny kid. "Yeah, you can come take out the trash and I'll give you some money." So that's how Vuthy met Frank and landed his first job.

Frank and Joyce grew fond of Vuthy, and several months later, the Italian and Greek couple would bring this 11-year old Cambodian boy into their home and raise him as their own son. Vuthy would have opportunities and privileges that few Cambodian immigrant children were afforded. He was the only one of his five siblings to attend college and further receive an advanced degree in Social Work.

Vuthy would make both his biological and adoptive parents proud by becoming a community leader and counselor to other Cambodian immigrant families coping with depression and post-war trauma.

By God's grace, Vuthy came to know our Lord Jesus Christ in October of 1999. It was a casual invitation by one of our members to a Bible study that resulted in a life-changing experience with God. No one in his family would have guessed that, five years later, Vuthy would dedicate himself to become a pastor.

God had bestowed on Vuthy blessings upon blessings, but what he wanted more than anything else was that his family could also come to church and experience the same joy in the Lord. His parents had given so much of themselves, and the greatest gift that Vuthy had to offer in return was the hope of salvation promised by our Lord.

We were blessed to witness this hope turn into reality for our dear father Frank near the end of his life. He had been battling cancer for over seven years, and was brought in and out of the hospital countless times before finally surrendering his soul to the Lord.

THE STRUGGLE WITH DEATH

It was Saturday, January 8, 2005, and Joyce, Vuthy, and I were all gathered by Frank's bedside in the Massachusetts General Hospital. His

bone marrow counts were a disheartening 90% cancer cells to only 10% normal cells. On top of that, the doctors discovered a new strain of bacteria in his blood that his weakened immune system could not possibly fight off.

Frank's condition was so poor that the doctors made sure to recite him his "Death Rights"... if he wished to be kept on a breathing machine, if he wanted shock treatment should his heart fail, if he wanted to donate his organs, etc.

Hearing this grim reality left us in shock and silence. Another team of doctors came into the room to examine Frank, so Vuthy and I retreated to the visitor's lounge area.

It had been a long and exhausting day beginning at twilight with a frantic 911 call and an ambulance rushing Frank to the emergency room. Frank had awakened from bed that morning gasping for air and yelled for help. He gave us quite a fright when we came into the room—his face was pale as a cadaver and he couldn't utter any words, so we thought he might be having a heart attack. His condition finally stabilized at the emergency room, and he explained what had happened in his bedroom that morning.

He had a supernatural encounter with two spiritual beings. He discerned that one of them was God, but sensed that the second figure, who he referred to as the "other guy," was evil. He remembered questioning God why he still felt pain in his body if he was in God's presence. God did not answer, but Frank soon realized that it was the "other guy" who possessed control over his pain.

The vision dispersed as Frank, suffocating and pale, called out for help and startled us out of bed. Frank understood that Satan had come for him that early morning, but God had mercy and prevented the Devil from taking his soul.

EXPERIENCING WHAT IS RECORDED IN THE BIBLE

Vuthy and I returned to Frank's room shortly after the doctors had finished examining him and again sat in silence. Terribly saddened by the prospect of Frank dying before receiving Christ, all we could do was tearfully pray that God would once again have mercy on his soul. Frank broke the silence and said matter-of-factly, "Vuthy, you

remember when we went to church that time, and you guys were chanting... I felt like wind and fire was going right through me.”

Vuthy jumped up off of his seat saying, “Why didn’t you tell us? You know how long we’ve been praying for you?” Frank was taken aback by Vuthy’s reaction. “I thought what I was feeling was strange, you know... so I didn’t say anything.”

Vuthy then grabbed the Bible and showed him the passage in Acts where the Holy Spirit came down on the Day of Pentecost and people felt a rushing wind and saw tongues of fire. Frank was amazed to see what he had felt in church several months ago being described exactly in the Bible.

Vuthy continued to explain the importance of receiving the Holy Spirit with regards to salvation and taught him how to pray for the Holy Spirit by saying “hallelujah.” We then all prayed together in the hospital room. After prayer, Vuthy continued to explain the biblical importance of receiving baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, and not the “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” like he had been baptized as a boy in the Catholic Church.

To our amazement, Frank was convinced and declared at that moment that he wanted to receive the true baptism once he got well. Even Joyce, who was born into the Greek Orthodox Church, was excited for him and agreed that he should get baptized once he recovered. Frank’s eyes moistened, as he understood how much God really loved him and was reaching out to him.

In the span of one hour, God had miraculously turned our hopeless tears of sorrow into hopeful tears of joy. Vuthy and I left the hospital with a peaceful heart and were truly grateful for God’s love and mercy, for God had this day spared our father’s life and given us a great glimpse of hope for his salvation.

Six months later, on July 10, 2005, our wedding anniversary, our father Frank was baptized into the Lord Jesus. He continued to battle cancer, and had bad days and better days, but God gave him grace sufficient for each day. The last time Frank was well enough to attend church for Sabbath service, God blessed him with a beautiful vision—Frank saw the Lord Jesus in His glorious light walk right through the chapel door.

Frank will be fondly remembered for his storytelling, funny jokes, and warm bright smile. Although he is deeply missed, we can look forward to the day when this odd father and son pair will be walking together again, through the Gates of Heaven. ●

7. God Touched Me

Author: Vuthy Nol-Mantia

Location: Boston, Massachusetts, USA

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I testify. I was born in Cambodia, and I came to the United States in 1981, when I was nine years old. From 1975 to 1979 there was genocide in Cambodia; out of 6 million people, 3.5 million died during those years. Every day, people died from starvation or execution—even my relatives and my loved ones. I always asked myself, “What kind of God created people, and then allowed them to die like that? How can this God be a good God? Can’t He see that all these people are dying?”

After I came to this country, I started having nightmares. It was the same nightmare every night. Five evil spirits would grab me: two of them would tie my hands, two of them would tie my feet, and one would choke me. I would be so afraid of going to sleep. Growing up, I worked two or three jobs because I didn’t want to sleep. All this time, I was so fearful and lonely. When I read the words of Buddhism that say that the world is full of suffering, I really believed it.

TURBULENT YEARS

I had been seeking the truth and looking for God all my life, but I still felt so lonely in my heart. I said to myself, life must be better than this. In college, I went to a party at a fraternity house. I saw people dancing, drinking, and having so much fun. I said, “Wow, this is what happiness is, huh?” So during my first and second year in college, I went out and I drank and I danced. When I went to parties, I would get up on the stage and dance like crazy. People would yell my name, “Vuthy! Vuthy!” But I couldn’t find happiness. Finally I said to myself, “This isn’t the way.”

I almost flunked out of school my sophomore year. Then I realized what was happening to me, and so during my junior year I settled down a little bit. But I still felt so lonely. I thought that maybe, when I get out of college, I'll get a job and make some money, and that will make me happy. But after I graduated and got a good job, my heart still felt empty.

SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH

I was still constantly searching for the truth all this time, but I couldn't find any religion that I believed in. For a while I went to a Christian church, where I was baptized for the first time. But God didn't move me and I didn't see God in that church, so I left. After that, my mom took me to a Greek Orthodox church. That was the second time I was baptized. But I used to fall asleep every time I went there because they spoke in Greek and I couldn't understand what they were saying.

After I left this second church I said to myself, forget it, God doesn't exist. I just focused on working at my agency in Boston. One of the women who worked there belongs to the True Jesus Church. One day she saw my Bible on my desk and asked me to attend a Bible study. I thought, why not, I have nothing to lose, and went to her Bible study. At the end, when they knelt down and prayed in tongues, it really scared me. I thought they were a bunch of crazy people.

One of the sisters must have been praying for me because the next week I couldn't wait to go to Bible study. At that meeting, I felt God move me. I started going to Bible study, and then I started to attend church services regularly. I felt that God was there, even though we gathered in only a prayer house. I started to pray sincerely every night because I felt the movement of God. Every biblical teaching that I learned and followed came true.

GOD TOUCHED ME

One night when I was sleeping, this power came over me and said, "Vuthy, get up and pray." So I said, "Okay," and I started to pray. I said, "Hallelujah," and this power came into me, and my tongue started rolling. Every time I said, "Hallelujah," I would fall prostrate. I started to weep from joy because I felt so much love and mercy from

God. This was the first time I felt joy in my heart, and I knew it was from God. During that prayer God made me realize what kind of a person I was, and all the sinful things I had done in my high school and college years.

While I was praying, God moved me to say, “Turn to 1 Peter.” I didn’t even know where 1 Peter was in the Bible. So I got up, switched on the lights, and turned to 1 Peter chapter 1. As I was reading, the words of God came alive, almost like they were three-dimensional. I couldn’t believe it. Every word came to me like it was living, and it really touched me.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

But a few days later, my nightmares came back again. I hadn’t had those nightmares in a couple of years. They were the same five spirits, and this time, they were choking me especially hard. I couldn’t breathe, I couldn’t yell, I couldn’t scream. But I said, “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,” and they left.

I asked the brothers and sisters in church why I still had nightmares if I already had the Holy Spirit. They asked me if I had any idols in my house. I did have a little gold Buddha head, and they told me that I had to throw it away. So in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I flushed it down the toilet.

The next night, I had another nightmare, but this time there was only one spirit. This big, black spirit was choking me, and I couldn’t see its face. It really scared me because it was something new. I said, “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,” and I started choking the spirit back. I turned the spirit over on my bed, and I saw that its face was corroded and full of worms. Then suddenly, it disappeared.

Again I asked the sister at church why I still had these nightmares. I didn’t know what it was; I didn’t think I had anything else in my house. She told me that I should check again. So I searched and searched, and finally I found another Buddha head that my mom had given me a long time ago. I had forgotten that it was in my jewelry box. So again in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I flushed it down the toilet.

MY FATHER'S "PRACTICE"

Later, I started to tell my father about God. My father is seventy-three years old, and ever since he was a young man in Cambodia, he's always practiced witchcraft. It was known all over his town that no one could kill him by shooting or stabbing. When I was a child I felt proud of this, but I didn't really believe it.

When my family came to the United States in 1981, we were terribly mistreated. Our house got burned down twice. The second time, my father went outside and started fighting with the people that were trying to burn down our house. One of the guys took a baseball bat and tried to hit my father, but my father put his hand up and broke the baseball bat in half. After that, I started to believe that my father really did use witchcraft.

The first time my father went to a Christian church after he came to America, he became so sick that he almost died. His "spirit master" of witchcraft came and told him that he would kill him if he continued to go to church. So from 1981 until 1999, my father never went to church.

In June 1999, I went fishing with my father. By then, I'd been coming to the True Jesus Church and I really believed that God exists and I felt His love. So I said to myself, "This is a great opportunity for me to talk to my father about God." I told him, "I've never asked you to do anything in my entire life. But I've found God, and I want you to come to church only five times. If after five times you don't feel anything, you don't ever have to come back." He agreed, "Okay son, I'll do it for you."

That same night, my niece was in my father's room. Suddenly, she started screaming, "Grandma, grandpa, someone's trying to kill me!" My father looked around and there was no one there. Then he realized that it was his spirit master again. He told me about it the next day, but I told him not to worry because God is the most powerful God, and only He can take away life.

GETTING RID OF THE OLD

The next Friday at Bible study, I asked the brothers and sisters what I should do about all the Buddhism paraphernalia in my father's room. They said that the best thing to do was to pray and to remove it. But

who would dare go into his room and remove all of it? My father wouldn't do it, and I didn't have enough faith to do it myself. So the only thing we could do was pray.

Thank God, my father came to church that Saturday. After the prayer, I asked him how he felt. He said, "I felt cold and full of chills." I thought, "That's not a good thing." Sure enough, I found out that he was wearing a big Buddha head around his neck. So I told him, "That's the problem; you need to get rid of that. You need to get rid of all the other things in your room too, if you really want to pray to God."

So with God's help, my father removed all his Buddhism paraphernalia (including his necklace), and he began to pray every night.

A NEW LIFE

The next Sabbath, my father came to church and knelt down to pray again. I had never described to him what the Holy Spirit felt like. After the prayer, he said that he felt this tingling all through his body, and it felt really good. I really thanked God.

During that same week, my father's left leg began to hurt so badly that he couldn't even walk. He didn't understand why this was happening to him. On the way to church he said to me, "If your God is the true God, let Him fix my leg." So I thought, "We have him, Lord." My father is a man of his word. I knew that all we would have to do was to have faith and pray, and God would heal him.

His leg hurt for one week, and then one night he woke up crying from the pain. The minute he got up, he felt this power from his foot all the way to his knee, and he was able to walk. He called and told me about it, and I was so joyful. The brothers and sisters at church had prayed really hard for him.

On our way to the next Sabbath service, he told me, "Son, I will follow your faith; I have already told your mother that I will follow your faith and follow your God." I really thank God. My father has practiced Buddhism all his life, just like his grandparents and great-grandparents before him. For him to believe in God and come to church is a miracle.

What I learned from this experience is that when I pray with sincerity and faith, everything is possible through God. May all the glory and praise be unto Jesus' name. 🙏

8. My Path To Salvation

Author: Lynn Hsieh

Location: Irvine, California, USA

Hallelujah, in the name of the Lord Jesus I testify.

When I was growing up, I never thought that I would come to believe in Jesus. Firstly, my family background was traditional ancestor and idol worship. Secondly, I often found Christians irritating because I felt their deeds weren't as good as those of Buddhists. So when Christians tried to preach the gospel to me, I ignored them. In my heart, I felt sorry for them because they actually believed the Bible.

In August 1997, a neighbor who attended a different church came and preached the gospel to me. She was very nice. Since I was suffering a great deal from my marriage, I went to her church. After several visits, I did not feel moved or touched. But I still continued to go for the sole purpose of making friends and socializing.

In October 1997, a sister from the True Jesus Church introduced me to the church. It was hard for me to ignore her persistence. After several invitations, I finally attended a family service. For the first time, I was actually moved by the pastor's sermon.

I thought to myself, how come I had never heard such wonderful words, especially in the previous churches I went to? This pastor emphasized that the true church has God's abidance. This greatly interested me, for I thought Buddha was god. Is there another God?

THE GARAGE DOOR

One day as I was backing out of my garage, I pressed the remote to shut the garage door, but it didn't work. After many attempts, the

door remained open. Suddenly I recalled that the church said there is a God, so I thought, “Why not ask God for help?”

I prayed to God, saying “If you truly exist, please close the garage door.” I pressed the remote again, and unexpectedly, the door closed. I was very surprised, but I thought it was only a coincidence, and then drove away.

The next day, when I was leaving the house, the garage door wouldn’t close again. I thought, “This time I’ll press the remote control more firmly. Something must have gone wrong with the sensor yesterday.”

I rolled down my window and pointed the remote at the garage. I tried all kinds of ways to make it work, pressing it firmly or softly, pointing it to the left or to the right. I tried about twenty times, and the garage door remained open. I had no choice but to pray. Like the day before, I pressed the button again and the garage door closed.

On the following day, the same thing happened again. This time I tried the buttons twice as many times as the day before and it still didn’t work. But miraculously, after a prayer, I pressed the button and the garage door closed. This event happened three days in a row. But since I was the only one who saw it, it didn’t really improve my faith.

The next afternoon, after I picked up my children, I opened the garage door from the inside. I gathered my children and stood to one side. I pressed the remote, and as usual the door wouldn’t come down. Then my eldest, second, and youngest daughters took turns pressing the remote and it still didn’t work.

Then I said, “Just watch, now I am going to ask God for help.” I knelt where I had been standing. After I got up from my prayer, I pressed the button and the door closed.

My three children said, “That’s wonderful, Mommy! How did you do it?”

I replied “It’s not me; it’s because of God’s help.”

This time I had three witnesses. I felt that I had established a genuine faith that God really exists.

JOY IN THE SPIRIT

Later, I continued to come to church to listen to the sermons and seek the truth. But I had great doubts when it came to praying in the Spirit (speaking in tongues).

One evening after attending a family service, I felt this numbness in my hand. This numbness was somehow different. I thought to myself, “Could this be the Holy Spirit?” Since I didn’t really believe in the Holy Spirit, I just ignored it. About ten minutes later, the sensation grew stronger and stronger, and it seemed like my whole body was vibrating.

I ran to a small room, shut the door, and knelt down saying, “In the name of the Lord Jesus I pray. Hallelujah, praise the Lord Jesus.” Immediately, my hands and body started to move and I began to speak in tongues. This continued for about fifteen minutes. My hands felt sore but I was unable to stop. Not knowing what to do, I said to God, “My hands are sore,” and at that very moment the movement stopped.

I then began to sing spiritual songs, and I heard myself singing a very beautiful melody, but it seemed like it wasn’t me doing it. During the singing, my heart was beyond joy, and it felt like I was in heaven. It was truly, incomparably wonderful.

Afterwards I realized that I had received the Holy Spirit. I fell prostrate on the floor and kept saying, “Thank the Lord! Thank the Lord!”

After this personal experience, I finally concluded that what I heard was the truth; the True Jesus Church really has God’s abidance, and the Holy Spirit testifies to this. After seeking the truth a few months more, I was baptized in the name of the Lord on July 5, 1999, and became His child.

This is how I was chosen by God. Thank the Lord, and may all the praise, thanks, and glory be unto the true God in heaven forever. ●

9. True Peace of Mind

Author: Fay Shen

Location: Garden Grove, California, USA

On July 16, 1999, John F. Kennedy, Jr., his wife, and his sister-in-law went crashing headlong into the Atlantic in a small private plane. News of their tragic death brought to my mind Ecclesiastes 9:5–6:

For the living know that they will die;

But the dead know nothing,

And they have no more reward

For the memory of them is forgotten.

*Also their love, their hatred, and their
envy have now perished;*

Nevermore will they have a share

In anything done under the sun.

Before I accepted Jesus into my heart, I frequently pondered over the meaning of life. What if I encounter a fatal accident tomorrow? Will I be reincarnated? Is there heaven and hell? Was I simply created through the process of evolution? These questions, which I had no answers to, often worried me.

A TURNING POINT

I grew up in an atheist family. As my husband Zion grew up, he and his family were members of the True Jesus Church. After Zion and I married, we attended church only once. Whenever there was an evangelical service, my mother-in-law would always urge us to attend and

to seek the truth. Because of our long work hours we were unwilling to give up valuable rest time, so we always declined her offer.

When December 1997 rolled around, again my mother-in-law asked us to attend an evangelical service. At that time we had a fairly long vacation from work, so we decided to give the services a try because there was “nothing better to do.”

Grace, a close friend of ours, was attending church for the first time. Not wanting her to be surprised by the prayer in tongues, Zion and I explained to her what little we knew about the Holy Spirit.

During the service, I felt as if the Lord opened our hearts and we absorbed the truth with great interest.

DOES GOD REALLY EXIST?

From that point on, we began seeking the truth. Although Zion had grown up attending church every Sabbath with his parents, it really had been a weekly routine, and he had never quite grasped a genuine understanding of the Truth.

During the 1998 evangelical services at Baldwin Park church, in his prayer Zion asked the Lord to allow Grace, my cousin, and I to experience the Holy Spirit if He truly exists. He dared not ask for the gift for himself, because he felt that he wasn't yet worthy and hadn't repented fully.

After the prayer, Zion was surprised to hear the pastor announce that three people had received the Holy Spirit that night. When he learned that the three were Grace, my cousin, and me, he was further amazed. God had answered him exactly as he had requested. He would never again doubt the Lord's presence.

MORE ADDED TO THE FOLD

After understanding the importance of believing in the Lord Jesus for salvation, I began to be concerned for my family. Among my three siblings, I thought that my brother Charlie would have the hardest time accepting Christ. But I noticed that Charlie listened to his wife Rio, so I thought that if Rio accepted Christ, there would be hope for Charlie.

I was also concerned about my grandmother. Not only did she have a hearing problem due to her age, but she also had been a devout Buddhist all her life. It was difficult to convey the gospel to her without using a combination of writing and loud speech. After I finally explained the truth to her, she was hesitant about giving up her Buddhist beliefs because it had been her religion for as long as she could remember.

So Grace, Zion, and I all prayed very diligently for my siblings, Rio, and my grandmother. Thanks to the Lord, they all accepted Jesus with a simple heart. Rio received the Holy Spirit shortly after her baptism. My grandmother cleared her house of the idols she used to worship. Later, my sister Jean and my brother John accepted the Lord Jesus and were both baptized in the church after more long prayers asking the Lord to open their hearts.

God listens to our prayers. We must pray persistently and not give up, just like the persistent widow (Luke 18:1–8). If we are concerned about our loved ones and others who have not yet accepted Jesus, we must convince them not only through example but through prayer. Our abilities are infinitely minute compared to the almighty Lord. Remember that the Lord hears the desire of the humble and listens to their cries (Psalm 10:17).

No one knows the exact moment when we will leave this world and face the judgment of Christ. John F. Kennedy, Jr. left his house on a happy trip, not knowing that it would be his last. The Lord gave and took away what he had in this world. For this reason, we must remain alert and pray for others, like the five wise virgins who prepared oil and waited for the arrival of the Bridegroom (Matthew 25:1–13).

I thank the Lord that I was introduced to the True Jesus Church. After understanding the truth, being baptized, and receiving the Holy Spirit, I have felt true peace of mind. ●

10. Finding New Life Through God

Author: J. Chen

A WILD PAST

I am a Christian today because of God's love. I believe He chose me when I was in my rebellious stage, when I was the most undeserving, to show me how much He loves me.

When I was in grade five, my family moved from Calgary to a small town just forty-five minutes away from the city and opened a restaurant there. My mom hired more workers during Saturdays so that she could drive me and my siblings to the city for Chinese school, swimming lessons, piano lessons, art lessons, and other activities.

During my teenage years I continued to attend Chinese school on Saturdays. When my mom dropped my siblings and me off for Chinese school, I often sneaked out with my friend and roamed around downtown and Chinatown. We joined other friends and hung out.

For fun, we stole cars for joy rides or weekend trips, partied and drank, vandalized, stole anything we could, and did drugs.

We fought often, both physically and verbally, within our group and with other groups of people we knew. There was a lot of violence, betrayal, anger, false friendships, jealousy, and lies.

My family was really worried about me during this time because they knew I had bad friends but didn't know what I was up to all the time.

In our family of four children, I was the middle child and often referred to as the troublemaker. Ever since I was young, I was left out by my siblings because I was different from them. I was not obedient

like them, nor did I like to study or help out around the house. Instead, I drew closer to my friends and became more distant from my family.

I would argue with my mom and yell at her until she thought she was going crazy. There was one time she ran home from work and started to drink whiskey straight from the bottle. Even though my mom didn't drink, she was so upset and angry with me that she would rather die. My dad was a quiet man and didn't say much, but I knew from my siblings that he had given up on me and had in fact disowned me.

MEETING CALVIN

I continued living a wild and dangerous life with bad influences throughout high school. My senior year, I celebrated my seventeenth birthday with a barbeque at a park. In the large group of people who gathered, I met someone named Calvin.

When we first met, we didn't get along because our best friends were enemies, but despite our mutual dislike, we started to talk on the phone and then became friends. At the time, he was part of a group of people who did even worse things than my group of friends.

Soon after we met, Calvin went to a different city to finish his studies. We would talk on the phone every day and visit each other whenever we could.

After a few months, I started to have a harder time getting a hold of him. He told me that it was because he was attending church services. This was a big surprise to me, as he had never mentioned he was a Christian and that he went to church. The church that he was attending was called True Jesus Church.

He was busy most of the time because he attended services Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday—sometimes even more if there was family service. I didn't know what was happening to him because he was in the next province, so I decided to take a few days off from school to visit him.

HIS SURPRISING CHANGE, MY WEIGHT LIFTED

When I arrived, he looked like a different person. He no longer wore dark designer clothing, and his hair was no longer highlighted and styled fashionably. He was wearing a green sweater and khakis with his hair dyed back to black and gelled to one side.

His friends, who were True Jesus Church brothers, were genuinely nice people, unlike the friends he hung out with before.

While I was visiting I watched him walk to the bus stop to go to school early in the morning, carrying a large backpack. There is nothing extraordinary about this in general—many people do this every day. However, I witnessed a person completely transformed from the way he used to be. After he returned from school I asked him to take me to his church the following Saturday.

When we arrived at church, the sermon was on jealousy. It was really intriguing because it was a problem I struggled with. I felt so peaceful and happy after hearing the sermon because it felt like a lot of weight was taken off of me.

Calvin introduced me to many brothers and sisters that day. One sister came to me and shared many words of encouragement. She told me to seek after God because He really loved me. She mentioned that Calvin could bring me to church but could not bring me salvation. It was up to me to seek after God and to find Him. I really felt God's love through the brothers and sisters that day and was even touched to tears.

I had always thought that I knew God and that He was automatically part of my life; I never thought that I had to pursue and seek after Him. As devout Catholics, my family attended Sunday Mass every week. But I never felt God the way I felt Him through other brothers and sisters at True Jesus Church, and the sermons never touched me the way they did at this church.

CHANGING OLD HABITS

After this experience at True Jesus Church, I went home and started reading the Bible. I also carefully and thoroughly read the basic belief booklet that they gave me at church. The last part of this

booklet talked about the second coming of Christ. One part quoted 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

This painted a vivid picture of the second coming of Christ. After reading it, I really wanted to be one of those who would be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord and to return to our home in heaven forever!

I continued to study the Bible and learn more about the beliefs of the True Jesus Church. A few months later, I attended service at Calgary House of Prayer. I prayed for the first time with other brothers and sisters.

The preacher said that we needed to be humble, kneel down before God, repent to Him of our sins, and ask for forgiveness. He also said that those who had not received the Holy Spirit should pray for it.

I followed what the preacher said to do and knelt down and started to repent. I started digging up all the sins I had committed in the past, and I felt so ashamed while I was thinking of what I had done. I had never felt ashamed before and never regretted anything I did.

However, in that prayer I felt really ashamed of myself and unworthy to ask for God's Holy Spirit. While I was thinking this, my arms started to shake, I started to cry, and I felt God's presence for the first time in my life. The prayer was very peaceful and full of light.

After experiencing the movement of the Holy Spirit and through studying the Bible, my attitude started to change towards my family and friends. There were fewer arguments at home, and Calvin encouraged me to love my family and to respect my parents.

Every time I got into an argument with my mom, I would tell him, and he would encourage me to apologize to my mom and tell her I loved her. It was very difficult for me to say "thank you" and "sorry." Even though I really wanted to, I had to fight all of my old habits and my pride to say those words.

I remember crying in front of my mom when I told her that I was wrong and that I was sorry. She also started to cry and came to hug me.

GETTING BAPTIZED

As I continued to seek after God and learn His truth, I learned that my sins were not washed away through the baptism I had received as a baby. I registered to get baptized during the next spiritual convocation.

The day of the baptism was a cold November day. We had to drive about one and a half hours out of town to get to the lake.

When we got there, we walked up to the shore and saw that the lake had already turned to ice! Although there was sunshine and snow had not started to fall yet, the lake was already frozen over.

My first thought was that God did not want me to get baptized that day. However, the brothers and sisters took the initiative and tried to break a hole in the ice. Young and old, they threw rocks, stomped on the ice, and pounded away with all their strength using sticks they found on the shore.

It was very touching to see the effort of these brothers and sisters. They were not willing to miss this chance to save one more soul. Not long after, a hole large enough for two people was made through the thick ice, and I was baptized in the name of our Lord Jesus.

A NEW LIFE TOGETHER

Calvin and I got married the year I was baptized. As we wanted to start a new life together in Christ, we decided to move so that we could avoid our past and the bad friends we made over the years.

This change was very sudden. We did not slowly detach from our friends, but stopped all communication with them. It was a conscious, deliberate decision for us, knowing that if we wanted to live this new life in Christ we had to change ourselves, especially who our friends were. Thank God, through His love, we made these changes easily.

We are both thankful that our past never came looking for us and that our hearts were not tempted to go back to enjoy the evils of the world. Giving up our old life freed up a lot of time, which we filled with God.

I looked forward to Friday evenings because it was the start of the Sabbath. The brothers and sisters were attentive because I was a

newly baptized member and graciously studied the Bible with Calvin and me during the week. Some of the church members also invited us to their homes for dinner and to share the word of God.

Since we got married at a young age, we promised each other that if we ever got into an argument we would kneel down and pray and trust our problems to God. We believed that God would watch over our marriage and become the head of our family.

The change in my life shocked my old friends as well as my family. Even my friends' parents, who used to follow us around to see what we were doing, couldn't believe I was talking to them about God and how my husband and I were determined to commit our marriage to God.

Together, we have tasted the joy of living a simple and quiet life in Christ, which is far better than what the world could offer.

GOD ACCEPTED ME

Our wonderful Lord has His great plan for everything. He even had a plan for a small-town girl who was not only the black sheep in her family but was also unwilling to listen to anyone!

I was brought to His church through witnessing the quick and dramatic change in a friend's life, which caught my attention and sparked my curiosity in the source of this transformation. I was also drawn to know God because I felt His love through the brothers and sisters in church as well as God's movement in me when I prayed for the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:38, 39 says:

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God's love is so immense and so great, I don't know if we can fully comprehend it. We can only relate based on what we have encountered in life and assume that God's love is infinitely greater than that.

The only comparable love I have experienced is parental love. My parents sacrificed a lot so that my siblings and I could have a good future. They worked really hard at the restaurant and put their time

and money into our education and other extracurricular classes. They always gave us the best and took the leftovers.

However, this love is limited. At my most rebellious stage, my parents disowned me not because they did not have love, but because I grieved them beyond what any human being could bear. My mom said, "I will feed you, you may live here, but you are no longer my daughter." I put on a strong face and showed no emotion, but in reality I felt empty and lonely.

I now understand why I cried so much when I went to church the first time and when God's Spirit moved me in my prayer in Calgary. It was because even in my worst state, when my own mother had disowned me, God accepted me and loved me.

Through God's love I learned to seek after Him and became His child. ●

11. God's Mercy Upon My Family

Author: Adeline Lin

Location: Baldwin Park, California, USA

STAYING ANOTHER YEAR

"There are many plans in a man's heart, nevertheless the Lord's counsel—that will stand." (Prov 19:21)

In February 1997 all I wanted to do was to go back home and find a job there. After all, Taiwan was my birthplace and where my parents, relatives, and friends still lived. Therefore I had no desire to stay in the United States, where I had been living the past two years to obtain my master's degree.

Knowing that the job market was not good, I even went back to Taiwan during that winter break just to send out my resume and to talk to people, hoping that I could pave a path for my future.

But after talking to a director at the Human Resources Department of a college, I realized that I probably had no chance to get a position in the field I was interested in. I felt hopeless after the interview and became very anxious about my future.

After returning to the US, an unfamiliar idea came up during some of my conversations with my husband (who was a good friend at that time). "Why don't you stay another year for an internship?" he suggested. Initially I struggled with this idea because it was against my will. However, the thought of "stay another year" was like a ray of light at the end of the tunnel. It gave me hope and even peace, so I decided to give myself a chance to go for it.

Unexpectedly, this journey became smoother and smoother. First, my work permit was approved very quickly. Following the approval,

I immediately received a response and got a teaching job right after the interview. Moreover, I was able to find a convenient place to stay within a very short time. I did not have a car, and God had arranged a comfortable apartment that was a few minutes' walk away from the train station and grocery stores.

All of these changes happened within two months. I, who did not know the true God yet, thought that I was just lucky and gave thanks to my "gods." I was completely unaware of God's guiding hand.

SERIOUSLY SEEKING GOD

Although I came from a family that observed Chinese traditional religion and had followed my parents in worshipping ancestors and idols, I knew very little about them. My mother was usually the one taking care of all the details of ancestral worship, and the rest of us merely followed her instructions.

However, there were two things that really bothered me. One was seeing my mother exhausted from preparing sacrificial food; the other was knowing that most of those idol worshipping activities, such as burning incense and paper money, were wasteful and harmful to the environment. The noise of fire crackers and loud music from the lion dance were always a nightmare to me.

I was introduced to my husband at the end of 1996, and he invited me to True Jesus Church family service a few times in the Boston area. Even though I didn't understand the truth and was very unaccustomed to prayer in tongue, the members received me with great warmth. I gradually grew familiar with the faces on Sabbath, as well as with the way they worshipped. I received baptism in April 1999. Thank God for those brothers and sisters who shared their testimonies, encouraged me, and became my spiritual friends.

However, I lacked the heart to pursue the truth so I did not receive the Holy Spirit until much later. I could not understand the Bible well, nor could I relate the teachings to my daily life. During service, I often had a difficult time staying awake. I became alarmed and started to seriously seek God when I realized that I was one of the few at church who did not have the Holy Spirit. I was afraid that God had rejected me because of my wishy-washy attitude.

After praying for a year, during a spiritual convocation in 2000, God finally poured down His precious Holy Spirit on me. I felt a hand lightly tap my left shoulder, and then suddenly my tongue loosened and started to roll. I was speaking in tongue, communicating directly with God. I finally felt accepted and loved by Him. Ever since then, His Spirit has opened my eyes—the Bible is no longer a storybook, and sermons are no longer a lullaby. And I learned how poor I was in spirit.

God's hand of amazing grace did not stop there. Over the following years, He cared for my family and brought them to Him, one by one, in miraculous ways.

MY SISTER'S BAPTISM

My younger sister has a strong character and independent mind. From her unpleasant experiences with those who had tried to preach to her, she had bad impressions of Christians. But through her colleague, she started to get in touch with people at a church in Xinzhu, Taiwan.

Even though she did not know much about Christianity, what she heard and saw at that church did not seem right to her. Moreover, she was unexpectedly pressured into receiving baptism at one of their events. So she was worried and started to bring up issues to me since I was a Christian. It was quite a surprise to me that she would make an international phone call just to ask me questions about the Bible and God.

I was newly baptized at that time and had only learned a little about God, so I suggested that she visit the True Jesus Church near our parents' house. She went with her unquenchable spirit of seeking the truth and was moved to tears the moment the service started. She knew right away that it was the church God wanted her to attend.

After seeking the truth at True Jesus Church for about a year and a half, she received the Holy Spirit and decided to receive baptism in November 2001. On that day, with her eyes closed for a prayer prior to her baptism, she felt God's warm and glorious light shine upon her. Others who were present at the baptism also saw the great light.

AN UNEXPECTED DELAY

In April of 2003, my sister was getting married at Dallas Church. She and my parents planned to meet me in Boston and spend some time together before we all flew to Texas for the wedding.

I received a phone call from my sister as I was getting ready to pick them up at the airport. She said they were waiting for their connecting flight in Detroit, but she was about to be deported because of a visa problem. She did not know what to do.

I was in shock when we hung up. I quickly called a friend who worked at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Boston, hoping to get instant help. But all I got was “Do what the officials tell you.” Then my sister called again to let me know that my parents were allowed to enter the US, but since the police were ready to take her away, she couldn’t stay on the phone any longer.

It was three hours after their connecting flight to Boston. After that phone call, I didn’t know what my parents would do since they could not speak much English, did not know how to use a pay phone, and had never changed flights by themselves before. I could only assume that they would get onto the next flight to Boston. My husband and I had no other choice but to wait at the airport, checking one flight after another. Finally, they showed up at the gate with six suitcases. We were so relieved and gave thanks to God!

My father was a very organized person who liked to plan things ahead. This trip had taken him months to arrange. At that time, he just wanted to return home; on the other hand, he felt guilty for not being able to accomplish his task. He owed the groom’s family an apology. Since we had already booked our flights and hotel rooms in Texas, we decided to go without the bride.

As for my sister, she got a “free ticket” to travel the world, and did not return to Taiwan until two days later. Now we all laugh when we think of it, but at the time it was not amusing.

After my sister got back to Taiwan, she immediately applied for a fiancée visa. According to the lawyer, it would be approved in two months. However, almost a year passed, and she still had not received it. It was a very difficult time for my sister while she waited for her visa and people repeatedly asked her “Why are you still here?”

Thank God for giving my sister strength and hope, so that she was able to patiently wait, fast and pray, and totally rely on Him during that period of time. A pastor told her that this delay might be because she had unfinished work in Taiwan.

MY PARENTS' BELIEF

Indeed, the delay miraculously opened the door of salvation for my parents. In the past my parents had refused to go to church because they did not want to “betray” their ancestors and replace their decades-long belief with something foreign to them. But during that year while my sister was waiting for her visa, my parents’ hearts were no longer hardened.

One day in March, my father asked her, “How can we help you?” “Pray for me,” she replied. Immediately, my father agreed and promised, “We will pray for you every day. Ten minutes in the morning and ten minutes in the evening.” My parents even started attending church services with her in April 2004, though with doubtful hearts in the beginning.

A pastor went to visit my parents on April 22, while North Taichung Church was holding an evangelical service. After his explanation and encouragement, my parents’ concern about their ancestors’ memorial tablets was solved. My father decided to get rid of the pagan altar and idols in the house. My parents wanted to get baptized. Seeing their great faith, the pastor agreed to baptize them on April 24.

The baptism of my parents, which I had always hoped to witness, arrived so suddenly that it did not even give me enough time to book a flight to Taiwan. I could only thank God on the other side of the world.

After my parents started to pray for my sister, she met a travel agent who was very experienced in visa applications. He meticulously instructed my sister on how to fill out her visa application and advised her on other important details.

The visa was quickly approved in June. On July 4, 2004, our friends and families once again gathered in Dallas Church to witness my sister’s wedding.

My prayer for my parents to receive the Holy Spirit was also answered—they both received it soon after the wedding. Even though

they no longer had my sister around, God's Spirit would guide them as they journeyed on. Thank God for His mercy!

MY FATHER'S ILLNESS

My father had had hepatitis B since he was a child and began receiving treatment after being diagnosed with a liver tumor in 2005. At the end of September 2006, he fainted as he was about to walk down the stairs. Thank God that my older brother, who was rarely home early from work, was there when the accident happened.

An ambulance brought my father to the emergency room. The doctors discovered that excessive bleeding from his liver caused him to faint. That night, the doctor issued a Do Not Resuscitate Form for my mother to sign. Even though my father was in critical condition, thank God for His mercy that he was discharged in a few days.

During that time, my father was planning a two-month-long trip to the United States to visit me and my sister. Because of his internal bleeding, relatives and friends advised him to cancel his trip.

He told my mother that this trip might be his last chance to visit us in the US, and he believed that the Lord Jesus would take care of him and grant his wish. Even though we were worried, after knowing his great faith in the Lord, we laid down our worries and looked forward to seeing him.

With God's blessings, my parents arrived safely in Boston and later went to stay with their newborn granddaughter in Dallas for a month. Every day they lived in great peace, satisfaction, and joy. We had a great time together. Out of the grace of God, the precious two months were given not only to our father, but also to the family.

In January 2007, not long after my father returned to Taiwan, he underwent another liver embolization for his tumor. Afterward he became lethargic and lost a lot of weight. The doctor told my mother that he had one to two months to live.

At this critical time, my brother, a physics teacher and the only non-believer in the family, started to pray. Because of his background in science, he placed his faith in evidence and his own ability. He had never seen God and, moreover, did not need God. However, he knew

that none of his scientific theories or training could do his father any good. Even though he still had doubts, he always joined us as we prayed. During the time that I was in Taiwan, we spent time with our father in singing hymns, reading the Bible, and praying together.

I really thank God for giving me strength during that time so that every day I managed to have a peaceful heart to devote myself to long prayers. I asked God for a miracle, but I also prayed that if it was His will for my father to go, that He would give us wisdom to understand His good will and comfort us with His own hand.

MY BROTHER'S BELIEF

My father's condition did not improve, but it was stable. Early in the morning of March 4, 2007, I went to my father's room to pray with him before I left for the airport. As usual, he gave me some Japanese currency so that I could buy snacks as I waited for my connecting flight in Japan. I had struggles in my heart to leave him because I was afraid that we would be saying our final goodbyes. But I suppressed my sadness and, just as what I usually would do, accepted his kindness with many thanks and a smile.

On the way to the airport and before I boarded, my brother and I talked about God again. Surprisingly I found that he was willing to listen and to share his thoughts.

That night he decided not to doubt any longer but to believe. He pleaded with God to heal our father's illness. When he was praying by himself in his room, the Holy Spirit moved him and he started to speak in tongues. He finally experienced God and could not but believe in His existence. He was very excited and his worries immediately disappeared.

However, over the next two days, evil spirits tried to disturb him. He would beat himself during prayers. Sometimes, his prayer sounded very harsh, like he was berating someone, and according to his students his face turned black with bruises. It seemed like the Holy Spirit was casting out the evil spirits, but they were unwilling to leave. After going through several spiritual battles, everything returned to normal on the third day. An elder from church visited my

brother and laid hands on him. He confirmed that my brother had received the precious Holy Spirit.

I was so joyful upon hearing the news, but at the same time I was worried that the evil spirits would attack my brother again because he was not yet baptized. My parents were newly baptized, so they were still spiritually weak. I regretted that I did not stay with them longer. All I could do was to plead with God to fight the spiritual battle for them.

Thanks to God's arrangement, shortly after my departure my sister was able to return to Taiwan with her four-month-old daughter. Many pastors, elders, and deacons also took time out of their busy schedules to visit and pray with my family. Their visitation comforted my anxious heart and I learned the preciousness of having spiritual friends at a difficult time.

MY FATHER'S REST

Soon after I returned to the US, my father's health began to deteriorate. We were afraid that my mother could not take care of him by herself anymore, so we sent him to the hospital. Not long after his admission, he went into a coma.

Around 5 p.m. on March 30, 2007, while I was in a hurry to get ready to return to Taiwan, my brother called and said that our father was not doing well and that I should bid farewell to him over the phone. I was speechless, unwilling to believe what I heard. But with my brother's gentle encouragement, I calmed myself and told my father to go with our Lord Jesus Christ, and I would meet him later in the heavenly home.

Two hours later, my father rested from his worldly labor, illness, and pain and slept in peace. My father was always tender-hearted and our Lord Jesus knew him well. Whenever he saw sad or unfortunate events on TV, he would switch the channel because he could not bear to see people suffer. Therefore, it was his will that he did not want emergency treatment. He preferred peaceful rest over endless pain, surgery, and tubes all over his body.

Thank God that my father did not feel much pain, unlike other patients who had the same illness. It was the most wonderful

arrangement from the Lord that He took him away to Paradise before the illness caused him great suffering.

My brother did not lose his faith even though God did not heal our father. On the contrary, he was grateful that God took away my father's pain, my mother's heavy burden, and his own sin. On April 28, 2007, he received the precious baptism, footwashing, and Holy Communion.

Throughout the past few years, God has arranged brothers and sisters from all over the world to accompany us in our journey of faith. They sympathized with our weaknesses and gave us timely care, help, and prayers of intercession so that my entire household could be baptized into the name of the Lord. May the Lord remember their love!

Even though we live in different parts of the world and rarely see each other, through the Lord Jesus Christ, we will definitely be reunited in our heavenly home.

May blessings and edification be with you, with whom we have shared the gospel. And may all the glory and praise be unto the true God, our Father in heaven. Amen! 🍀

12. How the Lord Called Me

Author: Irene Lane

Location: Irvine, California, USA

STARTING OVER IN SINGAPORE

My Buddhist grandparents left China in their youth and settled in Indonesia, where I was born many years later. My mother was a Buddhist by birth, but my dad was an avid self-believer and he was always confident in whatever he did.

I had a happy childhood growing up in my parents' home, and their only requirement was for me to study hard. They sent me to a Christian school and, occasionally, I prayed to my grandparents' portraits. Sometimes, during Chinese New Year, I would visit the temple and ask for higher grades.

Meanwhile, the teachers at school taught us the Lord's Prayer and how God is omnipresent, so we could talk to Him anytime and anyplace.

At that time, I was nine years old and living in my little comfort zone when my uncle called my father about my future education.

My parents' generation had gone to Chinese school but, because of racial discrimination, all Chinese schools in Indonesia were closed down by the time I was in school. That is why some Chinese Indonesians can't speak fluent Chinese nowadays.

After their conversation, my dad sat me down and asked, "Do you want to be able to speak Chinese and English fluently?" I replied, "Yes," and before I knew it, my mom and I were off to Singapore.

Arrangements were made for me to stay with a homestead mother to act as my guardian. She was about sixty years old and spoke only Mandarin and Hakka—another dialect in Chinese. Because many

Chinese Indonesian parents send their children to Singapore to study, this lady operated a homestead business to accept overseas students.

I felt as if my life had been turned upside down. In Indonesia, a family has three servants and a nanny at home to take care of the kids. Suddenly, I was brought to Singapore, with no mommy's kisses or daddy's smile, and with no one to wait on me. I had to be independent. I was left with a difficult course load at school and an old lady at home who could care less for the children staying at her house.

I regretted that I had agreed to my father. If only I had refused, I would have been able to enjoy my life like any other ordinary kid in Indonesia. But I didn't know that God had a different plan for me.

"JUST COME AND SEE"

*The LORD has called Me from the womb;
From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name.
(Isa 49:1)*

I didn't know God had chosen me to be one of His own, but the time came when I was fifteen years old and approaching my junior year of secondary school.

A friend asked me what my religion was, and I said both Buddhism and Christianity. She said, "How can you have two husbands? You have to pick one." I was shocked. I was still young. Why did I have to think about religion? I really didn't know how to pick. I just knew that Jesus is everywhere and that He is invisible. But according to my family, I was supposed to be a Buddhist.

That night, I prayed on my bed. I crossed my legs and held up my hand in the Buddhist prayer position. But with my mouth, I said, "Lord Jesus, I want to pray to you now. Please tell me what my religion is."

I prayed the way a Buddhist prayed because I thought I was a Buddhist, but there were no statues related to Buddhism or pictures of my grandparents in front of me. At the same time, I was aware that the Lord Jesus is available anytime and anywhere, and I didn't want to offend any of the gods. I didn't know that there was only one God.

Exactly one month after that prayer God still graciously gave me the answer, though I was ignorant of the fact that I shouldn't pray in this way. Two older boys in that house suddenly invited me to the True

Jesus Church. They hadn't been going to church for two years, and they suddenly felt like going. So they said to me, "Hey, just come and see."

Immediately, I grabbed three other girls to come with me. It was a Wednesday night service, and half of the service was devoted to praying for the Holy Spirit. It was the first time I had ever stepped into a church, and there was no introduction about speaking in tongues.

An amazing thing happened that night, though. The speaker used almost twenty-five passages, and I had never turned to the Bible before. But that night, every time I had to flip to a verse, the pages seemed to turn for me. I was always on the right page, the right chapter, and the right verse. "It must be God helping me," I thought.

I had learned in school that when you pray, you should never peek at your friends. But when it came time to pray I couldn't stand it, so I apologized to God and bravely opened my eyes. What I saw shocked me. Everyone was praying in a loud voice, and they were vibrating in an orderly manner. I couldn't understand at all what they were speaking. I turned to my friend who was beside me. When I looked at her, she said, "Shhh... just see."

After the service, a sister from the church came to answer my questions about the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. She said that speaking in tongues is speaking in the language of heaven. I already knew a few languages, and I wanted to learn this one.

The second time I came, there was a hymnal evangelical service. I was moved to tears. It seemed like the words sung by the choir were so real and were sung straight from their hearts.

INTRODUCED TO THE TRUTH

Despite my experiences, I still had my doubts and started to shop around for other churches. This time, I narrowed down my options. I knew I was attracted to Christianity, but I didn't know which church I should go to.

I tried a charismatic church. Their singing was great, but as soon as the preacher started to preach, I immediately fell asleep. I told God, if I go and I fall asleep again, I won't come back. True enough, I went back a second time and fell asleep. I felt the sermons at the True Jesus

Church were more appealing and had more depth. Still, I struggled with some confusion, gave up, and didn't go to any church after that.

Three months later, the sister who had sat next to me called me up and said, "Hey, our church is organizing a badminton competition. Do you want to come?" That was my third contact with the True Jesus Church.

Some members at the competition were playing badminton, and some were playing basketball. I thought to myself, "How come all these people call themselves brothers and sisters? Are they related? How come they seem to be one big family?" My curiosity made me investigate the truth.

That day, the first person who sat down with me referred to John 3:5, which states:

"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

It was very direct and hard for me to swallow. I also had many questions: "First of all, do I even want to enter into the kingdom of heaven? What is the purpose anyway? Is it to be able to speak in an unknown tongue?"

Despite my uncertainties, I knew that this church offered something really extraordinary. This church had the abidance of the Holy Spirit.

TOUGH BEGINNINGS

From then on, I actively searched into the church. I asked many questions. I learned how to pray to Jesus. I kept encouraging those three girls who had come with me that first time to come back to church. Out of the three, one of them accepted the truth.

I thought, since I was the one who had brought my friends, I should receive the Holy Spirit before them. I thought God's principles are the same as ours: First come, first serve. But it turned out to be the other way around—the first would be the last, and the last would be the first.

As we prayed together, I could only repeat "Hallelujah" loudly. But those three girls began to experience the movement of the Holy Spirit. One of them immediately spoke in tongues. I was shocked

and disappointed at the same time. What's wrong with me, I thought. Was it because I hadn't mastered the Bible well enough?

So I bought a simple Bible and was determined to read through it. At six o'clock every morning before I went to school, I would read one to three chapters. Before long I had finished the whole Bible.

I was going to church four times a week, reading the Bible every day, and praying loudly in my room daily. Each time there was a spiritual convocation, I would pray until I lost my voice. I did all I could to pray for the Holy Spirit. Yet, I still didn't receive it.

I still had to learn that God has His own time for everything. All I needed to do was to wait and to keep on praying.

Apparently, my homestead lady became unhappy because a few of us were praying loudly for the Holy Spirit. Secretly, she called my parents and told them that I was going to church every day, wasn't studying, was wasting my time, and believed in something very weird. But it was not true. I studied till late every night, and I only went to church four times a week, not every day.

That was the beginning of the persecution of my faith. I was fifteen years old at the time. My parents called and said they were very upset even though I tried very hard to explain to them. My mother said to me, "If you plant a watermelon seed, it will grow into a watermelon tree. If your mother is a Buddhist, then you are a Buddhist for life. You shouldn't believe in some Western religion."

My parents became very angry and said that if I went to church one more time, they would buy me a one-way ticket back to Indonesia, even if school wasn't finished. Thank God for giving me the strong will to keep on searching for the truth. In those days, I went to church secretly and prayed for God to open a way.

Going to church on Sabbath was not easy for me. Two times a year, I would go back to Indonesia to be with my parents during the holidays. But during those happy times, I couldn't go to church on Saturdays. We would be traveling in a car and passing by the True Jesus Church building, and my heart wanted to cry out to go to church. Sabbath service might become a routine and habit for some people, but I know what it's like not being allowed to go to service when I wanted to.

Only God could hear my cries and see the tears in my eyes. My body was in the car, but my soul was worshipping God with the others at church. He trained me to stand up for what is true. When everybody else was worshipping my grandparents at the cemetery, I sat in the car by myself. During Chinese New Year, when everybody brought flowers to burn incense in the temple, I stayed at home by myself.

To my family and to everybody else, I was unfilial and foolish. To some, I was crazy. But in my heart was a burning flame. I knew what I was doing, and just as the title of a familiar hymn expresses, I knew whom I had believed. I would often smile and say to God, “Lord Jesus, You said I would be blessed when I’m persecuted for Your name’s sake. I should rejoice and be exceedingly glad.”

RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

The persecution went on but I continued to pray for the Holy Spirit. By then, two years had gone by and I still hadn’t received the Holy Spirit. I knew how important it was, and I was thirsting for it.

I attended the first day of a student spiritual convocation in June, 1991. The preacher asked all the students to pray earnestly and persistently. The ministers laid hands on us, and because so many students would receive the Holy Spirit during prayer, a circle would be marked on the floor in front of where we knelt, so they would remember who had received the Holy Spirit.

After we finished praying, I also had a circle marked. The minister said, “Thank God, you have received the Holy Spirit.” I quickly stood up and said, “Oh, I haven’t received the Holy Spirit because I know I was clearly saying ‘hallelujah’ and not speaking in the spiritual tongue yet.”

Though the preacher kept assuring me that I had received the Holy Spirit, I kept on denying it, so I did not receive the Holy Spirit until the next year. It took me three years of praying before I received the Holy Spirit. I was foolish to doubt God.

On June 2, 1992, I attended the student spiritual convocation with my friends again. By the first prayer, I already saw a round circle marked in front of me. At that time, I was surprised but I didn’t dare to deny the Holy Spirit again. Even though I knew that my tongue could clearly say “hallelujah,” I did not dare to doubt.

The same preacher told me I had received the Holy Spirit and that I should keep praying. I didn't say anything but just smiled. I knew I had been wrong the previous year, and I didn't want to make the same mistake.

During the 4:00 pm prayer, I decided to change my attitude and mindset. When the prayer began, as usual, everyone started to pursue earnestly for the Holy Spirit. I also put complete concentration into my prayer, with the same urgency, thirst, sweat, tears, and everything in me.

But this time I also did something different. With my mouth I said "hallelujah," but in my heart I said to God, "The preacher said You have given me the Holy Spirit. This time I don't dare to doubt. Thank You for giving me the Holy Spirit already."

As soon as I said the word "already," my tongue rolled away very, very quickly. I was so shocked that I opened my eyes. In front of me was a fan that was turning very fast. I thought in my heart that my tongue was rolling faster than the fan. Another difference in this prayer was that no tears fell down my cheeks. Instead I was filled with joy, and a stream of happiness flowed from my belly.

The Holy Spirit is truly an indwelling Spirit. Once we pray for it, it will not leave us and will dwell in us if we abide in His word. Just as Mark 11:24 states: "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."

GOD'S WAYS ARE HIGHER THAN OUR WAYS

Ever since I received the Holy Spirit, God has made even more changes in my life. First of all, He gradually changed my character. The Holy Spirit also led me to understand the truth one step at a time. Finally, in 1994, I braced myself for baptism.

The Holy Spirit had also put it in my heart to come to study in the U.S., after I had been living in Singapore for eight years. At the time, I didn't know why God led me to the U.S. through my prayers and through signs. But now I know why.

As God says in Isaiah 55:9:

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

Looking back, if I hadn't come to the U.S., I wouldn't have been baptized at Pacifica Church in San Francisco. Maybe I would have kept on living in Singapore. Maybe I wouldn't have met my husband nine years ago.

Around the time of my baptism, a sister was preparing to get married and she said to me, "Getting married is a very serious matter. It's as serious as getting baptized. Once you go forward, you cannot turn back. There is no other man, only this one." She told me that if I could make the big decision to get baptized, then getting married should be my second biggest commitment.

Up to that point, I was only learning how to make the first commitment, and I was already so afraid. I knew that if I decided to be baptized in the Lord, I could not turn back. I could not pray to any other God. All my life I would have to keep myself in the faith. My attitude, speech, and behavior would have to be in tune with the Lord Jesus.

Now that I have embraced the first commitment of baptism, God would also show me His way in my marriage.

HE SAVED MY FAMILY

Four years after my baptism, I left Pacifica Church. My mom called me to go back to Indonesia because violent riots aimed at Chinese Indonesians broke out. Houses, cars, and properties were burned. Many Chinese and Christians were killed, but God led me to help my parents—to pray for them and to introduce the Lord Jesus to my family at the time.

Even though there were persecutions in my faith, I was moved by the lyrics of a hymn: "though others may obstruct our way, but in Jesus we will be happy all the day." And I turned to Acts 16:31–33:

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.'... And immediately he and all his family were baptized."

The Lord Jesus protected my family and their business throughout the civil unrests in Indonesia, and they also witnessed God's miracles in their lives. During that year, my brother was baptized, and my parents started to seek the truth. One week before my wedding, my parents were also baptized in Christ.

Who could foretell that ten years after I braced myself for baptism, my parents would receive the grace of salvation and be baptized, too?

We probably hear it all the time, but I will say it again. Our God is a living God, and everything He said in the Bible is true.

After we get baptized, our lives will be totally changed. We will belong to God, and He will see us through our Christian journey. Through every circumstance and when we encounter turbulence, God will keep us in perfect peace.

Using human reasoning, it was very painful for me to leave my parents at the age of nine. But God had a more wonderful plan in my life. He chose me and gave me something that money cannot buy—His saving grace.

God also wanted to give my family this saving grace. I cannot imagine where I would be now if I did not go through all that He has blessed me. God has also commissioned us what we are to do for Him. I don't think it is a coincidence that we are all here together (Acts 17:26–27). From different parts of the world with different languages we worship the same God.

Let us open our hearts, let Him control our lives, and let Him lead us. Thank God for everything.

May all honor, praise, and glory be given to His name only! 🗨️

13. Discovering God's Living Spirit

Author: Nhatha Nol-Mantia

Location: Boston, Massachusetts, USA

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I testify to honor God and share with the world how the Lord had brought me to His true church. May His name be glorified.

As a child, I was brought up in the Roman Catholic faith and attended Sunday services every week with my maternal grandparents (my father's family is Buddhist). I acknowledged God and cherished the golden cross that I wore around my neck, but I did not really know Him on an intimate, paternal level. I just imagined God as this awesome and powerful figure who ruled the earth from a far distance. I believed that He was a Supreme Being who could not be touched and was too busy and important to care about the trivial matters of this little world.

Every evening before I went to bed, I would routinely recite the Lord's Prayer and then ask God for all the things that I wished for, never knowing if He was actually listening.

LOSING MY GRASP ON GOD

My parents divorced when I was seven years old, and as a result, I moved from California to Massachusetts. I lived with my father in Boston during the school year, and I spent the summers with my mother and new stepfather. I really disliked my mother's new husband because I thought he was the meanest, most dreadful man I had ever met in my life, and I blamed him for breaking up my family.

After I moved to Boston, I stopped going to church because my father was not religious. Still, every evening before I slept, I would

say the Lord's Prayer and then ask God to somehow bring my parents back together and reunite my family. I believed that the reason my parents separated was because of my stepfather, so I even asked God to "get rid of him" if it were possible—then my family would be together again.

Many years of tears passed and I witnessed my family situation get worse. My mother was stuck in an abusive relationship, my father had sunk into a deep depression and drank often, and I was home alone in a dark basement apartment feeling hopeless and empty, crying myself to sleep each night. I doubted that there was really a God out there, and if there was, then why was He not answering my prayers?

Eventually, I lost faith in God as my family remained separated and my prayers continued to go unanswered. I had no close family members to rely on and to comfort me, so I began to rely entirely on myself. My school friends became the closest people to me. I was determined to be successful and happy in life despite the circumstances.

The Bible warns us not to get caught up in worldly ambitions,

"for all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 Jn 2:16).

But like many people living without God, my idea of success and happiness was to be rich, have a high-profile future career, and enjoy all the pleasures of the world as often as I could. Everything that I did in high school and college was motivated by these three ambitious goals that I had set for myself in life.

I became the most competitive and self-centered person, extremely proud of my achievements. Each day I would work and study very hard to be the best student, athlete, and community figure. In the evening I would sneak out of the house, drink, dance, and party with my friends until morning. In fact, I met Vuthy, my future husband in Christ, at a downtown nightclub.

GIVING GOD ANOTHER CHANCE

Vuthy and I were engaged my junior year of college, before I left to study abroad in Paris. While I was studying in France, Vuthy called me and told me how he had started attending some Bible studies and was really enjoying it. I did not think too much of it because

I understood Vuthy's personality well. He would get excited easily about different things, but then he would lose interest within a couple of weeks.

Surprisingly, Vuthy stuck with the Bible study longer than I had expected, and every once in a while he would update me on what he had learned during Bible study and tell me some testimonies he had heard. One of the memorable testimonies he told me concerned a sister who was watching some bad things on television, and as a result, God punished her with a terrible eye infection.

One night I went with a couple of American students to a gay bar in Paris just to check it out, because we heard that it was an interesting thing to do. The place we went to is comparable to Sodom and Gomorrah, but back then, I did not think that there was anything wrong with looking. It was not a big deal to me since I was just hanging out, not really participating in the activities.

The next morning, when I looked at myself in the mirror, I noticed that my eye was swollen. I immediately thought about the testimony that Vuthy had told me concerning the sister with the eye infection. I was a little worried, and I wondered to myself if it were possible that God was punishing me as well for going to the gay bar. Just to be on the safe side, I decided to repent and see if the swelling would disappear.

Miraculously, my eye was back to normal that same afternoon that I prayed to God! My belief in God was renewed after that incident, and I internally made a decision to give my faith in God another chance.

I was startled awake at four o'clock one morning when the phone rang. When I picked up the receiver, I heard Vuthy crying emotionally. I asked him what was the matter, but he could not stop crying, and my heart sank because I thought it was something serious. When he was finally able to speak, he kept on repeating, "God exists, God exists." In between the sobs, he explained to me that while he was praying, God's power came down through his head. He felt a warm sensation throughout his body and he was overjoyed.

Vuthy then begged me to repent, kneel down, and pray for the Holy Spirit as he had done, but I was really in shock. I was not sure if this was really happening or if I was having a weird dream. Nevertheless, I knew that Vuthy was very sane and that what he was experiencing

was very real. Out of hope and out of love, I promised Vuthy that I would sincerely give it a try.

Every evening, I prayed out loud, saying “hallelujah” and asking for the Holy Spirit as Vuthy had advised me. I even attempted to change my lifestyle and refrain from committing sin. Gradually, I stopped going to the wild French parties, discos and bars. Of course, all of my friends, including my roommate, thought I was acting strangely, and even I was not so sure myself about my faith and where it was heading. All I knew was that I was beginning to fear God, and I was really starting to feel good about my new outlook on life. I was no longer that interested in pursuing one of my three stated goals in life—no longer was I indulging in all the sinful pleasures of the world.

WON OVER BY EXAMPLE

My first semester in Paris ended and I was happy to return home for Christmas break. I remember feeling so excited when the plane landed in Boston, and I was particularly anxious to meet my fiancée and see if his looks or personality had changed since we had been apart. He picked me up at the airport dressed up in a suit, with flowers, a new haircut, and his big trademark smile.

He really did look handsome, but the most striking thing about him was not his outward appearance but his countenance and quiet disposition. His face was smooth and relaxed, almost glowing. All the previous anger creases on his forehead seemed to have faded away, and he was standing there, looking at me with gentle, loving eyes. When he spoke to me, I felt that he had such a peaceful and content heart. It was evident that he had been transformed into a better person, and I was grateful to God.

This airport encounter with Vuthy was the turning point in my spiritual life. God had renewed my faith through Vuthy, just as the Bible says:

“...that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives [or husbands in this case], when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear” (1 Pet 3:1–2).

Witnessing his transformation, I agreed with Vuthy to attend the Friday evening Bible studies and Sabbath services. The sermons and

Bible studies sparked my interest, and I was beginning to understand God's words for the very first time.

I grew fond of the church sisters, and having fellowship soon became my favorite pastime. I was supposed to return to France after the holiday break to finish my studies abroad, but I was no longer interested in pursuing my vain goals in life. Instead, I decided with Vuthy to pursue a peaceful and joyful life in the Holy Spirit, and to get baptized and married together in Christ.

After a confirming prayer to God, Vuthy and I happily decided to get married that summer. The entire Boston congregation traveled down to the Elizabeth Church in New Jersey for the baptism on April 25, 1999, and then again on July 10 for our blessed wedding ceremony. To top the year, God blessed me with the Holy Spirit during our honeymoon—two weeks in Philadelphia at the National Youth Theological Seminar.

A RELATIONSHIP RESTORED

Vuthy's faith could only carry me so far, and I needed God to touch me directly so that my faith could rise to the next level of independence. For me, that moment of confirmation occurred when God released me from the bondage of hate and resentment.

As explained before, I did not have an ideal childhood because of my parents' divorce. Living for the most part with my father, I never really developed a good relationship with my mother. I hated my stepfather (now her ex-husband) for sabotaging my family, but I also resented my mother for not being around when I needed maternal love. My animosity toward her reached its fullest during my time in Paris, when I wrote her an emotional letter and made up my mind that I no longer wanted anything to do with her.

I had decided that I would never call her again, yet when I returned to Boston and Vuthy and I decided to get married, she was the first person I thought of. I had not spoken to her for six months, and I remember crying and feeling very sorry for myself because I could not share the good news of my marriage with my own mother. Vuthy felt sad for me and encouraged me to pray to God.

I took his advice, knelt down, and prayed to God with tears to release me from my sorrow. Amazingly, right after the prayer, the phone rang—it was my mother! She had received the letter I wrote to her from France some time ago, and she wanted to speak to me about it. We ended up talking over the phone for two hours about everything from the past to the present and my future marriage.

This was the first time that my mother really opened up to me, and I felt like I was getting to know her for the first time. I cannot explain how joyous and lighthearted I felt after I spoke to my mother that night. I no longer had any feelings of resentment or animosity toward her. God had answered my prayers and miraculously restored my relationship with my mother.

FREED FROM THE BONDAGE OF HATE

A few months later I flew to California for my maternal grandfather's funeral. It was very nice to see my mother again and to kick off our newfound mother-daughter relationship. I told her how I had found God and the truth in the Bible, and she was very receptive and happy for me.

I was feeling very joyous and everything was going well, until I saw my mother's ex-husband at the funeral home. Upon seeing him, all the deep feelings of hatred and resentment that I had kept bottled up for over ten years poured out of my heart. I truly despised him and I could not conceal it any longer, lest I burst. I purposely did not speak to him all day and tried to avoid seeing his face, but I could not stop thinking about him and recounting how much suffering this man had caused me and my family to endure.

That evening I was feeling very down and heavy-hearted, so I sought to find some peace in reading the Bible. I had only been seeking the truth for about five months, and I decided to read Matthew for the first time. It is amazing how God opened my spiritual eyes to see how true and living the Holy Bible is. I was able to absorb every verse that I read, and it was as if God was speaking to me directly when I read Matthew 5:43–48:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you

and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Tears fell down my cheek as I read these verses and thought about how far from perfect my character is. I am nothing but a tax collector, not worthy to be called a child of God. I did not love, but hated my mother's ex-husband; I did not bless, but cursed him in my heart; I did no good to him; I did not pray for him; and I did not greet him when I saw him at the funeral home.

I felt very ashamed, but at the same time, I could not help the way I felt about this man. I could not just forget the painful memories or erase my emotional wounds and suddenly love a man that I had despised for over ten years. People just don't change overnight.

I knelt down, repented for my evil heart, and prayed with tears to God: "God, I do not have the strength in me to do what You want me to do. If You want me to forgive and have love for this man, then You must help me, for I cannot possibly do it on my own."

That prayer was one of the best prayers that I had in my life. When I got up from my prayer, I felt like a thousand-pound burden of hatred and strife was lifted off of my chest. I was finally released from carrying this burden of sin. God had touched me deeply, and He did what was impossible for me to do by myself. He had changed my heart and vanquished over ten years of built-up anger and resentment within twenty minutes of prayer.

This change of heart was not just a temporary disposition. The next morning, I saw my mother's ex-husband again at the funeral home. By God's grace, I truly did not feel any animosity toward him. In fact, I actually felt sorry for this man for the way he was, and I wished in my heart that he would someday be able to know God and behold the same peace and joy that I had received from Him. I even walked right up to him and sincerely greeted him with a smile.

I had forgiven him and he did not even know it. But he did not need to know it. This internal conflict was not really between me and him,

but between me and God, and it could only be resolved through God. Fortunately, our Lord is the world's greatest Mediator.

GOD'S LIVING SPIRIT

Reflecting upon the wonderful life I now have in Christ, I am truly grateful to God. It is funny how I rarely thought about God before, except during Christmas or Easter—but once the depressing holidays passed, I would again put God on the back burner.

Once in a while, I would feel really down and have an incredible urge to go to a church to be nearer to God. But every time I went to the chapel and sat down, hoping my soul would be comforted, I would feel nothing but emptiness. Eventually, I would rise and exit the building after just sitting and staring at Jesus' cross for a few minutes.

The cathedrals that I have visited are grand and beautiful indeed, but I was not searching for aesthetic beauty—I was seeking for God's living Spirit. I know now that the reason why my soul was not satisfied from being in church was simply because God was not there.

In 1 Corinthians 17:24, Paul states,

"God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands."

Even though I earnestly sought for him, I realize now, after receiving the true gospel and Holy Spirit, that God does not reside inside a man-made building of brick and mortar. For

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:24).

I really thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit and for opening my eyes to find the truth of the Bible. I can now be sure that God exists and that He really listens to our prayers. Best of all, I am comforted in knowing that after all is past, there is the hope of everlasting life in His kingdom. ●

14. Jesus Keeps His Own to the End

Author: Robert Cass

Location: Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

THE FIRST TIME

My journey to Christ began when I was ten years old. A friend had invited my mom, sister and me to her church. The speaker preached a simple message: “Accept Jesus into your heart and you will go to heaven; otherwise you will go to hell.” And we did as we were told—accepting quite readily and saying a simple prayer.

I was a bit of a delinquent prior to this experience, but for the next several years I tried to understand God and to pray to Him, and I tried to be a good person. I can’t say that I deeply felt the love of God at that time. My understanding was that it was my duty to be good and God is somewhere being God.

Then the rug was pulled out from under us. I was seventeen when my father and I both contracted a subtle but complex sinus infection. It was so insidious that neither of us was aware that our blood sugar levels had slowly crept to near-death ranges over time. I became very depressed and my grades dropped. I left my good friends and was soon doing drugs in the arcade across the street from the church.

The infection plagued me for a few years and my life continued to plummet. I had lost whatever I had known of God. I was separated from my family and was now unwed with a child of my own. Finally, the cure came, and while I still maintained permanent damage from the infection, my blood sugar level normalized and I was once again given a clean bill of health.

Within a short time, an old youth pastor invited me back to his church. I went and amazingly, I repented in great sorrow for my departure from the faith.

I began to pursue God with great fervor. I had been given a second chance and was truly grateful. I spent hours each day reading the Bible, and the spirit of God brought Jesus' words to life in my heart.

My soul and spirit always seemed to focus on Jesus' exhortations on giving. Moreover, my best friend, who supported a few dozen children in foreign countries, would preach to me continually on the topic. So I decided that giving to the poor would be my way to repay the Lord, and I desired to share my possessions with the poor.

BY MY OWN MEANS

I had never heard of spiritual gifts before, but one day I ended up at a Christian camp where everyone was speaking in tongues. I didn't know what was going on, but I remembered the preacher saying how he had all nine spiritual gifts.

I was coaxed to the front with several others. Immediately, he came over to me and put his hand on my stomach and prayed for me. "What is he doing?" I thought. At the time, my stomach had protruded noticeably due to the side effects of my illness. But more significantly, many came around and prayed for me. I felt this tremendous power come over me.

I was filled with an incredible love that is hard to describe other than to say that I was immersed in the love of God. For three days I walked around saying "God bless you" to everyone. I had never experienced the love of God in that way before, and I wanted to share it with everybody. All I thought about was how much God loves me. My stomach was completely healed within a few days—almost as a bonus to all of this.

I knew quickly that God was real and worked miracles, of which I saw many, and I began to believe that my purpose as a Christian was to believe Jesus' words with faith, and to see His miracles take place.

Then my faith encountered a challenge. My sinus cavities had suffered permanent damage, and I would experience terrible cracking sensations. I was in love and I wanted to marry, but I also did not want to marry in poor health. So I began praying to God and reciting the Scriptures over and over. I fasted for several months—two or

three days a week. The next year I did the same and the year after. But nothing happened.

My relationship with God became tiresome, even though I continued to worship. I raised my hands in the church while no one else did, but at the same time I questioned my spiritual well-being.

My prayers grew more frantic because I felt God did not hear me. And finally, in the midst of great pain one night, I decided to give up and never ask God about anything again.

THROUGH HIS SPIRIT

Then I met this girl at work whom I knew attended a church called the True Jesus Church. At first, I had thought it was a cool church name. She would never come to the Bible studies I so gallantly and dutifully hosted in our office for a God I didn't seem to know. But there was something different about her. She had this joy, peace, and confidence about her that I didn't have. She seemed to have an assurance in faith that came naturally.

So I told her I wanted to go to her church. My first visit to the True Jesus Church was during a special service.

I really liked the church, and everyone prayed in tongues. I had enjoyed praying in tongues with my previous church, but my tongue was different.

Before I came to this church, I thought I knew something about God. Yes, give to the poor, I thought, and speak in tongues. And at that time, it so happened I managed to give most of what I owned to the poor. Yet I felt nothing. What else is there? I received no joy at all. What was going on? This was supposed to be the climax of my Christian experience.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. (1 Cor 13:3)

Then things began to change. Within the same week, there was a spiritual convocation at the True Jesus Church. During prayer, I wondered when they were going to stop because my mouth was getting sore. Then I was coaxed up to the front again for more praying in tongues! I went up to be a good sport, but I was tired of "praying in tongues."

At the front of the chapel I said a silent prayer in my heart, “Please help me, Holy Spirit.” No sooner had I said it that a pulse went through my body. My tongue started rolling as fast as a fan, and my body was shaking and vibrating. The tongues I was praying were completely different than before and not out of my own doing.

I went back home to pray on my own. What was going on? I thought. Didn’t I have the Holy Spirit before? I could not stop praying in the Spirit. The joy and comfort that came in prayer was so uplifting. Pretty soon, I was weeping in my prayers and singing spiritual songs. I felt God’s love very deeply.

GOD’S ASSURANCE

I felt a deep connection with God in finding His church, and I felt very contrite about the time I had sworn never to ask God to help me ever again. These careless words that I had said in the past troubled my conscience.

But one day, while I was distressed over this matter, I heard God’s voice saying, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” I broke down in tears for a while. My Savior loved me still. Of course, it made sense. Why, after all, had He now given me His Spirit?

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” (Rom 8:15)

Suddenly, I began to realize what being a Christian is about. It is not about my giving to the poor, or evangelizing or raising my hands in worship. It was all about God. It was about me just belonging to Him. I have to belong to Him as a child belongs to his father and to abide in Him. If He wants to do anything good in my life, I will let Him do it and let Him receive all the glory.

Thank God, I was baptized in the True Jesus Church a year later. Though baptism may be the most beautiful experience of my life—the testimony of Him washing away my sins—I also feel great assurance in His voice: “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” I truly know now that Jesus keeps His own to the very end no matter where they are, or what church they began in, or how they have messed up trying to seek Him.

And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. (Jn 10:28–29)

And Paul also said:

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 8:38–39)

I can now say that the complete gospel is necessary for salvation. When I had walked across the street from the first church I attended and, as a teenager, started doing drugs, no one even tried to stop me. There was no power of God to help me overcome. And likewise, when my faith strayed away from the truth, no one could rescue me. I was just following the preaching.

I give tremendous thanks to God for preserving the True Jesus Church in the true faith, so that the members can continue learning His words and remain faithful to live in the Spirit. This church has not gone off on spiritual tangents, or tried to please God by her own means. He has kept her in His truth by His Spirit and His love.

I pray that we are able to continue to abide in Him until the end.
Amen. 🙏

15. I Will Go One More Time

Author: Iris Chiang

Location: Garden Grove, California, USA

A NEW FRIEND

In the fall of 1999, I left Taiwan for San Francisco to continue my education. At one of the school computer labs, I made friends with someone who worked there, and when he learned that I had just come to the United States, he was very kind to offer me help.

I assumed that he so eagerly took care of me because he liked me. But surprisingly, I realized later that he was equally helpful with everyone else. His conduct puzzled me.

Having grown up in big cities, I was taught to be suspicious of people and was accustomed to white lies. Also, having worked as a reporter at a periodicals office, I have met many successful people and, from their experiences, I quickly learned about the seedy side of society.

So I did not expect to meet someone as naïve as my friend. I decided that he must live a miserable life. But after observing him over a long period of time, I could see that he lived very happily. And he would give thanks to God whenever something good happened.

I believed that people should work hard for themselves and not rely on God. After all, does God really exist? I had gone to different religious institutions and had never felt God.

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

I still remember it was a Friday night when I went to the church with this friend.

The minister cited many miracles to prove God's existence but I didn't think much of the sermon. Instead, I wanted to ask him if he could prove that these miracles came from a supernatural force.

The minister continued, "Everyone has sinned. We must acknowledge our sins before God, pray for the Holy Spirit, and then we can enter the heavenly kingdom in the future. When one receives the Holy Spirit, he will speak in an unknown tongue."

At that point, I realized that I might have stepped into a cult of some sort.

When the sermon concluded, the minister invited everyone to go to the front of the chapel to pray. He said, "Those who have sickness or would like to pray for the Holy Spirit can come forward, and the ministers will help you by the laying of hands. When you pray aloud to him, God will fulfill your request." Seeing everyone standing up and walking forward, I braced myself and went, too.

We knelt down and, when everyone started to pray, I immediately understood what the minister meant when he asked the congregation to pray aloud. I was startled by the sound of praying in tongues, and my fear of having gone to the wrong church was further confirmed.

I kept thinking to myself, "When is the prayer going to end?" Since I had never knelt this long in my life, I was sweating and feeling faint. So I prayed to God, "Please end this prayer soon. I don't want to faint and be embarrassed."

Thank God, I suppose this was my first miracle—that I knelt for thirty minutes and didn't faint. But I vowed in my heart that I would never go there again.

"YOU HAVE TO EXPERIENCE FAITH"

Afterwards, my friend said to me, "You have to experience faith." I replied, "How do you experience faith?" He said, "When you receive the Holy Spirit, you will know that God exists, and many questions that you have will be resolved."

He said with further conviction, "The Bible promises us: Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it will

be opened to you. As long as you are willing to pray for it, God will surely give you the Holy Spirit.”

I was still very skeptical of the existence of the Holy Spirit. I thought that people usually seek God when they want their sickness healed or when they have difficulties in life.

I was very satisfied with my life, and I couldn't find anything I needed to ask of God. Besides, I didn't think I had committed any sins to ask God's forgiveness. As far as I was concerned, I didn't need God's forgiveness, and I didn't have any reason to believe in Him.

MY OWN MIRACLE

Even though I constantly questioned his religion, my friend never gave up on bringing me to church services. So, I told him, “I will go one more time. But if I do not experience God this time, please don't try to persuade me that God exists or ask me to go to church ever again.”

I went to the church again on a Sabbath. When I knelt down in prayer and said, “Hallelujah! Praise the Lord,” my hands began to shake slightly.

Now I was curious.

Just to make sure that I didn't shake my own hands, I decided to go to the church the following week.

On the following Saturday morning, I woke up feeling that I would receive the Holy Spirit that day. And a brother delivered a morning sermon that touched me deeply and struck a chord within me.

What was more miraculous was that I could readily open the Bible to the passage he was referring to. Even the sister who was helping me with the Bible asked, “Are you a Christian? Is that why you are so familiar with the Bible?”

I had never read the Bible. When the sermon concluded, I felt the urge to pray. So my friend suggested to me, “There is a thirty-minute prayer session in the chapel before lunch.” I decided to stay for the prayer session.

I knelt in a corner where no one was around and prayed, saying, “Hallelujah! Praise the Lord.” My hands began to shake slightly like

the last time. I thought to myself, “If there’s a God, please let me experience Him and give me the Holy Spirit!”

As I was thinking that, I felt a ray of light shining on me from behind like a warm current. My hands shook more vigorously, and I began to speak in an unknown tongue.

At this moment, I felt a wonderful message entering my heart: my well-being and the blessings in my life did not come from luck or my own diligence but from God’s grace that He had freely given me.

In my prayer, I thought about my relationship with others. I realized that there were many times when I had a conflict of interest with another, and I would struggle to love and help them. God opened my eyes to see how often my own interests took precedence over others’.

The more deeply I prayed, the more I realized that I was just as much a sinner as everyone else. It finally dawned on me that God really exists in this world. He knew my doubts. Only He could humble me and, in an instant, show me how insignificant I was and how I needed to recognize my own sins.

God opened my heart to understand that sin is not defined by human standards of morality or law. If I don’t belong to God, I am a slave to the sins of this world. And only through Jesus Christ can my sins be pardoned and cleansed.

At the same time, God allowed me to understand a lesson far greater than sin—His love for me.

I BECAME HIS

The moment when I realized that God had changed my heart, my tears began to flow uncontrollably, but the joy in my heart was unlike anything I had ever experienced before.

I felt like a lost sheep who had found her way home. When the concluding bell rang to end the prayer, I realized that I had prayed for thirty minutes. After this miraculous experience, I finally believed that this was the church in which God abides. Praise God!

I became His when I received baptism in October 2000.

The Holy Spirit strengthened me so that I would willingly and actively study the Bible. I knew that I could only receive true joy and peace by accepting the Lord Jesus as my Savior.

Before I believed in the Lord, I thought I was happy and blessed. But after my conversion, I really understood what true bliss is all about. It is so enlightening to have faith in God.

He is almost like a round-the-clock bodyguard and a psychiatrist who sees to my troubles at no cost. What is more miraculous is that I do not need to say anything. God already knows what I need through my prayers, and He comforts me with the Holy Spirit.

Often, I find that what God gives me far exceeds and outweighs what I pray for.

How capable are men? Can we really control our lives? I could never have imagined that one day I would testify for the Lord. We should not draw conclusions prematurely about things we don't understand.

God exists in this world. Through the Holy Spirit that dwells in us, we can experience His abidance, as long as we give ourselves the opportunity to accept and believe in Him.

May all the glory and praise be unto our heavenly Father. Amen. ●

16. In Hopelessness I Met God

Author: Jason Yu

Location: Baldwin Park, California, USA

Youth is the golden period of life and a time when hopes are high and the future bright.

But for me, a 20-year-old freshman in college, I was addicted to drugs. My outlook on life was bleak. In the midst of a severe drug addiction, I became dreary and desolate—losing all hope in life to the point that even my family was ready to give up on me.

ADDICTED TO DRUGS

In 1990, my father sent me to the United States to continue my studies. Coming from Taiwan and not having my immediate family with me, I stayed with my aunt and attended high school in New Jersey. Since she was very strict with me, I decided to apply to the University of Arizona because I wanted more freedom.

My wish was realized in 1995. As I moved into the dormitory, I felt like a bird suddenly released from its cage. I was bursting with excitement and joy! With the luxury car my father gave me, I went to many parties where alcohol and drugs were consumed.

Curious and naive, I tried everything. I told myself, “I’m strong and I can control myself.” Unfortunately, I overestimated myself and, before I knew it, I became addicted. I knew something was wrong when the drug use and spending escalated. I told myself to stay away from drugs but I caved into my cravings time and again.

What shocked me most was losing my hair. Because of heavy drug use, my hair came off by the handful each time I combed through it. It made me so anxious that, at one point, I shaved it all off, thinking that it would grow back fuller. But even that was futile. Growing bald

at 20 when appearance means everything was a terrible blow to my ego. It made me lose a lot of confidence in myself and it devastated me. With the way I looked, any possibility of finding romance was out of the picture, too.

Between 1996 and 1998, I became deeply troubled over my baldness. I wore a baseball cap everyday and hid from visitors. I was going insane. Once, I even thought of getting a hair transplant, but the transplant would not work with the little hair that remained.

Crushed, I turned to alcohol to numb the pain. I continued to take drugs and wallowed in self-pity and depression. My grades suffered and I was eventually expelled from school.

FAMILY TURMOIL

Realizing his son was wasting away, my father urged me to stay with my brother in California for a change. So from 1998 to 1999, I attended college in California. But I still could not extricate myself from the deep addiction.

At this point, even my family was apprehensive about hearing from me. My sister, Ruo-Lan, lamented in retrospect, “My brother would often disappear for two to three days at a time. Whenever he called, he wanted money to redeem himself from drug dealers. He was terribly threatened. I was so nervous everyday and was afraid to receive his calls.”

As heartbreaking as it is for me to recount this, my mother even knelt down in front of me and begged me to turn from my ways. But at the time, my heart was hardened and my body enslaved to drugs.

Everyone in the family felt hopeless and did not really know what to do. My father wanted me to start off on a clean slate by going back to Taiwan to serve in the military, but having been in the U.S. for eleven years and not graduating from college was too embarrassing for me to go back.

I was so lost that I even thought about becoming a Buddhist monk. In such helplessness, I decided to take my grandmother’s advice: “Believe in Jesus! This is the only way.”

SEARCHING FOR GOD

From then on, I would turn to the gospel channel at night, and soon I began to experience extraordinary things.

When I wanted to smoke, I would hear the TV evangelist preaching against smoking. When I loitered on the streets, I would hear voices or messages telling me to go home. When I wanted to read or watch pornography, either I could not reach the magazines under the sofa or the tapes were somehow erased.

At that time, I didn't understand the spiritual realm and thought that some extra-terrestrial beings were guiding me. As I watched the gospel channel, I also learned to read the Bible. I often came across Bible verses that urged me not to fall into the traps of the devil.

Slowly, I realized that God detested filthy things, and so I burned all the pornographic materials I had. I also started to pray and asked God to deliver me. Oftentimes, my desolation humbled me to tears and hopelessness.

One time, a True Jesus Church member introduced the gospel to my brother. But since my brother did not believe in God, my sister was invited to church instead. She went to church to pray for me—to ask God to help me. When she got back that night, she said, “It's so amazing! The Holy Spirit is in the True Jesus Church!”

GUIDANCE TO THE TRUE JESUS CHURCH

I wanted to go to the church, but I hesitated because of my baldness. Besides, wouldn't it be the same for me to pray and study the Bible at home?

Even so, God moved a church sister to invite me to the church. Because of my baldness, I repeatedly declined her invitations. Despite her persistence, I told her, “I've made up my mind, please don't call me again.”

I thought to myself, “Why won't she give up and hang up?” Then I said to her, “If God calls me to go, then I will go!” Before she hung up she said, “Okay, that's fine. Why don't you write down the address of our church: B-a-l-d-w-i-n, Baldwin Park Church.”

I was stunned when I heard the address. What does she mean—Bald Win? The bald will win? I've been struggling with baldness since I was 20. Does this mean that God wants me to go to this church and I will overcome my baldness? Does this mean I'm going to win?

This really gave me hope and I later asked Ruo-Lan, "Is it true that the church is in Baldwin?" When she confirmed it, I cried aloud, "The Lord Jesus has mercy on me! I want to go to church! I want to go to church!"

Wanting to go to church is one thing, but having to face people with my baldness was much harder. I was struggling emotionally when I first visited the church. I even put on some hair-enhancing spray. After I went home from church, I dreamt that my hair grew back. This could only be the wonderful assurance of God.

In subsequent services, I felt that God spoke to me through the sermons. Many times, I was deeply moved and realized that I should not be so uneasy with my appearance. There were only two things that really mattered: fearing God and hating sin.

I also experienced the word of God:

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"
(Hebrews 4:12).

As I came to understand the Bible, I stopped wearing my baseball cap. I was no longer afraid to reveal my true self in the church and in my worship. I also repented completely before God and asked Him to forgive my past transgressions. Overwhelmed by my past sins, I could only rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome my weaknesses.

RENEWED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

I was determined to pray for the Holy Spirit everyday. By December 2000, I started to fast and pray before services. I told myself, "I will always remember the day when God gives me the Holy Spirit." In the morning of December 25, I encouraged myself to fast and focus on prayer in the church.

In tears, I repented of all my past transgressions. Then, a great surge of heat came upon me while I was deep in prayer. It was as if my

whole body was electrified. I felt a strong current coursing through my hands. It was an experience of God's power I would never forget. After prayer, several church members told me that when one receives the Holy Spirit, one would be joyful and speak in tongue.

I could not speak in tongue, yet, but I decided to pray again the next day. The next day, I prayed wholeheartedly, and the same power came back again, but I did not speak in tongue. Later, the pastor advised me not to be too tense. Soon after that, I received the Holy Spirit.

It's great to receive the Holy Spirit. When I have bad thoughts, the Holy Spirit rebukes me and heightens my awareness of them. I then submit to the Holy Spirit and the thoughts disappear right away. Whenever I feel the urge to use drugs, smoke, or drink, I pray in the spirit. The Holy Spirit helps me overcome the desires, and I once again find peace, happiness, and joy in the Lord.

In March 2001, I was baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. I felt like a new man after baptism because all my burdens were removed. In the past, I was an empty and hopeless shell, harboring suicidal thoughts, wreaking havoc on my family, and loitering on the streets.

Yet, the merciful Lord pulled me out of darkness and brought me into the light. He chose me and gave me the Holy Spirit; He enabled me to be reborn. All that I have and all that I am is from Him. This is why I feel so strongly about Luke 1:79:

"To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Yes, only the Almighty God can perform such a miracle. Having experienced God's grace, I'm always joyful to see the Light in my life. The transformation from my struggles to my triumph over sin encourages me to journey on the path of light.

In church, I've experienced the true love of the brothers and sisters, and I can finally let go of past resentments. I am also compelled to turn this grace into action—to share His grace with others.

The Lord Jesus is "[my] way, [my] truth, and [my] life" (John 14:6). ●

Lost and Found

1. God Has Always Been with Me

Author: Carol Chan

Location: Houston, Texas, USA

A COMPLACENT LIFE

I have been a member of the True Jesus Church ever since I was baptized at the age of two weeks. At the time, I was very sick with asthma and my mom didn't think I would survive, but I pulled through after the baptism.

When I was four, my family moved to Vancouver, Canada, and thankfully my asthma soon disappeared. However, my family stopped going to church after we immigrated, so growing up I didn't know who God was, and I didn't pursue Him, read the Bible, or pray. During my third year at university, my parents, after some encouragement from a church member, decided to rejoin Sabbath services, and I followed them.

After graduating from university, I got a great job with a major airline that allowed me to travel the world for next to nothing. My mother not only bought me a car, she bought me clothes, packed my lunches, and allowed me to live at home rent-free. My colleagues thought I was so pampered and lucky! I thought I was invincible.

My spiritual life, however, was in decay. Although I attended services consistently, I was always the last to arrive and the first to leave. When members invited me to stay for lunch I would decline and make excuses.

I had many worldly friends, and every weekend I had something to do and somewhere to go. I couldn't even pray for five minutes without fidgeting. During such a short prayer, I would be thinking about

movies and lunch and what I wanted to eat. For me, food was more important than anything.

My life was so smooth and complacent that I felt I really didn't need God at all. But I thank God that it was not His will for me to continue living my life without Him.

FEELING LONELY AND HOPELESS

In 1999, I got married to a non-believer. Two years later, my husband was relocated, and we moved to Copenhagen, a beautiful city with much to do and enjoy. With hardly any notice, we were transferred in the winter of 2002 to a tiny fishing and oil town in Norway.

My world turned upside down. From having friends, a great job, and so many good things provided by my parents to having no friends, no job, and no parents close by, I became extremely bored and lonely. I would walk through town wishing someone would talk to me.

Not only was it lonely, the winters were difficult to live through. Each day was bitterly cold, and some days would be dark for almost twenty-one hours. I also did not have the luxury of owning a car, so I took the bus through the harsh winters, walking to the stops and waiting for the bus in the cold, dark, and sleet.

We lived in an apartment on a hill, and the sidewalk froze whenever it was cold, causing me to slip and fall every time I went shopping. The worst part was that everything cost about three times more than what I was used to. For example, a restaurant pizza cost about fifty dollars and a Coke seven dollars. Because I enjoyed food so much, this was a truly horrible situation. My husband and I grudgingly ate canned food and rice to save money.

I complained to my husband and said I couldn't live like this, and he told me not to worry because we would be there for only a few months. But then one day he received word that we would need to stay a minimum of two years. I started to get really worried. I didn't want my life to consist of feeling bored, sad, and lonely all the time and having to pay an exorbitant amount of money for everything.

For the first time in my life, I suffered panic attacks. Then I developed insomnia and anxiety until everything snowballed into a state of depression. Every day, I felt this darkness surround me, and I didn't

want to get out of bed. I didn't feel like doing anything and would constantly cry. The worst part was that my brain could not switch off even when I wanted it to.

In this state of hopelessness, I started to seek God for the first time. He moved my heart so that I would kneel down and pray, and I also started to sing hymns.

One night, I dreamt that I was praying with the Holy Spirit, and I was joyful when I woke up. But the insomnia didn't improve. I was so exhausted and anxious that I didn't even want to live anymore. There was no joy in my heart. I thought that I would end up in a mental asylum and people would forget about me.

I talked to my parents about my struggles, and my dad suggested that I go home for some rest and spiritual healing. It was two weeks since I had last slept, and, needless to say, I was a basket case.

The next morning, I was on a plane back to Vancouver.

JOY AND SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

My dad and a church sister picked me up from the airport and took me home. A couple of hours later, the pastor arrived at my father's request. The first thing he asked me was if I had the Holy Spirit. Please, I thought, don't talk to me about the Holy Spirit, I just desperately need something that will help me sleep.

He kept telling me to "ask, seek, and knock," so we got on our knees and prayed. As we prayed, I heard the church sister sing the beginning of "Frère Jacques," a French nursery song. The English translation of the lyrics is "Are you sleeping, are you sleeping, brother John? Morning bells are ringing, ding dang dong."

I thought this was quite peculiar and questioned her about it afterward. She replied that she was not even aware she was singing it! From that day forth, I was moved to pray for the Holy Spirit because God cared about me and understood my troubles.

That night, I lay in bed for several hours and tried unsuccessfully to fall asleep. When I closed my eyes in another attempt to sleep, it suddenly felt like my body was moving at great speed through dark space. I opened my eyes and saw that I was still in bed.

When I closed my eyes, the vision came back. As my body hurtled through the dark space, a giant wall of fire appeared before me. And as I went through the fire, I cried out, “God help me!”

I opened my eyes, and the vision vanished. I wondered what it meant. The fire didn’t feel sinister in any way. On the contrary, my faith was strengthened. It wasn’t until much later that the vision made sense after I stumbled across the following Bible verse:

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (Mt 3:11)

The next day was Sabbath, and I had gone fifteen days without sleeping through the night. I attended service and earnestly prayed for the Holy Spirit. I was so exhausted, but I paid careful attention to the sermon. It felt like my soul was thirsting for the truth.

That night, my brain switched off and I slept, albeit fitfully. I was so thankful that I could be refreshed even just a little bit to continue my spiritual pursuit.

Throughout the week, my insomnia would come and go. I continued to pray for the Holy Spirit but didn’t notice any change in the way I prayed until Friday. What happened during the Friday evening service is something that I will never forget.

The pastor invited the congregation to come up and pray in the front of the chapel to receive the laying of hands, so I went up. During the prayer, I felt the pastor lay hands on me, but nothing happened and he moved on.

All of a sudden, I felt a shot of electricity go through my body, and I couldn’t control my tongue, which seemed to be going a hundred miles an hour. My first thought was, “So this is what it’s like to have the Holy Spirit.” During the prayer, I was so thankful and joyful that, after all these years, God granted me His precious Spirit. I felt that God took away my sins that night.

I thought that everything would be fine after I received the Holy Spirit, but it wasn’t. I went through a period of doubt and spiritual battles because I didn’t understand why God gave me, a sinner, this gift.

I discussed my doubts with a sister, and she explained, “It’s not our place to ask why. When we receive a gift, we just say, “Thank you.”” I realized that she was right, that we shouldn’t question God but should accept what He gives us.

So in my prayers, I stopped doubting and instead gave thanks to God for the Holy Spirit. After praying in this way, I started to have a healthier attitude and began to recover from my depression. More significantly, my insomnia ebbed away.

When I thought about going back to Norway, however, I worried that I would revert to my depressed and hopeless state. I would be alone in faith, with no spiritual companions. I spent a lot of my time in prayer asking for God’s help. I thank God that He granted me the peace that I prayed for.

After eight weeks back at home in Vancouver, I was spiritually renewed and filled with joy at the prospect of reuniting with my husband and getting to know God better.

THE BLESSINGS AND PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Matthew 6:33 says,

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

I earnestly sought God’s kingdom and righteousness, and blessings began to pour into my life.

On my flight back to Norway, I thought that since I had gone through so much, it would be nice to take a trip to Italy with my husband. The following week, my husband called me from work and said the company had just given him a free one-week trip for two to Italy and asked if I wanted to go.

Another time, I was on the bus and decided that I would have Bible study and sing hymns that night. My husband usually watched television after dinner, so I was worried that I wouldn’t be able to concentrate. That night, I told my husband that I was going to have Bible study, and he said he was going to watch television. He turned on the television and the cable was out. I had my Bible study for one hour and the cable came back on after that.

Three months in Norway turned into five and a half years. By the end of those years, I had many friends and a good job. God also provided a new place for us to live. I no longer slipped and fell going to and from the market because our new apartment was above a supermarket.

My husband was facing another transfer, and it was possible that we would have to move elsewhere within Europe or to North Africa. I was worried that we would be sent to a country where there was no True Jesus Church. Although I had maintained my faith in Norway, I wanted to be able to worship with other members.

While we were vacationing in Vancouver in the spring of 2008, we received a long-awaited phone call concerning our move. My husband told me that his company wanted to offer him a position in Houston. I was so happy! Not only did God hear my prayers, He knew my thoughts and worries and understood my needs.

In Houston, blessings from God poured in. I fasted and prayed for things to go smoothly when we moved, and God gave me a great apartment and a great job soon after arriving. I thank God that I am able to attend Houston Church and have the opportunity to serve Him. Not only can I worship with other members, I also get to fellowship with them and enjoy this blessing!

I have a greater understanding now for what Paul wrote to the church in Rome:

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

(Rom 5:3–5)

I believe that I wouldn't be here today if I hadn't suffered panic attacks, depression, and insomnia. I would not have actively sought God because my life was so smooth and carefree in Vancouver. But through tribulations, I turned back to God and He renewed me.

When I look back at my life, I can see how God has always been with me even though I turned my back on Him. He has blessed me my whole life, but I never appreciated His blessings or made the effort to follow Him until I faced difficulties.

My encouragement is for members who are blessed with a good life—be careful and maintain your faith because this is the time that you may face trials and fall. But if you fall, don't forget to look for God. He is the only one who can bring you back up. ●

Miracles of Healing

III

1. In His Hands

Author: Robert Kealiinohomoku

Location: Maui, Hawaii, USA

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I testify. I praise God that He has given me this opportunity to share about the amazing grace of His love in my life.

I used to play football in high school in beautiful Hawaii, but my love and ambitions for the game ended when I was severely injured in the neck with a concussion. I couldn't remember what had happened to me when I woke up at the hospital the next day.

The doctors were amazed that I was still alive and was able to walk, because my condition was as severe as the one Christopher Reeves, the actor, suffered. The only difference was the cause of the accident; Mr. Reeves fell off a horse.

At the time of my accident, my parents were away on the mainland, and I had no other family on the island. Fortunately, there were a couple of church members that were watching over the prayer house in Maui. They heard about my accident and immediately came to the hospital to see me.

The doctors basically told us that my football career was over. They also said I was lucky that I wasn't paralyzed and was still able to move. During the week-long stay at the hospital, I prayed and thanked God for each additional breath He was giving me.

Even though my football career was short-lived, God opened another road for me. After I finished high school, He allowed me the opportunity to go to the mainland to study culinary arts.

GOD PLANS OUR STEPS

After I finished college, God allowed me to come back to the island and work in a resort where I met my wife. In 1996, I moved to the main island to become the head chef, and from 1996 to 2001, I kept moving up the corporate ladder.

God definitely blessed me in my job by guiding me and protecting me. In August, 2001, I found out that my wife was pregnant with our third child. At the same time, I was invited to New York to do a cooking exhibition for the James Beard foundation.

My partner and I were supposed to attend this convention together and cook in front of the press, but the two of us were working through some disagreements about our work. As we got closer to the date, I got a bad vibe about the trip so I asked to be replaced.

I talked to my wife about it and she was very unhappy because we had planned to go to New York together. But I had already made up my mind. Lo and behold, the day we were supposed to return from New York was September 11, the day the terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in New York.

That morning, my wife called me at work and told me to turn on the TV, and I couldn't believe my eyes. I prayed for the people who went there and took my place, and I thanked God for not allowing me to go. The chef and the other helpers who went up were stuck in New York for three weeks. They couldn't come back and their families waited anxiously back on the islands. When they finally came back, there was a difference in them. Some of the people were traumatized and had to get professional help.

TRIALS AND SUFFERING

In February 2002 I got into a minor car accident, and my neck problem came back again. The doctors found out through x-rays that my neck bone had moved one centimeter over and there was a gap between the first and second vertebrae.

They concluded that the first and second vertebrae had to be fused with a piece of bone from my hip. In April, we decided to schedule the surgery so that I could fully recover. Since it would be my first surgery, the neurosurgeon explained all my options.

He told me that I might be in a neck brace, and if worse, a halo. A halo is a metal cage placed on the head to support the surgery, and screws are inserted into strategic areas in the skull to help the bone grow and heal properly.

When I went into surgery, all the brothers and sisters in Honolulu were praying for me. I was very afraid. I prayed to God, and He gave me the strength to be positive and to think positive.

When I woke up after the operation, I discovered this cage over my head. Fortunately, two of the three procedures were successful. The doctor was right after all — I needed to be placed in the halo, and my wife told me I had to keep it on for twelve weeks.

I wanted to get out of the hospital as quickly as possible. The doctors said I couldn't leave until I could start walking. But thank God, I was walking the day after surgery, so I checked out of the hospital on the third day.

CLOSER TO GOD

I rented a medical bed that allowed me to get in and out of bed more efficiently, and it also allowed me to sleep through the night. One night, I was awakened by this sharp pain in my head. It felt like I got hit in the head with a bat and was shocked from my electric medical bed at the same time. My wife heard my scream and asked me what had happened, and I told her I didn't know.

Basically, the halo had shifted, and I was bleeding from the screws. I woke my mom up and she instantly gathered us together to pray. The pain was excruciatingly sharp and intensifying, so we rushed to the emergency room at three in the morning.

We had to wait until 7 a.m. before a doctor could see us. They gave me painkillers but they weren't helping. They tried to fix the halo but it wouldn't work either. So we came home and my mom had to drive very slowly. Every bump on the road was causing the screws to scrape against my skull.

After two days of insomnia, I had to go back to the emergency room because of the pain. Again, they gave me more painkillers. It got to a point where I told them I had had enough already. Since the

neurologist in the hospital didn't know what to do, I had to fly to Honolulu. I prayed to God for a smooth trip.

I went directly to the doctor's office after I arrived in Honolulu. Thank God, they were able to fix the halo in less than five minutes, and I slept all the way back home.

Through this period of pain and suffering, I was able to draw closer to God. That June, we attended the youth retreat in Honolulu Church, and I made every effort to go. All the brothers and sisters were so glad that I made it.

It was during that retreat that I had one of the strongest prayers in my life. The two visiting pastors laid hands on me, and I cried like a baby. I was encouraged that I should pray harder because I was acutely aware of God's love and His desire to bless me.

I prayed fervently to receive the Holy Spirit, but it wasn't God's time to give it to me.

HE IS THE GREATEST PHYSICIAN

During my twelve weeks of recovery in the halo, the halo shifted a second time. Three days before I could take it off, the doctors took an x-ray and it showed that the bone fusion didn't work.

They suggested that we wait a year and give the bone some time to heal on its own. So a year later, on May 2, 2003, I went to get another x-ray, and it showed that the bones still didn't fuse together. The doctors told me I had to go through the entire process again. In my heart, I wanted to put this matter in God's hands.

A month later, there was another youth retreat in Honolulu and we decided to attend. During the first few days, my wife was moved to tears in her prayers and she couldn't understand why she was crying. Then later, a sister had a vision, and she saw heaven opening up and rain pouring down. Soon after, my wife received the Holy Spirit, and this greatly comforted and encouraged both of us.

That night, I prayed very deeply to God. I prayed and told God that He was the greatest physician. I told Him that if He could heal me I would entrust my life to Him, and commit myself to serve Him.

Suddenly, I felt the vertebrae in my neck fuse. I was filled with joy.

Everyone encouraged me to continue to pray and to say, “Hallelujah” to Jesus. The next day, I took their advice, and I received the Holy Spirit and started to speak in tongues. I truly thank God for His blessings.

During and after the retreat, I continued to pray and experienced a new body in me. My grandmother passed away while I was there, but God gave me the strength to go to the funeral and overcome my loss. The days in Honolulu were too wonderful for words, and I felt absolute peace from God.

As I look back at my life and the path I took to reach this point, I thank God that He was always with me, that He healed my neck injury, and that He brought me closer to Him.

This has taught me that we must leave our lives in God’s hands. His plan is the best plan. Sometimes in life, we don’t know where we’ll go or what we’re going to do. We really need to pray and entrust our journeys to Him.

Now that God has brought me back into the fold and given me the Holy Spirit, I’m here to give glory to His name, and I hope to be a useful vessel for Him all the days of my life.

The way His hands guide me reminds me of a beautiful passage that was inspired by Job while he was in great suffering:

Did You not pour me out like milk, And curdle me like cheese, Clothe me with skin and flesh, And knit me together in bones and sinews? You have granted me life and favor, And Your care has preserved my spirit.

(Job 10:10–12) ●

2. God Works In Mysterious Ways

Author: Joseph Liu

Location: Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

A DEFECTIVE HEART

Jessica was born on a windy night at 10:30 p.m. in the fall of 1986. After her birth, the two doctors in attendance examined her and pronounced her to be a fine, normal baby. However, Jessica was not known to smile a lot during her infant years.

At the age of approximately twelve months, a community nurse placed a stethoscope on her chest and her eyes widened. She then stated that Jessica had a heart murmur, which appeared quite loud.

We rushed to our family doctor who confirmed that she indeed had a heart murmur. After a few visits to the cardiologist at the Children's Hospital in Vancouver, she was diagnosed with having a hole in the junction of the four chambers of the heart and a deformed mitral valve. Her electrocardiogram (ECG) also showed that she had a loose piece of tissue inside the heart.

The decision was made to operate on her as soon as possible. Our family was extremely upset at hearing this news. Her grandmother, Deaconess Chow, had only been called back to God a few months before.

Jessica was only one year old at the time. Her cardiologist was Dr. Marion Tipple, one of the top children's cardiologists in Canada. She also teaches doctors who are studying to be future children's cardiologists.

The surgeon was Dr. Ashworth. After the first surgery, the hole in the heart was patched with the loose tissue in her heart, but the attempt to repair the mitral valve was only partially successful. Another round of open-heart surgery was deemed necessary in the future.

RECURRING PROBLEMS

Because of her heart problem, she often had very little energy and was very susceptible to even minor illnesses. A minor chest cold would leave her flat on her back, gasping for breath. Rushing her off to the emergency clinic was a regular occurrence, even in the middle of the night.

In 1988, Dr. Tipple decided the only thing to do was to perform the second surgery immediately, this time, to completely remove her mitral valve and replace it with either a pig's valve or an artificial mitral valve.

Either way, because she was an infant, she would need many future heart operations as her heart and valve grow larger. Our family was totally devastated by this news. There was very little we could do but to follow the doctor's recommendation and leave our little girl's future in his hands.

Meanwhile, I had not kept up my faith for more than twenty years, and often went against my mother's teachings about Christ. Having attained higher education, I reasoned that my mother's talk of Christ was not the truth, and I often contradicted her and the Bible.

To make matters worse, British Columbia medical nurses went on strike the same year. Only medical cases that were deemed "life or death" situations were scheduled for surgery and all other surgeries were cancelled. The stress on our family was bearing down heavily.

AN UNSUCCESSFUL SURGERY

One afternoon, our telephone rang and the nurse on the other end told us to bring Jessica in right away, as there was an opening for her surgery the next day. Fearing that this may be the last time we'd see Jessica alive, I made sure everyone gave her a last hug before I took her to the hospital.

Even her grandfather hugged her and refused to let her go. Jessica was two and a half years old by this time. Jessica stayed overnight in the hospital to prepare her for surgery. I stayed with her all night and cradled her in my arms until she went into surgery at eight o'clock the next morning.

The next morning Dr. Leblanc, an established and renowned heart surgeon, came into the hospital room and told me that he had studied Jessica's case in detail the previous night. He said that he would be able to repair Jessica's mitral valve without replacing it with an artificial valve. It brought some joy and relief to us, as there is no better substitute to your body than your own tissue.

After eight hours of surgery, we finally saw Jessica in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU); she was hooked up to half a dozen machines, and she had tubes inside and outside her body. She was asleep and motionless—weighing only nineteen pounds.

We expected her to be in the ICU for two or three days before she would be released to the general ward. On the third day, Jessica was still comatose but I could feel her grip on my finger. Even with her eyes shut her tears still flowed.

The ICU staff tried to wean her off the machines and drugs a number of times, but her heart couldn't handle the strain. She was then hooked up to the machines again. This went on for five or six days.

Finally, on the seventh day, Dr. Leblanc had a meeting with two heart specialists, Dr. Tipple and Dr. Sandoz, and he told us that he would perform another open-heart surgery and put in an artificial valve.

However, he informed us that he would not be able to do it immediately, as he had an urgent surgery to perform the following day. He promised to conduct the surgery two days later.

I was very concerned about Jessica's condition, as she had been in a comatose state and had not eaten for seven days. I asked the three doctors at the meeting if Jessica could survive another open-heart surgery given the condition she was in.

For a couple of minutes the doctors looked silently at each other, waiting for someone else to answer my question. Finally, Dr. Tipple looked at me and told me that there was no other choice. Jessica could not continuously live on life-support systems.

So, with a heavy heart I signed the letter of consent to allow the surgeon to proceed. My wife and I left the hospital thinking that surely this time Jessica would not be as fortunate as before.

TURNING TO GOD

We didn't talk much when we reached home. I told my wife to take down Jessica's photo from the wall, as it saddened us to look at it. I had not been to church for over twenty years at this point, and hadn't even prayed or talked to God during that time.

That afternoon I went into my bedroom, closed the door, and knelt down. I asked for forgiveness for being a lost son and prayed that I would not be a stranger in the face of God. I asked God to give Jessica back to me, and I asked Him not to punish my little girl for past things that I may have done wrong.

We had a solemn dinner that night, and none of us had an appetite to eat. Sometime after dinner, the telephone rang. I jumped with fear. What message would the telephone bring? Was Jessica still alive? Should I answer it?

Finally, I got to the phone and Dr. Leblanc told me that he was going to defer the surgery and place Jessica under observation. There appeared to be a sudden improvement in her condition and it seemed she was recovering rapidly.

It brought untold happiness to our hearts. We rushed to the hospital early the next morning and found Jessica awake and looking at us. We stroked her arms and forehead, and we thanked God for showering His forgiveness and mercy on us.

Within two days Jessica left the ICU, and she was discharged from the hospital a week later. Before we left the hospital, Dr. Leblanc came to examine Jessica and I asked him what had happened.

He answered that he didn't know why Jessica recovered so quickly, especially without medical help. However, he requested that we bring her into his office to see him whenever Jessica was scheduled to come to the hospital for her annual check-ups with Dr. Tipple.

Dr. Leblanc instructed us not to bother about making an appointment and to just come into his office at any time. Bear in mind that it is not easy to see a surgeon without an appointment.

Jessica's health is progressing well. To this day, she continues to see Dr. Tipple for her annual check-ups, and she is very happy with Jessica's progress. Jessica is now sixteen years old, and we pray that

she will always be a regular and faithful member of the True Jesus Church, as she is today.

Our God is the God of mercy. For He works in mysterious ways and His power is over all things. Amen. ●

3. Amazing Grace— Wondrous Healing

Author: Claire OuYang

Location: Hillsborough, New Jersey, USA

Years have passed since my baptism on April 27, 2003. Looking back, it still feels like it was just yesterday. Before my baptism, I was like any other lost sheep, not knowing where I really was headed and what lies at the end of this road. I am blessed, for the Great Shepherd found me and led me back to His fold. Yet, the road I trod on wound through a dark valley of the shadow of death before He led me into warm sunshine again.

With each recounting of this testimony, I feel God's grace in greater magnitude. Nevertheless, I feel inadequate still to fully convey the great mercy shown to me. Here, I again tell of the wondrous deeds of God towards my family, for I have learned that no knowledge in this world surpasses the knowledge of understanding God's amazing grace.

THE SAVING GRACE OF GOD CAME UPON MY FAMILY

My husband was the first in our family to hear of the gospel. I saw and marveled at the change in him after his conversion. He used to be headstrong and argumentative. But after a period of listening to the teachings of the Bible, he was transformed into a gentle person who was willing to give way. And in all things, he acted according to biblical standards. That God was able to cause such a great change moved me and in 2003, we both decided to receive baptism.

At that time, we felt thoroughly content with our lives. Little did we imagine what a difficult trial awaited us, perhaps targeted at our ignorant complacency.

Our daughter turned 15 that same year. Unbeknownst to me, my husband prayed to God for another child! His prayer was granted, and a month after our baptism, I became pregnant at the age of 43. An amniocentesis confirmed that the baby would be a boy, which made us all very happy.

Then, the trial came.

GOING THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

In September, when I was in my 25th week, a routine ultrasound revealed the presence of a tumor the size of a fist. The doctors suggested an immediate removal by surgery. My husband and I had no idea what was going on, and our only concern then was that the baby should not be affected.

The hospital had never had a patient who needed a tumor removal during pregnancy, so more than ten specialists from different disciplines were called to attend to my case. I myself never had any major illness, so it never crossed my mind that this surgery was a high-risk one. I thought that since I was already baptized into the Lord, I would just entrust everything to Him.

A biopsy of the tumor cells revealed that I was in Stage 3 of colon cancer. Being an optimist, I was actually glad that it was not the terminal stage and was not too worried. However, my husband was devastated. People around us were baffled: "Did they not recently get baptized? Why would God allow a pregnant woman to be plagued with cancer?" Everyone seemed to have some doubt about our faith and spirituality.

The brother who introduced the gospel to my family, Brother Chen, stuck with us throughout our whole ordeal. He encouraged us,

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Cor 10:13)

That is so true. God is indeed a faithful and righteous God. Besides,

"children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward" (Ps 127:3).

We got this child after we had believed in the Lord—surely God would not simply end my life this way.

EXPERIENCING GOD IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING

By God's grace, the surgery safely removed the biggest tumor without impacting the fetus. The doctors told me that because the cancerous cells were spreading quickly, they wanted to do a C-section as soon as the baby was viable. So in November, the baby was delivered prematurely. He was tiny. But in every way he was as healthy and active as any full-term baby.

As the cancerous cells spread, I began to have difficulty consuming any food. Whatever went in was thrown up within minutes. My weight plunged from 120 lbs to 80 lbs. In December, the results of a CAT scan showed that the cancer had spread to my liver, spleen and other organs, and chemotherapy was the only option available.

I started on my first course of chemotherapy in January 2004. Thank God, my first few sessions of chemotherapy went very smoothly. I suffered nausea and hair loss, but there were no other side effects.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:6, 7)

God truly listens to our requests. By the time I was on my second course of chemo, I no longer suffered any accompanying discomfort, and my weight even began to increase steadily.

When the second course of chemo ended, a PET scan was done on me. I was cancer free! Even the chemotherapist and oncologist rejoiced with me, for they were also Christians. To all of us, we were definitely witnessing a miracle.

GOD—THE SOURCE OF ALL GOODNESS

Brother Chen asked me if I had moments of feeling troubled all this time when I was in and out of the hospital. Seriously, I would say no. I firmly believed that God was with me the whole time.

This sickness helped me see my past folly. During the ordeal, I remembered the sins I committed in the past. In prayers and tears, I

would plead for God's forgiveness. Each time, I received great peace and comfort.

When I was in the hospital, my husband and I would recite Psalm 23 every day, and each time, we would be filled with tears. In the past, I always thought I was luckier than most people. After this incident, I realized that all good things in life are granted by God's grace. There is simply no such thing as sheer luck. I thank God for this precious lesson.

Step by step, God led me to His fold. He first guided my husband to know Him. Throughout my illness, my husband never once thought of abandoning me but took great care of me, looking into every single possible detail. The brothers and sisters across the various churches in the US prayed for me while I was undergoing treatment. Clearly I have received abundant grace!

More than a decade ago, my husband and I watched the movie *Silkwood*. Towards the end, the female lead sang a song that touched us both very much. It was not until our conversion that we found out that song was "Amazing Grace." It was as if God had prepared us to be chosen.

I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see! 🗨️

4. My Christian Journey

Author: Thomas Erickson

Location: Coos Bay, Oregon, USA

AN UNHAPPY PAST

Many years ago, in 1968, I made a commitment to Christ. I was truly zealous for the Lord but I had no knowledge of the Truth. Anything I tried to accomplish for Him came to no avail. I spent many years trying to tell others about Jesus, but it was very frustrating to me.

Even though I made a commitment to Christ, I still had a lot of problems. I was able to stop smoking, drinking, and using foul language, but I was unable to rid myself of the darkness that was in my soul. Discouraged and despondent, I entered into a period of depression.

If somebody were to ask me what it felt like, the only way I could describe it is the feeling of being at the bottom of a hole without any place to escape. I could not make rational decisions, and accepting responsibilities became a monumental struggle. I was desperate.

At the time, I was also married with four children, but my marriage was a shipwreck.

A SECOND CHANCE

I remarried a little over eleven years ago, but both my wife and I came with extra baggage from our past. About five years into the marriage, we determined that we must seek after the Lord.

We started to attend church. We realized that we really didn't know each other, so we took three days off work to spend time with one another, to read the Bible, and to learn how to communicate with each other.

We also set some goals, one of which was praying together every morning. This may be common with some people, but it wasn't common to me or my circle of friends. Another goal was to read God's words every day.

My wife worked the afternoon shifts from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m., and I worked night shifts from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. She would wake me up in the morning, and we would have devotions. After she left for work, I'd have nothing to do, so I began to spend my afternoons in prayer.

As we kept up our devotions and prayer, we felt the Lord moving upon us and instilling in us a desire for a closer relationship with Him. He slowly began to show us our need to be baptized in Jesus' name.

This was not acceptable to the church I was attending at the time. So we kept seeking God, praying to Him for His guidance. While we were seeking God, I became sick and unable to work a five-day week.

DEALING WITH SICKNESS

I knew that something was drastically wrong with my body. I went to a specialist and he discovered that I had bladder cancer.

We went through minor and major surgeries, and I entered a new phase in my life with a tolerance for pain I never had experienced before. I was unable to take the prescribed medication, so I cut the dosage down as much as I could.

During this period, the most painful time was at night—after my wife, Willa, had gone to bed and I was alone. I continued to draw nearer to God and I felt as if His spirit embraced me in my suffering. His grace truly is sufficient for us.

As time passed and I healed, that closeness I felt with God suddenly disappeared. I almost wanted my cancer back so that I could regain that closeness. But through my wife's and my reading of the Bible and praying for our children, our relationships with our children improved.

DEALING WITH LOSS

On occasion, I tried to talk to my youngest son, even though he didn't have a desire to communicate. One day, Willa and I felt impelled to intercede for my youngest son in prayer. At the time, I had not received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, so we prayed for our

son but didn't receive any specific direction. On September 8, 1999, I received a phone call that my son had committed suicide.

It is so true that we do reap what we sow. When we are young and have our life ahead of us, we have a great opportunity to be an example to our families. We have a great opportunity to serve God. We have an opportunity to affect our neighbors.

When we seek God and worship Him, we have to do so with everything within us. We must walk in His love, be obedient to His word, and be in contact with His wisdom and apply it in our lives. But I had not yet reached that point of my life when my son died.

COMING HOME TO GOD'S TRUE CHURCH

After this incident, my family rejected us, but we kept seeking God. We knew that there must be more to serving God than what we were experiencing. This went on for a period of time, and we began to attend another church.

I thought this was the one: "Finally, I'm going to find fulfillment and peace." And yet, by what His words declared and the way He was filling my heart, I knew that this church was not taking us where we wanted to go.

I began to search His word diligently and used the Internet to look for more knowledge concerning the Truth. I searched hundreds of websites and read many doctrinal statements from different churches, but I failed to find what I needed.

One day, a woman at our church lent us a book. That book had a description of many churches, including the True Jesus Church. I liked what this church had to say. I was so desperate that I emailed the General Assembly of the United States (USGA).

I knew that they were very busy, but I wanted an immediate answer. I went through the list of email addresses and found one for Southern California, but I should have emailed the one for Northern California, which was closer to where I was living.

I got a response within a couple of days. This person invited me to the True Jesus Church. The thing that struck me so profoundly was what he wrote: "I will be your servant guide." I thought to myself,

“This must be a true Christian.” They referred me to the local church at Pacifica, California.

Brother Stephen Ku emailed me and invited me down for the church’s spiritual convocation. I was so excited. I was so hungry. I was baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. I came and I found peace.

Even though the Spirit came upon me in times past, it was never as powerful as it was on the day that I began speaking in a new tongue as I came out of the water. I had found hope for my children because the great Comforter, who abides within me and intercedes for me, is also dealing with their hearts as I pray.

I’ve learned not to be selfish but to lay down my life. I am older. I don’t consider myself old yet. I don’t know how much time I have left, but with what strength that I have, I give it to the Lord. There is no greater calling, no greater blessing, than to serve our Lord. Seek God. Serve Him with all your heart. Be an example. Walk in purity.

FELLOWSHIP IN GOD’S WORD

The summer of 2002, I had the wonderful opportunity to attend the National Youth Theological Seminar (NYTS) at Pacifica Church. There are a couple of things that I learned there.

The first thing I realized, after a couple of days, was that I was no longer a teenager and that I could only do what was within my capabilities. I learned and gained a new determination to pray and to seek God.

During those two weeks, there was a closeness and a fellowship that I had never experienced before. When we prayed for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, I knew that He heard our requests and our prayers. I knew that He was preparing us for something.

Willa and I live in Coos Bay, Oregon, in an RV park. The RV park in Coos Bay is a field that is ripe and ready for harvest. I know that I have neither the strength nor the courage to confront the challenges of presenting the gospel to my neighbors. This has caused me to cry out to Him for the fullness of His Spirit, to enable me to proclaim His word.

A CALL TO ACTION

Before I attended the NYTS, my wife, who was not yet baptized, was bolder than I in preaching the gospel. But I’ve changed.

This seminar has been the greatest experience of my life. What I've gained and experienced I will never forget. I recognize the need for change in my home.

I also recognize where that change must begin—with myself: the way I conduct myself, the boldness with which I would proclaim His word, and the perseverance to swim against the tide.

Jesus came to speak to them... all authority has been given to me in heaven and earth. Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things that I command you. And I'll be with you till the end of the age. (Mt 28:18)

I can no longer take God's words lightly, nor can I take any shortcut in prayer or water down the gospel. We must speak the Truth.

Amen. 🗨️

5. Remembering the Tenth Anniversary of God's Miracle to Us

Author: Claudia Chen

Location: Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Editor's Note: In a magazine article published by the True Jesus Church, Deacon Fritz Chen, the author's husband, shared how the peace of God helped him through the days where he fought to overcome stomach cancer. On this tenth anniversary of his being in remission, his wife, Claudia, reminisces about being by her husband's side through those dark days and deeply experiencing God's love and mercy. Dn. Chen's complete testimony, "Peace in the Lord," can be found in Manna Issue 32, p. 10–13.

Passages in italics are taken from Dn. Chen's testimony.

GOD'S MIRACLE TO US

I met my husband in 1983 through a preacher. We were married the next year, and we had our daughter, Rebecca, the following year. Our life was very smooth until the beginning of 1986, when my husband's job became more demanding with irregular work hours, making it difficult for him to eat regular meals.

Because of this, he started to have stomach problems that increased in severity. During a regular check-up in 1993, the doctor was shocked by the condition of my husband's stomach.

I underwent surgery to remove a cancerous tumor in my stomach (gastric lymphoma). The doctor first proposed to remove my whole stomach and then have me undergo chemotherapy.

Fritz went ahead with the operation and had his stomach removed in December 1993. As I stood staring through the windows of the door that separated me from the operating room, tears rolled down my face. Family members of other patients were trying to comfort me, but I couldn't hear or digest any of their words. Even though I prayed constantly in my heart, I was heartbroken.

I thought to myself, "Heavenly Father, are You there? You know how helpless I am! But I know You are very merciful, and You know that at this moment I cannot afford to lose my husband."

Our daughter was only eight years old and I dared not tell her that her father had a very serious illness. So, I kept on asking God not to take him away but to give him more time.

I also prayed to God that, if possible, to leave him with at least a little bit of his stomach so that he could eat. I felt like I was trying to bargain with God.

[As] it turned out, the doctor removed only four-fifths of my stomach. And to my surprise, I didn't need to go through chemotherapy after the operation because the tumor turned out to be benign. Thank God, the doctors told me I was healthy.

The doctors and nurses were astounded because they couldn't understand how this could have happened. My husband and I hugged each other and cried in the hospital room because we knew that it was God's miracle to us.

"THE LORD WILL CERTAINLY HEAL DAD"

In January 1995, Fritz went back to the hospital for a check-up, and all the tests came back normal. Around the same time, he decided that we should relocate from Taiwan to Canada, and with God's smooth guidance, we arrived in Toronto on March 1, 1996.

One year and one month after we settled down in Canada, my husband started experiencing stomach discomfort again, but the doctor thought it was due to stress from adjusting to a new country. Another year went by with him often throwing up after meals.

In February 1998, I was sent to the hospital. My condition was a lot more serious this time. For a long time I could not eat because the tumor took up so much space in my stomach. I was literally skin and bones.

One month later, Fritz could no longer eat anything through his mouth. By that time, his weight dropped to 110 pounds, and every day I wouldn't know whether we would have tomorrow.

The doctors recommended that I should not undergo surgery because I was too weak and it would have been too risky to operate. They suggested

that instead I skip directly to chemotherapy. However, I was even too weak to start treatment immediately.

After examining my reports, the surgeon was convinced that he could successfully operate on me, despite objections from the other doctors. The operation was scheduled to take place two weeks later on March 16, 1998.

I was more prepared for what could happen this time, so I told my daughter that it was very possible we could lose our loved one at any time. Every night, my daughter and I would pray earnestly despite the fact that my husband's condition got increasingly worse.

One night when we were praying at home, I felt so completely helpless that I cried out to God, "Lord, if everything that I have encountered is from You, then I have no complaints. I only hope we can have another opportunity to go to church and attend service together as a family, just the way we did before."

Miraculously, I felt this warmth coming out from my heart, like a fountain of water gushing out. Even though I was crying bitterly, I felt such an indescribable joy that I wanted to laugh. This feeling lasted until I stopped praying.

I told my daughter, "I don't know why, but I am very happy." My daughter told me, "Didn't I tell you that the Lord will certainly heal Dad?" Children are truly simple and pure; adults really do worry too much sometimes.

I really thank God that He comforted us in prayer. With God's abidance, I had more courage to face what was coming because I no longer felt alone.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

The period of time just prior to my surgery was the most critical and trying because I was dying. At times, I would even lose consciousness.

Those days, Fritz rarely talked to me. Every day, I stayed with him, read the Bible, sang hymns, thought about the lyrics, and prayed to God in my heart. I knew that I had to take care of myself and remain healthy in order to take care of my family.

On March 10, 1998, he was in the worst condition he had ever been. He vomited three cups of blood and had four bloody bowel

movements. He told me that it might be God's will to take him away this time. Then, he began to speak his last will and testament. I asked him to stop talking and hugged him as we cried.

That night, he wanted me to stay with him in the hospital. I had trouble falling asleep and just lay there on the bed, praying until the sun rose, when suddenly I heard the sound of water flowing. The sound came from a distance, and, as I listened, I realized that it was the sound of prayer.

The voice was very small at first. But when I listened more carefully, it became quite loud and full of strength. My husband was praying in tongues!

I saw him lying on his bed praying, this sound coming out of him. Just like that, I felt very comforted. I lay down again and fell asleep until the doctor knocked on the door at 9 a.m.

Thank God, I was able to sustain myself through prayer up until the actual day of the major operation.

AN EXTRAORDINARY OPERATION

When my husband was wheeled in to surgery at 8 a.m. on the day of his major operation, I told him, "I will be waiting for you in the waiting room."

As I was wheeled into the operating room, she saw me peacefully wave to her, saying, "Peace be with you," as if we were bidding our usual good-byes.... Around 10 a.m., the doctor, sweating profusely, emerged from the operating room. Anxiously, he informed my wife that I was in a very critical state, completely beyond his expectations.

The doctor said that if they continued with the operation and it failed, it was highly likely that my husband would not make it out of the operating room. And if they didn't operate and left Fritz in his current condition, he would probably survive for only another two to three days.

My sister was with me when the doctor spoke to us. We told him to just try his best, and we would pray to our God. The young doctor put his hand on my shoulder and comforted me. He told me to have faith and to ask God to guide him, and he hurried back into the operating room.

My hands and feet felt very weak after he left. I rushed to the wash-room and cried out bitterly to God. It seemed like all the experiences that I had had and the peace that I had felt meant nothing. I asked God, "Were You kidding with me when You tried to comfort me in my prayers?"

Originally the doctor expected the operation to last six hours. But at 2 p.m. in the afternoon, we still had not heard anything else from the doctors. I felt very uneasy.

At that moment I saw two familiar people, Elder Huang and Brother Jackson, walking into the waiting room. They joined us and we sang hymns, while Elder Huang kept on encouraging me. I was comforted and strengthened after they joined us.

The operation continued until around 4 p.m., when the doctor came out again and said to my wife, "Your God has saved him!" He described the operation as "searching for a path through the forest." He did not know how he managed to complete the operation, but his face showed that it was successful.

The doctor drew a diagram on a piece of newspaper to show us how he had conducted the operation. I still have this piece of newspaper. He showed us how he removed the whole stomach and spleen. Some parts of the pancreas and intestines were also removed. Then he showed us how he joined the remaining parts together.

On April 2, thirty-eight days after his hospitalization, my husband was discharged. After he came home, I continued praying to God. I am not a very good cook, but I prayed to God to guide me so that the things I cooked would appeal to his appetite. And things really turned out this way.

He stopped eating baby food very quickly and began to eat normal meals. He ate everything! During chemotherapy, he continued to gain weight until he surpassed what the doctors said people without stomachs could weigh. He gained forty pounds in three months, thank God!

On August 1, 1998, during Holy Communion in Toronto Church, my husband and I both saw a vision of the cup of grape juice turning

crimson with the blood of Christ. Once again, we were encouraged by God's unfathomable grace.

Fritz had the opportunity in the year 2000 to participate in the theological training program held by the United States General Assembly (USGA). It was beyond our expectation that he would be able to complete the three-year course.

It has been over ten years since my husband was first hospitalized. Even so, I get teary-eyed every time I think about what happened, because the love of God is truly deep, wide, and long. How can we fully repay God's love? Throughout these ten-plus years, I've seen God's miracles every day, and I've counted God's blessings every day. I see how the time we have in our family should be treasured. Each moment is a gift from God.

During this trial, I really felt the power of intercession by the brothers and sisters. As the Bible says,

"if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them." (Mt 18:19)

Our faith is living and true, and I believe that God is here in our church. I have seen with my own eyes and have experienced Him myself.

God knows how much we can bear. As long as we can hold onto Him tightly, He will never forsake us. And no matter what comes our way, God's grace will always be sufficient. ●

6. Transcendental Peace from God

Author: Patricia Chen

Location: Irvine, California, USA

THE UNSETTLING NEWS

For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." (Jas 4:14–15)

This passage resonates loudly for me, and I am thankful for this opportunity to share an amazing blessing from God.

I have often thought that it is a wonderful grace to be able to do God's work, and I treasure every opportunity that I am given. So when I was assigned by the church to go to Australia to assist in the Religious Education Teachers' Seminar to be held in April 2003, I took hold of that opportunity and made the necessary arrangements in December 2002.

That same month, I also went to see my physician for a routine physical. Upon examination, he found a small lump in my left ovary, which prompted him to schedule a second ultrasound in three months' time. Dutifully, I returned for the second ultrasound in March 2003.

During the second round of checkups, the physician informed me that the lump had grown and was now the size of a kiwi. That would explain the tingling pain I had been feeling in my left abdomen those past few months. To be on the safe side, the physician urged me to undergo surgery within the next few weeks to remove the tumor.

I struggled greatly in my heart when I heard the news. What about my plans for Australia next month? What was I going to do? If I went through with the surgery, I would have to be confined to bed rest for at least a week, and I would have to cancel the church assignment.

THE INNER STRUGGLE

Although it was not a matter of life or death, it was a tough dilemma for me. Should I rely on God and ask Him to have mercy on me so that I could have the faith to attend the seminar and undergo the surgery after I returned? Or should I heed the doctor's advice and have the tumor removed?

I have often told my religious education students that they should trust in God and rely on Him. The question was how much? I felt myself challenged to face the truth about my own level of faith. Was it just a theoretical understanding or did I, with true conviction, believe that He could help me? Each trial we face could well be the beginning of God's renewing grace. But before we can learn this lesson, we first have to trust that God's grace is sufficient. As these thoughts went through my mind, my little faith soared.

In my heart a small voice was telling me not to be afraid but to face my trial with courage. God's grace would be sufficient for me. After a few minutes of pondering, I told the doctor that because of my trip, I would not be able to do the surgery until the beginning of May. He asked me if that was my final decision. I firmly replied, "Yes." He scheduled another check-up for April 28 and a surgery on May 1 at 8:30 in the morning.

After I left his clinic, I sought the advice of another doctor and a medical professional. They both warned me that if my tumor enlarged over the next few weeks, there was a chance that it could rupture and I would bleed internally—causing major complications.

When I heard this, I felt a chill run down my spine. What if I had made the wrong decision? My inner struggles returned once again. Should I go or should I stay? The church had already bought the plane ticket. There were teachers from different churches in Australia who were eagerly awaiting this seminar. These were teachers who worked tirelessly for God, never expecting any compensation. Only the love of God could effect such dedication. Compared to all these volunteers, shouldn't I, as a full-time worker of God, all the more fulfill the work He has entrusted to me?

THE PEACE FROM ENTRUSTING HIM

The inner turmoil slowly began to subside. I was brought back to the memory of my mom when she had surgery years ago. Coincidentally, at that time, I had also been sent away to do holy work. What God wanted me to learn was to give all my burdens to Him.

Through prayer, God will give us unexpected peace just as it says in Philippians 4:7,

“and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

It was a hard lesson. But I knew I needed to submit myself to God all the more, for that was the way to receive strength from Him. With the prayers of my family and colleagues behind me, I set off for Australia. Thank God, I once again experienced the joy and value of working for Him. Throughout the seminar, I soaked in the words of God. His presence was greatly felt when I prayed together with the teachers at the seminar. One could not reap such joy from any work in the secular world.

Each day, I asked God to guide me and to help me accept the trials He put in my way. However, a part of me did not dare to ask for Him to remove the tumor. I felt small and insignificant and did not deserve God's grace and mercy. I only asked Him to guide me back to the US safely and that the surgery would be successful.

THE POWER OF GOD

I returned safely to the US on April 26. On the 28th, I went to see the doctor as scheduled. I remember the doctor asking me if I was ready for the surgery the following Monday. He reminded me that I needed to arrange for post-surgery pickup from the hospital. As the doctor was talking to me, a small voice inside me urged me to request another ultrasound and see how large the tumor had become. Because this powerful urge came over me, I boldly asked the doctor to have another ultrasound done.

Thank the grace of God, he agreed. Miraculously, the doctor could not find the tumor. He searched for a long time, but he just could not locate it. In my heart, I knew what had happened and could not stop repeating, “Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!” The doctor was bewildered

and said that the tumor had disappeared completely. In the end, he told me there was no need for surgery.

God knew very well how terrified I was of the surgery and mercifully spared me. The Americans have a saying that goes, “No surgery is a good surgery.” As I walked out of the hospital, I felt lightness in my feet and I was overjoyed. I quickly told my husband and my family this great news. I also called my colleagues and shared with them my overflowing happiness and peace.

I thank God for guiding my path and allowing me to experience His presence in my life. If it were not for the mercy and grace of God, the tumor could not have simply disappeared. I also thank God that He gave me the courage to ask for another ultrasound so that I did not have to undergo surgery.

John 14:27 says,

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

This verse speaks directly to this miracle. All the glory be unto God’s name. Amen. ●

Visions from God

1. My Father in Heaven

Author: Johnny Cheng

Location: Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Hallelujah, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ I testify about an experience I had during prayer on December 26, 1999, in Toronto church, Canada. During this prayer I was thinking about my father, who was in Taiwan working hard to support my family here in Canada. The last time I saw him was over a year ago, and I really missed him. Even though my father is very strict, I still wanted him to come back and hug me, and I wanted to tell him how much I loved him. Thinking about him being so far away made me want to cry.

A few minutes into the prayer, a bright light suddenly shone into my eyes and began enveloping me until it completely surrounded me. I saw a person dressed in a white garment coming toward me. Following him were five to six people who were also all dressed in white. I then realized that the first person was Jesus and the people following Him were angels!

Jesus walked toward me and placed His loving arms around me. At that moment I felt incredibly joyful, peaceful, and comforted. I felt totally safe and protected. Jesus hugged me for what felt like a long time. Then He said, “I am your Father. I am your God.” Jesus was telling me not to worry. My father in Taiwan would be all right, and Jesus would look after him and me.

Out of curiosity, I looked up because I wanted to see what Jesus looked like. But I could not see His face, because it was shining so brightly—even brighter than the sun. The faces of the angels were also shining brightly like Jesus’. The angels formed a circle around Jesus and me, holding hands. They sang hymns in a spiritual language, praising the Lord. Even though I did not understand what

they were singing, it sounded heavenly, harmonious, and melodious. I had never heard such beautiful singing in all my life!

I then looked down where I was kneeling. The ground had turned pure white, and the whiteness started to spread gradually from the spot where Jesus and I were, radiating out in all directions until it covered the entire area. The church seemed to disappear, and I felt that I was no longer in the world—I realized that I was in heaven! This was the first time I saw a glimpse of the heavenly kingdom with my own eyes. Words cannot describe the beautiful views that surrounded me. Everything was pure white, but it did not seem strange. Then I heard the prayer bell ring. Jesus stood up and walked away, with the angels following Him. They all disappeared into a white light in the distance.

As the vision ended, I started to sense the presence of the other brothers and sisters who were praying beside me. I opened my eyes, and I realized that I was in church. I felt incredibly joyful that I had been hugged by my Heavenly Father and that I saw Him with my own eyes!

This was a wonderful experience that I will never forget. I now know that the Lord my God is also my dearest, most precious, loving Heavenly Father. He will take care of me, love me, and always be at my side. I feel very blessed to be His child. May all glory and praise be given to our Lord Jesus forever. Hallelujah! Amen. 🙏

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. (1 John 3:1–2)

2. Called Out From The World

Author: Richard Solgot

Location: Tampa, Florida, USA

I was raised in a family with a long tradition of Catholic beliefs, dating back to the early 1600s in France, and I was educated in the Catholic school system. Through the years, though, I came to feel an emptiness in my heart. I felt that there was still something missing, that there was a void in my life, but I couldn't quite put my finger on what it was.

When I joined the military, I drifted away from my Catholic beliefs and didn't go to church as often as I used to. But thank God that when I got married, my wife, a member of the True Jesus Church, patiently waited and shed many tears in prayer for me.

After fifteen years, God finally began to work in my heart. He began to show me what I needed to fill that emptiness inside me. My family and I began to have Bible studies in our home on Sabbath mornings. My children had already been baptized in the True Jesus Church, and I had no problem with my wife's desires to improve their spiritual life. Both my wife and my son Randy had received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues, and even though I didn't object to them praying in this manner, I couldn't bring myself to seek after this gift. I felt that I needed to hold onto my old beliefs, and to pray in the way that I had been taught.

After we concluded our morning Bible studies, I would kneel down, and my wife would ask me to pray out loud. But I would say, "No, I'm going to pray my own way." So I'd pray in understanding, silently. I'd pray to Mary and the saints, saying the various prayers that I'd been taught to say in the Catholic church.

THE FIRST VISION

I prayed this way for quite some time, until one Sabbath morning, when something happened. We had been planning to go to the True Jesus Church in Pacifica, California, to attend a spiritual convocation. My wife wanted my youngest son, Sean, who was an infant at that time, to be baptized. I kept saying, "Okay, sure, we'll go," but inside I really didn't want to go. I tried to find some excuse to get out of it, so they could just go on their own and I could stay home. Since I was still in the military, I thought that I could just lie and say that my request for vacation time had not been approved. But God knows our hearts, and He knows what's best for us. Once God chooses you, there's no turning back.

When we knelt down to pray that morning, my wife again said to me, "Please, why don't you just pray out loud? Just say, 'Hallelujah, praise the Lord.' Just say it out loud, over and over." But I said, "No, don't bother me, I'm not going to say it that way. I'm going to pray my own way."

But as we knelt down to pray, I experienced something that I had never experienced before in my life. If you told me that I would have such an experience, I would have never believed you.

When I knelt down to pray, God gave me a vision. I saw myself kneeling in a circle of light, and on the edge of the circle were six figures wearing monks' robes, with their hoods over their faces. They had flaming swords in their hands. And they were closing in on me.

I had never experienced anything like this before, so the first thing I did was open my eyes. But when I opened them, I didn't see anything unusual. Then I closed my eyes, and the vision was there again. This frightened me. I remembered from our Bible studies that we can cast out demons in Jesus' name, so I said, "Hallelujah, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Satan be gone!" I didn't realize then that I had said it out loud, but my family told me later that I had.

Suddenly those six dark figures were replaced by six glorious, white figures. I felt very warm and touched, very safe and secure. The prayer ended at that moment.

I didn't want to tell my family about my vision, because this was strange and totally new to me. But my family knew that something had happened, because they had heard me say out loud, "Hallelujah!"

So they asked me, “Dad, what happened?” I said, “Oh, nothing.” But they said, “No, something happened! You shouted ‘hallelujah’ over and over, several times.” I then told them what I had seen, and my wife said to me, “God is trying to tell you something. We need to pray again.”

THE SECOND VISION

As I knelt down to pray again, another vision came upon me. In this vision, I saw myself on an old wooden ship, like those in biblical times. The ship and all the sea around it were on fire. I was terrified; I didn’t know what to do.

I looked off into the distance, and I could see a beautiful green island. Then I saw that my family was standing on the island, and my wife was holding our youngest child. They were motioning to me to join them. But I thought, how can I join them? The sea is on fire, the ship is on fire, and there’s no way I can get to them.

Then suddenly I heard a voice say, “Seek and you shall find, ask and you shall receive, knock and the door shall be opened to you.” I looked over to the island, where the voice was coming from, and behind my family was a beautiful white figure. I couldn’t see His face, but I knew it was our Lord Jesus. He was standing behind them, holding His arms around them.

I lost my fear, and I saw myself going into this sea of fire. As I went in, I began to cry like a baby. The prayer ended at that time.

I cried for thirty or forty minutes after that. My wife asked me several times what I had seen, and I described the vision to her. She asked me, “What do you think God is trying to tell you?” I said, “We’re going to San Francisco. We need to go, and I need to be baptized for the remission of my sins.”

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

So we went to California for the spiritual convocation. I had never before experienced that many people praying in tongues, with that much joy and that many tears being shed, as I did at the first morning prayer of the spiritual convocation. It was very comforting to me. I could definitely feel

the Holy Spirit working, not only among the believers, but also in myself. I could feel myself moved by the Holy Spirit.

My daughter, who was thirteen years old at that time, received the Holy Spirit during that morning prayer. When I saw her face and how radiant she looked, and when I heard her testimony about how happy and joyful she was, I made a determination that this was something that I had to experience for myself.

So during the next prayer, in the late afternoon, I came right up to the front to pray. As I prayed, I tried to focus on our Lord Jesus on the cross and on all that He had suffered for me. I thought about all the sins that I had committed in my life, and I humbled myself before Him to ask for His forgiveness.

The minister came to lay hands on me during the prayer. As his hand neared the top of my head, the heat from his hand began to penetrate my heart. I began to perspire, and a glorious white light shone through the right side of my head and went down into my heart. When it came back out, all of my troubles, sadness, and frustration were taken away from me.

I began to cry and speak in an unknown tongue. My tongue began to roll, and I knew that the Holy Spirit was filling me. I had never experienced anything like that before in my life. I praise God and I thank Him so much for the precious gift of His Holy Spirit.

FROM SERVANT TO FRIEND

During the rest of the week prior to my baptism, Satan began to work mightily to try to stop me from doing what I knew God wanted me to do. I began to experience the most awful, nauseating headaches every day. There were times that I couldn't sleep and couldn't even open my eyes. Thank God that my wife recognized what was happening. She gently, but firmly, coaxed me into making my way into the chapel for the class lectures. Gradually, after about three days, my headaches disappeared, and with the help of God the battle with Satan was won.

My son and I were baptized on July 5, 1985, in the Pacific Ocean, and since that time, our lives have been filled with one blessing after another. We have our share of trials and tribulations, but we know that our Lord Jesus is here with us, and He's guiding us every step of the

way. Through Him, all of our sins have been washed away, our eternal life is in His hands, and one day we will join Him in heaven.

What a great blessing and joy it is to know that God has called me out from the world to be His friend. In John 15:15–16, the Lord Jesus says,

“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”

I praise and thank the Lord Jesus so much for His wonderful gift of love. May all the glory be unto His Holy name! 🗨️

3. Blessings Upon Blessings

Author: Mike Yuan

Location: Canoga Park, California, USA

When I was preparing for this testimony, I was reminded of the story of when the Lord Jesus healed the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years, as recorded in Luke chapter 8. No one was able to heal her, so she came to the Lord Jesus with the faith that if she could touch the edge of His cloak, she would be cured.

Once she touched Him, the Lord Jesus felt that power go out from Him. He immediately asked, "Who touched Me?" The woman, knowing that she would not go unnoticed, came trembling before the crowd to witness why she had touched Him and how she was instantly healed.

Like the woman, I wish to testify of how God's power has worked many miracles in my life.

NO SENSE OF BELONGING

My testimony actually starts in 1984, when I was in first grade. I was six years old at the time and it was my first day of Chinese school. I remember I was extremely shy and terrified as I entered a room full of strangers. But in one corner of the room, I saw a boy who coincidentally went to the same elementary school as I did.

I told my mom about him and she said, "Why don't you sit next to him?" From that moment on, we became fast friends, and we are still really good friends today. From elementary school to college, we followed each other from school to school. Some years, we would see each other every day of the week.

Having a friend like that really helped me during my childhood because my parents were constantly fighting at home. There would be lots of yelling, sometimes throwing, and sometimes hitting. I was in third grade when my parents got divorced. I chose to live with my mom and visited my dad every other weekend.

It was very difficult growing up. It seemed like my life was never complete and I had no sense of belonging. I went through a variety of emotions: rage, loneliness, aimlessness, depression, anger, fear, and even violence. The emotional roller coaster caused me to do things that I now very much regret.

FINDING GOD AT SCHOOL

During my last year of high school, I narrowed my selection of colleges to UCLA (University of California in Los Angeles) and UCSD (University of California in San Diego).

I had a very difficult time choosing which college to attend. There were pros and cons for each school. In the end, I told myself that I would flip a coin. If the coin landed on heads, I would go to UCLA, and if the coin landed on tails, I would go to UCSD. I determined to flip only once, and whatever side the coin landed on was the school I would go to. The coin landed on heads.

On my first day of school at UCLA, I discovered that I once again had the same math class as my friend from first grade. In that class, he introduced me to another classmate, who was a member of the True Jesus Church (TJC). I sat with him every math class that quarter, and we became friends. After that quarter though, I did not have another class with him and rarely saw him until the end of my second year of college.

I stayed in the campus dormitories the first two years of school. I was planning to stay with my uncle, who had just bought a new place near campus, in my third year. A week before school ended, he suddenly got married, and I was booted out of my next year's living quarters even before I had a chance to move in.

During the last week of school in June, while I was walking back to my room to continue studying for my last final, I saw my friend from math class, and he was moving out of the dorms to go home. We greeted each other and the conversation eventually led to next year's living situation. He told me that he might need a roommate, but he wasn't sure. I told him that I might need a place to stay, but I wasn't sure. I gave him my number, and we went on our separate ways.

It wasn't until the end of August that I received an unexpected phone call from him. He called to say that he was planning to stay with this

other guy, who was also a True Jesus Church member. They needed one more roommate, and he was wondering if I was still interested. At that time, I was in the process of searching for a roommate but hadn't found a suitable person, so I quickly agreed.

During that school year in 1999, the TJC UCLA campus fellowship met every week in our apartment, so it was hard for me to avoid the topic of church and God. I began learning about the Lord Jesus Christ, salvation, and eternal life. What role did Jesus play in salvation? What do I need to do to be saved? Why does everyone pray so funny?

Every week, I learned a little more about God, and through the help and the care of the brothers and sisters in the UCLA fellowship, I went from doubt to a point where I was praying fervently for the Holy Spirit. I believed that the Holy Spirit was necessary to enter the kingdom of heaven, and I desired to experience God the way all the UCLA brothers and sisters experienced Him.

I FINALLY FOUND MY HOME

By the grace of God, I was baptized on March 12, 2000. As described in Acts 2:38:

"...Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

John 3:5 adds:

"...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

I figured I would first get baptized and then worry about getting the Holy Spirit later. That way, I would meet at least half of the requirements, which was better than none at all. But thank God, the day I received water baptism was also the same day I received the Holy Spirit—exactly the way it was described in Acts 2:38.

Later that same day, I also had my first Holy Communion. I was very emotional the entire service. The pastor made sure not to leave out any details of how the Lord Jesus was betrayed and the pain that He had to endure. I tried to hold back my tears for as long as I could, but I eventually gave up—it was too hard.

I asked myself, “Did Jesus go through so much pain just for me? Did I cause Jesus so much pain and suffering? Who am I that He should care enough to be tortured, disgraced, and crucified for me?”

When we knelt down for prayer, I saw a vision. I saw the impression of two men. One of the men was beating and striking the other. He was hitting and kicking the other man down to the floor, but the other man never fought back. Every time he was beaten and fell to the floor, he would always get up just to be beaten down again.

Taking a closer look into the eyes of the man that was doing the hitting; I saw a familiar rage and a familiar pain. Then, I realized that that person was me, and it was not long before I realized that the other person was our Lord Jesus Christ.

Was I the one beating Jesus? Was I just like the Roman soldiers that whipped, beaten, and mocked Jesus? I kept watching the other man get knocked down over and over again, and every single time he fell to the floor he always got up, ready to get knocked down again. I looked into His eyes and saw His pain and suffering.

I also saw His love.

“Stop beating Him!” I cried out. Then, I turned to my Lord Jesus, “Why don’t You just stay down? Stop getting up—it’s not worth it!” But I kept seeing myself beating Him repeatedly. I kept pleading and pleading until I fell to my knees, closed my eyes, and wept bitterly.

I was the one who hurt Him; the one that caused His pain every time I pushed Him away in my life, every single time I disobeyed Him, and every time I was angry or fearful. All of these were blows and strikes I took out on Him.

While I was weeping in prayer, I felt two arms enfold me with warmth the way a father’s arms would embrace his son. It was like I had finally found my home. Then, I suddenly felt my tongue begin to roll, and, like a dam bursting open, I felt the love and power of the Holy Spirit rush to every part of my body.

As I look back on my life, there would have been so many times where, had I made the other choice, I would not have been led to God. If I had never met my friend in first grade, I would have never

met my roommate, or if the coin had flipped to tails, or if my uncle had never gotten married ...

I also look back and think of all the things in my life that had caused me pain and sorrow; if those events had never taken place, I would not be who I am today, and I might not have had a need to know God or to pursue for the Holy Spirit. I lived a good portion of my life without a father figure, but I can now value and cherish having a Father in heaven.

This was how I touched the edge of Jesus' cloak.

BUILDING GOD'S HOUSE

When I was small my mom taught me very well about how to save money. From her, I learned to live frugally. During college, my mom paid for my tuition, but I worked two to three jobs so that I could support myself with everything else.

When I graduated, a year after I was baptized, I continued working at one of the jobs I had in college. I did not make a lot of money, but I was happy and content. The job was never in conflict with Sabbath services, Bible studies, and fellowships. I enjoyed the projects I worked on and the people I worked with, and the job was low stress with good benefits that provided for all my needs.

During this time, the Canoga Park Prayer House was preparing to purchase a chapel, but we still lacked \$316,000. Every time I prayed, I would always have this burning desire to do more for God and to contribute to the purchasing of the chapel. I decided that I would offer seventy-five percent of my twenty-two years' worth of savings towards the chapel fund.

At the same time, I was also haphazardly looking for a new job. I was randomly sending out my resume to various job search websites, and I was really surprised when a company called me up one day for an interview. Thank God, I got the job. The miraculous thing was that the new job offered me a forty-percent raise. This was very good timing because I could offer the extra money from the new job to the chapel fund.

On my first day of work, I found out that the company was in "Chapter Eleven," which means that the company is in the process of

re-organization. Even though the company was not doing well, it was able to stay afloat with business.

Thank God, for the two years that I worked in that company, He allowed it to avoid bankruptcy. And He gave me the opportunity to offer and contribute to the building of His house.

GIVE ME NEITHER POVERTY NOR RICHES

Through the grace of God, Canoga Park Church was dedicated to Him on May 18, 2003.

Two weeks before the dedication, I found out that my company finally ran out of funds and was bankrupt, which meant I was out of work. Around this time, another brother at Canoga Park was also laid off. We should have been in great distress, but instead, God inspired the two of us to help with the dedication preparations, so I did not feel depressed about losing my job or worry about finding another one.

After the dedication, I spent the next two weeks trying to find work. Through God's grace, I was working by the third week. The company that offered me the position also offered a fifty percent raise from my previous job. I was reluctant to accept their offer because I was aware of the temptations of wealth and status.

Money can easily become an idol in our hearts and cause us to stray away from our Lord Jesus Christ, so I always encourage myself with a passage from Proverbs:

*Two things I request of You
(Deprive me not before I die):
Remove falsehood and lies far from me;
Give me neither poverty nor riches—
Feed me with the food allotted to me;
Lest I be full and deny You,
And say, "Who is the LORD?"
Or lest I be poor and steal,
And profane the name of my God." (Prov 30:7-9)*

I asked the company to pay me a little less. At first they did not understand what I was asking for and did not understand why anyone would request for something like that. In the end, they were insistent about their offer, so I accepted the job.

While working for this company, God constantly guided and protected me, and I was still able to attend church services and local fellowships. After working there for about a year, I thought to check my bank statement one day.

I never usually pay much attention to my savings accounts; in fact, I probably check once every year. But when I did check that day, I found out that, within three years of work and what I offered to church, my earnings exceeded twenty-two years' worth of life savings. God had repaid all the money that I had offered.

Thank God that He has since helped me find another job. Even though the pay is lower, the work is more stable and brings me closer to church.

SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM

I feel as if my experience was just like that of Abraham. He was willing to offer to God his son Isaac, his most precious possession, on the mountain of the Lord. Not only did God give Isaac back to Abraham, He also added to Abraham blessings too numerous to count.

Abraham was able to offer his best to God because he lived a God-centered life. His decisions and actions revolved around God.

I compare my life from when I first began to attend the UCLA campus fellowship to now, and I find that the greatest difference between my past and the present is how I used to anchor my life in the world. When I was first introduced to God, I would attend fellowship or service only when I had time, when I did not have class, or when I did not have to study.

The more I attended fellowship and church services, the more my life shifted from the world towards God. Instead of missing fellowship for class, I would schedule my classes around fellowship.

When I was searching for a new job after being laid off, I insisted on finding a job that would allow me to attend every Sabbath service both Friday nights and Saturdays. I would set those two times aside so that I could focus on worshipping God and helping out with church work. As I move towards a more God-centered life, He encourages me time and time again with Matthew 6:33:

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

During the past few years, God has given me very little to worry about in my life. I find myself worrying more about church matters than my own. Truly, when we offer our best on the mountain of the Lord, God will provide and He will add blessings upon blessings.

I thank God for the opportunity to be His instrument. May all the glory and honor be unto the Lord Jesus' name. Hallelujah, amen. ●

