前言

帕特里克·亨利(Patrick Henry美國開國元勳之一)最後的遺願和遺囑的結尾說到:「這是我能留給我親愛家人的所有遺產一一基督的信仰一一這遺產,可以使他們獲得真正的富足」。同樣地,周金海也留下了這樣的遺產;首先是留給了他的家族,其次,也讓那些研讀他作品的讀者,可以引為前車之鑑。周金海在本書追溯神的手是如何引導他和全家人的生活,藉著這樣的追溯,他在紙上留下了屬靈遺產的足跡一一這些足跡不會隨時間流失。

雖然周金海無法觸及太多他和妻子南星更早世代的遺產,但那並不重要,因為比起神作在他身上,以及神透過他作在他這世代的寶貴屬靈記錄,那些都黯然失色——他就像詩篇裏的大衛,服事了他所在的世代。

周金海一方面是及早預備,為尚未出生的周氏子孫而著書寫作,(詩篇48:13;詩篇102:18;詩篇78:3-7)

另一方面,他同時是為我們所有想要尋求更深入、更親密與神同行的讀者而寫;他透過他自己的屬靈歷程來幫助我們,揭開更親密與神同行的秘訣。對於神所帶給他的一切經歷,以及近年來,他在世界各地講道事奉所教導的內容,他一直認真的照管。難怪他能遇見數以千計飢渴的心靈,尤其是在亞洲,他們已經準備好要渴求「安靜等候神」的信息一一就是那一直燃燒在周金海心中的信息。

幾十年來,周牧師/記者周傑的華人讀者,早已受益於他 所寫的具有靈性挑戰的中文書籍,但英語讀者卻錯過了赴宴 的機會。如今,他的願景、信息和他一生的見證,終於在這 本書中備齊了。請加入他的行列吧,因為他也要帶你進入「 等候的內室」,在那兒,聖靈將教導你聆聽神那「安靜微小 的聲音」。

如果要我選出一段經文,足以具體代表周金海在本書所呈現的生活見證,那一定是:「哦,神啊,從我年輕的時候起,你就是我的希望,我的信心。從出生我就依靠你,你使我出母胎。我要永遠讚美你。神啊,從我年輕的時候起,你就教導了我,直到今天,我都在宣揚你的奇妙作為。神啊,即使我年老髮白,也不要拋棄我。讓我能活著,直到我向下一代宣揚你的力量。願你的力量加給所有將要到來的人」(詩篇71:5-6,17-18)。

麗歐娜蔡 『Leona Choy』 作家/金晨出版社編輯主任

謹以此書獻給:

我親愛的主耶穌基督 因祂不變的愛和無盡的恩典;

致我親愛的妻子孫南星 因為她無條件的愛和忠誠;

致我們心愛的七個孩子和他們的孩子 和孩子們的孩子;

致所有尋求認識聖父、聖子耶穌和聖靈的人 願他們在祂永恆的豐富中認識這位全能的神, 那是擁有從今日直到永遠最美好的生活。

致 謝

首先,我要感謝慈愛的天父,從我還是孤兒起,祂就給我無限的恩典。我實在是感激不盡,自從我歸依基督教以來,祂為我所做的一切,特別是在我經歷到聖經所說的「聖靈的洗」之後,所帶來的生命改變。我感謝祂給我的啟發和恩膏,以及在英文上一一不是我的母語一一供應我夠用的詞彙,以致我不僅能和講英文的家人分享,也可以和我那些說英文的朋友分享屬靈經歷。

最初決定寫這本書,是為了給我的後代提供(屬靈的)資訊和益處,如同神的僕人摩西要求以色列百姓,不要忘記神為他們所作的事,並且說「總要傳給你的子子孫孫」。當我著手寫的時候,神讓我想起童年時期發生的許多事,特別是祂為我和家人所作的那些美好又奇妙的事。

其次,我滿心地感謝孫南星——我結褵65年的愛妻。她 一直是我們家的支柱,是我最好的朋友,和事工中最親密的 伙伴(關於JMI耶穌國際事工,請到我們的官網 www jmiinnerlife.org了解詳情)。她是一位話不多,但禱告很多的姐妹;寫這本書的期間,她一直用禱告支持我。祈禱是她撫養我們七個孩子時,獲得力量、耐心和毅力的秘訣;我們每一個孩子,各在不同領域中獲得成就。我對她的無私犧牲深表感激,這些犧牲,在很大程度上,促進了我們已成年孩子和孫子們的成功和幸福。

我也要感謝我們每一個孩子和孫子,他們皆自力更生, 半工半讀,在各自的專業領域,如建築、法律、醫學、健 康、高科技、教育和商業,取得傑出的成就。

衷心感謝紐約布蘭特湖(Brant Lake)朝聖者營地(Pilgrim Camp)的負責人保羅穆辛格(Paul Munsinger),他花很長的時間閱讀和審閱整個手稿,修改和潤飾英文語句的表達,連休假時也不中輟,充分顯露了他對主耶穌基督和弟兄們犧牲的愛。

還要特別感謝JMI的助理牧師兼司庫瑪莎威爾登(Martha Weldon),感謝她辛勤的付出,以及格外細心地一再審閱冗長的手稿,確保筆者英文文法的正確和上下文的清晰及連貫性。也同樣感謝她為出版發行此書所作的行政工作。

最後但同樣重要的是,我特別要感謝金晨出版社 (Golden Morning Publishing)的編輯主任兼出版人麗歐娜蔡 (Leona Choy),她以朋友和著名作家的身份,在此書最終 編輯和出版方面,提供了寶貴協助;沒有這些幫助,這本書 就無法及時、並以如此美好的面貌問世。她這一生撰寫或與 人合著了四十多本書,九十三歲的她,除了指導有抱負的年 輕作家之外,至今仍筆耕不輟。

她的公子理查德蔡(Richard Choy)負責本書排版和製作,他加快整個出版流程,趕上我們為慶祝南星九十歲華誕而規劃的家庭團聚,非常地感恩。

序文

這本書所記載的,全是我的屬靈旅程,職場生涯,和服事主中發生的故事。我感覺有必要說明一下,為什麼我會放棄如日中天的新聞事業,轉而從事無償的教會事工?對我來說,這就像是「從報導地上要聞轉而報導天上新聞,從原本向我的目標讀者報告壞消息,轉變成把福音的好消息帶給所有的人。」

我的旅程一直在神的引導之下,我在天上的父神差遣祂的 兒子耶穌成為*以馬內利*(就是神與我們,神與我,同在),因 此我尋求聖靈內住的力量,要將祂的愛與同在帶給世人。

我寫這本書的最初目的,是想為我們七個成年子女和十七個孫兒,提供一些周氏家族的歷史。我想讓他們知道我從哪裡來,是什麼造就了今日的我,還有,我們這個家庭所經歷的一切,以及我們是如何在試煉中得以勝出而榮耀了神。 我想讓他們知道,儘管生活中不可避免地會遇到挑戰,但我 和親愛的妻子從65年前結婚以來,是如何幸福地生活在一起;我想留下記錄,就是從孩子們離家上大學,我們在空巢期過自己的生活以來,發生在我們身上的許多事。

隨著寫作的進展,我意識到這不僅是我個人的故事,更 是有關人生的記敘,敘述在現實的生活中,如何找到成功和 幸福的秘訣,這或許是一般讀者,尤其是基督徒,更感興趣 的事。

雖然我曾用我的中文母語寫過許多本書,但用英文寫作,這才第二本;有點諷刺的是,英語已經成為我們大多數在美國長大,或在美國出生,並接受美語教育的孩子和孫子們的母語了。這本書除了供我子孫閱讀;當然,也可以給其他感興趣的英語讀者閱讀。

我想藉著這本書分享我的個人經歷:當我還是一個十一歲的男孩時,突然間被父親拋棄,無法再上學,在這樣的光景中,我如何一邊為生存掙札,一邊開始自學;又是如何在後來成為一名成功的記者,和受人敬重的牧者。

我想傳遞我認為生命中最寶貴的東西,是幸福的秘訣, 是實際可行的方法,使我們能活出成功的基督徒生活。這是 我對基督的信心,是經過考驗並證明是真實的,它徹底改變 了我的生活,使我成為一個真正快樂和充實的人。

為了那些虔誠的基督徒,和經常去教會之人的益處,我 覺得應該在書中分享一些與聖經相關並且不可不知的真理, 在我深入研究聖經和個人親身經驗中,我發現,這些真理對 於真實的屬靈成長和委身參與教會,都顯而易見,並實際可 行。

多年來,我注意到,許多真誠的基督徒在靈命上,無論 是與神的關係,或是與神同行的操練,都沒有什麼長進。而 這僅是因為他們沒有得到完整而全面的聖經教導。我希望這 本書能在這方面有所幫助。

為了要使我經歷個人的成長之痛,神允許我很深地涉入兩個大型教會——個是福音派,另外一個是靈恩派——由於這兩個教會,對某些聖經真理的過度強調和誤用,我便看到了兩個有偏激和過分行為的教會,因著缺乏健全與平衡的聖經教導,出現了無休無止的分裂。

因此,對每一位認真的基督徒而言,參加一個以基督為中心、以聖經為基礎、且被聖靈充滿的教會,是非常重要且不可或缺的;這樣,靈命才能在愛中有所成長,並且服事我們的主耶穌基督。

本書最後一章,我將它命名為「我眼中的美國」;這一章是我對美國這五十年來社會和政治狀況的觀察和看法,是 我個人以專業記者和牧者的雙重角度,所作的總結。

我們這些了解現今美國正在發生什麼事的人,可能很容易就意識到:無論政客如何努力嚐試,媒體專家如何努力分析,想要提供替代的處方,但似乎都沒能有效地解決國家持

續的道德淪喪、社會暴力和政治分歧。我由衷地贊同我們國家的開國元勳,他們在幾個世紀前就預先警告說,如果沒有神和聖經準則,來作道德行為的標準,我們就不可能有一個和平有序和充滿愛的社會。

喬治華盛頓是第一個警告政府當局的人,他強調:「沒 有神和聖經,就不可能正確地管理世界(或國家)」。

以美國憲法為基礎的現有政府制度,主要是由有基督信仰的人設計的,也是為有基督教信仰的人而設計的。它並不 適用於所謂的多元化和多樣性的混合文化。

因此,我得出這個結論:美國要擁有光明未來的唯一希望,就是回轉,歸向聖經中的這位神一一是祂使美國成為地上最大最強的國家。

筆者 2018年寫于德州達拉斯



孩童時期

1

我於中國農曆羊年(1931年)8月17日出生於中華民國前 首都南京。

我是一個貧窮、功能不彰的家庭所生的唯一孩子。媽媽 二十出頭就去世,那時我才三歲;沒人告訴我她是如何去世 的。當時我父親在軍隊服役,所以由祖母照顧我,直到我要 入學的年紀。祖母送我去和當時才初次見面的父親住在一 起,那時他已和一個女人同住;雖然我對她仍有許多疑問, 但我不得不稱她為繼母。她確實對我很好,我特別喜歡她做 的菜。

父親剛從軍中退伍,在當地一家旅館做郵遞員,薪水微薄。我們住在豪華酒店後面的破舊街區,形成鮮明的對比! 我們一家三口,住在破舊不堪的小單間裏,在同一個房間裡 煮飯、吃飯和睡覺。我們沒有抱怨這樣的生活條件,能有餐 桌上的食物和棲身之所,我們已感到滿足。大家都知道,那 --- 我的屬靈旅程

時中國是個貧窮的國家。

我或多或少感覺自己像孤兒,我不記得童年有什麼快樂的日子。因為母親早逝,我從來不知道她是什麼樣的人。我唯一擁有能記念她的,就是一張她穿婚紗的照片,而這照片切成兩半,新郎不在其中!從沒有人告訴我為什麼會這樣?死因是什麼?還有,她與我父親的關係;這些一直是個謎。我沒有父親任何的照片。只記得他是個性溫和,身形瘦長,臉色紅潤的中年男人,每天騎著自行車在旅館和郵局之間來回。1948年中國內戰,我們分開了,從此我再沒有見過他。

1950年代後期,我住在台灣,當時我有過一個奇異的經歷:有一次半夜醒來,想到父親,對他產生一種奇怪的感覺。我逃離共產黨的統治來到台灣時,他留在南京;多年來,我沒有任何管道可以聯絡上他。有那個奇怪的感覺後不久,我從一位香港朋友那裡得知,父親已經去世了,但沒有其他任何細節。

對於祖父母,我所知甚少,甚至一無所知,只知道在祖母照顧我的時候,他們處得不好,沒有住在一起。她是個虔誠的佛教徒,每天早上誦經唸詞,她似乎一點都不快樂。祖母不曾告訴過我任何關於我母親,或她與我父親的事,可能是因為當時我還太小,說了也無法理解。後來,就我所能記得的,她告訴我唯一的一件事是,當母親就要去世時,很奇怪的,她的眼睛一直睜著,直到她一再得到保證——祖母會

照顧我,她才慢慢閉上了眼。

小時候我經歷過日本佔領中國的可怕日子;我永遠無法 忘記1937年日軍侵華後,對中國人民犯的暴行,就是眾所皆 知的「南京大屠殺」,日軍屠殺了數以萬計的中國平民,包 括婦女兒童在內。

我清楚地記得,看到武裝的日本士兵,拿著裝有刺刀的 步槍,挨家挨戶尋找年輕的中國婦女。我看到那些女人在被 日本士兵追趕的同時,試圖尋找藏身之處。她們被捕時,被 拖進附近的房屋,並遭到強姦。許多人被殺,包括懷孕的婦 女。

這些可怕的童年記憶無法抹去。時至今日,戰後日本當局仍不承認其占領軍在中國犯下的南京大屠殺,並故意將中 日戰爭的這一部份,從歷史教科書中排除。



周金海從未謀面之母親的結婚照



第二章

我的教育

1

基本上,我是一個自學而成的人。我受的學校教育有限,只有五年的小學教育,加州柏克萊大學推廣部門一年的新聞函授課程,以及紐約雪城大學廣播新聞學一個學期的學習。後者是1955年,由隸屬美國國務院的美國新聞署贊助的,為期8個月的一個技術培訓課程。該課程還為我提供了在美國旅行的機會,以親眼目睹美國電視廣播網絡如何運作新聞業務。我很榮幸之後能有機會在台灣的英語新聞機構中,主持短期的培訓班,將這次旅行所獲得的技術知識和技能分享出去。

1955年在美國遊學的亮點之一是,我能與當時極具代表性的美國廣播記者愛德華·默羅(Edward R. Murrow)會面。他主持的哥倫比亞廣播公司獨家電視節目「依我所見」(As I See It)是美國收視率最高的採訪節目之一。我很榮幸能有機會親眼看到他製作該節目,並與他討論美國新聞業一些基本原則。我在默羅位於紐約的辦公室,與這位廣受尊敬的美國

--- 我的屬靈旅程

記者談話,對我的新聞事業影響重大。

簡而言之,我大部分的教育和知識來自兩個方面:聖經和八十年的真實生活經歷。自從我十七歲成為基督徒以來, 聖經一直是我的同伴和老師。它教導我很多關於生命的意 義和對神的認識,以及我們與這位創造宇宙萬物和人類的 神,之間的關係。在我身為基督徒的生活中,藉著應用聖經 原則,使我成為一位更好的丈夫、父親、記者、牧者、和祖 父。

為什麼我提早輟學

由於父親負擔不起學費,我年紀尚小的時候就無法繼續 升學,父親要我退學去工作養自己,那時我國小五年級還沒 有唸完。我是十一歲時被丟下,獨自面對未來,自生自滅。

不能回學校讀書,使我感到萬分難過。我被剝奪受教育的機會,一想到其他孩子都能上學時,我常哭泣。雖然如此,我痛下決心要以自學的方式來繼續課業,於是,我努力工作,同時努力學習。

我在父親工作過的旅館裡作服務生,我用賺得的錢買書閱讀,也買練習冊學書法,我希望能夠像中國學者一樣,用 毛筆寫精美的漢字。我利用所有的空閒時間,像書蟲一樣地 學習。如果我還留在學校的話,我可能不會這樣努力。 歲月流逝,我依然繼續學習。八年對日抗戰在1945年終於以勝利告終,當時中國的主要戰爭盟友一一美國,在廣島和長崎投下兩顆原子彈,導致日本投降。隨著美國第一個駐華軍事顧問團的成立,大量美國軍事人員湧入,需要在首都南京找住宿的地方。我工作的旅館,被中國政府徵用為美軍住所,我則可以在那裡繼續工作,這為我提供了學習說、寫英語的絕佳機會。我再說,如果我還在學校上學,就沒有這樣的機會和理想的環境,來學這門語言;而這語言後來成為我職業生涯和未來的重要資產。

我是如何開始學習英語的

住旅館的美國人中,有一位名叫約翰羅德里克(John Roderick),他是資深記者,替美聯社報導在中國的中日戰爭。多年後,當美中關係進入「乒乓外交」時期,他是首位獲准進入中國的美國記者;這段「乒乓外交」,最後導致中美在1979年恢復外交關係。雖然我和約翰羅德里克是素昧平生,但他對我這個十幾歲的青少年感到興趣,自願免費教我英語。他也為我取了一個英文名字「傑克」(Jack),而傑克正是他自己的小名。通常,中國人不像西方人那樣將名字放在前面,除非他們取了英文名字。傳統上,中國人把姓氏放在前面。

約翰羅德里克是我的第一位、也是最後一位英語老師。

他每週花幾個小時教我用正確的美式英語閱讀和寫作。身為 資深新聞記者,他是位了不起的作家。約翰花了三個月的時 間教我發音,直到我能說出美式的英語字詞!這是為什麼我 能說出帶有美國口音的英語,我是在中國學到的!

和美國老師一起學習英語,引起我對美國文化和歷史的 興趣。我在美國人中工作和生活時,我注意到他們非常尊重 個人自由和人的尊嚴。一般美國人似乎在社交禮儀方面受過 較好的教育,他們對每個人皆彬彬有禮,這與往往更尊重老 人的中國人不太一樣。

例如,我注意到,當美國人不小心撞到某人時,或者當 他們必須打斷談話時,他們通常都會先說「抱歉」或「對不 起」。一般而言,美國駕駛者會為行人讓路;他們幾乎是停 下來或完全讓路給行人。

另一個例子是,當他們排隊時,通常沒有人會想插隊往 前面擠,他們有秩序地排隊等候。我還注意到,當不得不打 噴嚏或咳嗽時,他們總是用手帕摀住嘴。我從未見過美國人 在公共場所隨地吐痰,或是在講電話時大喊大叫。

英語如何改變了我的生活

我開始喜歡美國人和美國,我想更多地了解美國的文化和歷史。出於某種原因,我對英語產生了強烈的興趣和熱愛,以至於我日以繼夜地學習英語,也就是說,我連吃飯睡.18.

覺都和英語在一起!我如此熱情地學習英語,以至於不得不一本接一本地更換英漢詞典。我儘可能地吸收每一個單字和詞語,在兩年內,我學會了一口流利英語,且能使用英文打字機,像一位訓練有素的秘書一樣,快速地打字。

1947年,當我十六歲時,我在美國駐華軍事顧問團獲得了第一份有薪的正式工作。剛開始是打字員,後來當了翻譯員。從那時起,我的職業生涯不斷往上攀升,開始陸續遇到更好的工作機會。看起來,我的英語能力,已經為我舖設了更光明的未來。特別在戰後的中國,不論是公家機構或私營單位,對英語人才,都需求孔亟。

懂英語的好處

由於精通英語,這便成了我主要的經濟收入方式,不僅 養活我個人,最終也養活了全家人。可以說,如果沒有英語 的知識和技能,我就不會在新聞界有所成就,也不會派往美 國。正因派往美國,我才對美國的政治、文化和歷史有更多 的了解,最終歸化美國,成為美國公民。

此外,我接觸到英語文學作品,這有助於拓寬我對美國和整個世界的了解。由於我懂英語,所以我能習得在新聞領域裏最新的知識和技能,然後能夠將這些知識,傳遞給台灣有潛力的年輕華人記者。每當我看到我參與培訓的記者嶄露頭角,最終被政府新聞局,或民營新聞機構錄用時,我都感到無比欣慰。

憑藉著優異的英語能力,我在美國生活享有諸多的優勢,尤其是在擔任外國媒體記者時,我能夠報導總統新聞發佈會和白宮簡報會的消息,以及採訪國會領導人和政府官員。我可以用英語直接與美國主流新聞媒體和各種刊物接觸,無需等待中文翻譯,就取得許多第一手的新聞資料。

另一個很大的好處是,我可以閱讀中英文對照聖經,比較中文譯本與多種英文譯本之間的不同,從而使我對聖經的原意,有更廣更全面的理解。我也因此有能力閱讀尚未有中文譯本的英文屬靈讀物及靈修典藉,這些都有助於我與神建立更親密的關係。

擁有雙語的能力,不僅給自己帶來巨大的好處,透過我的新聞報導,和隨後的基督教事工,也給許多人(不論是說中文或英文的人)帶來益處。總而言之,它讓我的生活有意義、更愉快、更有價值,我期望也使許多人的生活如此。

把聖經當作自我教育的工具

由於沒有受過正規教育,我一直依靠聖經來自我教育和 自我提升,它尤其幫助我,對偉大的真神有更多的認識。聖 經真實地塑造了我的性格,並且將我模塑成一個看起來是有 學養的人。

自從我成為基督徒以來,我一次又一次地閱讀和查考聖經,已經超過50個年頭了。我熱愛聖經、珍視聖經,它是靈,20.

感的源泉,是一座蘊藏取之不盡的智慧和知識的金礦。我發現,這本令人難以置信的書,有著現今世界各地所有人類問題和悲劇的答案。

聖經被認為是神所默示的話語,它奇蹟般地歷經了各個時代的考驗仍獲保存至今,也依舊是世界上最暢銷和最被廣泛閱讀的書——它已經整本或部份翻譯成2,530種不同的語言或各類的口語表達方式。

總的來說,我的自我教育主要來自兩個來源:聖經以及 工作歷練。後者包括30多年的新聞工作、20年的牧師工作, 以及25年來廣泛的基督教事工之旅。我要將這些因為人的努 力而獲致的成就,歸功於我的神和主耶穌!

在述說著自學的好處時,我從沒想過,學習第二語言一一英語,幾乎對我生活的各個層面,都產生重大的影響。我突然意識到,我年輕時對英語的熱愛,一定是來自更高的源頭,而且是有原因的。我怎能不相信那位全知的神,亦即慈愛的天父,祂早已在我出生之前就已計劃了我整個人生,並且為祂自己的榮耀,實現了這計劃?

這讓我相信,神不僅對我的生命有計劃,也對每一位由 聖靈而生的神的孩子都有計劃,正如祂在祂的話語中所強調 的:「因我知道我為你們所定的計劃,是使你們得平安,而 不是遭受災禍的計劃;要賜給你們美好的前程和盼望。」 (耶利米書29:11 另譯)。



南星的母親藍蘭, 曾是上海的電影女演員



第三章

歸依基督

1

我在1948年受洗成為基督徒,不是因我遇到不尋常的信仰經歷,而是因為一位基督徒朋友的見證。某個星期天的早上,我的同事徐云逵,邀我去教會聽他講道,之前我並不知道他是平信徒傳道者。那是我生平第一次去教會,也是第一次聽到耶穌基督這個名字。在此之前,我只從祖母那裡聽說過佛陀,或者從我的一些穆斯林親戚那裡聽說過穆罕默德。

之後每個星期天早上,徐云逵都會出現在我的公寓,風雨無阻,等著我起床,然後帶我一起去教會。徐云逵是那種讓你很難拒絕的人,他總是和藹可親,他的耐心和堅持確實對我產生了影響。所以,我繼續和他去教會,大約持續了六個月,我喜歡這期間在教會所聽到的信息。有一天,教會宣布將舉行洗禮儀式,想要受洗的人可以報名參加與教會長老的而談。

面談中,我被問到一些簡單的問題:你是否相信耶穌基督是神的兒子?相信祂為你的罪死在十字架上?若你接受

祂作為你個人的救主,你的罪就會被赦免,而且當你死後,你會去天堂。我對每一個問題的回答都是肯定的,所以我就受洗成為該教會的新成員。儘管當時我對基督教知道的並不多,然而我相信我做了一件對的事。事實上,隨著時間往前進,事實證明,這是我生命中發生過最好的一件事!

受洗之後,我持續地過一熱心基督徒該有的生活:定期 參加教會禮拜,每天禱告並閱讀聖經。我為教會付出時間和 金錢,參加聖經培訓班和傳福音活動。我擔任過各種服事, 例如帶領敬拜、帶領小組,以及進行家訪和醫院探訪。我甚 至作打掃廁所的工作,那個年代的廁所相當原始簡陋!

透過這些事,我以為自己已經是一個「好」基督徒,然而我只是表現得像一個敬虔和屬靈的人。後來我發現,我連重生都沒有!因為我的行為中,沒有任何新生命的跡象,我還是那個總是以自我為中心,狂妄自大,脾氣暴躁的人。我無法與任何同事相處。在教會裡,我假裝很善良很屬靈,但在家裡我是個完全不同的人,經常讓老婆孩子難受!我羨慕那些善良和快樂的基督徒,然而我心中既沒有平安也沒有喜樂。這種情況持續了十多年,我厭惡也厭倦了要成為一個好基督徒。

漸漸地我意識到,我的基督徒生活缺少了某樣東西,但 我不知道那是什麼。我想從教會牧師們那裏尋求答案,但沒 有一個人能幫助我。我變得很絕望,所以有一天我請假在 家,想要從神那裡直接尋找到我之所以失敗的原因。我需要 知道,在我的信仰中到底缺少了什麼。 我花了一整天的時間禱告,在聖經中尋找答案,但神似乎離我很遠。這一天快結束時,我準備要放棄了。我對祂說:「神啊,如果祢今天不給我答案,我就不再作基督徒了。」然後,突然間,這句熟悉的經文在我腦海中浮現:「我已經與基督同釘十字架,現在活著的不再是我,乃是基督在我裡面活著;並且我如今在肉身活著,是因信神的兒子而活;他是愛我,為我捨己。」(加拉太書2:20)。那時我並不明白「與基督同釘十字架」對信徒而言意味著什麼;也不明白當一位信徒說「現在活著的不再是我,乃是基督在我裡面活著」是什麼意思。我以為使徒保羅只是在談論他自己的基督徒經歷,雖然我去教會多年,但我從未有過「基督住在我裡面」的經歷,我不知道當「基督住在我裡面」時,那會是什麼樣子。如果這就是基督教的意義,那我就不是一個真正意義上的基督徒,只是一個宗教人士而已。人們常說基督教不是宗教;它是個人與永活基督的關係。

所以我繼續尋找真實的東西。正如耶穌所應許的:「你們祈求,就給你們;尋找,就尋見;叩門,就給你們開門。因為凡祈求的就得著;尋找的就尋見,叩門的,就給他開門」(馬太福音7:7-8)。我一直在尋找和叩門,我花了七年的時間才找到這個真理——基督住在我裡面——從此,我不再是同一個人了!

1962年我在香港開始了一份新工作,所以我們從台灣搬到香港。我們開始聽到關於某個教會的事,據說,該教會幾乎每天都有「神蹟奇事」發生。我們了解到,創辦該教會的

---- 我的屬靈旅程

那位女士,曾是一位走紅的電影女演員,後來,她有了奇妙的悔改經歷,而且被聖靈充滿,神大大使用她。

我和妻子孫南星(關於我們的交往過程和婚姻請見第五章)對這教會越來越感到興趣和好奇,有一天我們決定去拜訪該教會,親自去看看它長什麼樣子。這位女演員出身的傳道人,當晚正傳講所謂的「聖靈的洗」。這是我們在所屬的教會未曾聽過的主題;在我們教會,婦女不被允許在公共場合傳道——並且她們被教導,在教會裡要蒙頭,以作為順服的記號;婦女只被允許向婦女傳道。

這位前粵語女演員(在銀幕上的藝名為梅綺 Mui Yee)強有力地傳講「聖靈的洗」的必要性。在此之前,我們只知道受水的洗,福音派信徒通常接受浸水禮或點水禮,但我們沒有被教導任何有關「聖靈的洗」。她以五旬節那天120位信徒第一批受聖靈的洗為例子,強調,每個基督徒都需要受聖靈的洗和受水的洗,正如耶穌在五旬節前命令他的門徒說:「約翰是用水施洗,但不多幾日,你們要受聖靈的洗。」「但聖靈降臨在你們身上,你們就必得著能力;作我的見證。」(使徒行傳 1:5,8)。

講完道,那位身材嬌小的女傳道人,身著黑色傳統長袍,手裡拿著一本聖經,從講台上走下來,逕直朝我們走來,微笑著彷彿已經認識我們。她熱情地向我和我妻子打招呼,並邀請我們留下來吃宵夜——這是廣東人的習慣。我們開始想知道神為我們預備的是什麼。

我們坐下來吃飯時,他們要我作謝飯禱告,當我一開始 禱告時,我聽到妻子生平第一次說方言,並且在我還沒禱告 完之前,我發現自己被傳道者梅綺和她的同工包圍著,他們 開始齊聲禱告並按手在我身上,希望我也能被聖靈充滿。他 們一致相信,說方言是被聖靈充滿或聖靈的洗的標記,正如 早期門徒在五旬節那天所表現的那樣,如聖經所說:「他 們都被聖靈充滿,開始照著聖靈所賜的才能,說起別的語言 來。」(使徒行傳 2:4)。

他們一直禱告再禱告,但我並沒有說出方言來。我不是拒絕說方言,因我知道聖經清楚地記載和教導了說方言的事。我無法接受的是,這些婦女沒有事先徵求我的同意就按手在我身上!如我之前所說的,我們來自的教會背景是:女性被教導要順從男性,在聚會中要保持安靜。(提摩太前書2:11-12)當他們一直在禱告讓神用聖靈充滿我的時候,我一直在思考女性是否被允許「按手」在男性身上!

姊妹們為我禱告了至少半個小時,直到在我的靈裡我 聽到了這些話:「...你將這些事向聰明通達人就藏起來,向嬰 孩就顯出來。」「我實在告訴你們,你們若不回轉,變成小 孩子的樣式,斷不得進天國」(馬太福音 11:25, 18:3)。

我立刻知道這些話是來自於主,我開始明白我需要像孩子一樣,謙虛和簡單。在我的靈裡,我也知道那天晚上神正 在為我們作新事。我的妻子很容易接受說方言的恩賜,因為 她很單純,像小孩子一樣。所以,我知道我需要變得像小孩 ---- 我的屬靈旅程

子一樣,才能領受聖靈的洗。

我的心一降服於神的時候,就在一瞬間,我的方言就爆發出來!我感覺好像有什麼東西從我體內炸開了!我一直在大聲說方言,幾乎無法控制地說了約半小時!當我這樣作的時候,我聽到那些包圍著我為我熱切禱告的人在拍手!他們似乎都很喜樂,因為我領受了聖靈的洗。

對我而言,聖靈的洗最美好的部份是,我看到耶穌就站在我面前——不是用我的肉眼,而是用我的靈看見,在我的靈裡是如此鮮活——我將自己和我的一切都奉獻給祂。對我來說,這一切是如此真實,以至於我不覺得需要睜開眼睛看看耶穌是否在那裡。祂就在我面前!因為正是耶穌用聖靈給我施洗!施洗約翰早已預言說:「…祂要用聖靈和火給你們施洗」(馬太福音 3:11)。

經歷這奇妙的洗禮之前,我只是在理性上相信耶穌基督從死裡復活,但我現在乃是憑著實際體驗相信耶穌基督真的活著! 祂不僅活在世上,而且活在我裡面! 然後我就開始明白使徒保羅所說的「…基督活在我裡面」(加拉太書 2:20)是什麼意思了!

那天晚上所發生的事,是我人生一個轉捩點。每件事都改變了!我的世界觀,我的價值觀,我對基督教的了解,我 與神的關係,我對基督教會的看法,我與基督徒朋友和非基督徒的關係,生活的意義和目的——全都改變了!



第四章

職業生涯

· . i . ·

回溯最初的基督徒生活,我第一次認真禱告是在我急需一份工作的時候。當時我正搭上一艘要趕在共產黨入侵之前就離開上海的緊急疏散船,我的朋友是國民黨軍隊的高級軍官李勝玉(Li Shengyu),他負責這艘開往廣州的船。我獲得了這艘船的免費通行證,但我知道,一旦我們到達了目的地,我就是孤身一人。在我父親指示我「無論去那裏要與國民黨政府同進退」之後,我便抓住這個機會逃離共產主義。那是我最後一次和父親通電話,當時並不知道我再也見不到他了。

國民黨駐軍和入侵的共產黨軍隊之間已經爆發了戰爭。 當我們的船駛出上海港時,我能聽到雙方交火的聲音,幾天 之內,上海這個大都市就落入了共產黨手中。

第二天早上,當我們的船在公海上航行時,我獨自站在 露天甲板上,當我眺望廣闊的海洋時,天空和水域似乎融為 -- 我的屬靈旅程

一體,我在想,一旦我到達了目的地之後,有誰會幫助我。 因為我沒有錢,而且我在即將到達的陌生城市裡也不認識任 何人,我很擔心自己的未來。

第一次的禱告

我認真地向神禱告:「親愛的主,如果祢幫我在廣州找到一份工作,我會一輩子把祢當作我的神,奉耶穌的名禱告,阿們。」作為一個年幼的基督徒,我真的不知如何禱告,但後來我才知道,我這個簡單的禱告與舊約中的雅各,在曠野逃避他兄弟以掃的憤怒時,所做的禱告相似(創世記 28:20-21)。

船停靠在南部港口廣州市後,我立即上岸找工作。有人告訴我,這個城市有一個地區叫做沙面(Shamian),靠近海灘,那裡是外國公司聚集的地方,我拜訪了其中一些公司,申請成為英語打字員和翻譯人員,頭兩天沒有人僱用我,第三天,我就在一個叫農村重建聯合委員會(JCRR)的半官方組織找到了工作,這是一項由美國資助的聯合項目,其任務是幫助中國進行農業改革。它的員工比大多數其他組織的薪酬更高。

我被聘為打字職員。兩週後,在我的第一個發薪日,令 我驚訝的是,我收到了七十五塊中國銀元!(戰爭期間失控 的通貨膨漲,使得當時的中國貨幣一文不值)銀元幾乎和 美元一樣好。當我手裡拿著兩摞銀元走出辦公室時,我激 動得不住地感謝神, 祂回應了我在船上的禱告!因此, 我認定, 神聽禱告!這次經歷無疑地增強了我對神的信心。正如我所承諾的, 從那時起, 我就信靠耶穌基督為我的主我的神。

不久,共產黨軍隊向廣州市推進。JCRR和其他的國民黨政府機構受命撤離到台灣。我與其他當地僱員的工作因此終止;然而,令我感到驚訝的是,當我的老闆——是一位親切的美國女士,負責JCRR的人事——告訴我,如果我獲得入境許可,她可以在台灣重新僱我。徵得她的同意,我把她的名字列為我的擔保人,這是當時對任何中國公民要申請入境台灣的要求。我的入境許可證,很快地在香港獲批並郵寄給我。當我抵達台北松山機場時,前任老闆派來的資深官員已在機場迎接我,然後很快地我就開始工作了!神真是對我太好了!

奇蹟還在發生

如果能連著兩次在JCRR就業是個奇蹟,而那只是更多奇蹟的開端而已。到目前為止,在我從事過的多份工作中,我會說在台灣JCRR的這份工作,是我遇到過最美的事,主要原因有二:首先,它讓我意外地遇到了當時尚未結婚的孫南星(Nancy Sun)小姐,後來她成為我的妻子,我終身的伴侶;其次,它為我日後在新聞界嶄新成功的生涯,提供了難以置

信的催化劑!

黃余夢燕(Nancy Yu Huang)是《英文中國郵報》(China Post)的發行人,她是一位懷抱事業心的華人女性新聞工作者,擁有紐約哥倫比亞大學新聞學學位。由於許多新聞訊息只有中文稿,她剛成立的小報,急需要精通中文及英文的專職作家和編輯。勇(Yong)(譯註:可能是作者的一位朋友)和我剛剛完成了我們的新聞學課程,所以我們就趕緊以兼職的方式,接受了這份新聞寫作和編輯的職缺。對我來說,這似乎是把我在函授課程中所學到的,付諸實踐的最佳時機。

成為一個成熟的記者

我在報社工作中得到一些經驗之後,我想知道,就一名 英文記者/作家而言,我的表現究竟如何。有一天,台灣官方 的中央通訊社(CNA)英文部門,發佈了新聞記者/編輯的職 缺,招聘年輕有抱負,有大學文憑的記者來競試。雖然我未 上過大學,但我決定參加考試,目的只是想看看我與那些受 過大學教育的人相比會如何。令我驚訝的是,在幾十名參賽 者中,我竟名列前茅;這對我而言又是一個奇蹟!我很高興 能知道,在持續自學英語的情況下,以及成為一名具有潛力 的外語記者,我的程度如何。

台灣資深記者、著名政治評論家曾虛白(Tseng Xubai) 曾任官方中央通訊社社長,他同時是中國廣播公司(BCC) 的副總經理。他需要人手來管理外語廣播。他想要親自面試 我,確認我是否有資格在BCC擔任該職位。然而,我並不想 放棄在JCRR的高薪工作。

在第一次會面時,曾先生對培養新一代記者興趣濃厚。 曾先生曾是台灣政治大學新聞研究所創辦人及所長。最後, 是這位有影響力的記者兼教育家說服我離開JCRR,轉而從事 一份收入較低的工作;他說這份新工作會為我從事新聞事業 提供更好的前景。這是一個艱難的決定,因為當時我必須養 活一個不斷壯大的家庭。但是,我很高興當時我接受了他的 建議。

第一次訪問美國

令人驚訝的是,我加入BCC擔任英文部主任還不到六個 月,我獲選成為台灣兩名記者中的其中一位,能去參加由美 國國務院在華盛頓特區資助的新聞工作技術培訓計劃。這在 當時是台灣記者夢寐以求的難得機會。

這個計劃一共八個月,包括支付我在美國頻繁旅行的費用,以獲得有關美國廣播技術的第一手知識,並在美國主要廣播和電視網絡台的新聞編輯室中,實際操作培訓。其中包括CBS,NBC和當時位於紐約、波士頓、費城、芝加哥和洛杉磯的聯播系統網絡電台(Mutual Broadcasting System network stations)。以外,我還在紐約雪城大學的大眾傳播系度

過了一個學期,在那裡我參加講座,並在電視廣播方面參與實習。

擁有了從美國各廣播網絡台的一些新知識和技能,回到台灣後,我發起了兩個培訓項目——一是針對廣播記者,另一是針對新聞記者和寫作者。1956年,我還應當時教育部部長張其昀先生之邀,要在台灣開展第一個實驗性的教育電視廣播,計劃要以電視作為大眾教育的新媒介。很遺憾,由於資金缺乏,這個計劃並沒有開始。

1961年,當台灣開辦第一家電視台時,我被推薦為第一人選擔任節目總監。然而,由於我對《英文中國郵報》承諾說,我會繼續負責新聞台的工作,而且當時我的發行人無論如何也不願讓我離開,所以這個職位後來由一位也在紐約上州雪城大學接受過培訓的同行記者擔任。

首届亞洲記者大會

我在《英文中國郵報》任職期間,第一屆亞洲記者大會在1962于菲律賓舉行,我和另一名記者獲選代表中華民國參加,這另一位是台灣《英文中國日報》(China News)總經理丁維棟。在馬尼拉會議期間,我們受到菲律賓總統和亞洲其他國家代表的接待(不包括中華人民共和國)。

我從馬尼拉回台路經香港時,意外發生了一件好事。我 在香港拜訪了一位資深記者朋友一一吳嘉棠先生,他是當時 .34. 香港兩大英文報紙之一的《香港標準報》總編輯。當時,他 正在尋找報社採訪主任的人選,令我感到意外的是,他給了 我這份工作,我欣然接受並同意儘快任職。

要往前的時候到了

我把得到這份香港的工作,作為從神來的徵兆,告訴我們是時候該離開已經居住十三年的台灣了。回到台北不久,我立即從《英文中國郵報》離職;澳大利亞籍的格雷厄姆·詹金斯(Graham Jenkins)是當時《香港標準報》總經理,他很有效率地協助我度過工作上的轉換期。

從1962年到1968年,我們在香港生活了六年。在此期間,我除了擔任《香港標準報》採訪主任一職,還兼其他四份工作——分別是香港美國新聞處電台科科長、美國之音和自由歐洲電台新聞記者,《今日世界》雜誌記者/作者,香港貿易發展委員會貿易顧問/作者。我沒有主動請求任何工作,然而這些工作一個接著一個找上我,一個比一個還好!到了這個時候,我完全地相信諸如「神的介入」和「無條件的恩惠」等教義。

從靈性上來說,我在香港所意外獲得的「聖靈的洗」 的經歷,對我個人與神的關係,以及後來在美國福音派教會 的服事,都產生深遠的影響。

我曾報導過的主要新聞事件

在我33年的新聞職業生涯中,我所報導過的最重要和最具歷史意義的新聞事件包括:毛澤東領導下的中國共產主義與前蘇聯之間,公開的意識型態爭論和分裂;1960年代初期,左派搧起的暴動,導致英國殖民地香港的社會動盪;1960年代後期,中國混亂的「文化大革命」;1969年,美國發送第一個人類登陸月球;1972年,尼克森總統連任,並於同年到中國進行歷史性的訪問;關於中國在聯合國的代表權問題,於1971年聯合國年度辯論中,以中華民國(台灣)被中華人民共和國取代而告終;廣為人知的醜聞「水門事件」迫使尼克森在1974年成為第一位辭職下台的美國總統;以及推動中美關係正常化。(直到1979年兩國重新建立外交關係為止;而台北和華盛頓之間的傳統關係,尤其是正式的共同防禦條約,則由美國國會通過的所謂「台灣關係法」取代並維持至今。此法由美國總統吉米卡特簽署而正式成立。)

我認為擔任台灣《中國時報》駐華盛頓/紐約特派記者的 任務,是我新聞事業中的亮點之一。正值中美關係發生歷史 性變化的關鍵時刻,尼克森政府正試圖制定一項新的對華政 策,讓華盛頓承認北京是中國唯一的合法政府,同時,仍保 持其與台北國民黨政府的現有聯繫和道義義務。

當時,台灣在聯合國的「中國代表權」這議題,面臨嚴峻的外交挑戰。以專業的角度來說,從台灣而來的記者,被派駐華盛頓和紐約,既是激動人心的時刻,也是巨大的挑戰。

當時有很多的新聞報導要發送回台灣,然而,那時的政府仍在實行新聞審查制度;要報導有關美國、中國和台灣的敏感政治問題時,可以說是如履薄冰。與此同時,在紐約聯合國的外交潮流,又越來越有利於北京加入世界組織;當時有廣泛流傳的預測認為,如果台灣在聯合國被共產主義中國取代,它將在政治、外交和經濟上受到致命打擊。為了讓台灣人民為可能的外交衝擊做好準備,我以一種讓人從字裡行間閱讀時,能感知到有可能會發生大事的筆法,來撰寫發送回台灣的報導。

記者的特權之一就是,可以在歷史形成的過程中,見證 它的存在。中華民國(台灣)被迫退出聯合國,而中華人民 共和國以壓倒性多數票通過進入聯合國,當時我就在現場。 我永遠忘不了,就在即將投票,很可能會承認中華人民共和 國是合法代表中國以及五個常任理事國之一的時候,中華民 國外交部長周書楷,率領代表團走出聯合國大會堂的尷尬場 面。對於自1945年以來一直是聯合國創始成員之一的中華民 國來說,這是悲傷的一天。 對於我個人而言,身為一名基督徒,為著神保佑台灣能留在世界組織裡,我多方禱告。像許多其他支持台灣的人一樣,看到台灣失去聯合國代表權,我感到難過。我想知道為什麼神沒有回應我的禱告。當我尋求主的解釋時,祂給了我這節聖經經文:「壓傷的蘆葦,祂不折斷,將殘的燈火,祂不吹滅。祂必信實地帶來正義」。(以賽亞書42:3,CCB譯本)

就我能夠理解這句經文的程度而言,我認為它的意思是,儘管中華民國在聯合國和國際關係中遭受損失,但全能的神「至高者在人的國中掌權」(但以理書4:17,25)神將承擔著台灣的未來。

然而很奇特的是,就在中華民國被聯合國驅逐後不久, 台灣經濟不但沒有受到打擊,反而在1970年代初開始起飛。 其製造業和出口貿易成倍增長,成為世界領先的貿易國家之 一,擁有第二大外匯儲備!台灣與全球約120個國家保持經濟 和文化關係,但只有少數國家(2012年為23個)仍承認中華 民國為中國的合法政府。

儘管北京一直聲稱台灣是中國的一部分——美國對此仍 然承認,但實際上不接受這一立場——事實卻是,台灣,或 者它更喜歡自稱的中華民國,仍然是一個自由、民主的國 家。1949年內戰失敗後,中國國民黨退守台灣,成為獨立國 家。 就所有實際的意義和目的而言,台灣及其離島,從未處於中華人民共和國的控制之下。自1979年美國與中共建交以來,這一直是美中關係的一個癥結點所在。就美國本身而言,它更願意讓長期存在的統一問題,隨著時間的推移和平解決,但在解決之前,美國有道義和法律上的義務,在台海發生軍事衝突時為台灣防禦。

只要《台美關係法》仍然有效,政治現狀就可能會持續下去。身為一名基督徒,我將這種獨特的國際局勢,歸因於「神的干預」或「神的護理」。

工作經歷

我十一歲開始工作,從那時起,我在43年的時間(1942-1985年)總共從事了13份不同的工作。作為我們家庭記錄的一部分,這裡簡要介紹一下我的工作經歷:

南京中央飯店服務生,現更名為南京中心飯店(1942-1947);

美國駐南京軍事顧問團打字職員(1947-1948年);

聯合國難民救濟組織上海辦事處處理文員(1949年1月 至5月);

廣州和台北,中美農村重建聯合委員會(JCRR)行政助理(1949年6月-1955年);

台北《英文中國郵報》新聞編輯/總經理(1960-1962);

台灣《中央通訊社》英文部文案編輯(1955);

中國廣播公司駐台英文部節目經理(1955-1962);

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周金海與孫南星的婚紗照

從記者到牧者

我的屬靈旅程



婚姻與家庭

1950年夏天,我在台灣遇到了孫南星(英文名Nancy Sun),它發生在我來到台灣,開始為JCRR工作大約六個 月後。我們相遇在基督徒同事陳恩慈小姐(Grace Chen)的 家中。陳恩慈激請她的朋友瑪格麗特,孫南星和我到她家吃 飯,瑪格麗特也是南星在基督教女青年協會的老師和輔導, 南星曾在該協會上過英語課。晚宴是特意為我安排的,為要 讓我認識這位後來成為我終生伴侶的19歲女孩。我事先被告 之晚宴的原因,但南星沒有。

我對這位謙虛的年輕女子的第一印象非常好。她個子 高,衣著樸素,長得好看,有點害羞,她的頭髮紮成一對辮 子。如果事先告訴她這是一個特殊的場合,或許她會打扮一 下,後來我才知道她平時就是這個樣子,我很喜歡。我對自 己說:「她是我喜歡的女孩!」

--- 我的屬顯旅程

我根本還沒考慮到她對我的看法,就決定要和她約會。 起初,她似乎對我一點興趣都沒有,我寫信和打電話,但她 都沒有回應。我至少邀請過她三次共進晚餐或看電影,但每 次都受到斷然拒絕。一開始我很失望,後來很生氣,我覺得 我的自尊受到了傷害。由於她一再拒絕我的愛,我開始和一 位在工作中的女同事約會。

身為一個少年人,我在談戀愛時採取了所謂的「三振出局」政策。如果我對一個女孩感興趣,我會先與她交朋友,邀請她出去吃飯或看電影;如果她拒絕我三次,我會說:「妳出局了!」所以,每當我告訴恩慈我準備放棄南星了,她總是鼓勵我說:「請耐心等待,周兄!」

我們的交往過程

有一天,我得知南星從自行車上摔下來摔斷了手臂,她上了石膏正在家裏休養,我藉此機會一次又一次地去她家拜訪她。我帶了鮮花,試著安慰和鼓勵她。漸漸地,她改變了對我的態度,開始表現出興趣。顯然藉由這件事,她已經知道,我畢竟不是那麼壞的人。

等她完全康復後,我邀請她參加我們公司為員工舉辦的 聖誕晚會。當她接受我的邀請時我非常高興。我不記得她那 天穿的衣服,但她的自然美看起來如此迷人。即使是現在, 她也從不化妝——甚至在我們的婚禮上也是如此。我們在晚 會上和其他人相處得很好,我們第一次跳舞。那是我們的第 一次約會。

我們在晚會上發現我倆參加了同一個教會,我們當時都 只是週日的基督徒,對於神的事情沒有很認真。當我們繼續 約會時,我決定不再和辦公室裡的另一個女孩見面。

在JCRR工作的好處之一是,每個員工都有權在週末使用公務車處理個人事務。那個時候,在台灣買得起車的人不多。隨著南星和我開始在每個週末約會見面,我總是會提前為我們每週的約會預訂一輛車。那時,由於她在台北市郊的一家電台做播音員,如果沒有汽車,我不可能每個週末都能見到她。

隨著我們每個週末繼續共度時光,我們的關係越來越密切。然而,在那些日子裡,年輕的中國女性與西方女性不同,她們很矜持,無法對她們的男朋友說「我愛你」。當南星和我相愛時,她非常害羞,甚至連一次都沒有對我說出她對我的愛,直到我們訂婚的那一天。

她第一次對我示愛,是在我20歲生日時,她給了我一本日記作為生日禮物。在第一頁上,她附上了一朵塑料包裹的壓花,下面她寫道:「勿忘我」——這也是這朵壓花的名字。作為一個靦腆的年輕女子,這幾乎是她對未來丈夫表達

--- 我的屬靈旅程

愛意的最大程度!我不知道為何那時我沒有期待她為我多作 些什麼。

我們的婚姻

經過兩年多交往,我們都認為是時候該論及婚嫁了。有一天,我們鼓起勇氣,去見她的母親,以徵得她的同意,讓我們結婚。不出所料,我們的請求被拒絕了,可能有兩個原因:第一,她媽媽擔心我的長期健康問題,不久之前,我有肺結核的問題;其次,她希望看到自己的女兒嫁給一個受過更好教育、更富有的人——也許像她的第二任丈夫那樣,他是一位受過日本教育的醫生。

我們決定不急於結婚或嫁娶任何其他人——等就等著吧——直到她母親改變主意,與此同時,我們也開始為她母親的心意能改變,以及靈魂能得救禱告。我們不記得它是怎麼發生的,但她母親心意逐漸改變,並同意我們結婚。

我們選擇聖誕節後那天舉行婚禮,並且尊重我們教會領袖的意思,避免一切俗世形式,我們就在教會舉行了簡單的婚禮,由幾位長老主持;有許多教會成員參加。我們的結婚證書,是由一位傑出的書法家,在一張精緻的紅紙上,特別以中文書寫,並由新娘和新郎以及兩位主領的長老作為見證人簽名。

因當時我們所在的教會極其保守,且墨守成規,不准許 新娘在婚禮上穿現代婚紗!因此,沒有任何妝容,她就穿著 旗袍——通常中國女性在正式場合會穿的傳統長袍。我沒有 穿燕尾服,而是穿了一套新西裝。婚禮過後,我們才在攝影 工作室裏,由專業攝影師為我們拍攝婚紗照。

緊接著教會儀式之後,我們在一家大型中餐廳舉行晚宴,三百多名親友參加,包括新娘喜樂的母親和繼父,以及我們經驗豐富的媒人陳恩慈(Grace Chen)和瑪格麗特(Margaret Ma)。1952年12月26日《英文中國郵報》刊登了我們結婚的消息,連同我們的結婚照。

經過四十年的婚姻以及多次搬遷,我們的婚紗照不知道放到哪裏去了;我們以為這些照片將永遠消失。然而,在一次事工之旅時,我回到台灣,去到當初我們拍婚紗照的工作室,想知道這家公司是否還在?結果不僅工作室還在原處,更令我驚喜的是,他們竟然找出當年拍攝的所有底片。我做了八套,把它們帶回美國,送給我們七個孩子作為紀念品,一套留給我們自己。

我們的家族

我們有幸生了七個孩子——兩兒五女。此外,我們有17個孫兒孫女——7個孫子和10個孫女。長子大衛出生於1954年7月20日,也就是朝鮮和平條約簽署的那一天。兩年後,長

女路得出生,我們認為這樣已是很理想的家庭了——家四口,一個男孩一個女孩,我們不想再有孩子。但,你瞧!約翰、瑪麗、以斯帖、蘇珊娜和瑪莎相繼來了,他們平均相隔兩三年。大衛、路得、約翰和以斯帖出生在台灣,瑪麗和蘇珊娜出生在當時的英國殖民地香港。瑪莎是家裡唯一的ABC美籍華人(American-born Chinese),在馬里蘭州出生。

以下是撰寫本文時,我們七位成年子女和十七個孫兒孫 女的簡歷:

- 1. 周大衛(David),企業家,1954年於1978與馮國美(Cindy Feng)結婚;他們有兩個孩子,老大男孩周世浩(Alex),1981年生於台灣,老二女孩周思好(Jessica),1986年生於洛杉磯,周思好於2013年與撒卡里羅培茲(Zachary Lopez 1984年生)結婚。大衛還有二個兒子,由第二任妻子王麗萍所生;他們的名字:周世逸(Alvin),1997年生於上海,周育霆(Justin),2001年同樣生於上海。
- 2. 周路得(Ruth),會計師/企業家,1956年出生,1982年與企業主管/企業家顧紹箕(James S.K.Ku)結婚;他們有兩個女兒,大女兒顧芷瑜(Samantha)於1989年生於台灣,二女兒顧芷甄(Tessa)於1990年生於香港,她於2017年與傑西·薩姆伯格(Jesse Samberg 1987年出生)結婚。

- 3. 周約翰(John),建築師,1959年出生,1993年與王 慕蘭(Nancy Molan Wong)結婚;他們有三個孩子, 大女兒周恩霖(Corrin) 於1995年生於波士頓,老二 男孩周恩澤(Timon)於2000年生於紐約,老三女孩 周恩惠(Bethany)2004年也生於紐約。
- 4. 周小麗(Mary),IT架構師於1962年出生,1988年 與企業家/高爾夫球教練高志綱(Wayne)結婚;他 們有三個孩子,都出生在馬里蘭州,1990年高家儀 (Christa Danielle Kao)、1992年高家玲(Isabelle Tiffany Kao)和1999年高家恩(Christopher Samuel Kao)。
- 5. 周以斯帖(Esther),生物學家/學校教師,1966年出生,1995年與平面設計師特雷弗·謝弗(Trevor Shaffer)結婚;他們兩個女兒都出生在馬里蘭州,分別是1996年聖誕節出生的凱特琳(Caitlin)和莉塞特(Lisette)2003年出生。
- 6. 周珊珊(Susanna),護士,1967年出生,2008年與金融分析師Peter Young結婚。
- 7. 周瑪莎(Martha),學校教師,1970年出生,1996年 與醫學博士威廉·柯瑙普(William Knaupp)結婚。他 們有三個孩子都出生在紐約,1998年柯德華(Andreas),2001年柯德美(Mariana),和柯德榮(Nico-

-- 我的屬靈旅程

las) 在2004年出生。

我們的祖先 - 在我這邊

沒有記錄可以追溯到我父親的家譜。我是獨生子,三歲時母親就去世。在我母親的家族中,我唯一知道的是,我的外祖父來自山東曲阜,這是孔子(公元前551-479年)的故鄉。因為我外祖父的姓氏與孔子相同,我母親的名字就叫孔慶蓮,所以我們應該是孔子的後裔,但我無法證明這樣的關聯是否正確。

當我得知孔子家譜第五版將於2009年出版數卷,並且只要少許費用就可以加入新的家譜條目時(亡者可以免費添加),我多次嘗試追根溯源我母親的家人,看看她的名字是否可以添加到第五版的孔子家譜——卻被告知,只有男性的名字才能被納入孔氏的族譜中。我有一個孔姓舅舅,但我不認識他,也不知道他的全名。我母親還有兩個妹妹,我在十幾歲的時候曾短暫見過她們,但從此再也沒有機會見面。

根據金氏世界紀錄,孔子家譜已有2500多年歷史,歷經八十多代人,是世界上最長的家譜記錄。它於公元1080年首次印刷,在那以後已有三次的修纂,最後一次的修訂是在1937年,有600,000個新的條目。第五版總共包含近200萬個孔氏家譜條目。

南星的家族

南星的祖父母藍韵笙夫婦都是重生的基督徒。他們從福 建省福州著名的華人福音傳道者倪柝聲的故鄉,來到上海; 是上海鹽商。他們育有三個女兒,藍馥清(南星的母親)、 藍馥榮和藍馥馨。南星十一歲時,祖父帶她去教會,在兒童 主日學的經歷,影響了她的餘生。

南星的父親孫誼,別名孫世毅,是親共的劇作家,與周恩來熟識。他於1930年代後期加入左派劇團後,家人再也沒有他的消息。後來有人在香港發現他,吸毒成癮生活貧困。據一位在港認識他的親戚說,周恩來將他帶到北京接受治療和護理。據說,孫誼曾為中華人民共和國國歌的創作貢獻專長。

南星的母親藍馥清,在共產主義前的中國好萊塢地區, 以「藍蘭」之藝名廣為人知,於1930年代初期在北京加冕為 「北京燕京大學校花」。當年,她在舞台上和默片中扮演主 要角色,成為上海著名女星。

南星的父母,因二十世紀30年代後期的中國共產黨和國 民黨軍隊之間的內戰而分居。分居多年後,她的母親提出離婚,並與接受日本培訓的沈鼎新醫生結婚。沈氏於2015年在 台灣去世,享年100歲。南星的母親在1966年5月離世,去世 前決志成為基督徒——我們為她的靈魂得救禱告了13年!所 以不要停止為你未得救的親人禱告! 南星的弟弟藍國賡,現年82歲,是退休的房地產經紀人,他與李文珠結婚。李氏是他第二任妻子,現年81歲。他們和33歲的兒子里賓(Ribin)住在加州的聖蓋博。(註:藍國賡是冠母姓,以保住藍氏族譜的連續性。)藍國賡與前妻有兩個成年孩子和五個孫子;兒子(Robert C. C.)今年50歲,是加州最大的保險公司之一(UCA General Insurance)的執行長;他的妻子是李瑪麗,現年27歲;他們有兩個孩子,女兒海莉(Haley)20歲,兒子R.J. 18歲;藍國賡的女兒達芙妮(Daphne),45歲,她先生格雷格·西奇(Greg Cicci)是位工程師,現今45歲。他們有三個女兒:加比(Gabby)8歲和7歲的雙胞胎女兒吉莉安娜和艾麗莎(Guiliana & Elisa),一起住在芝加哥。

南星的姐姐孫南強是退休的房地產經理,於2012年去世,享年80歲。她的丈夫賀尚賢早她幾年去世了,是夏威夷大學的語言學教授,他們在那裡住了多年。他們有兩個孩子和四個孫子。小兒子吉米(Jimmy),現年51歲(1966年生),是一名電氣工程師,與日本出生現年39歲的富田愛(1978年生)結婚,她是航空公司員工,育有兩個孩子,男孩科多(Kaito),出生於2011年,女孩米亞(Mia),2016年出生;住在夏威夷檀香山。孫南強的唯一女兒佩姬(Peggy),現年60歲,丈夫是州政府退休僱員威利李(Wally Lee),現年67歲;他們住在加州奧克蘭。另外,孫南強還有個大兒子約翰(John Ho 1960-2004)在加州死於一場事故。他有兩個女兒,28歲的傑西卡(Jessica)和27歲的詹妮弗(Jennifer),他們住在夏威夷的毛伊島(Maui)。



作者的七位子女,合攝於老六珊珊的婚禮。從左至右分別是:老七瑪莎, 老二路得,老大大衛,老三約翰,老四小麗以及老五以斯帖。



周家大團圓,攝於南星80歲華誕。右起第三位:作者及結縭65載的妻子。



神的第一次召唤

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從聖經的意義來看,與神相遇,對每一位基督徒而言, 意味著一次改變生命的經歷。當門徒遇見耶穌基督——永生 神的兒子時,他們的生命都會以這樣或那樣的方式有所改 變,很多信徒也是如此,當生命被主觸摸時,他們都改變 了。

我第一次與神相遇是1965年夏天,在香港的一個宣教教會。用聖經術語來說,我受了聖靈的洗,或者說我被聖靈充滿;那時我在靈裡看到了一一令我十分驚訝一一復活的救主耶穌基督就站在我面前!對我來說,耶穌基督一瞬間變得那麼真實!我不需要睜開眼睛來確認是不是耶穌;我知道那是主,如同妻子若站在我面前,我會知道是她一樣。從那時起,我再也不一樣了。

正如早期的門徒在五旬節那天所經歷的那樣,我被聖靈 充滿,並開始按聖靈所賜的能力說起方言來,因為聖靈使我 能夠說話。(使徒行傳2:4)對我來說,這不僅是說方言而己,是基督祂親自出現在我面前!當我將我的生命和我的一切奉獻給祂時,我剛硬的心在祂面前融化了。從此,祂藉著祂的靈進入我的心,並永遠住在那裏!

基督內住在我裡面

在我領受聖靈的洗之前,我只在理性上知道聖經所說有關耶穌復活的事,我個人並沒有經歷過耶穌基督住在我裡面,藉著祂的靈帶領我和引導我。在我基督徒生活的前十七年裏,我的教會沒有人教導我有關聖靈的職事,以及祂在每個信徒的生活中所扮演的角色。然而,現在我開始明白它真正的含義了。

在領受聖靈的洗之後的幾個月裡,我內心充滿無比的喜悅,我感覺好像生活在一個全新的世界裡!真的,就像在地如在天,我對耶穌是如此的著迷,以至於全世界都失去它一切的吸引力!我曾經那麼熱愛記者生涯;我喜歡報導和寫作,我喜歡在報紙和雜誌上看到我的名字,我喜歡看電影、聽音樂會;當然,我還喜歡中國佳餚!但不管這一切曾經有過的價值,現在,世上的一切,都失去它的美麗和魅力了。現在我唯一關心的就是為耶穌而活,並告訴全世界關於祂的事!

上帝的第一次召唤

生平第一次聽到神的呼召時,我感到很興奮。有一天半夜時分,半醒半睡,我發現自己正在與神的靈對話。雖然我無法記得談話的完整內容,但它大致是這樣的:

神:我要你辭掉世俗的工作,開始傳福音。

我:我如何能作到呢?我必須工作養家糊口——妻子和 四個孩子。

神:我會照顧你的家人,我會供應你們所有的需要。

我:但是如何行呢, 主啊?我知道當你派你的門徒出去 傳福音時,你告訴他們,不要帶任何東西——「不要 帶拐杖和口袋,不要帶食物和銀子,也不要帶兩件褂 子。」(路加福音9:3)。但是我和家人如何能以這種 方式生存呢?

神:我會供應你所有的需要。

我:但是如何行呢,主啊?你知道我沒有那種信心。

神:只要你對我忠心到底,我就會對你信實到底。

談話就這樣結束了。似乎神與我達成了一項協議:如果 我忠實地傳講神的話語,祂就會信實地供應我們所有的需 要。第二天早上醒來時,我立即告訴妻子昨晚發生的事,我 說:「神呼召我踏入全時間的服事,並開始憑信心生活,倚 靠祂供應我們的生計。」她沒有多問,淡定地接過話,說: ---- 我的屬靈旅程

「那我們就為這件事禱告,求神確認。」

我想在這裡提一下我難得的妻子;自從結婚以來,她一直是我最好的朋友,和在服事上的同工。多年來她很少質疑我的任何決定,不論是為了教會的益處,或是為我們倆都愛的耶穌所作的任何決定。我永遠感謝她對我的愛、支持和代禱。

我們每天在一起禱告持續了兩個月,直到我們確定了神的呼召。對我們來說,這意味著我要辭掉高薪的工作,把我們擁有的一切都交給這個宣教教會。以我們對聖經教義的理解,這就像耶穌呼召門徒跟隨祂時,門徒所作的那樣一一更像初代教會時期那些被聖靈充滿的信徒們,他們賣了家產,凡物公用,住在一處共同生活。(見馬太福音4:18-22,使徒行傳2:44-45)。

有一天,在我們一起禱告的時候,我問妻子一個棘手的問題:「我辭掉工作後,如果我們的生活變得如此艱難,以至於我們沒有錢,連一頓像樣的飯菜都吃不起,妳還願意和我在一起嗎?」她毫不猶豫地說:「願意,無論如何我都會和你在一起。」

禱告求印證

在求神印證時,我們效法基甸的榜樣;他兩次將羊毛拿 出來,以確認他正確地聽到了神的聲音。(見士師記6:36-40 .58. 。)我們特別要求神作三件事來印證祂的呼召:(1)求主醫 治我的皮膚病;(2)差遣人免費來照顧我們的孩子;(3) 我們將在我們要全職服事的宣教教會附近租一間公寓,我們 求主降低租金到我能負擔的價位。

在兩個月的時間裡,神一一滿足了我們的要求:首先, 我胸前大面積的慢性紅疹突然消失了;第二,一位愛主的基 督徒姐妹自願來幫我們照顧孩子,讓我們能自由地從事宣教 工作;第三,房東終於同意把公寓的月租降到了我們能負擔 的價位。神完全按照我們所求的作了!因此,我們深信神呼 召我開始全時間服事。

當我們一確定是神的呼召後,我便辭去了美國新聞處無線電台負責人和香港《今日世界》雜誌特約撰稿人的雙重職務。消息一出,兩個辦公室的同事全都嚇了一跳,因為他們一點都不知道;我已經考慮放棄這份高薪且極有晉升前景的工作一段時間了。

放棄一切跟隨耶穌

神的呼召如此強烈,以至於我很容易地就把工作辭掉, 放棄世上財寶跟隨耶穌,像初代教會門徒那樣樂意地回應神 的呼召一樣。我們原本擁有一間普通的高層公寓和一輛福斯 金龜車,我們簽署了契約,把公寓和汽車的所有權轉讓給宣 教教會,然後搬進教會對面的出租公寓。 --- 我的屬靈旅程

許多加入宣教教會的人,也都放棄財產和貴重財物,包括積蓄、珠寶和黃金。有位教會姐妹放棄她擁有的一切,只留下兩件衣服,一件留著用來打掃,另一件留著以備替換。一位來自新加坡的女士奉獻很多錢,還有金手鐲、金耳環等。一對年輕夫婦放棄在新加坡的生意和財產,來到香港和我們一起生活。這一切帶來了教會的復興!宣教工作迅速擴大到整個東南亞。

學習禱告和禁食

加入宣教教會的服事後,我們除了每天早上參加禱告會,每天傍晚參加教會的禮拜外,白天和晚上也都在服事。 偶爾也會有連續幾個星期的禁食禱告,一天只吃一餐。有時 我們會禁食三天來禱告,不進固態食物只許可喝水或湯。有 一次我們有禁食三天禱告,沒有任何固態或液態的食物;我 記得很清楚,在第二天時,我虛弱得無法下床。然而,從屬 靈的角度來說,我發現禁食對靈性有益,因為它使我有更多 的時間親近神,使我裏面的人更剛強。

由於我是來自以講道聞名的教會,他們認為我是一個好 講員,所以決定讓我無限次地在主日講道。但是幾次主日講 道之後,我覺得那不是神要我在那裡作的服事,至少現在還 不是。相反地,我需要學習一些實際的功課,來預備我成為 神的僕人和祂的孩子。這些課程包括學習禱告、禁食、辛勤 的耕耘和自律。只會講道是不夠的,我必須學習像耶穌告訴 祂門徒的那樣:「學我的樣式,因為我的心裏柔和謙卑」(馬太福音 11:29)。

我必須學會少吃少睡,多禱告,多學習——如果需要的話,還要多勞動,我需要學習如何與人相處,按著他們的本相接受並愛他們。很快地我就意識到,神帶我到這個宣教教會,不是為了講道和教導別人,而是為了要學習謙卑和順服的基本功課,這樣我就可以成為神希望我成為的那種傳道人。

更重要的是,我發現了這個以前不知道的真理:為了耶 穌或神的事工放棄外在的東西,例如:金錢、地位、勞動和 物質財富,算是比較容易的。而放棄內在的東西,如:自 我、驕傲、自義,或聖經所說的「肉體」,並不那麼容易; 這「肉體」乃是神最大的敵人,往往是實現祂神聖旨意的巨 大障礙。捨己(否認己生命)似乎是我們的主耶穌為那些想 要跟隨祂的人,所規定的唯一條件。

《公審》

在我們成為宣教教會同工的期間裏,神允許妻子和我受 到宣教教會內外基督徒的誤解、批評和無端指責;我們必須 學會不為自己辯護。有一天,教會負責人召集所有工作人員 開會,其方式相當於一個「公審」,我們在公開的場合被審 ---- 我的屬靈旅程

查。一些同工自由表達他們對我們的看法,大部分都是消極 否定的話。

我們曾邀請一對年輕夫婦來住我們家,並把我們的主臥室讓給他們居住;現在,這對夫婦藉機挑剔我們,公開批評和羞辱我們。靠著神的恩典,南星和我只是靜靜地聽,儘管淚水從我們的臉頰流下,我們選擇不回應。但在裡面,我們感覺就像一把刀刺穿我們的心。更甚者,在我們照著主的指示離開該教會後,隸屬該組織的眾教會仍在繼續「公審」我們,且愈演愈烈。

在這些攻擊下,我們想起了我們的主耶穌在彼拉多面前受審,並且面對從人群而來的虛假指控;以及他如何保持冷靜和沈默,選擇不回答控告他的人:「祂被祭司長和長老控告的時候,甚麼都不回答…連一句話也不說」(馬太福音27:12-14)。

有時,正如我們所經歷的那樣,一想到基督在地上行走 時所受的苦難,我們就能感受到鼓舞和力量,來忍受我們的 試煉。為耶穌受苦是有益的,因為它使我們成為更剛強、更 好的基督徒。

神允許這些事情發生在我們的生活中,為要使我們在靈性上成長,並且變得更像耶穌。雖然那段時間對我們來說是 艱難的日子,但它是整個靈命訓練和紀律的一部分,是我們 所需要的,好使我們成為神所要的僕人。

發現偏激的行為

我們在宣教教會服事,與那些被認為是聖靈充滿的基督徒同工,一起工作和生活大約六個月之後,關於他們中間做事的方式,我開始看到一些嚴重的問題。例如,其中有一位領袖曾預言說,在泰國的特定日期和特定地點,即將有一個新教會誕生,但是當似乎什麼都沒有發生時,一些同工迅速被派往當地,使預言能順利發生。

宣教領袖似乎過度依賴聖靈恩賜的運用,例如:說預言、說方言和翻方言、異夢和異象,而不是遵循聖經的教 導和原則。另一個過度的例子是,在宣講和實踐神聖醫治的 同時,因為過度地強調,而使得會眾在生病時若尋求醫療幫 助,會感到內疚或受到譴責。

例如,曾親身經歷過神醫的宣教教會負責人,在她癌症 末期時,痛苦不堪,她不但沒有尋求醫療,反而企圖從高層 公寓跳樓自殺。她曾大力宣揚神醫,並就此主題,撰寫了 大量文章。最後,她不得不被帶到醫院——秘密地,在半 夜——她在那裡度過了最後的日子。

另一個誤解和誤用《聖經》的例子是,宣教教會負責人 在她死前所提出的不當建議。在她死後,她的遺體將被放置 在教堂會議廳的中央,等待第三天復活,因為耶穌在第三天 從死裡復活。

當她在與癌症奮鬥的時候,我很想從聖經的角度與她談

---- 我的屬靈旅程

談其中的一些問題,但她一直處於痛苦之中,而且她的病情迅速惡化到無法說話的地步。

不過,我的確與她的同工會面,並從聖經的角度提出了 我對偏激舉動的看法,但他們拒絕接受聖經所說的話,並堅 持認為他們的負責人一直是正確的。

就在那時,我決定是時候該離開這個已經走偏的靈恩宣教教會了。離開後不久,我們就開始聽到這個教會發生分裂,並且人們紛紛離開該組織所建立的各教會。

聖經說:「你的話是我腳前的燈,是我路上的光」(詩篇 119:105)。如果沒有神的話,我們肯定會在黑暗裡,不知道該往哪裡去,也不知對與錯。「他們既棄掉耶和華的話,哪裏還有智慧可言呢」? (耶利米書 8:9)。

所學到的功課

那時,我們結束了與兩個大型基督徒團契的關係,這兩個團契都熱衷於傳福音,熱心事奉主,也都願意為耶穌的緣故放棄一切。第一個團契的規模要大得多,在共產黨統治中國之前約有三百多個教會,後來在海外拓展至數千個教會。正如他們從聖經中看到的,他們一直強調所謂的「地方教會立場」,但是對於聖靈在基督身體中所扮演的角色,並沒有正確完整的教導。在大多數的情況下,他們是在悟性和理性的領域而不是在屬靈的領域,換句話說,他們有很多頭腦的.64.

知識,但很少(如果有的話)有屬靈的實際。所以,當面臨 考驗和實際挑戰時,他們沒有能力克敵致勝。

上面提到的第二個教會團契,被稱為靈恩派/五旬節派, 是從傳統的教會宗派中走出來的新興教派。他們被聖靈充滿 更新,所強調的是神蹟奇事和聖靈恩賜的運作,但很少或根 本不注重聖靈所結的果子,以及正確解析和應用聖經一一神 的話。

這兩個極端的教會群體,顯然未能在神的話和神的靈之間取得應有的平衡。神的話和神的靈兩者必須攜手並進,就像鐵路上的兩條軌道一樣;火車——即基督的身體;教會——可以在其上成長並安全前行。基督為教會的元首必須被高舉,「使祂在凡事上都可以居首位」(歌羅西書1:18)。如果沒作到這一點,任何地方的教會,都無法堅固並持續同心地來彰顯耶穌基督的同在、權能和美麗。

在我們參與這兩個大型教會近二十年的時間裏,就我所看到的,這些是導致他們一再分裂以致解散的主要原因。通過這一切,我學到了寶貴的功課:我們必須始終保持平衡; 更好的是,能把聖經一一神所記載下來的話與神的靈聯繫起來,以避免偏激和盲信。更重要的是,我們的眼目要一直注 視著耶穌基督!

神的道和神的靈不可分開,因為它們本質上就是一體的。聖經說:「太初有道,道與神同在,道就是神。」「

我的屬靈旅程

神是(個) 靈。」我們需要知道聖經,就是神寫在書面上的話,我們還需要認識聖靈,就是神祂自己,沒有祂的同在和啟示,我們就無法認識耶穌基督——「是一切,又在一切之中」。(見約翰福音 1:1; 4:24; 西 3:11。)



第七章

遵行神的旨意

1

「世界和其中的情慾都要過去,惟獨遵行神旨意,是永遠長存」(約翰一書 2:17)。

基督徒生命中最重要的事,就是遵行神的旨意。遵行神的旨意,並不一定意味著從事事工、參加教會聚會、慈善捐款或宣教工作;遵行神的旨意就是做神要你做作的事,成為他要你成為的人。

對祂來說,唯一重要的事,就是遵行神的旨意。耶穌警告說,不是每個稱祂為「主啊,主啊」的人,也不是每個奉耶穌的名做了大事的人「都會進入天國,只有遵行我天父旨意的人」才能進去(馬太福音7:21-22)。

如前所述,我們加入宣教教會是因為我們確信那是當時神要我們做的,照著我們的禱告,神以多種具體的方式確認之後,我們才去做。當我們目睹了宣教教會內過激和偏差的行為,顯然,就是我們該離開的時候了。既然是神把我們

帶到那裡,我們認為最好也是神帶我們離開;正如你所看到的,神解決它的方式真令人驚訝。

意識到「行在神旨意中」的重要後,我便努力確認,在服事中所邁出的每一步都要按照神的旨意。我們對主說:「我們寧願死在祢的旨意中,也不願活在祢的旨意之外」。我從人生的變遷中了解到,一個人若行在神的旨意中,那就是世上最安全的地方,尤其在這末世險惡的日子裡。當你知道,你是在神的旨意中時,會帶給你真正的平安和安全感,只要你全心相信:神是超越一切,並且掌管著每一個情況。

然而,遵行神的旨意,可以說是對一個人的信心和順服 真正的挑戰和考驗,甚至有時候是要冒險的;但結果卻總是 使我們對全能神的良善、信實和可信賴度,更加認識。

我們最好記住神以永恆的愛,愛我們。祂了解我們的一切,關心我們生活中每一個細節,讓我們確認耶穌所說的:「就是你們的頭髮,也都被數過了。」因此,沒有傷害能臨到我們,正如耶穌所說:沒有我們天父的許可,「連你們的一根頭髮也必不損壞」(馬太福音10:30,路加福音21:18)。

如何知道神的旨意

關於神的旨意,經常提出的一個問題是「一個人如何能知道神的旨意呢?」神的旨意——神永恆的旨意和願望——在聖經中有非常詳細的描述。羅馬書12章2節告訴我們「不要.68.

效法這個世界,只要心意更新而變化,叫你們察驗何為神的 善良、純全、可喜悦的旨意。」讀聖經,能使我們證明這一 點的真實性。

然而,在實踐中,根據經驗,我發現可以通過三種方式 來確認神的旨意:(1)神的靈在內心深處不斷地感動;(2) 來自聖經中明確的話語;(3)環境上的印證。此外,諮詢一 位屬靈成熟的基督徒領袖,也能進一步幫助確定神的旨意。

神使萬事互相效力叫我們得益處

當我們清楚是時候該離開宣教教會時,南星正懷著我們的第五個孩子,而且不到兩週就是預產期了,當我們正在準備迎接南星的分娩時,我們接到南星的繼父從台灣打來的緊急電話,要南星立即回家,與罹癌末期的母親相聚。

由於南星離預產期很近,如果沒有醫生書面許可,說明她適合旅行,航空公司不會允許我們預訂她的航班。我去找了一位主內朋友艾里克費許巴哈(Eric Fishbacher)醫生,他開立證明准許她飛往台灣。

原本預定短期居留,但南星抵達台灣後,母親的病情好轉,她就答應留下來繼續照顧母親,這麼一來妻子肯定會在台灣生產了。當時我和四個孩子還在香港,等待主給我一個明確的指示,是否我該預訂回台灣的行程?我為此禱告並等候。

某日的傍晚,在六層宣教樓的樓頂禱告時,我在靈裡清

楚地聽到了這句話:「你要帶著孩子搭一艘預定於7月23日從香港啟航回台灣的船〔1966年〕。」三天后,我收到南星的來信,說她和剛出生的嬰兒都很好,並補充說:「你應該帶著孩子搭7月23日從香港離開的船回台灣。」她信中提到同一個出發日期讓我感到驚訝,因為我沒有告訴她我在屋頂聽到的任何事情。我想這是一個印證,神要我們在那一天離開宣教教會。

南星信中還說,女兒以斯帖出生後,她和孩子一直由我們在台灣時所認識多年的教會朋友照顧,神讓他們帶給她食物和金錢上的供應。她還說到,「我相信神將以這種方式,來供應我們短期未來的需要。」結果在接下來的八個月裡,一直到我重返工作為止,神以奇妙的方式供給了我們的財務需求。

神聖的保護

的確,在我們被祂的靈引導時,我們在天上的父,看顧著我們在路上的每一步。當我帶著四個孩子在香港登上貨運客船時,小瑪麗才三歲,我把她放在一張雙層床的上層,然後去幫三個大一點的孩子提行李包,突然聽到「砰」的一聲!我迅速轉身,看到瑪麗在地板上哭泣,她掉到地上了,但是卻沒有受傷。我很感恩,也打趣的說,這是「軟著陸」!

安抵台灣後,我們全家人又在一起了。以斯帖已經七周大了,那是我們第一次見到她。南星在產後幾天一直是一個.70.

人,沒有人幫她坐月子;就是中國傳統習俗中對婦女產後頭 30天的「特別照顧」。雖然那時有教會的朋友來探望她,並 帶了食物和金錢,但她太虛弱,除了餵嬰兒之外,她無法做 飯或任何家務。她和新生嬰孩住的四層樓閣樓裏,只有一 張單人床和一個簡陋的嬰兒床,這個地方已經空置了很長時 間,窗戶也需要修理。南星那時迫切需要幫助。

然後神及時派人來了!我們以前的同工,也是我們家的好友邵遵瀾牧師來探望南星,發現媽媽和嬰孩都急需照顧。他妻子和南星是好朋友,過去常常一起尋求主。他立即提建議接他們去他家,他的妻子和母親可以提供幫忙照顧,南星毫不猶豫地接受了;迅速將嬰兒包裹起來,收拾所有的個人物品。她坐在摩托車後座上,一隻手抱著四天大的嬰兒,另一隻手扶著中間的欄杆,前往邵牧師夫婦的住所。

他們到達時,他的母親和妻子已在門口張開雙臂迎接他們。他們很快地幫南星煮了一些熱湯麵,雖然他們沒有嬰兒床可以給剛出生的「特別來賓」,但邵太太立刻想出了一個有趣的主意,就是用一個抽屜櫃,讓小嬰孩在裏面舒服地躺著,這就是以斯帖的小綽號「抽屜寶寶」的由來。邵家夫婦悉心照顧南星和嬰兒以斯帖,直到坐完了30天傳統的月子調理。

「抽屜寶寶」還有一些特別之處,她異常安靜,除了餓 了或需要換尿布的時候,她很少哭,一直安靜地睡在邵家的那 個抽屜裡。即使七個月後,她睡在自己的嬰兒床上,也幾乎都 --- 我的屬靈旅程

不需要抱起安撫,她是如此乖巧好帶的嬰孩,這讓她媽媽的生活變得輕鬆了許多,尤其是在最初幾個月的艱難時期。

神聖的供應

搬回台灣後的前八個月,我們沒有錢也沒有積蓄,可以說身無分文,我們必須學習信靠神,相信祂會供應我們的基本需求。雖然我以前的雇主,《英文中國郵報》發行人曾兩次邀請我重新加入他們的報社,但我並沒有感到可以自由地回去上班,至少現在還沒有。我感到神希望我相信祂,尊崇祂的應許,就是祂會以祂的方式供應我們一切所需。

我們帶著五個孩子,分別是12歲、10歲、7歲、4歲和8 週大嬰兒,搬到南星的繼父那裡,住在一個四層商業大樓的 頂層,南星的繼父就在這棟大樓開業行醫。南星的母親在兩 個月前去世了,閣樓裡只有一些簡單的家具,沒有臥室或廚 房,前教會友人王譚美利姊妹來探望我們,並且留意到我們 缺了什麼,然後她很快地就為我們打點這一切。

王姊妹二話不說,悄悄地訂購建材,隨後分批發貨,當 材料足夠時,她雇了一個木匠,在陽台走廊上建造隔間和一 個小廚房,這樣一來孩子們有了臥室,我們也有一個做飯和 洗衣服的地方。其他愛主的教會朋友也為這些施工的費用奉 獻,然而,這一切都是在我們沒有要求的情況下完成的!再 一次,神展現祂的信實,供應了我們一家的需要。 神為我們提供生活費的方式也非常神奇。每個星期天早上做完禮拜後,負責打開奉獻箱的招待同工,總會發現一個信封,信封上寫著我的名字,裡面有一份現金奉獻,剛好夠我們一家七口一個星期伙食費。這樣一連發生了八個月!一週又一週,我們靠匿名奉獻者提供的現金為生。

更令人訝異的是,每當有額外的需要時,我們就會收到 多一點的奉獻,支付這個需求。有一次,當南星的繼父生日 快到時,我們需要額外的錢才能買生日蛋糕,我們就為這個 特殊的需要禱告。結果,你看!在下一個星期天早上,我們 收到了額外的奉獻,這使得我們能夠買一個漂亮的生日蛋 糕。

還有一次,我們需要額外的錢支付孩子家教費用。那天早上12歲的大衛上學之前,提醒他媽媽說,在那晚上需要付學費給老師;媽媽告訴他要為這事禱告。那天中午過後,一位主內姐妹突然造訪我們,並與我們一起交通禱告。她離開下到二樓的時候,突然轉身回到四樓,遞給我們一個黏好的信封,說:「對不起,我差點忘了這個。」我們打開信封,發現裡面的現金剛好是當晚需要支付給家教老師的金額!

大衛放學回家後,問道:「我們有錢付給老師了嗎?」 南星在回答之前先問他:「你禱告了嗎?」他回答說:「我 禱告了。」然後她說:「是的,錢已經有了。」

自從我三十二年前放棄世俗的工作,開始邁入不支薪的 全時間服事,神一直沒有停止供應我們所需用的一切。正如 祂在首次呼召我時所承諾的那樣:「只要你對我忠心,我就 會對你信實。我會供應你一切的需要。」



周金海牧師與孫南星師母八十歲生日



事奉與事業

...

「我是希伯來人〔或基督徒〕,我敬畏耶和華」(約拿書 1:9)。

神這樣奇妙、且一連八個月沒有間斷地,一週接著一週 供應我們一切的需要之後,我以前上班的報社老板來請我回 去工作。然而,我不能就這樣返回世俗的工作,除非神給我 明確的指示,表明我可以重返世俗工作。同時,我知道我必 須學會在任何情況下,都相信主會供應一切所需。

我從一位在香港的好朋友喬治帕特森那裡,收到了另一個工作機會,他是前英國記者和作家,也是主內弟兄。他剛剛受任為《香港企業》總編輯,該雜誌是香港貿易發展局出版的商業月刊,香港發展局屬於當時英國殖民地香港的半政府機構。邀聘的職位是貿易顧問/記者,主要工作內容是報導香港製造、生產的最優質輕工業產品。

我頭一回收到這個工作機會時,沒怎麼考慮,因為我太

專注於事工,以致於沒有想到要重返業界。然而,喬治弟兄多次打電話來,請我幫助。他已經面試多個應徵者,都沒有達到標準;他認為我很適合這份工作,也表示這個職位迫切地需要有人來遞補。

尋求神的帶領

我在神和人面前與自己爭論,因我知道我已蒙呼召進入 全時間服事,若我放棄事工,轉去從事世俗的工作,這樣對 嗎?如何跟教會的人解釋你的決定呢?你已將自己作為全職 傳道人,不支薪事奉主了,你如何與這世上的工作相調和, 而同時履行養家糊口的責任?

這些是我的疑問,我陷入兩難的境地,為這問題掙扎很 長一段時間。我不想得罪神,也不想在人面前丟臉;我直接 尋求主,懇切地禱告,並查考聖經尋求答案。

雖然我通常不把夢當回事,但有一天晚上我做了個夢。 夢裡,我看到自己站在海邊一塊巨石前;更遠的海面上,我 看到一個人右手指向南方,好像在指揮我往那個方向走。次 日早上醒來,我想知道香港是否位於台灣南方,我參閱地 圖,發現香港確實在台灣的西南。然而,這還不足以讓我做 出如此重要的決定,我需要親自聆聽神的聲音。

某日早上,我讀聖經時,注意力落在約拿的故事上。約拿 是舊約中一位先知,神派他到亞述帝國(公元前900-605年) .76. 的古都尼尼微,傳達救恩的信息——「因為他們的邪惡已經 出現在我面前。」但是約拿逃離了神,他乘船朝相反方向, 逃往西班牙西南部古老的採礦殖民地他施。在他去的路程 上,神安排了一場猛烈風暴,以至船快要破裂了,船上的人 都嚇壞了,把眼前的災難歸咎於約拿。水手們問他:「你以 何事為業?你從哪裡來?」他對他們說:「我是希伯來人, 我敬畏耶和華」(約拿書 1:2,8,9)。

主給的話

在閱讀這段特別的段落時,我覺得神正在回答我的問題。祂似乎在對我說:「你的職業是什麼,你來自哪裡並不重要,重要的是你敬畏主。」我認為它的意思是,最重要的是在神的旨意中,去到神要我去的地方,做祂要我做的事。無論我是在事工,還是在世俗的工作中,對神來說,重要的是,我有沒有敬畏祂,並遵守祂的誡命。

這不就是所羅門王在他所有的學習和經歷之後,所得出的結論嗎?畢竟,他是地上有史以來最有智慧的人。他以這樣的話結束了《傳道書》:「這些事都已聽見了,總意就是:敬畏神,遵守祂的誠命,這是人所當盡的本分」。(傳道書12:13)

查考聖經時,我在使徒保羅和他的同工身上找到例子,如:路加福音和使徒行傳的作者——路加,亞居拉和他的妻

子百基拉…等,許多使徒都有他們自己的世俗事業。路加醫 生無疑在事奉主的同時,仍繼續行醫;亞居拉和百基拉是靠 編織出售帳篷為生。保羅加入他們的行列,建立了工作上的 夥伴關係。儘管如此,他們的主要呼召是,傳揚耶穌基督的 福音,並活出復活救主的生命。

於是,在內心極度平安的情形,我決定接受這份工作,舉家遷往香港。我想,「不要在意別人對我的決定會怎麼說;多年來,我的呼召都是:否認自己(捨己),背起十字架來跟從耶穌」,這是耶穌對所有想要跟隨祂的人的呼召。主在他三十三年半的塵世生活中,對天父的整個心態就是「不要成就我的意思,只要成就称的意思」(路加福音22:42)。

我也明白,兩年前神呼召我「傳道」時,他並不是只要 我在教會這環境內來作傳道就好,同時也要我在工作和社會 中來傳道。神並沒有呼召我只用嘴巴,或其他溝通的方式來 傳福音,更重要的是,我乃是被呼召用我的生活方式來傳道 的。

教會之外和教會內部一樣有很大的屬靈需要。所謂的五 重職事——使徒、先知、傳福音者、教師和牧師——在職場 上和在基督的身體裡一樣需要;我相信在職場上有些人是被 呼召來成為使徒、傳福音者、教師和牧師!總之,世界比以 往任何時候都更需要耶穌!

對所有基督徒,包括牧師和傳道人,耶穌說:「你們是

世上的鹽」〔是要來影響世人的〕。「你們是世上的光」,「你們的光也當這樣照在人前,叫他們看見你們的好行為〔活出基督的生命〕,便讚美你們在天上的父。」(馬太福音5:13,14,16)。

不是我的旨意,乃是称的旨意

當神呼召你時——你會知道的——並不一定意味著你要離開你的世俗職業,成為一名全職牧師、佈道家或宣教士。當神呼召你,或者當你認為神在呼召你時,你首先想到的可能是你需要去神學院接受培訓,以使你有資格成為牧師,但這不是耶穌的門徒受訓的方式,他們都沒有上過神學院,使徒保羅在歸依耶穌督基督之前,是一位有成就的猶太學者,但他從未上過所謂的神學院。

神有祂自己的方式來訓練祂的僕人,此外,神並沒有呼 召每個人都成為牧師、傳福音者或宣教士。祂的葡萄園遍滿 全球,並有各式各樣的需求,神為每個蒙召的人都預備了一 個位置,只有祂知道祂的僕人會被派到哪裡,安置在哪裡。 我們的責任是順服祂的吩咐。

現在的問題是:你怎麼知道神要你做什麼?正如我在前一章中所概述的,我已經學會了用三種基本方式,來確定神對我的旨意:內住的聖靈不斷的感動;從主而來明確的話;和環境上的印證。等待神的指示和確認是值得的,以確保我

--- 我的屬靈旅程

們在神的旨意中,並做衪要我們做的事情。

我通常使用的經驗法則是:當我嘗試做我相信是神要我去做的事情時,要省察我內心是否有平安?當我沒有平安,或者我不確定該做什麼時,我就什麼也不做,只是禱告和觀望。當我們做某事或去某地方,內心感到不安時,這很可能是應該停下來或退後的信號。神肯定會按祂的時間,讓我們知道該做什麼,因為祂渴望每個人都遵行祂的旨意。內住的聖靈,或使徒約翰所說的「從主所受的恩膏」會「在凡事上教訓你們。因為這恩膏是真的,不是假的……」(約翰一書2:27)

當我們領受內住恩膏的教訓和引導時,我們就聯結於生命之主,如同葡萄枝子聯結於葡萄樹一樣;藉著這樣的聯結就能結出許多果子,結出屬靈的果子,如仁愛、喜樂、和平、忍耐、恩慈、良善、信實、溫柔和節制,這些一般被稱為「聖靈的果子」,是不斷住在主裡面的自然結果。

最後,我們也應該給神時間和空間,來彰顯祂想要賜給 基督身體中每一位肢體一一祂的孩子們一一的恩賜,使徒保 羅教導說,並非所有成員都有相同的恩賜或服事。(見哥林 多前書14:26-30)但如果我們耐心而謙卑地等待,神會向我們 展現我們在教會或職場中應該扮演的角色。遵行神的旨意是 首要的事,是耶穌一生的標誌,它也應該是我們的標誌。



第九章

神聖的計劃

1

「因為我知道我為你們安排的計劃」,主說,「我的計劃不是要降禍給你們,而是要賜福給你們,使你們的未來充滿希望。」(耶利米書 29:11)。

生活充滿挑戰;它一直是個學習和成長的過程。正如中國古語所說,「活到老,學到老」。雖已屆八十七歲高齡, 我仍在學習;因為你學得越多,就越覺得需要學習,尤其是 在這個高科技、瞬息萬變的世界中。

特別對認真追求的基督徒而言,隨著你不斷地了解神國的奧秘,生活就是一個持續成長和不斷豐富的經歷。生活中的各樣挑戰,是促使我們對神的信心和祂的恩典,得以更認識的機會。生活也能讓我們獲取智慧和知識,這兩者都比金銀更加珍貴。

從1962到1968這六年間,我們四次搬遷於香港和台灣之間,我們之所以這樣搬遷,不僅是因為工作上的轉變,也是

因為我們相信是神在引導我們如此行,並且祂對於我們—— 身為祂的孩子——的生活,有一個計劃和神聖的目的。

祂帶領我們這樣轉換的目的是什麼?我曾經問神:「主啊,祢想從我這裡得到什麼嗎?」祂回答說:「我只想擁有你。如果你能將你自己更完全地給我,你就能擁有更多的我。」當時我不明白「擁有神自己」意味著什麼,隨著我在基督裡不斷成長,我開始明白:擁有神自己,意味著擁有神所有的豐富,祂的所是,和祂所有的一切。正如使徒保羅所說,「……基督那無窮〔測不透〕的豐富……」(以弗所書3:8)。

所學的功課

到底神要我們學什麼功課呢?首先,因為生命是短暫的,祂在教導我們,在地上過一種生活,我稱之為「帳棚生活」,就像古時的亞伯拉罕,一路跟隨神進入應許之地時所過的那種生活。

當亞伯蘭(他的舊名)和家人離開家鄉哈蘭時,他並不知道自己要往哪裡去,但是當神一有帶領和引導時,他就移動帳棚,他相信有一個更美的家鄉,「因為他等候那座有根基的城,就是神所經營所建造的」(希伯來書 11:10)。

神也教導我如何與人相處,與那些和我不一樣的人,與 各種不同文化、不同種族的人相處——按著他們本來的樣子 .82. 接受他們和愛他們。

作為《香港標準報》的城市新聞編輯和採訪主任,我的 組員來自澳大利亞、英國、印度、葡萄牙、北美和華北華南 各地;儘管我們之間存在分歧,但我必須學習如何在工作中 與他們建立融洽的關係。

即使是來自同一個國家的中國人,彼此也是各不相同。 北方人比南方人直接、粗獷,而南方人溫文爾雅、老練。這 些是從我個人的經驗中觀察而得,對我日後擔任教會牧師一 職很有幫助,身為牧師,我必須面對各式各樣的人和問題。

香港是一座充滿國際氣息的迷人城市,也是我經歷一連 串屬靈危機的地方。領受聖靈的洗,固然給我的生命帶來了 革命性的改變,但同時它也在我的教會中引起騷動。於是教 會暫停了我的領導職務,最終我們完全退出了這間我們所愛 的教會。

如同前幾章所敘述的原因,我們不得不離開這兩間相當 大的教會。頭一個教會反對我領受聖靈的洗,而我們脫離第 二個教會,是因為它的偏激行為和偏離聖經。

生活中的挑戰

我們離開這兩個教會時,遭受到很多批評、嘲笑和無情的攻擊,尤其是來自第二個教會的領袖。我們加入他們的時

--- 我的屬靈旅程

候,放棄了所有的財產,這些批評和攻擊,格外加深了對我們的傷害和痛苦。我變得非常沮喪,以至於不想與任何教會有任何關連。我認為教會應該是一個彼此相愛的地方,但我在這些教會中所經歷的,與我在世界上所看到的,並沒有什麼兩樣。

有好一陣子,我一直問主:「為什麼這樣的事會發生在 你的教會中?」我對教會的許多問題感到困惑和不解。將近 兩年的時間,我沒有去任何教會,我花了很多時間反思這些 痛苦經歷。雖然我仍在工作,但我進入半隱居的狀態,以便 能與神單獨相處。下班回家後,我會花幾個小時在房間裡休 息、禱告和讀聖經,等候主來解答許多困擾我的問題。只有 星期天下午,我們才會在家裡與幾個基督徒朋友會面。

奇蹟開始發生

這段安靜的時間裡,幾乎我所有的問題都莫名其妙地消失了,我的傷痛也莫名地消失了,苦澀也消失了,仇恨也被帶走了,和平與寧靜奇蹟般地進入我的心靈深處。我不知道發生了什麼事!

我記得的就是在那些安息、安靜的時間裡,我花了許多時間禱告——大部分時間是靜默祈禱,以及讀經、默想;我所有的問題逐漸得到解答。我徹底地痊癒了——彷彿過去所有的批評和惡意攻擊,都不曾發生過一樣。

我無法解釋發生了什麼,我唯一能述說出來的是,「全能的神做到了!」祂怎麼作的?我不知道。但是我憑著信心接受了聖經所說的:「因祂受的鞭傷,你們便得了醫治」(彼得前書2:24)。我毫不懷疑神已經醫治了我,而且我完全恢復了!現在我可以說:「我的內心平靜安穩!」

萬事互相效力叫我們得益處

漸漸地,我明白了這句常被引用的聖經經文的精義:「 我們曉得萬事(無論好壞)都互相效力,叫愛神的人得益 處」(羅馬書8:28),一個信仰基督的人,不論發生了什麼 事,都有一個神聖的目的;重要的是:結果總是為了要使愛 神的人得著益處。

我了解到,作為神的兒女,如果沒有天父的允許,和神聖的旨意,沒有一件事情會發生在我們身上。不好的事也會發生在基督信徒身上,就像發生在非信徒身上一樣;但是,這都是為了使愛神的人能得著最終的益處。正如使徒保羅所寫的,「我們曉得萬事都互相效力,叫愛神的人得益處」(羅馬書 8:28)。

對於神的兒女來說,沒有所謂的好運或壞運,因為我們 在天上有一位慈愛的天父,祂以無限和永遠的愛來愛我們。 作為宇宙的造物主和主宰,萬物都在祂的掌管之下,神允許 發生在我們身上的一切,都是為了我們的益處,這是我在香 ---- 我的屬靈旅程

港的不愉快經歷中,所學到的最寶貴真理之一。

我從屬靈危機中學到的最深刻的教訓之一,可能就是與神獨處的「奧秘」一一不一定要一直禱告或讀聖經,而只是在祂面前保持安靜,靜默在祂的同在中。我每天這樣做一到兩個小時,持續了近兩年。結果,我內心的痛苦和創傷徹底地痊癒了,我所有的問題都解決了。事實上,這樣的操練,是我在誤打誤撞的情形下開始的,在聖經中被稱為「等候神」,這也是我第一本英文書的書名。

在醫治的過程中,我一次又一次地間神,為什麼祂允許 我在香港遭遇這兩個教會所帶來的不愉快經歷。祂的回答總 是響亮而清晰:「萬事互相效力,叫愛神的人得益處」,我 花了數年時間才看到結果,並相信這個奇妙真理的有效性和 深度。我了解到,我所認為那些發生在我身上的「壞事」, 其實最終是好的。

美好的神只賜下美物

除了物質上的祝福之外,神以祂的良善和憐憫賜給我許多「美物」:祂同在的奇妙;我內心的平安和喜樂;寬恕和忘卻的能力;包容的能力;有力量去愛那些曾傷害過我的人,和對神的一些深奧事有屬靈的看見…在此僅列舉一二。

對於那些真正愛神的人,我們在天上的父只為他們儲備 美物。所以,即使壞事發生在我們身上,祂也可以使它們為 .86. 我們永恆的益處來效力。一旦我們認識了這個奇妙的真理, 並且開始將它應用到我們個人的生活中,抱怨和指責就會愈 來愈少。

在這個世界上總會發生一些我們可能無法理解的事情; 然而,我們的天父,天地之主,知道我們的一切,祂愛我們,知道什麼對我們是最好的,我們只需要全心全意信靠祂和愛祂,因為祂不僅把我們最大的益處放在心上,祂還總是 為著我們的益處而工作。

以屬靈的珠寶為裝飾

無論何時,當你發現自己處於困難的環境時,請記住這一點:神掌管萬事,祂會讓萬事互相效力「叫愛祂的人得益處」,如果你愛神,無論你發生了什麼事,都將會轉成對你有益的。

如果你願意學習祂為你所預備的課程,無論是耐心、信心、愛心、寬恕、盼望、或是謙卑,神都會工作,為你帶來益處。這些都是屬靈的珠寶,是神渴望用來裝飾我們的,好叫我們被裝飾整齊預備好,有份於基督新婦的行列,就是在聖經中所描述的終極的教會,是可以獻給基督「…作個榮耀的教會,毫無玷污、皺紋等類的病,乃是聖潔沒有瑕疵的」(以弗所書 5:27)。

與其逃避困難的環境,還不如讓我們擁抱它,並欣然接受它是來自我們慈愛天父的靈巧之手,祂可以只為了我們的益處而「叫萬事互相效力」,神也應許,祂不會讓我們受試煉超過我們所能受的,正如聖經所說:「神是信實的,必不叫你們受試探過於所能受的;在受試探的時候,總要給你們開一條出路,叫你們能忍受得住」(哥林多前書 10:13)。

對於那些信心正受到考驗的人,讓我這樣說:在我們的信心經過考驗,證明它是真實無偽之後,它將比黃金更寶貴。所以,讓我們學習神為我們預備的每一個課程,並且靠著神的恩典把它學好。只有這樣,我們才能在靈性上成長,成為成熟的基督徒,在世上活出耶穌基督的榮美。

在神的爱中沒有懼怕

讓我再重複一遍:沒有神的許可,任何事情都不會發生在我們身上或傷害我們。神愛我們,關心我們生命的每一個細節:「就是你們的頭髮,也都被數過了(馬太福音10:30)。因此,我們沒有什麼好害怕的,因為知道我們的生命和時間都在祂的手中,「愛裡沒有懼怕;〔神的〕愛既完全就把懼怕除去」(約翰一書 4:18)。

當你知道,若沒有神的許可,任何事情都不會發生在我們身上,你就會得著安慰。祂的神聖目的是祝福我們,堅固我們,幫助我們在靈性上成長,使我們在基督裡興旺富足,

使我們更認識祂,最終能被改變得愈來愈像祂。這就是神救 恩的終極目的——不僅是要拯救我們脫離永遠的定罪,更重 要的是,要逐漸改變我們,塑造我們,使我們滿有耶穌基督 榮耀的形像!

等候神的奥妙

因為「主耶和華以色列的聖者曾如此說:你們得救在乎歸回(神)安息(在祂面前);你們得力在乎平靜安穩」。「但那等候耶和華的,必重新得力;他們必如鷹展翅上騰,他們奔跑卻不困樣,行走卻不疲乏」(以賽亞書30:15;40:31)。

操練等候神——在靜默中與神獨處——是我在屬靈曠野中所學到的最寶貴的功課。「等候神的奧妙」在於:我們是如何被領進神寶庫的。

等候神,是一種更深層次的禱告生活,和與神親密的關係,是一種從來沒有人教過我的靈修課,是從過往的屬靈危機中,神的靈帶領我進入的蒙福光景。然而,透過這樣的操練,我發現,安靜等候神,是與神聯結最簡單的途徑;是進入祂的同在以便與祂建立親密關係的途徑。

我發現,當我們等候主時,實際上就是來到神的同在中,來與祂相交,且在靈裡連於這位獨一真神——生命、 光、能力、和智慧的源頭——也是我們活出豐盛的基督徒生 活所需要的一切。神稱自己為「…活水的泉源…」(耶利 我的屬靈旅程

米書2:13) ,意思就是:祂是無盡的源頭,供應我們一切所 需。

耶穌基督是我們今生所有問題的最終答案。正如我前面所說的,因著我不斷花時間等候主,主為我行了奇妙的內在醫治,並回答了所有困惑我的問題,如聖經所說:「但那等候耶和華的,必重新得〔神聖的〕力……」(以賽亞書 40:31)。

不論在患難或平安的時候,每位相信聖經的基督徒,都可以來到神面前。聖經清楚地說,「你們親近神,神就必親近你們」(雅4:8),然而你必須相信神就在你身邊。聖經還勸誡我們說:「人非有信,就不能得神的喜悦;因為到神面前來的人必須信有神,且信祂賞賜那尋求祂的人」(希伯來書11:6)。當我們親近神時,我們必須憑信心這樣行,心裡單純地相信祂就在我們身邊,而且藉著聖靈,祂就住在我們裡面。

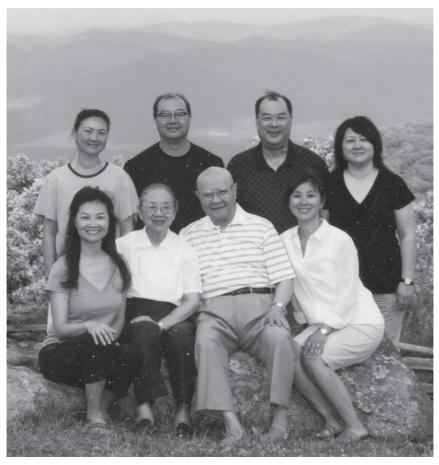
當我們憑信心親近神時,我們心裡的禱告就不一定需要 言語,默默地耐心地等候在祂面前,我們要期待祂來為我們 行事,滿足我們的需要,無論我們的需要是什麼,無論祂選 擇以何種方式來行事。我已經找到了這個親近神的途徑,它 是大而有功效的!

我還發現,安靜等候神,是克服我們自身軟弱的有效途徑,包括那些隱藏在裡面的東西,如驕傲、自以為義、嫉

妒、苦毒、仇恨和我們自己複雜的性格。神知道我們所有的 需要,當我們真誠地親近祂時,祂總是在那裡等著幫助我 們。透過安靜等候神,我可以在任何風暴、壓力或重擔中擁 有平靜和內心的安穩。

簡而言之,倘若基督徒能不間斷且規律地操練安靜等候神,最終一定會成功——就是擁有一個快樂得勝的基督徒生活。對於牧師、傳道人和宣教士來說,持續等候主,是領受恩膏並使事工有果效的秘訣!

(有關該主題的進一步探討,請閱讀我的著作《安靜等候神》一書。可在各書房或網上購買)



周金海牧師八十歲生日與師母及六位子女合影



受引導移居美國

....

「因為這神永永遠遠為我們的神,他必作我們引路的, 直到死時」(詩篇 48:14)。

這神是唯一的真神,在我的經歷中我已認識祂是一位慈愛的天父,並救主耶穌基督,祂不僅回應我們的禱告,祂也在日常生活中,毫不誤事地帶領和指導我們該作的選擇和決定。當我們存心尋求要照祂的旨意生活時,祂會確保我們的福祉、平安與昌盛。只要我盡我所知的繼續努力遵行祂的旨意,祂就會繼續引導和祝福我,直到我生命的盡頭。

當我被邀請擔任台灣《英文中國郵報》總經理時,我認為這是邁向專業階梯的重要一步,同時我也覺得這是來自神的一個信號——要我們離開住了兩年的香港(1967-1968),搬回台灣。在此之前,就是從1962到1966年間,我們也曾往返暫居於這個英國殖民地。

1960年代後期,當我在香港工作時,我目睹了中國「文

化大革命」的後果。在中國有無數的人受到共產黨領導階層 紅衛兵的虐待和殘暴。許多屍體被發現漂浮在香港港口的水 域,其中有些被肢解,有些雙手被綁在背上,想必是從中國 邊境漂來的。我們還經歷了一段香港社會動盪不安的時期, 英國殖民地親共左翼工會,在街頭放置了自製炸彈,有些是 真的有些是假的,這導致有錢的香港居民,大量地逃往加拿 大和美國等西方國家。

在香港居住的六年裡,我做過幾份新聞工作:《香港標準英文報》的新聞編輯/採訪主任;《今日世界》特約撰稿人/記者,它是美國新聞處在香港出版,且廣為流傳的中文雜誌;「美國之音」和「自由歐洲廣播電台」特約記者;以及屬於半政府組織的「香港貿易發展局」的貿易顧問/記者。我接受《英文中國郵報》的工作邀請,條件是:前六個月是試用期,若結果雙方都滿意的話,就會簽長期合約。有了這個共識,我辭去香港貿易發展局的職務,開始為過渡做準備。

第一次宣教經歷

然而,在這期間,我感覺到神呼召我去新加坡短期宣教——這是我第一次這樣的旅行,由於旅程為期一個月,因此我會有一個月沒有收入,我必須信靠神會供應我在財務上的需求。那時我在新加坡不認識什麼人,除了一位我在香港短暫接觸過的基督徒商人;但這呼喚如此強烈和清晰,我不

得不順服而行。

我記得在付完機票費用之後,登機時身上大約只有30美元。我不知道在新加坡我會住哪裡,所以我預備好,如果有需要的話,我將睡在這個熱帶城市的街道上。無論我為主耶穌的緣故做了什麼決定,不管看起來多麼愚蠢,我親愛的妻子總是用她的禱告和信心來支持我。

令我驚喜的是,當我到達新加坡時,我在香港認識的那位基督徒弟兄周明把我帶到他家。他的房子像一座豪宅,我就住在那裡整整一個月。藉著這位在基督裡的弟兄,神為我打開了一扇門,讓我在新加坡兩間福音派教會傳道,其中一間是倪桥聲早期在南洋宣教時建立的。

我一連三個晚上在那間教會講道,大約有兩百人來參加。第一天晚上我傳講聖靈的洗,幾乎沒什麼反應。第二天晚上,會眾似乎開始留心注意我的信息。第三天晚上,聚會快結束的時候,讓在場每個人驚訝的是,突然間一股強大的聖靈澆灌下來!人們被聖靈充滿,從座位上站起來,他們中間許多人走到講台前,承認自己的罪,或是為缺乏對基督的愛而悔改。有一位一生都待在那間教會的80歲老太太,事後告訴我說,「我在這教會從來沒有見過這樣的事!」

那安静微小的聲音

在新加坡停留的最後一天,我接到馬來西亞檳城一位教

會長老的電話,他邀請我到他的教會講道。 當我和他通電話時,聖靈清楚地對我輕聲說:「你在新加坡一個月的宣教已經完成了,你要回到香港,收拾行李準備搬到台灣!」 我知道這是主在對我說話,就像祂告訴我去新加坡宣教一樣的清楚。因此,我別無選擇,只能拒絕這位長老的邀請。

出乎意料的是,離開新加坡前一天晚上,周明弟兄遞給 我一個大信封,裡面裝著一疊現金。他說這筆錢是他的什一 奉獻,是他為我在新加坡的服事而作的奉獻。我數點現金 時,總金額足以彌補我為宣教而放棄的一個月工資!神一次 又一次地證明祂會信實地供應我的需要,無論是作世俗的工 作,或是教會的工作。

新工作,新挑戰

1968年秋天,我開始了《英文中國郵報》總經理的新工作,報社除了付我薪資外,還提供我們一套位於報社大樓後面的公寓,使我們全家住得相當舒適。我喜歡這份工作,因為我們與政府和民營單位的公共關係很好,特別是與在台灣的國外相關機構社群,包括當時的美國大使館和台北美國學校。我們很幸運能夠為兩個較大的孩子一一大衛和路得一一取得全額獎學金,進入台北美國學校就讀。那個年代,只有精英家庭才有能力把孩子送到美國學校就讀。

安頓下來後不久,我們的信心再次受到考驗。有一天,

全家六個孩子生病,全都得了流行性感冒,都在發燒。還有 幾個咳嗽得很厲害,南星在家照顧生病的孩子,我得上班。 那時,我們買不起任何醫療保險,而我們也沒有孩子一生病 就帶去看醫生的習慣,我們為他們得醫治禱告,他們總是能 好起來。

當時我下班回到家,看到六個孩子都病了,躺在床上, 南星和我決定到每個臥室為他們按手禱告。我們懇切地一一 為每個孩子能得著神聖的醫治禱告,禱告完畢,我們回到臥 室,跪下大聲讚美主大約有半小時,我們這樣作是因為我們 被教導:讚美神是對抗魔鬼的有力武器。幾天之後,六個孩 子又活蹦亂跳起來了!

孩子失而復得

發生在台灣讓我們最難忘的可怕經歷之一,與我們兩歲 半的女兒以斯帖有關。她失踪了好幾個小時,且引起了不小 的轟動,因為擔心她可能被綁架了,所以我們一群人都在全 力尋找她,其中包括一些在報社上班的人。

那天下午,南星需要出去辦點事。當她離開我們公寓的時候,以斯帖在媽媽不知情的情況下跟著她出去。就在小以斯帖遠遠地想追上媽媽時,媽媽來到一個十字路口,轉了個彎,就從以斯帖的視線中消失了。受驚害怕的孩子不知道該怎麼辦,就開始哭泣求救。

--- 我的屬靈旅程

附近一位女士看到她在哭,就過來幫助她。女士抱起以 斯帖,把她帶回自己家,然後她向附近的派出所報案:「有 個小女孩走丟了」。值班警員立即給報社打了電話,並提供 所要發布的信息,包括報案女士的姓名和地址。這時我的同 事意識到這一定是總經理的女兒以斯帖。接到通知後,南星 趕到女士家,發現她的小女孩就在那兒哭,以斯帖看到媽媽 出現在門口時,就從女士的腿上跳下來,跑進媽媽懷裏。我 們都鬆了一口氣,感謝神讓她平安歸來。

從台灣到美國

起初,我以為從香港搬回台灣是永久的,但出乎意料,就在中國郵報總經理職位六個月試用期即將結束的時候,另一位報業大亨,銷售量居冠的《中國時報》的負責人余紀忠先生找到我,提出邀請,要我擔任該報總編輯。這是一個很具吸引力的職位,因為《中國時報》是台灣最大、最具影響力的兩大報之一。

如果這個提議得到同意,那意味著我們就可以如願定居在台灣,這應該會是一個理想的狀況,因為我們的大多數孩子都在台灣出生,而且我與國民黨政府和國外的機構社群關係良好。然而交涉過程受到阻礙,該提議遭到該報內部資深編輯強烈反對。之後,余先生又給了另一個提議——派我到美國擔任《中國時報》分社社長,並分配到華盛頓特區。我

拒絕了第二個提議,因為我想要長期留在台灣。

奇怪的是,在我拒絕這個提議之後,我內心並沒有平安;有好幾天,晚上睡不好覺。我想知道為什麼會這樣,是神想要告訴我什麼嗎?我心裡思量:「在過去六年裡,我們在台灣和香港之間來回搬了四次,難道又要搬家了——甚至搬到太平洋的另一邊?」我與愛慕禱告的妻子分享內心的感受,她說:「說不定神要我們搬到美國。我們何不來為此禱告?」

當我們一起禱告後,奇怪的事開始發生,一件接著一件。首先,我們一位禱告同伴黃約拿弟兄,某日早上突然來公寓找我們,他迅速的拉過椅子坐下來,很認真地對我說:「周弟兄,昨晚我禱告的時候,主要我來告訴你,他要送你去美國。」這聽起來像是《中國時報》報社向我提出第二次的激約!

後來成為「黃牧師」的這位約拿弟兄繼續解釋,為什麼他相信他是從神那裡得到了話語。那天早上,還沒來我們公寓之前,他在我們平日禱告的屋子裡獨自禱告,外面的道路因施工而封鎖,他對主說:「如果祢想要我把信息帶給周弟兄,請派工人來拆除路障。」禱告一結束,他一抬頭,就看到封鎖解除了!

黄弟兄帶來信息後不久,他的妻子安靜姐妹來我們公寓 參觀,她的表現有些奇怪。她在公寓裏到處看,走遍每個房 間,打量每一件家具,包括舊冰箱。然後她對我妻子說:「聽說你們計劃搬到美國,有打算賣掉所有的家具嗎?」南星回答說:「是的」,同時意識到這是神回答了她的禱告,她沒有告訴任何人,但她一直暗暗禱告,「主啊,如果是祢的旨意要我們搬到美國,請派人來買走我們全部的家具!」安靜姐妹到來,正好給了答案;她要買走我們所有的家具,她知道我們需要錢支付去美國的費用。實際上她付的金額,遠超過家具本身的價值!

來自神鼓勵的話

有一天早上,我靈修的時候,主賜給我鼓勵的話,印證 祂的帶領:「你是我的僕人;我揀選你並不棄絕你。你不要 害怕,因為我與你同在;不要驚惶,因為我是你的神。我必 堅固你,我必幫助你,我必用我公義的右手扶持你」(以賽 亞書41:9-10)。

即使賣掉家具,我們仍然需要額外的錢,支付六個孩子的機票費。起初,雇主只願意付我一個人的機票費,令我驚訝的是,後來他願意加付我妻子的機票費。即便如此,我們還是沒有足夠的錢支付全家的機票費用。我們一直禱告,相信如果是神要我們去美國的話,他會提供足夠的資金。

為了籌集更多資金,我們還需要賣掉從住在香港時就擁 有的鋼琴。神回應我們的禱告,派了一位在基督裡的弟兄, 這位弟兄曾在我失業八個月的時候,受派供應我們的需要。 他買了鋼琴,而且支付超過我們所開出的價格,因為他想幫 我們付機票的費用。

差不多在這個時候,我收到了一位住在華盛頓特區為美國之音工作的老朋友傑森周(Jackson Chou)的來信,他願意提供我們一個臨時住處,直到找到長期住處為止。這封信是另一個令人鼓舞的標記,它表明,如果我們決心跟隨祂的帶領,神會供給我們在美國的所有需求。而我也以此為進一步的確認,神真的要派我去美國,並使用《中國時報》的邀約帶我們前往。

由於我們籌集的旅費,只夠一家人從台北飛往洛杉磯(當時我們最終目的地是華盛頓特區),於是我安排南星和孩子搭乘火車繼續往前,可以順道造訪住威斯康新州麥迪遜市的姐姐(內爾Nell)和家人,一直到我在華盛頓特區找到住所。

令人驚訝的是,我們到達洛杉磯後第二天,我們拜訪南星的弟弟(羅伯特)和他家人,我接到朋友傑森的電話,他聽起來很興奮地說:「你們的神真的很照顧你們,我剛剛為你們一家人找到一間房子,它是我同事的房子,同事是位基督徒。房子附有家具,現在還有幾位馬里蘭大學的學生住著,但學期結束後就可以搬進去。屋主說,既然你是神的僕人,歡迎搬進來,至於房租只要付你們負擔得起的任何租金都行…」

這又是一個禱告蒙垂聽的結果。我們離開台灣之前,就 一直禱告,一旦踏上美國土地,祈求神能供應我們這兩件不 可少的東西:一間適合一家八口的房子和一輛汽車。我們聽 說華盛頓特區的房子非常昂貴,對於一個孩子眾多的大家庭 來說,找房子不容易。

這套四居室的房子位於大學園市(College Park),離馬 里蘭大學不遠,離美國首都只有半小時車程。因為房子是租 給大學生的,所以家具齊全,廚房用具也齊全,床位充裕, 足夠我們六個孩子使用!

神給我們一輛八缸的奧茲摩比敞篷車的方式,是更不可思議。當時我在紐約出差,報導聯合國大會辯論「中國在聯合國代表權」的問題,返回馬里蘭州的路上,我在新澤西州伊麗莎白市停留,拜訪我在香港認識的一位朋友。在香港時,我曾經幫助過他。他和他的妻子都是醫生,各有一輛汽車,他們剛又買了一輛新車;正想把一輛10年舊的敞篷車淘汰,這輛車的里程數還很低。

朋友帶我去中餐館吃飯,回到他的公寓時,他給我看了 剛買的新車。然後,在不遠處,我們停下來看他那輛想淘汰 的舊車。他說:「我們一直在想是否要把這車送走。如果你 有興趣,我想以一美元的價格賣給你。」

回到公寓,他就以一美元象徵性的售價把車子的所有權 過戶給我,完成合法的交易。我真的是當下就把車開到附近 的加油站加滿了油,滿懷感激和喜悅地,把它開回了馬里蘭州!第二天,當我的妻子和六個孩子乘火車抵達華盛頓特區時,我開著我們第一輛美國車,在聯合火車站接他們。一輛八缸的大車,剛剛好容納一家八口,以及每個人的行李!

適應美式生活

南星和孩子,曾與她在威斯康新州的姐姐內爾和她一家人,同住了一段時間;這樣很好,特別對一個中國家庭主婦和六個孩子的母親來說,這是一段適應美國生活的過渡期。當時,姐夫賀尚賢(S.H.Ho)正在威斯康新大學攻讀博士;後來他們搬到夏威夷,在那裡他受聘成為夏威夷大學語言學的終身教授。

儘管馬里蘭州喬治郡的四居室屋主,願意接受我們任何 負擔得起的「租金」,但我堅持要簽一份雙方商定同意的租 金契約。我們決定各自為一個合理的數字禱告,然後回來比 較琢磨。你看看結果!我們各自提出的數字完全相同!一份 租約順利完成了。

我們在那房子裡住了不到一年;然後,在1970年初,我 從公司獲得一筆無息貸款,並在大學園市好萊塢區的下一條 街購買了一套稍微好一點的房子。這是我們在美國擁有的第 一間房子,有三間臥室,地下室有兩間較小的房間,還有兒 童玩耍的空間,和一間額外的浴室。飯廳是從廚房延伸出來 --- 我的屬顯旅程

的,空間剛剛好夠一家八口用餐,廚房中間有一個小窗戶,可以用來傳遞食物和盤子到飯廳。當我們的第七個孩子瑪莎 到來時,我們還可以擠上她的高腳椅!

家庭祭壇

簡陋的飯廳雖然擁擠,但大家在一起很開心,餐桌上總是充滿喜樂和笑聲。我決定將「家庭祭壇」(或家庭崇拜)融入生活。正是這樣的屬靈聯結,將我們全家維繫在一起。儘管我們可能在經濟上一直缺乏,但我開始相信這句話:「一起禱告的家人會持續在一起」,我們不僅是因為身為一家人而相聚一起,也是因為我們一起讀經禱告時,總是很快樂。

我將晚餐後的家庭崇拜,列為每日生活的一部分。因為 我從一位紐約的牧師那裡學到:這是保護我們孩子免於邪惡 世界影響的最佳方式。建立家庭祭壇,並儘早開始從聖經中 教導孩子有關神的事情,這是很重要,「教導孩童,使他走 當行的道,就是到老他也不偏離。」(箴言 22:6)。

我順從這條勸勉,因為我開始意識到:身為父母,我有責任將我的信仰傳給孩子,這樣,他們和他們的孩子也可以得到至少和我一樣多的祝福。我了解到家庭崇拜的內在和持久價值,這比參加教會更重要。我堅定地相信神對每個家庭的偉大應許「…愛我、守我誠命的,我必向他們發慈愛,直到千代。」(出埃及記20:6)。











在美首次嚴峻的試煉

....

我們搬進新家沒多久,南星就懷了我們第八個寶寶。在 她預備作第一次產前檢查的前一週,大約懷孕五個月的時候,突然出現劇烈的腹痛,我衝進她的房間為她禱告,這是 我們家有人生病的時候,我通常會作的事,神總是會回應我 們的禱告。但這一次,當我為南星禱告時,她的痛苦加劇到 一個程度,使她開始尖叫,好像她的全身都受到攻擊。意識 到事態的嚴重性,我趕緊把她送到喬治王子縣醫院急診室, 她一入院就開始抽搐,最終陷入昏迷。

經醫生團隊檢查後發現,五個月大的女胎已經死在母親的子宮裡,根據醫學報告,這是由於臍帶過早分離,導致血液中毒。南星的病例被診斷為「子癇」,這是懷孕後期的一種嚴重疾病。她之所以沒有早點做產檢,是因為我們理所當然地以為一切都會正常;因我們七個孩子都沒有任何問題地順利出生;而同時也是因為我們當時沒有醫療保險。

--- 我的屬靈旅程

由於胎兒死在母親的體內,導致她的生命處於極度危險之中。雖然醫生考慮過立即手術拿出死胎,但南星處於深度昏迷的狀態,血壓極高,活下來的機會只有一半。醫生決定推遲手術,並觀察接下來病情的變化。我一直沒有任何關於妻子病情的報告,直到她昏迷的第三天,我才被告知。

消息傳來實在令人震驚,我呆住了,說不出話來。我立即打長途電話給我們在台灣、紐約和休斯頓的教會朋友,迫切地請求代禱;我們在紐約立巨屋五旬節教會的許多朋友懇切地為南星不斷地禱告,也為我們的家禱告。

隔天我開車去醫院看她時,我不停地唱著這首熟悉的詩歌,「這大山必要挪移;這大山必要挪移……主說靠我靈成事。」我的信心突然活了起來,接下來的幾天裡,我每天在去醫院的路上都唱這首歌。我意識到教會朋友的代禱,在靈性上提升了我。我的信心挑旺並得到堅固,我開始真心地相信她會得醫治並康復起來。

有一天早上八點左右,我接到了醫療團隊婦科醫生蘇琪 (Suki)的電話,她說:「我要告訴您一個好消息,我們不 必為您的妻子進行手術,因為胎兒已經自己流出來了。我們 認為您的妻子很幸運,不過她仍然處於危急狀態中。」而我 認為,這個消息是神正在回答所有為我親愛妻子代禱的第一 個神蹟。

不過,當我每天繼續去醫院探望她時,她仍然昏迷不

醒,醫生和護士反覆嘗試測試她的反應能力,都沒有任何進展,他們似乎已放棄了她。從人的角度來看,真是沒有任何希望了。在一次傍晚探望她時,我問治療團隊中的一位女醫師,是否我的妻子會醒過來,她的眼睛盯著呼吸器看,淡淡地說:「我們只是在等而已……」。

當我看到她躺在病床上昏迷不醒,一動不動,似乎處於絕望的狀態時,我不禁感到沮喪。她的狀況不好到一個地步,無法自行呼吸,因此進行了氣切手術,以便將她連接到呼吸器上。她全身插滿了管子,頭髮蓬亂,臉色蒼白,躺在重症監護室裡,看起來就像一個垂死的人。在這種狀況下,我不敢帶任何一個孩子去看她。

五旬節立巨屋教會的吳(Waldvogel)牧師,幾乎每天都從紐約打電話過來,詢問我妻子的狀況。他派了安德烈斯(Charles Andrews)牧師到醫院為她禱告,他是立巨屋教會在維吉尼亞州雷德里克堡(Fredericksburg)姐妹教會的牧者。他來了好幾次,每次單程要開大約90英哩的路程。有一次,他帶了一位傳教士朋友到我家,為我仍在重症監護室的妻子禱告,這個人有很大的信心,據說因著他大有能力的禱告,曾使一個人起死回生。

在安德烈斯牧師最後一次來醫院的時候,他和我一起為 南星按手禱告,我們同心合意憑信心宣告耶穌基督復活的生 命臨到南星;就在我們禱告完畢後,我向妻子喊道:「媽 媽,我來看你了!」這麼多天以來,這是第一次她開始有 反應,她的頭非常緩慢地轉向在床邊的我,她只睜開眼睛幾 秒鐘,然後又閉上了,兩隻眼睛佈滿血絲,那一刻,我感覺 到好像那使耶穌基督從死裡復活的大能,正在她的身體裡運 行,使她恢復活力,並使她開始有反應。

然而,又花了一個星期的時間她才完全清醒、恢復意識,這時,她已經昏迷了兩個星期。醒來後,她的第一個問題是:「我怎麼了?」她意識到她在醫院。起初我聽不懂她在說什麼,因為氣切她發不出聲音,我只好請她重覆說一遍,我才能透過嘴型,讀出她想說的話。

醫院工作人員將她從重症監護室,轉到四樓普通病房時,重症室頓時燃起了亮光——彷彿有人從死裡復活了!在她轉出重症室的那時,因為不久前同一層樓已有兩三個病人去世,那裡籠罩著一股愁雲慘霧。但突然間,護理人員的精神似乎振奮起來了,因為有一位病人剛從昏迷長達二週中醒來,感覺就像他們收到了一個從「死裏復活」的人!

出院那天,我帶南星坐著輪椅回到她昏迷臥床的ICU中心,感謝照顧過她的醫生和護士。他們看到她活得好好的,準備回家去,又驚又喜!很多人對我說:「周先生,你很幸運能把你的妻子活著帶回家。」一位診治過她的醫生問她:妳是周太太嗎?我還以為妳死了呢!」

然而,回到家,她甚至不認得我們停在房子前面的車; 當我們走進家裡時,她也沒認出當時約12個月大的小女兒瑪 莎。她問起:「這個女孩是誰?」時,我懷疑她因長時間深度昏迷,要麼失去了記憶,要麼腦子遭受些損傷。但有趣的是,她仍然記得生第一個孩子時發生的事,大約花了六個月的時間,她才逐漸重拾失去的記憶。

除了許多朋友為我妻子禱告外,我同時從兩個不同的基督徒家庭收到同一節經文,他們是各自在禱告時,從神那裏領受的。在南星昏迷時,這給了我很大的啟發和鼓勵。這節經文是約翰福音11章4節:「耶穌聽見,就說:這病不至於死,乃是為神的榮耀,叫神的兒子因此得榮耀。」

南星昏迷的時候,我試著反覆與她分享這句強而有力的話。雖然無法與她交流,但我會在她耳邊大聲朗讀這節經文,並且禱告,就盼望她能聽到神的話,得到鼓勵。我這樣做是因為有人告訴過我,昏迷的人也有聽覺。我注意到在她病床旁邊的牆上貼著一個標語:「小心說話,病人聽見了。」我在信心中大聲向她朗讀這節經文,相信神的話語帶著醫治的能力。「因為出於神的話,沒有一句不帶能力的」(路加福音1:37)。後來在家裡,我問她是否真的聽到了我的朗讀,她說她沒有聽到。

我們龐大的醫療費用怎麼辦呢?正如我之前提到的,我們當時沒有保險,但是神再次供應了!祂似乎總有辦法在迫切的時候,幫助那些信靠祂的人。某日一一就在我帶妻子回家的幾天前,一位醫院社工來找我,想要確定我是否有資格參加州醫療補助計劃。審查我的財務狀況後,她認為我應該

--- 我的屬靈旅程

向馬里蘭州申請醫療補助,全部的醫療費用結算後,超過一萬美元,我只需要先付兩千美元。由於醫療費用沒有任何利息,其餘的費用,我只要每個月支付最低額度一百美元,直到付清為止。

真實無偽的信心

妻子瀕臨死亡的經歷,對我的生活、信心和家庭價值觀都產生巨大的影響,它使我學習如何在信心中成長,為我所有的需要信靠神,並更加愛妻子和家人。那段受試煉的期間,我明白了什麼是「無偽的信心」,這是提摩太從他的祖母羅以和母親友尼基那裡繼承下來的品格(提摩太後書1:5)。這種無偽的信心,乃是對神純正沒有摻雜、純潔真誠和全心的信靠。

回想起那些日子,醫生用盡他們的腦力、技能和可用的醫療技術,想要把南星從深度的昏迷中喚醒;他們似乎走到了盡頭。事實上,他們無法作任何事使她甦醒。從外在現象看起來,完全沒有希望;不知怎地,我就是不放棄希望。儘管我的信心很小,但我知道,無論如何我都必須學會相信神,因為我唯一的希望就在祂身上。我也知道,我需要在主的恩典和知識上成長。我常常告訴別人耶穌所說的話:「你若能信,在信的人凡事都能」(馬可福音9:23)。

在那些艱難的日子裡,我有很多不眠之夜,因為我想知

道,為什麼妻子喚不醒。我和孩子一起禱告,唯一盼望的就是他們的媽媽能醒過來,當她在重症監護室時,我越盯著她看,就越感到沮喪。但在經歷絕望之餘,我裡面神的靈卻說:要「為信心打美好的仗」,「因為我們行事為人是憑著信心,不是憑著眼見」(提摩太前書6:12;哥林多後書5:7)

我們最小的三個孩子——歲、兩歲和四歲——都還太小,不能沒有媽媽。一群在台灣認識南星的基督徒姐妹,一直求神存留她的性命。她們向神禱告:「這些孩子需要他們的媽媽!」我也向神呼求:「為了孩子的緣故,請救她的性命」。同時,我向神祈求能延長她的性命至少15年,直到我們最小的孩子滿16歲,那時她就到了法定的年齡,可以開車並照顧自己。我求神將她的生命延長15年,是借鏡於聖經中猶大王希西家(公元前726-697年)的例子。當希西家從先知以賽亞那裏得知,他就快要死了;希西家痛哭流涕,向神祈求能存留他的性命。而神垂聽了,祂吩咐以賽亞回去告訴希西家,「我聽見了你的禱告,看見了你的眼淚,我必加添你十五年的壽數」(以賽亞書38:1-5)。

那一年南星42歲,神不僅充滿恩典垂聽了我的禱告,還 慷慨地給了她超過我所求所想的歲數。若按照中國人的算 法,她今年已近九十歲了,而且在各方面她仍然堅強。讚美 和榮耀,世世代代都歸於神!

從記者到牧者

我的屬靈旅程



改變我一生的相遇

* 10+

1967年初,我正準備從台灣搬到香港開始我的新工作, 我的朋友丁曉亮大夫(Dr. Donald Dale),一位英國宣教醫 生;他來參加我們教會在台北舉行的華人基督徒特會。他告 訴我,有一位在紐約的美國牧師打算來台灣舉行特會,問我 是否願意做他的翻譯員。當時,我正在收拾行李,並沒有過 多考慮這個提議。我只是簡單地回說:「是的,如果這是神 的旨意。」

通過丁大夫和他妻子丁桂貞師母,我認識了來自加拿大新斯科舍省的榮耀秀教士(Pearl G. Young),她來台灣建立了錫安堂。榮教士與紐約布魯克林區立巨屋五旬節教會有聯繫,該間教會是由吳漢斯(Hans Waldvogel)牧師創立和牧養的。而在紐約,立巨屋教會的許多人,正在為吳漢斯老牧師首次在台灣舉行的佈道會禱告,祈求能找到「合適的翻譯人員」。我從未想過,與這位美國牧師的會面,竟成為我生命和事奉中的一個重要里程碑。

一個新的里程碑

直到我們搬來美國,我才知道吳漢斯牧師是美國和歐洲有名的五旬節佈道家;他的帳棚聚會,被神大大使用,常有神蹟奇事隨著。他經常前往二戰後的歐洲,結果在德國、奧地利、南斯拉夫、瑞士等歐洲國家建立了許多教會。他位於布魯克林區的母會立巨屋教會,也擴大到紐約州一新澤西州的一些地區,直到北維吉尼亞州。這些教會後來被統稱為「立巨屋團契」。1979年我在馬里蘭州所成立的華美基督徒教會,也因著我與吳漢斯老牧師的關係,而成為該團契的一員。

發生了幾件事,讓我相信,我與吳漢斯牧師的相遇是一次神聖的約會。當時,除了紐約的立巨屋教會在為擬定的台灣特會與合適的陪同翻譯員禱告外,在香港,我和妻子也為此禱告,想確認我是否是神心目中所預定的那位隨行翻譯。後來,經過一連串的事件,使我相信,去台灣作他的陪同翻譯是神對我的旨意。

那時妻子正懷著我們第六個孩子,已取名為蘇珊娜(Susanna)。她的預產期與預定的特會日期相衝突。我們特別為寶寶能提前到來禱告,這樣我就可以放心的離開。當時,我們的家庭幫傭不是基督徒,當她每天聽到這個「奇怪」的禱告時,都會笑出聲來。寶寶在台灣特會前三天安全分娩!它給了我足夠的時間將母女從醫院帶回家,搭車去機場,然後搭上飛往台灣的航班。順便提一下,我們的幫傭後來成了基督徒。

那年早些時候,香港的一家航空公司有促銷活動,飛往 台灣的票價減價多達50%。我趁著打折活動買了來回票,但 還不知道什麼時候會用上。六個月後,它有了明確的用途, 飛到台灣擔任吳漢斯牧師在台佈道會的隨行翻譯。

現代版的勞倫斯弟兄

抵達台北時,吳牧師對我說的第一件事是:「你的到來對我也是一個確認」。顯然,他也在確認台灣之行是否在神的旨意中。我有生以來,第一次遇見這樣屬神的人—— 完全致力於遵行神的旨意。他是如此地被聖靈充滿,以至於無論在公開的場合還是在私下,他都持續地在與神交流。我有此特權和榮幸,能在特會中全程與他在一起,連聚會之外也與他在一起,親眼目睹他如何在聖靈中生活與工作。他是一位真正屬聖靈,被聖靈充滿的傳道者,我稱他為「現代版的勞倫斯弟兄」——一位以他的著作《操練與神同在》而聞名的16世紀聖徒。

我還記得在台灣為吳漢斯牧師翻譯的第一場聚會,神的 靈非常豐富地澆灌在與會者身上,幾乎每個人都放聲開懷大 笑,持續很長一段時間。蘇格蘭裔的加拿大傳教士榮耀秀 女士,是一位非常嚴謹和矜持的人,卻笑得好開心。我同 樣笑得無法控制,肚子都笑疼了!我對主說:「哦,主啊, 夠了,夠了!」這乃是我第一次經歷一個充滿「聖靈中的喜 樂」的聚會。回顧過去,我會把吳漢斯牧師的服事描述為「一 ---- 我的屬靈旅程

個真正由聖靈開啟和帶領的聚會」。

令我驚訝的是,當我在為他翻譯的時候,我感受到我們在同一個靈裡,我們的心是如此的同心與和諧。他說的每一句話都觸動我的心弦,引起共鳴,彷彿它們是從我裡面而出的一樣;許多心意透過吳漢斯牧師極其有力地傳講出來!我從未在基督教的聚會中,或在為講員翻譯的時候,感到如此地自由和釋放;正如聖經所說「主的靈在哪裡,那裡就得以自由」(哥林多後書3:17)。神的靈真的按著祂的心意,自由地運行在那些聚會中。我們從第一場聚會中走出來時,他對我說:「我們倆都在講道。」

一次最難忘的經歷

我與吳漢斯牧師最難忘的經歷之一,是發生在台北市郊的溝子口錫安堂。那是一次早上的聚會,約有二十幾個人出席,其中許多是當地教會的牧師和傳道人。他當時正在傳講「基督的謙卑」這個主題,就在我為他翻譯時,我進入到另一個靈裏的情境中——彷彿我是獨自跪在主耶穌面前,周圍沒有任何其他的人。祂多次對我說:「你要謙卑,因為我是謙卑的」,那時,我完全忘了我正在為吳牧師翻譯!這次的經歷是如此地不尋常——我永遠都不會忘記。

雖然我與吳牧師在1967年的台灣特會中,只有兩週的時間相處在一起,但他的生活和服事的典範,他與神同行的方

式,都留下無法抹去的深刻印象,對我個人的生活、服事, 和與神的關係,產生了持久性的影響。

兩年後,即1969年初,我正準備啟程赴美,擔任台灣《中國時報》駐華盛頓記者。我一直期盼在紐約能再次見到吳牧師。令我非常失望的是,我從榮耀秀教士那裡收到了一個悲傷的消息,說吳牧師已經離世與主同在了。不僅是我,還有許多從他的事工中受益的人,都想念他。他七十六歲,終生未婚,一生盡心、盡意、盡力事奉他所愛的主耶穌。

新的關係

1969年9月,新工作的第一個任務就是,到紐約報導聯合國大會的一場辯論會,是有關中國在該世界組織的代表權問題。儘管吳漢斯牧師已離世回天家,但我還是決定去參觀在紐約布魯克林區的立巨屋五旬節教會。我帶著一張我為吳牧師在台灣特會翻譯的照片前往,見到了他侄子吳愛恩(Edwin H. Waldvogel)牧師,他接替吳漢斯牧師,成為該教會的主任牧師。牧師張開雙臂熱情地接待我,並邀請我去他家吃飯,在那裡我見到了他妻子伊迪絲和他們的三個孩子。

透過「吳愛恩弟兄」——這是立巨屋團契裡大家對他的 親切稱呼,我遇到了賈德納牧師和他的夫人,那時他們是紐 約朝聖營地的聯席主任。這營地是由立巨屋五旬節教會和其 附屬教會的牧者一起創立的夏令營和退修中心。吳愛恩和賈 德納是立巨屋教會最資深的兩位牧師,賈德納還是教會月刊《生命之糧》的編輯,以及羅炳森師母傳記《榮耀的光輝》的作者。1985年,我們在馬里蘭州的華美基督教會,來紐約參加立巨屋教會60週年慶;因著賈德納牧師的促成,我在聚會中被按立為全職牧者,那時馬里蘭州華美基督教會已成立六週年了。

馬里蘭州華美基督教會成立之前,我們曾在紐約生活了大約兩年,那時我已辭去世俗的工作,預備讓主帶領我在華人聚集的皇后區或中國城建立教會。在這兩年裡,我們全家參加位於歐松公園(Ozone Park)的好牧人教會(the Church of the Good Shepherd),這是立巨屋團契的教會之一,弗蘭克和艾瑪(Frank and Emma Posta)在那裡擔任牧師。我也盡可能地多參加立巨屋教會的聚會,尤其是每週一早上,在信心家庭舉行的牧師禱告會;漸漸地,我覺得我是他們其中的一員。我也有機會訪問立巨屋團契其他教會,隨著我與這些教會傳道人的關係愈來愈好,當有傳道人必須在某個星期天外出時,他們會叫我來填補他們主日講台服事的空缺。正因為如此,我幾乎認識了所有紐約和新澤西地區的立巨屋相關教會。

當我還在《中國時報》工作的時候,每次去紐約出差時,我都會選擇住在立巨屋教會的信心家庭,這樣我就可以更多地參加他們的聚會。我本可以公費住在紐約任何一家旅館,但我想參加他們的聚會,在那裡神的同在是如此明顯。信心家庭的人總是親切地接待我,以非常友善熱情的態度對

待我。當他們把我安置在已故吳漢斯牧師(Hans Waldvogel) 在世時所使用的那間臥室時,我感到十分榮幸並且特別蒙福,主甚至祝福我在那個房間裡所寫、並要寄往台灣報紙的新聞報導和文章。據我的雇主余紀忠先生說,其中一些報導,已引起當時蔣介石總統的注意。蔣介石的長子蔣經國,也留意我在美國的報導,在他成為中華民國總統之前,曾兩次在台灣接見我。我相信這些都是後來我晉升為台灣《中國時報》總經理的原因。

當我們住在紐約皇后區參加立巨屋教會的時候,我等候主,渴望知道祂想要我在這個城市做什麼。吳愛恩和賈德納弟兄曾多次為我禱告,特別是為我要在曼哈頓中國城開始建立教會禱告。吳愛恩弟兄至少兩次對我說:「如果你要在紐約開始華人事工,歡迎你使用我們(立巨屋教會的)地下室禮堂。」但我告訴他,關於我是否應該這樣做,我沒有從主那裡得到指示或明確的亮光。儘管如此,我還是繼續參加立巨屋團契的各種聚會,尤其是星期一早上的牧師禱告會,在那裡我得到了相當多的屬靈幫助。

耶和華以勒 (耶和華供應)

沒有固定收入,在紐約生活並不輕鬆,我們的信心再次 受到考驗——金錢這方面。那時我們有五個孩子,儘管我仍 收到報社按件計酬的稿費,但我們經常陷入拮据的地步。例 如,某個星期一早晨,當我靠近冰箱時,妻子一言不發地打 開冰箱的門,我看到裡面幾乎是空的。我明白她的意思,我說:「我們來禱告吧。」於是在前往信心家庭參加牧師禱告會之前,我們一起禱告…。妻子在我之後禱告,她被「主禱文」所鼓舞:「我們在天上的父,願人尊祢的名為聖,願祢的國降臨,願祢的旨意行在地上,如同行在天上,我們日用的飲食今日賜給我們」(馬太福音6:9-11)。

那天早上禱告會結束後,吳愛恩弟兄走到我身邊,在我準備離開時,他握了握我的手,把一張鈔票塞到我手裡,低聲對我說:「這是我的十一奉獻。」我知道他塞給我的是錢,回到車上時,我看到一張20美元鈔票。在1970年代這是一筆不小的金額。回家路上,我在一家超市停下來,買了四五袋食物,足夠我們一家人吃兩個星期!

紐約的住房,比馬里蘭州的要貴得多;所幸的是,一位 我們在香港認識的基督徒朋友,免費讓我們住她的公寓;當 她要在皇后區(Elmhurst)買這公寓時,我接到她的授權委 托書,代表她處理這個交易。她邀請我們住在那裏,並希望 我們能夠在地下室開始一個教會。她愛主,也盼望與事工有 份,但事情並沒有像她期待的那樣發展。兩年後,我們搬回 馬里蘭州自己的房子。

我常在想,為什麼主帶我們到紐約,讓我們在那裡住了兩年,但卻沒有任何具體的成就。當我等候主時,我才逐漸明白這是一段必須有的預備時期——主要訓練和進一步裝備我,為了將來跟隨聖靈的服事。回首過往,我不禁要感謝神讓我從立巨屋團契中得到的屬靈益處。沒有這些益處,我就無法承擔祂要我去作的事工。



最後一份屬世的工作

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當我應邀來美國擔任台灣《中國時報》駐華盛頓新聞記者的時候,我把它當作是一個「馬其頓呼召」(使徒行傳16:9)——至終按照祂的意思來事奉神。報社的工作是次要的,它是為了謀生,其實在這個工作機會出現之前,我就已經準備好回應神的呼召了:不論祂要以任何的方式,差遣我去任何的地方服事。所以,當神在紐約打開一扇門,在城裡提供免費公寓時,我就辭掉了世俗的工作,開始要為主工作,並且「憑信心生活」,完全依靠祂來供應我們的需要。這也是一個可喜的機會,能與我們在立巨屋教會的朋友有更多更密切的團契。

雖然我們在紐約住了兩年,似乎一事無成,然而我們在 那裡的逗留並沒有白費:我們學到了一些在其他地方可能學 不到的寶貴功課。後來證明,不僅對我們在馬里蘭州的家庭 和教會生活有助益,也同時有利於我以後的事奉。

回到馬里蘭州

我們之所以搬回馬里蘭州,主要是因為我們的房子一直 租不出去,已經空置兩年了。1977年初某日,我在喬治亞州 亞特蘭大宣教時,妻子不得不獨自趕回馬里蘭州,處理房子 地下室嚴重的淹水問題。我們一直在處理這個困擾,以及因 為房子長時間無人居住的其他相關問題。在我和妻子的各自 早晨靈修中,我們都領受到主的話,引導我們回馬里蘭州的 家。

它特別之處在於,主分別在不同的時間地點,給了我們 倆同一節經文,利未記25:13「在禧年,你們各人要歸自己的 地業。」我們確信這是主在對我倆說話,是時候該歸回我們 自己在馬里蘭州的地業了。回到馬里蘭州後,我們面臨的問題是,接下來該做什麼?我需要知道:是否我應該在馬里蘭州開始一個教會,還是回到世俗的工作?關於我應該走的方向,我不斷禱告尋求神的心意。

有一天,我問妻子和六個孩子是否願意和我一起禁食禱告,特別為了尋求神的帶領和指示,他們都欣然同意,在那 天不吃三餐,全家人一起禱告。我列出了幾個可能的工作機 會,包括之前的台灣雇主。

我還打電話給紐約朝聖營地的賈德納弟兄,請他與我們 一起禱告,尋求方向和指示。他是立巨屋團契兩位最資深的 牧師之一,我非常尊敬他。兩個月後,他回信建議我暫時回 到屬世的工作,一方面供應家庭的需要,同時等候神更清楚的帶領。

神的心意

於是我開始了求職之旅。因著神的心意,曾經是民主黨副總統候選人和當時美國參議院外交關係委員會主席的參議員約翰·斯帕克曼(John Sparkman),對我的求職需要感到興趣。作為前《中國時報》駐華盛頓記者,我曾就當時不斷演變的美國對華政策採訪過他。我跟他的秘書很熟,他通過秘書知道了我的需要,儘管我沒有開口請求,這位來自阿拉巴馬州的參議員仍寫了一封推薦信,寄給美國之音的主任,他正好是與參議員同州的老朋友。

在向美國人事管理辦公室提交了一份冗長的聯邦工作申請後,我接到通知,去接受美國之音中文區新聞翻譯播音員的面試和測試(美國之音是美國國務院下屬美國新聞署的國際廣播機構)。我立即被聘為美國公務員,比一般新進人員高一級。我從沒想過美國參議員會介入並確保我的最後一份屬世工作!

就我而言,在美國之音的工作應該是臨時的,但它持續了八年。我沒想到它會變成一個漫長如深谷般的「熔爐體驗」!就像但以理的三個朋友一樣(但以理書3:24-27)。我列出了六種不同的工作機會,最終因著神的心意,我得到了

我最不想要的那一個!

在我32年的新聞職業生涯中,我曾在台灣、香港和華盛 頓的不同新聞機構,擔任過12份不同的工作,其中包括在三 大主要報紙擔任高管職位;結果美國之音這個工作是最不愉 快的。雖然工資相當不錯,但是工作環境不行,有很多辦公 室之間的明爭暗鬥和爭吵。一位前員工曾感慨地說:「那個 地方會讓你發瘋!」就在我開始在那裡工作之前,一位知情 人士警告我說:「這個地方就像煉獄一樣!」

神更高的旨意

儘管如此,當神認為使用美國資深參議員的斡旋,將我放入那「熔爐」是合適的,並允許我經過八年的考驗和煉淨;那麼,祂對我的生命就有更崇高的目的。鑑於我在新聞界的資歷與深厚的背景,我強大的自我,以為自己比別人更懂得如何運作美國之音中文部。經過最初幾年的工作和對那裡的觀察,我得出一個結論:這些人,要麼沒有做他們該作的工作;要麼,根本不知道他們自己在作什麼。

我強烈地想幫助中文部改進它的新聞運作方式,但我沒有權限和地位去做,因此,我感到沮喪和無用。當分配到上夜班時,情況變得更糟,因為我必須向所有的值班新聞編輯回報,其中許多人都比我年輕且經驗不足。我對上夜班感到抗拒,我開始討厭工作,並討厭每個人輪番成為我的上司。

作為三大報社的前任執行長,以前有幾百人在我手下工作; 有很長一段時間我都在想,為什麼我的專業經驗沒有得到認 可和發揮。有一天,我聽到主溫柔地對我說:「我帶你來這 裡不是為了改變別人——而是為了改變你,讓你成為我想要 你成為的樣子!」

隨後,我開始明白,為什麼神把我放在那個可怕的地方,讓我在那裡待了這麼久,那是因為我應該謙卑、倒空、破碎和剝去我隱藏的驕傲和自以為是。我不知道我還需要學會聽話、耐心和寬容。我必須學會接受和愛他們本來的樣子,這些都是耶穌基督的特徵;神渴望將其注入我的靈魂之中,以便我成為神真正的僕人,以及耶穌的追隨者和愛人。

神看出了我缺少什麼, 祂總是知道何時、何地, 以及如何滿足我的需要; 但我從沒想過我需要花這麼長的時間,來學會我所需要學的功課。我發現我在聖靈學校裏是一個多麼可憐的學生。所以, 我最後的這份屬世工作, 實際上是一個進階的培訓班, 要進一步為我的全職服事做好準備。但是在神把我從那火煉般的地方帶出來之前, 我是多麼迫切地想逃離那裡! 我非常努力地想找一份新工作, 或調到另一個部門。我只想從那個火爐裡逃出來!

我記得當我在1980年成為美國公民時,我以為我會有更好的機會,能在聯邦政府的機構中,找到需要有公民身份的工作。我申請了多達四十二個不同的職位,這些職位都是聯邦政府公佈的工作機會,但是一點用都沒有!令我極度失

望,在申請的一些職位中,有幾位面試官告訴我「你的資歷 過高」,然而我心裡想的卻是:「別管這些,就給我一份工 作吧!」他們不知道我是如此拼命地,想離開現有的工作。

到了快滿八年的時候,試煉和苦難,在我內心變得幾乎無法再忍受下去,以至於有個下午,我從辦公桌前起身,想找一個地方禱告,呼求神的幫助。我對自己說:「我再也受不了」,當我走到樓上的會議室時,我似乎聽到一個響亮的聲音在說:「因為我活著,你們也要活著」(約翰福音14:19),它像錘子一樣擊中了我,我立刻從黑暗和陰霾中出來,重新充滿了繼續前進的希望、力量和信心!

我即時回應主,說:「是的,主啊,不論祢想要我在這 裏待多久,我都願意」,這響亮的聲音把我敲醒了,它提醒 我主耶穌活著,而且祂活在我裡面,要賜給我力量,勝過塵 世生活的苦難和試煉!

在這段漫長的試煉中,我深信這節經文的真理:神「開了就沒有人能關,關了就沒有人能開」(啟3:7)。不過,更重要的是,我學到了一些關於基督徒受苦的意義,它可以使我們得益處,「因為知道患難生忍耐;忍耐生老練;老練生盼望」(羅馬書5:3,4)。大衛王說:「我受苦是與我有益,為要使我學習你的律例」(詩篇119:71)。約伯是一個與神有「親密友誼」的人,他可能是除了主耶穌以外,比任何人受的苦都多;然而,在他的試煉中,約伯說:「……祂試煉我之後,我必如精金」(約伯記 23:10)。

靠著神的恩典,我也可以說受苦是與我有益的,因為它使我成為更好的基督徒/牧師、父親和丈夫。 我意識到,如果我沒有最後這份屬世工作的考驗,我是不可能成為一位好的牧師,去愛神的子民,接受他們本來的樣子,無論他們的種族、文化和宗教信仰如何,或甚至尚未有宗教信仰。

蒙召全職服事

當我告訴主「只要有必要,我願意一直待在我的工作中」,祂便開始展開對我未來的計劃。祂指示:現在是我踏出全時間服事的時候了。我明白這意味著,我們要信靠神會供應我們一切的需要。那時,我們還是個小教會,並沒有足夠的資源可以供應我們一家九口之需。

我在意的是,我們有三個孩子還在大學,如果我辭掉工作,他們將如何完成學業?我也擔心每月的房貸和一堆賬單。所以,我和妻子一起為這個重要的決定禱告。我們求神給我們印證,確保祂會供應我們的需要,三個孩子能按時完成大學教育。

1984年11月,就在我們為是否離職的事禱告一個多月後,一位在我們教會聚會的弟兄,知名的基督徒藝術家楊賢明,突然來到我們家;他帶來了一幅剛完成的畫作,想把它作為提早的聖誕節禮物送給我們。那是一幅山林樹木圖畫,有鳥兒飛過它們,畫中有書法題字:「你們看那天上的飛

鳥,也不種,也不收,也不積蓄在倉裡,你們的天父尚且養活地。你們不比飛鳥貴重得多嗎?」(馬太福音6:26)很明確的信息。我們繼續禱告,求神給進一步的印證,以消除我們對財務需求的擔憂,並且,賜給我們完全的平安,以信心充滿我們,好叫我們能以過「信心生活」。幾個星期過去了,主帶走了我所有的憂慮和疑惑,賜予我完全的平安、喜樂和信心。

令人驚訝的是,那些在辦公室對我懷有敵意的人突然變成了朋友,他們和我其他的同事在一家中餐館,一起為我舉行了盛大的惜別晚宴。我非常感恩,能以這樣快樂的結局,離開一個曾經是不愉快工作環境的美國之音。這只有神才能做到。

我踏入全時間服事時,我們的教會才五歲;從聖經和跟 隨聖靈的角度來看,我認為我不應該從教會支薪。我不是把 牧師身份當作一份工作,而是從神而來的呼召;我要仰望祂 的供應,薪酬問題甚至都沒有提及。然而,有了這樣的理 解,教會自願以十一奉獻和自由奉獻的方式來供應我們的需 要。

最終,我們的三個孩子周約翰、周珊珊和周瑪莎不僅完成了大學教育,還接著完成了哈佛、哥倫比亞、喬治城等著名大學的碩士學位,其中一位還獲得了約翰霍普金斯大學的學士學位。



第十四章

從記者到牧者

* 10+

十幾歲的時候,我的夢想是成為一名空軍飛行員,我從 未想過要成為一名記者或教會牧者。然而,我記得,即使在 我二十出頭的時候,一些工作上的朋友就開始叫我「周牧 師」,當時我覺得它只是一個暱稱,而且聽起來還挺不錯! 但是,全能的神對我的生活有一個尚未展開的計劃。作為一 名基督徒我堅信聖經的真理;那就是:神對祂的每個兒女, 在他們出生以前就有一個計劃,一個永恆的計劃,要向那些 愛神、相信真理、相信「聖經作為神的道是完全正確」的人 開啟。

在美國留學的華人學生,有一項出色的課外活動,就是 他們會積極地參與許多大學都有的校園查經班,很多來自中 國大陸和台灣的學生以及交換學者,通過這些查經班,歸信 了基督。這些校園查經班背後的主要力量,是有組織的事 工,例如:學園傳道會、基督教校園福音團契、導航會等。

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美國的許多華人教會,都是從小型的查經班發展而來 的,馬里蘭州華美基督教會也是如此。

實際上,華美教會開始於一對基督徒夫婦的私人住宅,那時他們剛從弗羅里達在塔拉哈西(Tallahassee)的州立大學獲得博士學位。剛開始,我們只有一些人每週末聚會一次,隨著出席人數穩定成長,我開始聽到成立教會的呼聲,這樣其他人也可以來參加。我一直記得,我們來美國的最終目標是做主的工,對我而言,新聞媒體的工作只是次要的謀生方式。在這些呼聲中,我決心要尋求神的明確指引,以確定成立教會是否是主的心意。

那時,我已在美國之音工作了兩年,同時也帶領查經小組。我趁著第一次休年假的時間,開車從東到西橫跨美國大陸,將我們家四輛車的其中一輛,送去給正在加州州立大學洛杉磯分校就讀的大女兒路得。妻子、四個較小的女兒、兒子約翰,和他的一位朋友也一起隨行;這兩位年輕人可以擔任候補司機。我們早已久仰國家公園和大峽谷的美景,所以特意沿途遊覽了一番,大家玩得很開心。但在打道回府的路上,我變成唯一的司機。我只記得在我們回到馬里蘭州之前,我必須連續五天,每天開車八小時!當我們回到家時,我對自己說:「我再也不這麼作了」!然而,儘管如此,我認為這樣的體驗,如果可能的話,每個人在他(或她)的一生中都應該經歷一次。

隔年,當我要再次在夏天休年假時,我決定抽出一週的

時間來禁食禱告,單獨與神同在,我想要親自從主那裏聽到是否應該成立一個教會,好回應我們查經小組的渴望。我與維吉尼亞州柏林格林(Bowling Green)五旬節教會的費特牧師(Walter Fette)聯繫,問他是否我可以去他的教會度過幾日,只為了單單尋求主。我是透過紐約立巨屋五旬節教會,才認識了費特牧師和他妻子安妮;也是在他們的建議下,我們家曾在柏林格林教會聚會過一段時間。

費特弟兄毫不猶豫欣然地接待我,他把我安置在一輛房車裡,這輛房車曾是他已故母親的車。這是一間可移動的房屋,配有兩間臥室、淋浴間、廚房和一間客廳,屬於教堂的財產。令我驚訝的是,他在冰箱裡放了很多食物,包括「幸運餅乾」(美國華人餐廳常提供的餅乾),並對我說:「請把這裏當作自己的家」。其實我不想吃任何東西,我去那裏就只想禱告和讀聖經。

到了第四天,大約早上10點左右,當我正在靈修時,我 突然感受到房間裡有強烈而明確的神的臨在,就好像是有人 走進來,坐在我旁邊的椅子上一樣。在我的靈裡,毫無疑問 地我立刻知道,那是主耶穌! 祂的靈開始說話,指示我打開 聖經,翻到以賽亞書第55章,當我開始慢慢仔細地閱讀時, 主給了我關於在馬里蘭州建立一個新教會的具體指示。除了 這些指示之外,他還做出了一些承諾,如果我忠心地遵循祂 的指示,祂就會實現這些承諾。

當我仔細地閱讀這一章時,我感受到聖靈以一種新的方

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式逐節對我說話。以下是我在1979年6月14日所領受的一些指示,記錄在我的欽定版聖經背面:

- 1. 你要高舉耶穌基督,讓祂成為主和總司令。
- 你必須渴慕更多得著基督, 祂是一切, 又在一切之 內。
- 3. 你要全心尋求主,就必尋見。
- 4. 你要享受主的同在,並持續與祂相交。
- 5. 你要忠實地傳講神的話,因為祂的話不會徒然返回。
- 6. 你要領人到耶穌基督祂自己那裏,祂是他們所有一切問題的答案。
- 7. 你要幫助人被聖靈充滿,跟隨聖靈而行。
- 8. 你不要有自己的計劃,而是要學習神的思想和法則, 因它高於人的思想和法則。

以下是主應許會為我們而作的,前提是我要忠心、始終 如一地履行我的牧師職責:

- 1. 神的同在會在我們中間顯現。
- 2. 祂會把人帶到我們的教會——那些我們從不認識的人。
- 3. 祂會用聖靈給他們施洗,以平安喜樂祝福他們。
- 4. 祂會使人認識祂,並與祂有親密的相交。

- 5. 祂會把得救的人數加給教會。
- 6. 祂會使祂的話語發出,並結出許多果子。
- 7. 祂會使我們以基督為中心的教會,成為永恆的見證。

帶著這些從主而來的指示和應許,我找到馬里蘭州貝爾 茨維爾(Beltsville)神召會的斯萊牧師(Granville Slye),我 問他是否可以租用他教會的設施,在每週日下午舉行華人聚 會,因他們週日早上已有聚會。過去,每逢我必須出門到紐 約新澤西地區的華人教會講道時,我妻子和孩子們就會參加 這個教會,如此行已經有一段時間了。我問斯萊牧師我們應 該付多少租金給教會,他回答說:「別擔心房租,神會供應 的」。我視此為從神而來的另一個印證。

1979年感恩節,馬里蘭州華美基督教會應運而生。作為 創始人和牧師,我向華盛頓特區的所有朋友發出通知,邀請 他們參加我們新教會的開幕典禮。第一個星期日,教堂擠滿 了一百多人,這個聚會以神同在的榮耀為標記,人們充滿了 喜樂、讚美和感恩。對於我們的新教會來說,這確實是一個 盛大的開幕儀式和歷史性的一天。

一個新的功課

教會才剛開始,令人費解的事就發生了,令我十分困惑 的是,接下來的主日出席人數突然下降了將近一半,隨後的 幾個主日,人數持續急劇下降,直到寥寥無幾,最後只剩下 我的屬靈旅程

我的家人和余道潔夫婦——他們是我查經班裏的一對夫婦。 那些參加第一個主日崇拜的人在哪裡呢?為什麼他們突然不來了?是否我說錯或做錯了什麼,使得他們不來了?

我尋求這些問題的答案。我能給出的唯一解釋就是,或 許是因為我的主日方式與他們傳統的方式不一樣;與其把講 道作為主日敬拜的主要部分,我們會花相當長的時間靜默等 候主;無疑地,這對那些只想來聽道的人而言是陌生的,顯 然是因為我們沒有達到他們的期望,他們就不來了。但是聖 靈若沒有帶領,我就不能自己做什麼。

這種尷尬的局面大約持續了兩年,有幾次我發現自己傳講的對象幾乎都是自己家裡的人,我就在想「如果是這樣的話,我在家給他們講道就可以啊!」然而,我不能關閉我剛剛開始的教會,我陷入兩難當中。我忍不住問道:「主啊, 祢為什麼不按祢的承諾把人帶來?」我一次又一次地問同樣的問題。

在一次也是只有少數人參加的主日下午,我又問了這個問題,令我驚訝的是,主用簡單的英語反問我這個問題「你想要我,還是只要人多?」我回答說:「主,我當然想要你,勝過想要人。」還有一次,當我抱怨出席人數太少時,主再次令我驚訝地問我:「你想要很多的出席人數,還是我聖潔的同在?」

這使我恍然大悟,我並沒有遵循主給我的指示:就是高

舉祂,更多渴望得著祂自己,而不是更多的人數;首先要全心尋求祂,使我可以找到這位「是一切,又在一切之內的主」。我似乎忘記了這一件事:擁有基督自己和祂的同在,就是擁有我所需要的一切!

錯誤的焦點

我開始意識到我的注意力放錯了地方,應該放在耶穌基督身上而不是人,放在祂的同在上,而不是出席狀況。回過頭來看,我才意識到我並沒有遵行神要我做的,祂正在教導我一些具有永恆價值的屬靈功課,而我的眼目卻只看到外在的事物,例如「更多的人」,這些都只有暫時的價值。自此我有了轉變,不僅我的注意力被重新設定,我的價值體系也得到了適當的調整。

主正在使用這段特別的時期,教導我一個重要而簡單的 真理:我必須有祂和祂的同在,才能滿足他人的需要。正如 耶穌所說的「……離了我,你們就不能作什麼」(約翰福音 15:5)。在服事當中,我發現「不是倚靠勢力,不是倚靠才 能〔天賦或人力資源〕,乃是倚靠神的靈方能成事」(撒迦 利亞書4:6),事實上都是聖靈的工作。因此,我們必須要有 聖靈的膏抹在我們身上,才能成為神手中有效的器皿。

定睛在耶穌身上,這是擁有成功的事工和基督徒生活的 秘訣,我是花了很長的時間才學會這極寶貴的功課。在我們 教會剛起步的前幾年裏,我們在講台的牆上掛著這節至關重要的經文「仰望為我們信心創始成終的耶穌」(希伯來書12:2),每當我心情低落或心灰意冷的時候,我就把目光轉向這句話,我的靈很快就得到提升!主給我上了多麼寶貴的一課!它成為我未來生活和事工的秘訣。

教會開始成長

因我學會「注視耶穌」這秘訣,並以祂為教會服事的中心,主開始帶人來教會,正如祂所應許的那樣——我們以前從未見過的人。這些新來的人雖然為數不多,但在基督裡都是寶貴的弟兄姊妹,他們真心愛主,渴望更多得著耶穌。他們是如此特別,相較之下,每一位都相當於十位一般的教會會友。

正如耶穌所說,「我若從地上被舉起來,就要吸引萬人來歸我」(約翰福音12:32)。我想起了耶穌吩咐我的第一件事:讓他在凡事上居首位;當我努力遵循祂的指示時,主就開始吸引飢渴慕義的心歸向祂自己,並且,如祂所應許的,開始在我們中間以奇妙的方式彰顯祂的同在。

除了星期天下午的主日崇拜外,我們為那些想花更多時間尋求和等候主的人開始了第二個聚會。大約有12個人,固定在每週六早上六點聚會,只為了在神面前靜默和禱告。即便在寒冷的冬天下雨或下雪,這些「早起的鳥兒」也會聚在

一起尋求主。這個獨特的週六聚會持續了10年,有幾天教會 積滿了雪,那些先到的人就鏟雪,把走道清理出來。

對新教會的指示和應許之一是:「當趁耶和華可尋找的時候尋找他,相近的時候求告他」(以賽亞書55:6)。這些來聚會的人,都是真誠的尋求者、和耶穌的愛人,他們親身經歷了耶穌是如此的相近,真實和寶貴。神向那些熱切尋求祂的人彰顯祂的同在和啟示祂自己,藉此來尊崇祂的話語。

隨著教會人數的增加,我們開始每年舉行兩次的基督徒退修會;第一個稱為「感恩節週末退修會」,是為了紀念教會是在1979年的感恩節成立,第二個稱為「軍人節週末退修會」,主要是為了讓會眾藉著退修會的休息,安靜等候神,能放鬆和再次充電,許多參加的人,在離開時都變得精神煥發,重新得力,正如聖經所說,「…那等候耶和華的,必重新得力…」(以賽亞書 40:31)。

最初幾年裡,我們都是在柏林格林五旬節教會舉行感恩 節退修會,這是位於維吉尼亞州南部鄉村的一個小型美國教 會。

儘管文化和語言存在著差異,但我們華美教會已發展成為一個具親和力的教會,隨著越來越多的人從其他教會來參加退修會,我們不得不把場地搬到約25英里外的一個更大的場地——弗雷德里克斯堡五旬節教會(Fredericksburg Pentecostal Church)。十二年後,我們在馬里蘭州銀泉市,和下了

一個可以容納250-300人的教會場地——西班牙裔的基督復臨安息日教會。我們移到這個新的場地聚會,以因應不斷增長的會眾,還有,不斷擴大的感恩節退修會。基督復臨安息日教會是一個基督教無宗派教會,他們與猶太信徒一樣,是在週六而不是在週日舉行定期禮拜。

另外一個有助於我們教會屬靈成長和發展的年度活動 是,在朝聖者營地舉行的勞動節退修會,這個營地,是由紐 約布魯克林區立巨屋五旬節教會所經營,是基督教夏令營和 退修中心。我們的小型教會,有許多人會前往紐約上州的朝 聖者營地,參加勞動節退修會,領受由立巨屋團契有恩膏的 牧者們所傳講的神之道,接受教導和建造。

朝聖者營地成立於1946年,得名於約翰·本仁(John Bunyan)的著作《天路歷程》(Pilgrims Progress),也是為了紀念從英國和歐洲,移民到美國的清教徒。營地的座右銘是「歸耶和華為聖」,該事工成立70多年以來,一直明確地保持:聖潔是營地一切活動的焦點。營地主要的吸引力在於神明顯的同在,這一點可以從參加者——不論是大人或小孩——生命的改變得到印證。我們教會有許多人在該營地的勞動節退修會中,蒙受豐盛的祝福並大得堅固。

我個人從退修會中得到最大的益處乃是,觀察基督徒聚會,或說新約時代教會的聚會,是如何由屬靈的人,在聖靈的管制和引導下進行;特別是賈德納牧師,他在聖靈帶領之下,主持這些聚會的方式,給我留下深刻的印象。雖然我們

常說,人總是不知道聖靈帶領的聚會接下來要如何轉變,然而他似乎仍然知道聚會的流程,每一步都如此恰當和美妙地進行著。他也是一位出色的聖經教師。

賈德納牧師的夫人,他們稱呼她為卡羅琳姐妹,通常是 坐在管風琴前司琴,然而她會即時地說出一段從神而來的預 言,正好完美地配合賈德納牧師的教導,「就像金蘋果落在 銀網裡」,據說她曾是一個更優秀的傳道人,但在結婚後就 謙卑地委身於自己的丈夫。然而,每當她被聖靈感動時,就 證明出,自己是丈夫完美的搭配和支持者,我從未見過夫婦 團隊在聖靈的感動下如此和諧、合一地同工著。

全時間服事

在我們教會的頭五年,我還在華盛頓美國之音工作,我 儘可能多花時間在服事上,但隨著會眾人數的增加,我需要 投入的時間和注意力也相對地增加。在1984年年底,神再次 呼召我憑信心全時間服事祂。如果我踏入全時間服事的話, 這意味著我再次沒有薪水可領,我必須憑信心生活,單單相 信神會供應我所有的需要,這是我一直以來所學習的。

神第一次呼召我全時間服事是在香港,在我領受聖靈充滿後不久。有一次,在半夜時,我發現自己正在與神進行對話,我不記得談話是如何開始的,也不記得它的全部內容, 但以下簡短的交談一直留在我的腦海中: --- 我的屬靈旅程

神:「我要你出來全時間服事我。」

我:「是的,主,但我無法現在就出來全時間服事祢; 我還需要供應妻子和四個孩子,因我知道我不能向任 何人要錢——也就是我須要完全依靠祢來供應我的生 活。」

神:「你來跟從我。我是主你的神,我會供應你的需要。」

我:「但是,主啊,我還沒有預備好要過這樣的信心生活。」

神:「如果你忠心地服事我,我就會以信實對待你。」 談話就這樣結束了。

次年,我們搬回台灣後,我們的第五個孩子以斯帖剛剛出生,那時我在一個新成立的獨立教會服事,有整整八個月我沒有工作,然而,在這段時間,主以一週接著一週的方式奇妙地供應了我們的需要:一個包著現金的信封,上面寫著我的名字,是來自一位匿名者的定期奉獻,每個主日的早上都會在教會的十一奉獻箱中找到它。這筆現金,總是剛剛好足夠供應我們一週的生計,然後到下個主日,又會有另一個奉獻信封,上面寫著「給周金海弟兄」。這種情況一週又一週地持續了八個月!令人驚訝的是,每當在某一週有特別的需要時,奉獻信封裡也總會多一些錢。

神再次呼召我

1984年12月的一個晚上,我正開車去上夜班。那時,剛剛聽完吳漢斯牧師的講道錄音,我現在不記得它的內容了。但就在講道快結束時,神用了這幾個字再次發出祂的呼召「現在或永遠沒機會!」聲音是如此有力,猶如鐵鎚砸在我的頭上,我瞬間淚流滿面,我毫不懷疑那是神的聲音向我發出最後通牒。兩個月後,我遞交了辭呈。

1985年11月29日,我在紐約立巨屋五旬節教會60週年慶的聚會中,被按立為全職傳道人,是由賈德納牧師推薦,在立巨屋團契的其他八位牧者都在場的情況下,由吳愛恩牧師主持按立。

在我離開屬世工作約15年後,即使我都沒有作任何的要求,我們的教會就以什一和自願奉獻的方式,負起供應我們全家的責任,使我們能夠繼續維持一樣的生活。這讓我能夠將全部的注意力和精力都投入到教會的需要中。

現在我就可以利用整個早上的時間進一步深入研究聖經和沉思禱告。我每週五天,每天花四個小時深入挖掘神的話語,在靜默中等候神。從1985年到1990年,我這樣做了五年。這段獨處的時間,不僅加深了我個人與神的關係,也讓我對於祂的教會——耶穌基督的身體——神永恆的旨意,有更好更廣泛的了解。

過渡時期

我並不太知道,這段獨處的時間其實是神所指定的,是為了預備我能順利地從牧會服事,過渡到未來的宣教和使徒事工。這轉變始於1991年初,在遙遠的亞洲發生了一連串奇特且意想不到的事。我們的大女兒路得剛剛生下她的第二個孩子顧芷甄(Tessa),她住在香港並為美國運通公司工作,根據華人的傳統,身體健康的父母都會儘力地為他們的女兒和新生嬰孩坐月子,提供他們特別的照顧。因此,我們決定飛往香港給他們一些幫助。在去的路上,我們在台灣停留,拜訪一些親戚和教會朋友。在那裡,我受邀去台中一一台灣中部的主要城市——一間教會傳道。令我驚訝的是,這次聚會吸引了200多人參加,他們蒙受了主奇妙的祝福。

抵達香港後,再次令我驚訝的是,我收到了從台灣首都 台北最大的教會之一一靈糧堂的邀請,要我在他們的特會 中講道,我完全不知所措,因為我以前從未受邀成為特會的 講員。在許多禱告和等候主後,我恢復了平靜,並回信告知 我接受他們的激請。

我一個人飛回台北參加會議,妻子留下來照顧女兒和剛 出生的外孫女。擁有1000多個座位的台北靈糧堂,第一晚就 座無虛席。我一站起來講道,我的恐懼感就消失了;我在聖 靈的恩膏下暢所欲言,這是我從未經歷過的。當我在講道結 束後呼召大家來到台前,反應簡直是壓倒性的。洶湧而來的 會眾,迅速填滿了偌大的講台;很多人躺在講台上,很顯然 地他們都被聖靈澆灌感動了。這是一個很奇妙的場景,對於 我這個講員來說,感到十分震撼和新鮮。

正如後來所看到的,在沒有任何事先的暗示下,神是以 1991年在台北舉行的特會,成為我進入宣教事奉的先驅和模式。這也是我們頻繁前往亞洲宣教的開始,其中以2008年首次進入中國宣教為頂峰,這是自1949年中共接管大陸,我離開上海以來,第一次回到中國。

我還記得當我在杭州的一個教會站起來講道時,那是我近60年來第一次回到中國,我說不出話來,情緒激動,沉默了好幾分鐘,禁不住想哭。同年,中國西北的四川省汶川發生大地震,造成數萬人死亡;事實上,當時我正與一群基督徒在杭州一個私人的公寓裡聚會,我感受到了地震的衝擊。

我和妻子每年都繼續前往中國,在全國不同的教會傳道——直到中共當局取消了我的簽證。因為我持有美國護照,而且他們認為歸化美國的華人都是外國人,不論是住在台灣,香港或澳門,這些人都被禁止在中國進行宗教活動。 從那以後,他們禁止我進入中國。

自從台北第一次特會以來,我的旅行比以往任何時期都多;最初是到台灣、加州、加拿大和歐洲,後來又到香港、新加坡、馬來西亞和澳大利亞。我發現自己越來越多離開自己的教會——一年中約有兩三個月的時間——我意識到是時

--- 我的屬顯旅程

候該有第二位牧者或全職同工來替代我牧養的工作了。所以,我請求會眾開始為新牧者禱告。

打從教會一開始,主就奇妙地供應了三個人組成的牧養 團隊,這些忠心的人當中一位于道潔弟兄是最有可能的接棒 者。然而,必須由主來成就祂的旨意和完美的時機,讓于弟 兄自己對神的呼召完全的信服,而踏入全時間服事。對他來 說,辭掉收入豐厚的工作,轉為無薪的牧師職位,是一生中 極重要的決定。

1999年初,他從神那裏得到印證:是該離開企業界的時候了,他毫不猶豫地辭職。這消息讓所有的同事感到震驚,其中許多是在他手下工作多年的資深工程師。有些人想知道,他為什麼選擇放棄未來潛力巨大的高管職位,尤其是在他剛剛獲得國際成就獎的時候。當然,他們很難理解,這個犧牲的決定,是出自於他對主耶穌的忠誠,這位耶穌,乃是愛他,並為他死在十字架上。

在我的推薦和會眾的接納下,于弟兄於1999年7月18日 在馬里蘭州的銀泉市,由紐約布魯克林立巨屋五旬節教會主 任牧師吳愛恩帶領的牧師團隊,為他按立牧職。1999年9月1 日,他成為我的接棒者,成為馬里蘭華人基督教會的全職牧 師。我卸任時,教會已經發展到四十多個家庭,約150人左 右。

心得

回顧過往二十年的牧會時光,我認為這是我中年生涯中 最有價值的投資;學習了學校裡無法學到的、寶貴的人生課 程。這些課程包括:

一、服事神和他人,而不是只為自己活,使生活更有意義;二、能夠與每個人都和睦相處,是人所能達到的最高成就之一;三、能夠愛那些與你不同的人和看似不可愛的人, 是追求個人成功的最大成就。

愛是世界上最偉大的東西。沒有愛,正如使徒保羅所說的,「我就算不得什麼。」一個人可以得到世界上的一切,但沒有愛,他/她什麼都不是,只有空虛感。因此,保羅告誡所有的人,你們要「追求愛」,因為「愛永遠不會失敗」(愛是永不止息)「如今常存的有信,有望,有愛這三樣,其中最大的是愛」(哥林多前書 14:1; 13:8,13 NKJV).

除了愛,我還學到了信心的寶貴。當我們說到與神交通時,就必須有信心;信心是從神那裡領受一切的關鍵。「人非有信,就不能得神的喜悦,因為到神面前來的人必須信有神,且信祂會賞賜那尋求祂的人」(希伯來書11:6)。

【新韋氏世界詞典】對信心的定義之一是:「毫無疑問 地相信神」或「對神完全的信任、信心和信賴」。二十年 來,在沒有支薪的情況下,我擔任教會牧師,但只要我完全 信靠神,衪沒有停止供應我一切需要。作為一名牧師,我不 得不與各種各樣的人打交道,他們每個人——無論男女——都是不同的,即使在同一種文化中也是如此。我們教會裡有很多受過高等教育的人,包括那些有博士學位的,然而,我不得不在幾乎沒受過什麼正規教育的情況下,來向他們講道,作教導,我沒有任何才幹可以滿足他們,只能完全依靠神和聖靈的恩膏。面對教會有關人際關係的問題時,我只能在禱告中將他們帶到神面前,相信祂會解決,神一次又一次地證明祂是信實的。

耐心,是我在牧會期間學習的另一個重要功課,我多麼需要耐心啊!在我剛成為牧師時,主就預先警告過我:教會會出現意見分歧和個性上的衝突,但我要學習寬容和忍耐。有一次,祂清楚地對我說,「別人可能會生氣而發脾氣,但你不能——因為你是牧師。」

在我牧會二十年裡,我確實與同工有嚴重的意見分歧, 並遭到其中兩個人的反對;其中一位弟兄甚至在我正在講台 上講道時,公然地挑戰我。然而,我不記得我是否曾在教會 發過脾氣;我曾多次問過妻子,在我與同工意見分歧的時候,是否聽到或看到我「發脾氣」,她說她不記得我這樣做 過。若真是如此,我只能將這歸功於神,並將榮耀歸給祂。

如果我沒有承認自己也有軟弱的時候,那我就不誠實。 在牧會的歲月裡,我曾有過沮喪、不愉快和內心掙扎的時刻,甚至到了想放棄的地步。每次當我想離開時,主就對我說:「如果你愛我,就餵養我的羊。」我知道我需要有更多 的愛——更多來自神的愛——才能堅持下去。

所幸,在我早期基督徒的經歷中,我就學會了「把我的需要帶到神面前,比尋求人的幫助更好」。我發現,正如聖經所說,「投靠耶和華強似倚賴(或依靠)人」(詩篇118:8 NKJV)。因此,每當我與同事或教會其他人有問題時,我總會在私下禱告的時間,把它帶到主面前,並相信祂會解決。一次又一次,祂證明祂自己是我所有問題的答案。

結束本章時,讓我誠實地說,在我一生從事的所有工作 (總共13或14份)中,牧師一職的工作最具挑戰。然而,就 我而言,這不僅僅是一份工作,而是從上頭來的神聖呼召。 通過這一切,我學會了簡單地藉著「安靜等候神」和「相信 祂的得勝」來克服困難。因著神的恩典,我通過了測試和考 驗,日取得了優異的成績。

從記者到牧者

我的屬靈旅程



第十五章

我的信仰和異象

我的信仰很簡單,它完全立基於聖經,我相信聖經中所 寫的一切。我的異象是:每一位實踐聖經所教導的基督徒 最終都會變得像耶穌基督——神的兒子一樣,他(或她) 注定要有份於聖經所說的「基督的新婦」或「聖城新耶路撒 冷」——這是完美榮耀教會的完成;神永恆計劃的終極目 標。

我相信聖經是神所默示的話語,聖經中的每一卷書,都 是由敬虔的人在聖靈的感動下寫成的,我相信整本聖經的權 威性和絕對正確性,它歷久彌新,並被證明是真實的。若是 對聖經只有理性上的理解是不夠的; 它必須伴隨著屬靈的啟 示和領會,這只能來自神之靈的啟示。被譽為二十世紀先知 的陶恕(A.W.Tozer),曾經問過這個問題:「你是受聖經教 導,還是受聖靈教導的?」在我們追求神的過程中,我們必 須同時接受聖經和聖靈的教導。

聖經固有的持久價值,不在於經文的字句上,而是在於精意(或聖靈),「因為那字句是叫人死,而精意(聖靈)是叫人活」(林後3:6)。耶穌說:「我對你們所說的話就是靈(或聖靈),就是生命」(約翰福音6:63)。因此,聖經不只是從字面意義來理解,更重要的是,要從原作者聖靈所啟示的屬靈意義來理解。聖經也不能只接受其中一部分,而是整本聖經全部都要接受;聖經中所寫的一切,都是為了教導和造就我們,因此都是合適我們的。任何不在聖經中的教義或教導,或與神的話語相抵觸的,都不可接受,應該被拒絕。

在我基督徒生活的前17年裡,我所信仰的耶穌,只是記載在新約聖經中一個客觀性的歷史人物。我現在所相信的耶穌,是又真又活的基督,透過聖經所說的「聖靈的洗」,基督對我而言,變得既親密又寶貴。

通過聖經和聖靈雙重的教導,我己經認識耶穌基督是父神、子神和靈神——傳統神學所說的三一聖神。因為「神是靈」(約翰福音4:24),祂可以藉著祂的靈來住在我們裡面,因此,我們一定要在靈裏與魂裏,才能與祂聯繫,而不能只在理性裏。

神是靈,離我們並不遠;我們隨時隨地都可以來親近祂。 作為一位信靠聖經的基督徒,我相信主耶穌基督就住在我裡 面,每天透過祂的話和祂的靈,來教導、指正和引導我。以 下的歌詞是我基督徒生活的寫照:「主活,主活,救主今日 活著!祂與我談,祂伴我走,人生窄路同過。主活,主活, 賜人得救宏恩!你問我怎知祂活著?因祂活在我心。」

一個成長的過程

我相信福音成為基督徒已將近七十年了。十七歲接受耶穌基督為我的救主時,我對基督教幾乎一無所知,我只是認為這麼作是對的,因為所有的宗教(除了激進的伊斯蘭極端主義)都是在教導要成為好人作好事。所以,在最初的十七年裡,我是一個熱心的宗教人士,把我所有的業餘時間和金錢都奉獻給教會,我參加各式各樣的教會活動,包括每週的主日崇拜、查經、戶外佈道和各種造就課程,以及在教會當義工。結果,我們的教會人數加倍地成長。

然而,我自己的屬靈生命並沒有同時成長。我發現自己越來越疲倦,也不快樂,我沒有內心的平靜和喜悅。我強大的自我,不斷使我成為家中和職場上的問題。我自以為是,以自我為中心,脾氣暴躁,而我可愛有耐心的妻子,不得不忍受我多年。我遇到的最大問題是,我無法與人相處,我不知道如何寬容、尊重和接納別人;無論他們的種族、文化或教育背景如何。我感到無力和無助,正如使徒保羅所說,「立志為善由得我,只是行出來由不得我」(羅馬書7:18)。

我在教會也做得不好,雖然我已將所有業餘的時間都花在 追求屬靈的事上。我開始質疑信仰,「為什麼我沒有更好?我 的信仰出了什麼問題?我的信仰是否缺少了些什麼?」我開 始尋找答案,我去找教會的牧師和其他的領袖問這些問題,但 他們都無法幫助我。有一天,我請假在家,想好好禱告和讀聖經,希望能聽到神的聲音。在那天結束的時候,我只領受到這句熟悉的經文:「我已經與基督同釘十字架;現在活著的不再是我,乃是基督在我裡面活著」(加拉太書 2:20)。

雖然我早就知道這節經文,甚至傳講過,但當我面對實際問題時,卻不知如何將它應用到自己的生活中。我從來都不明白什麼是與「基督同釘十字架」,或一些屬靈的人所說的向「己生命」死是什麼意思;直到十七年後,我才開始發現使徒保羅所宣講的真理。在某天晚上,我和妻子沒參加自己教會的聚會,而前往另一間教會參加所謂的聖靈充滿聚會。令我驚訝的是,聚會結束的時候,我們倆都被聖靈充滿,並開始說方言;如同使徒行傳第2章描述的,耶穌的門徒在五旬節那天所經歷的那樣。

值得注意的,不是我首次說了方言,而是我突然間意識到,基督確實還活著,而且祂就活在我裡面。這是最初的福音——好消息——也就是保羅和其他在五旬節領受相同聖靈的洗的使徒和門徒所傳講的。我開始思考五旬節的重要性——聖靈的澆灌或充滿;自從我受了聖靈的洗,基督住在我裡面的事實,對我變得越來越真實;從那一天起,我的生活就不再一樣了。最初幾個月裡,我一直處於狂喜的狀態,在地如在天!我對世上的事失去了興趣;如:西洋電影、好聽的音樂、我的工作、我的新聞事業等等。

耶穌對我來說,變得如此真實和寶貴,以至我開始了解

保羅所寫的這話是什麼意思:「因為神的國不在乎吃什麼喝什麼,而是關乎公義、平安、和聖靈所賜的喜樂」(羅馬書14:17當代譯本),我找到了我早期基督徒生活中所缺少的內心平靜,我幾乎每天都充滿喜樂;我感覺自己好像在雲端行走!我活在另一個世界中!對我來說,耶穌不再只是一個歷史人物,而是活生生存在的那一位——祂藉著聖靈,就住在我裡面!我真的可以說:「我尋見祂了!」

被聖靈充滿最美好的部分不是說方言,或得到某些屬靈恩賜;而是與耶穌基督開始建立親密而且活潑的關係。我發現只是去教會的基督徒,和已被聖靈充滿的基督徒,兩者之間有顯著的區別;前者只是一種宗教信仰,而後者是有基督的靈住在他(她)裡面。我也開始從一句經常被引用的說法中看到了這點,那就是「基督教不是一種宗教,而是與永活基督的關係」。

使徒保羅表明「使我認識基督,曉得祂復活的大能」, 這就是基督教的精髓。就人性而言,這位博學的使徒,有著 令人印象深刻的輝煌成就,按照猶太人的標準,他已經達到 了「就律法上的義說,是無可指摘」的地步。然而他說:「只 是我先前以為與我有益的,我現在因基督都當作有損的,不 但如此,我也將萬事當作有損的,因我以認識主基督耶穌為 至寶」(腓立比書 3:5-10)。

深入的讀經

在我經歷了五旬節聖靈充滿之後,我開始在聖靈這個主題上廣泛深入的研讀聖經。我開始看到領受聖靈,或說「聖靈的洗」的重要性和必要性,如五旬節派/靈恩派經常提到的那樣。事實上,施洗約翰和主耶穌都教導過兩種洗禮,水洗和靈洗,以及兩者之間固有的關聯。(馬太福音3:11和使徒行傳1:5)

施洗約翰所施的水洗,是為了悔改,而永生神的兒子耶穌基督所施的聖靈的洗,是為了賜下聖靈內住的力量——戰勝罪惡、世界、肉體、魔鬼和死亡!在主耶穌升天之前,為了澆灌所應許的靈,祂告訴門徒:「約翰是用水施洗,但不多日,你們要受聖靈的洗…聖靈降臨在你們身上,你們就必得著能力…作我的見證,直到地極」(使徒行傳1:5,8)。

耶穌自己就是我們完美的榜樣。當他藉著約翰受水洗的 時候,他同時也接受了聖靈的洗,正如馬太福音、馬可福音 和路加福音所記載的那樣。我們也有耶穌門徒的榜樣,他們 顯然也是藉由約翰受水洗,後來在五旬節那天,由主耶穌為 他們澆灌聖靈的洗;因此我們可以看到門徒的生命,在接受 聖靈的洗之前和之後有顯著的不同!

彼得就是一個很好的例子。在他受聖靈的洗之前,曾三 次否認耶穌,在他領受聖靈的洗之後,當公會(最高的猶太 公民和宗教權威)禁止門徒傳道時,他大膽地站起來說:「聽 從你們,不聽從神,這在神面前合理不合理,你們自己酌量 吧!我們所看見所聽見的,不能不說」(使徒行傳4:19,20)。內住在他們裡面的聖靈,不僅賜他們勇氣面對逼迫,也有醫病趕鬼的能力。他們活出了基督的生命!

在研究了舊約和新約之後,我得出一個結論:每個重生的基督徒都應該接受兩種洗禮,水洗和聖靈的洗。如果沒有聖靈的洗,福音派的基督徒在靈性上仍會處於軟弱和貧窮,無論他們在智力上多麼強大和豐富。

基督教到底是什麼?雖然經常被描述為世界上最大的宗教,估計有三十億信徒,但基督教不應被歸類為宗教,也不應被視為與其他宗教同等。因為它是宗教的對立面,否則,基督就不會被祂那個時代的宗教領袖處死。

基督教是神與人之間一種個人的、非常實際的關係;在 更廣泛的意義上來說,它是關於:這位造物主神,以及祂與 被造物之間的交往。或者,如使徒保羅所傳講和實踐的那 樣,它是關於:認識基督並曉得祂復活的大能,以及如何 能夠從我們裡面活出基督的生命來。他在聖經的另一處這樣 說:「…使他們真知神的奧秘,就是基督;所積蓄的一切智 慧知識,都在祂裏面藏著」(歌羅西書2:2,3)。在我看來, 這就是基督教的全部意義所在。

從新聞人到教會人

新聞傳播對我來說,不僅僅是一份工作,它是我的摯

愛,我的生命,我吃喝拉撒睡都離不開它,我似乎也很懂箇中訣竅,我知道取什麼標題才會引人注目,我是一個徹頭徹尾的新聞人。即使在我成為虔誠的基督徒後,我仍認為自己是半個新聞人和半個教會人,我把時間分別用在傳播新聞和傳播福音上。

雖然我很少,或根本就沒有接受過正式的新聞培訓,但 在二十歲出頭就愛上了新聞行業。由於透過自學,我獲得了 足夠的知識和對英語的良好掌握,於是我從加州大學新聞系 的函授課程,選了為期一年的「新聞報導與寫作」。

學習期間,我必須以年輕記者的身份,完成實作的任務,報導體育、法庭、貿易、政治和社區活動等新聞。幾乎在我完成課程的同時,我的朋友和他的商業夥伴,一起創辦了台灣第一份英文報紙,名為《中國郵報》;我被邀請以兼職作家的方式成為他們的職員,在那裡,我能夠將我從課程中學到的東西付諸實踐。隨著報紙從小報的規模擴大到成熟的報紙,我成了該報的全職新聞台編輯。

1955年加入中國廣播公司(BCC-Taiwan)擔任英文部 負責人後,我被選中參加由美國國務院贊助的、為期八個月 的實地培訓計劃,在紐約州北部的雪城大學,學習廣播新聞 學。因著這個計劃,我有機會在紐約、波士頓、芝加哥和洛 杉磯的一些主要網絡電台之間旅行,並觀察第一手的新聞業 務(如 NBC、CBS、ABC 和 聯播節目製作)。我有幸見到了 一些當時著名的國家新聞主播,包括愛德華·默羅(Edward

R. Murrow) •

回到台灣後,我帶著廣播和新聞行業中嶄新的知識和技術,為那些像我一樣有志成為專業記者,能說英語的中國青年,舉辦了一系列有關這兩個領域的培訓計劃。他們當中有許多人,後來都成為各種新聞機構的成功人士,包括在華盛頓特區的美國之音。

我的新聞職業生涯橫跨三十三年,主要是以英語(我的 第二語言)報導和寫作。在台灣中國廣播公司(BCC)擔任 新聞播音員和評論員的兩年期間,我得自己編寫文稿,然後 以我的母語中文廣播出去。我在華盛頓最後一份工作的八年 中,也必須用我的母語寫作和廣播。我是來美國之後,才開 始真正用中文報導和寫作。擁有雙語能力,在我的職業生涯 以及私下的閱讀和學習中,都為我帶來了許多的優勢。

在華盛頓的工作,是我新聞事業的亮點。從1969年至 1974年這段多事之秋,除了其它事件外,還有三大歷史事件 是我必須報導的:三位美國太空人員登陸月球;尼克森總統 出人意料地訪問北京,導致中美恢復外交關係;還有「水門 事件」,迫使尼克森成為第一位在任內辭職的美國總統。

從歷史的角度來看,尼克森總統對中國採取主動,不僅 幫助共產主義國家對外開放,更準確地說是改變了世界。作 為當時駐華盛頓為數不多的華人記者之一,我撰寫了大量關 於不斷演變中的「美國對華外交政策」的文章,含蓄地警告 在台灣的華人及政府,要為華盛頓外交關係將從台北轉向北京,以及台灣最終將羞辱地退出聯合國,這一切所帶來的雙重震驚和打擊,做好準備。對台灣及其外交官來說,那是艱難的日子;自此之後,台灣正式被稱為中華民國。中華民國駐華盛頓大使沈劍紅(James Shen)曾對我說:「我在這裡的日子真是原日如年」。

在紐約聯合國大會上,我正在觀看關於「中華人民共和國加入聯合國」的決議案投票過程。就在局勢一片倒向對中國有利之際,外交部長兼中華民國常駐聯合國代表團團長周書楷先生,迅速走上講台,宣布中華民國退出世界組織;身為聯合國創始成員之一的中華民國,從此結束了為期二十五年在聯合國代表全中國的地位。

更高的呼召

作為一名在華盛頓地區生活了三十多年,親眼目睹許多歷史事件的記者,我想我足以撰寫一本回憶錄。但是,本書的目的,並不是為了替歷史作記錄;而是要講到一位真心相信聖經的基督徒,他已在生活中找到了真實的意義,並將他所學和所傳的付諸實踐;本書不是在寫:基督教是個宗教,而是要談如何與永生神的兒子耶穌基督建立個人的關係。

三十多年來,我一直很享受記者的工作和生活,我熱愛它,以至於將我所有的時間和精力,都投入到對它的追求

中。當我在華人新聞媒體界聲名鵲起時,我想我已達到一些 可觀的成就。從一個年幼的記者,晉升到台灣最大報紙之一 的最高職位社長,就可以看出我的成就。儘管如此,對我來 說,這只是我為了謀生和養家糊口的眾多工作之一而已。

說來我還是覺得很奇怪,我在年輕的時候,就不看重這 些功成名就和財富。身為一名成功的記者,如果我追求這些 的話,我多次有機會能賺到很多錢,或是達到一個有權力和 影響力的地位。例如,我在新聞界的一些同事,已晉升為國 家的高級外交官,其中包括一位外交部長。

關於財富,在我的記憶中,我不曾羨慕過百萬富翁。金錢可以是很有用的,但也有很多東西是錢買不到的,而且通常金錢可能是有害的。透過對主耶穌基督我救主的信心,我找到了金錢買不到的東西:不變的愛、內心的平靜、永恆的喜樂和真正的安全感。我真可以這樣說:無論我的環境如何,我已找到了幸福和滿足的秘訣。

是什麼導致我生命中這種本質上的轉變?在基督徒的世界中,我們稱它為「遇見神」,很像使徒保羅的經歷;他在前往大馬士革的路上,耶穌基督向他顯現,那時他正要去逮捕基督徒,將他們帶回耶路撒冷入獄,但他的生命卻發生了180度的大轉變。(見使徒行傳9:1-6)

在我的基督徒經歷中,有兩個轉折點完全改變了我的觀 點和價值體系。第一個是發生在很久以前,當時我參加幾位 年輕人在家裏舉行的禱告會,每個人都認真地禱告。有些人 在哭泣,當輪到我禱告時,我開始不受控制地哭了起來,我 己不記得那時發生了什麼,但我在靈裡看見耶穌掛在十字架 上,從祂戴著荊棘冠冕的頭、手和腳上有許多的血流下來。 畫面非常真實生動,彷彿一部電影在我眼前播放。

這一幕,以一種我從未感受過的方式,在我的靈魂中帶來了信服的力量。儘管當時在我看來,我並沒有任何不當的行為,但我意識到我是一個罪人,我很清楚地意識到耶穌是多麼愛我,顧念我,以至為我的罪死在十字架上。我為我愛世界上的事物而悔改,然後我獻上自己,要來愛主、服事我的救主耶穌。

我生命中的第二個轉折點是:當我被聖靈充滿時,就完全確定了我的未來;祂拿走了我追求世界上任何事物的慾望和野心,並點燃了我對耶穌的愛火,和在祂國度裹服事的心;祂重新設定了我的人生目標:去尋求能存到永遠有價值的事物,而不是只在這世上短暫有價值的事物;祂讓我對看得見的和看不見的事物,有了正確的觀點。最重要的是,祂給了我一個全新的,立基於聖經的世界觀。

接著就*發生*了我與主的午夜對話,這在前幾章已描述 過;但我似乎忘了這第一次的呼召,以至於神不得不以最後 通碟的方式再次呼召我,即使那時我已在馬里蘭州牧會了。 而這第二次的呼召,非常有效地結束我的新聞職業生涯。

身為一名記者,我曾經為一群特定的觀眾,報導和撰寫

地上的新聞事件,我給他們帶來好消息也帶來壞消息;而現在,我是一名傳道者,我只報導「好消息」——耶穌基督的福音——給全世界所有需要的人。在過去的二十五年裡,我和妻子頻繁地往來於亞洲、歐洲和北美,要把基督和內在生活的好信息傳給人——就是藉著住在我們裡面的聖靈,活出復活基督的生命。

我實在沒有足夠的言語來表達我們對神深切的感激之情,因為祂賜給我們如此豐厚的祝福:走筆至此,我們這個家已有七個成年子女和十七個孫兒孫女,還有兩個孫女婿。這本自傳出版時,我們即將慶祝我們的六十五週年結婚紀念日。在聖誕季節時,我們經常聽到一句流行的話:「耶穌是這個季節的原因」,是的,我真的可以說耶穌基督是我們婚姻長久的原因。

在耶穌國際事工(Jesus Ministries International 取這名字表明是祂的事工)的運作下,內在生活特會,已在中國、台灣、香港、新加坡、馬來西亞、澳大利亞、日本、非洲、中東、比利時、法國、德國、加拿大和美國舉行過(完整的信息,請參考我們的網站:www.jmiinnerlife.org)。神似乎用微妙的方式,透過國際網絡和口耳相傳,與這些國家的地方教會建立聯繫。

我們的事工是一個組織上鬆散,但在屬靈團契上卻緊密 相聯的團隊,是由不同國家不同教會的傳道人和基督的工人 所組成的,其中一些是平信徒傳道人,另一些是全職媽媽, --- 我的屬靈旅程

但都是真正跟隨耶穌和愛耶穌的人,他們奉獻時間和精力為主作工。

由於網際網路的便利性,我們在2015年初開始了一個只有十幾名學生的網絡學校,隔年突然增長到數百名學生;不到兩年的時間,人數猛增至1600人!今年(2018年)總人數已超過2300人!有無數飢渴慕義的基督徒(大部份是在中國),他們在尋求更多認識神,並能與祂更親密地同行。是什麼促使我們的網絡學校人數暴增呢?我只能將其歸因於:是神的靈吸引這些飢餓的靈魂,歸向祂自己。

作為一個非營利性的宗教實體,耶穌國際事工(JMI)是一個嚴格地以信仰為基礎的事工,是由一小群忠心奉獻的志願者組成的。我們沒有任何所謂的營運預算,而是完全倚靠那些愛主的人,受聖靈的感動而作的無私奉獻。

例如,有一位基督徒商人奉獻了一筆可觀的捐款,因在 我們事工剛起步時,他的癌症得到了完全的醫治,這使得 JMI,能夠於2006年開始,在我們的總部達拉斯舉辦第一次內 在生活特會,在連續三年的達拉斯特會之後,我們從2008年 開始,受邀在海外舉辦類似的特會和研討會。從我們的第一 次特會開始,神就沒有停止供應我們一切財務上的需要。

在神的葡萄園裡沒有退休

神的呼召是終生的,以當今的話來說,就是沒有「退

休」的意思。如果我們的主看為好,要以長壽來祝福我們, 我們就要以祂調整我們各個生命階段的方式,來繼續服事 祂;如同耶穌在迦拿婚禮上所行的,祂將最好的酒留到最 後。最成熟的果實,在初霜之後有時還會留在樹上。由於現 今科技的奇蹟,好消息不僅可以立即,而且可以同時,傳給 世界各地成千上萬甚至數百萬的人,這就像在大豐收前,神 為預備基督的再來,所降下的「末日之雨」。

主正在以一種奇妙的方式做到這一點!祂的時機恰到好處,祂並沒有因為我們的年齡而縮小規模,反而在我們體力上無法再出門傳道時,打開了更大的門;尤其在我們年邁的歲月,旅行變得更加困難的時候。三年多以前,祂就給我們線上網絡學校的願景,透過一扇「神打開就沒有人能關」的門,我們踏入了這個奇妙的機會。

我們提供的課程是免費的,正如耶穌所吩咐的:「你們 自自地得來,也要自自地捨去。」但是,學生必須在每門課 程結束時,繳交一份心得報告,讓我們知道他們學到了什 麼。我們教導的主題,基本上都是關於:基督徒內在生活的 培養和與神建立親密的關係;總而言之,全都是關於主耶穌 我們奇妙的救主。是的,神所給我們的永恆信息,一直新鮮 而有力,與祂自己最初向我們顯現祂秘密時的那天一樣,這 是「奧秘派」基督徒所稱的「等候神」和「行在聖靈中」的 重點。這些課程,均由來自中國、台灣、馬來西亞和北美的 華人物師傳道,以中文華語授課。 為了涵蓋英語聽眾,JMI助理牧師瑪莎·威爾登(Martha Weldon)也開始藉著一位中文口譯的協助,用英語來授課,以回應神的呼召。正如耶穌從山上,或推離岸邊的漁船上教導群眾一樣,在現今這個高科技時代,透過祂的靈,我們可以作到祂所應許的「要作比這些更大的事」。趁著白日,我們必須作神國度裏的工作,「黑夜將到,就沒有人能作工了」。若要訴說JMI不斷擴大的歷程,我還得另外寫一本書!

我們深覺卑微又蒙福,也充滿喜樂,能夠繼續從事天父的工作,深深依靠神,來獲得力量和智慧。正如古典詩歌所唱的那樣,「當負擔變得更大時,祂會增加更多的恩典」,而且當我們安靜等候祂時,「祂的恩典沒有窮盡,祂的能力沒有限量」,這些都是聖靈的工作,正如我們常說的:「都是神的作為」! 主耶穌的名配得頌揚!

按照世界的標準,我們並不富有,但我們有耶穌基督, 他是「萬有」。在肯尼斯泰勒的聖經意譯本中說,「所以當 你擁有基督時,你就擁有了一切,並且你因與基督聯合而被 神充滿」(歌羅西書 2:9)。因此,儘管我們需要像其他年老 的夫婦一樣,處理與年齡有關的問題,但我們仍然有平安、 喜樂、愛,以及安全感和滿足感。我們很感恩,在八十多歲 的年紀,仍然可以在一起;每早晨當我們醒來時,都感謝神 賜給我們新的一天,並把它當作是從祂而來的禮物,一天一 天地生活,並相信「我們的時間是在祂的手中」。

我想留給你們一句我們JMI網校學生經常表達的話,那就 是「有耶穌真好!」



第十六章

我眼中的美國

1

「以耶和華為神的那國是有福的,祂所揀選為祂自己產業的那民是有福的」(詩篇33:12)。

美國在許多方面都是一個很獨特的國家。它開始於1620年9月6日,第一批來自英格蘭的102名移民者,他們乘坐一艘名為「五月花號」的船,啟航前往美國。經歷兩個月強烈風暴的海上航行後,他們在新英格蘭的普利茅斯岩登陸,在那裡建立了第一個海外殖民地。

他們一踏上新土地,就開始為自己建造庇護所;然而, 他們對嚴峻的天氣並沒有任何準備,有一半的人,在那年的 冬天死亡。在當地印第安人友善的幫助下,其中較特別的是 薩摩塞特(Samoset)和斯寬托(Squanto),這兩位跟早期的 商人學會了說英語。移民者在他們的幫助下,學習耕種和飼 養牲畜,以便在這個新來乍到的世界裏生存下去。

春天大豐收時,他們邀請了印第安朋友,和他們一起慶

--- 我的屬靈旅程

祝為期三天的感恩節,其中有各種活動和體育比賽。美國一年一度的感恩節慶,就是起源於這第一批移民,工作倫理的 觀念,也是從這些早期的定居者發展而來的。

政教分離

他們不僅是優秀、勤奮、守法的移民,而且是虔誠的基督徒;他們當初會選擇離開祖國和由國家主持的儀式性宗教(英格蘭國教),為的是能有個地方自由地敬拜神;不受任何政府的限制,自由地實行他們純正的宗教信仰。他們稱呼自己為清教徒,也被稱為朝聖者,他們在美國定居的唯一目的,是為了過一種簡單而平安的基督徒生活,並能與他人分享信仰。

引起熱議的政教分離概念,就是受到這些清教徒的啟發,對朝聖者來說,政教分離,顯然是指政府不干涉宗教信仰的自由,這種想法進入了美國憲法。憲法第一修正案,以這樣的話開頭:「國會不得制定有關建立宗教或禁止自由行使宗教的法律。」

與世上任何其他國家不同的是,美國憲法,是由開國元勳制定和編寫的,他們幾乎都是公開承認的基督徒,幾乎所有55位美國憲法的作者和簽署者,包括那些冒著生命危險簽署《獨立宣言》的人,都是屬於各主要教派的虔誠基督徒。

五月花盟約

第一批移民來到美國,不是為了追求所謂的美國夢,而 只是為了能在一個新的自由世界中,實踐他們的基督教信 仰。1620年11月11日五月花號登陸後,朝聖者舉行了一個祈 禱會,並簽署了一項名為「五月花盟約」的合同,其中明確 指出,這次航行是「為了神的榮耀和基督教信仰的發展」, 以及在美國「開拓第一個殖民地」,他們還承諾「將不時為 殖民地的普遍利益,而制定公正和平等的法律、條例、法令 和憲法,並給予這一切應有的歸順和遵守」。五月花盟約, 具有如此重要的政治意義和革命性,以至於它實際上是美國 第一個政府文件,影響了自那時以來所有其它憲法文書。

繼朝聖者之後,在1630年、1640年和隨後的幾十年中,從英國和其他歐洲國家來的移民不斷湧入。這些早期移民者,絕大多數都受過良好教育、遵守紀律、道德高尚,且有宗教信仰。的確,美國最初就是一個移民國家,但更重要的是,它誕生於一個基督教社區,該社區建立在具有數百年歷史的基督一猶太傳統之上。那時,美國是一個新興國家,移民者在此虔誠地順服神為至高的主宰,以聖經原則為他們行事為人的唯一標準,這是當時美國人的生活方式,在美國歷史的最初幾百年,一直是如此。

我不是歷史愛好者,也不是美國的粉絲,但在深入了解 美國歷史的開端後,我開始真正熱愛和欣賞美國這個基督教 --- 我的屬靈旅程

國家。我甚至開始這麼認為:當一個人了解美國歷史,卻不 愛美國,那麼這個人幾乎不可能會愛神。

曾經是一名記者的我,仍然記得我第一次在華盛頓為台灣一家報紙報導美國七月四日國慶日的活動,那些簇擁在美國首都的人群,所表現出的熱情和愛國精神,使我留下深刻的印象。我想知道他們對美國的看法,結果幾乎每一位在林肯紀念碑台階上接受我採訪的人都說:「我愛美國,不過首先我是位基督徒,然後才是美國人。」

聖經的影響

聖經,一直是我自學的主要來源。自從清教徒的到來, 聖經已在美國國民生活中發揮了重要的作用,直到今天為止 按照美國傳統,從總統以下的每一位政府官員,在宣誓儀式 上,都會把手放在聖經上。聖經是制定美國獨立宣言和美國 憲法的靈感來源,那些熟悉聖經的人,很容易地可以從許多 歷史/政府文件中,意會,並發現融入到其中的聖經原則和戒 律。

聯邦政府以三個部門——行政、立法和司法——為制衡體系的形式,據說是從舊約聖經發展而來的,特別是從以賽亞書33:22節:「主是我們的審判者,主是我們的立法者,主是我們的王;他必拯救我們」。憲法的制定者顯然預見到,有必要在政府的三個部門之間分權制衡,以防止美國有國王

或獨裁者的崛起;如此一來可一勞永逸地阻止這種可能性。 在美國政府的體制下,不可能有一人或一黨專政的情形;制 衡體系,是聖經對美國民主所產生的另一個深遠影響。

然而,正如美國第二任總統約翰·亞當斯在1798年的一次講話中所警告的那樣:「我們的憲法是只為有道德和宗教信仰[基督教]的人民制定的,對於任何其他國家的政府來說,是完全不合適的。」換句話說,不道德和非宗教人士(那些不相信聖經是神話語的人),總是有可能或有這危險,就是曲解和誤用這份被稱為「永活的文件」——憲法。

美國第一任總統喬治·華盛頓,一位敬虔的人,被譽為「戰爭時的第一、和平時的第一、國人心中的第一」,他曾說:「沒有神和聖經就不可能正確地治理這世界」。

約翰·亞當斯對聖經有如此高的尊重和信心,以至於在他1756年2月22日的日記中寫道:「如果有一個遠方地區的國家,以聖經為唯一的律法書,每一位成員都以其中所展示的戒律來規範他的行為,每個成員都打從良心上有義務、節制、節儉和勤奮,對同伴有正義、善良和慈善(慈愛);以及對全能的神有虔誠、愛戴和敬畏…這是何等的理想國!這地區[國家]將會是美好的天堂。」

美國第六任總統,約翰·亞當斯之子約翰·昆西·亞當斯(John Quincy Adams)曾這樣評價《聖經》:「第一本也幾乎是唯一一本值得全面關注的書是《聖經》…《聖經》是

---- 我的屬靈旅程

所有人的書,適合所有年齡層,和生活在各種情況下的人閱讀…我對聖經的崇拜是如此之大,以至於我認為:我的孩子們越早開始閱讀它,我就越有信心相信,他們會成為國家有用的公民和受人尊敬的社會成員」。

聖經年

1982年10月4日,當雷根總統在白宮當政期間,國會參議院和眾議院通過一項聯合決議,並由總統簽署,宣布 1983年為「聖經年」,承認一項事實,「聖經一 一神的話語,在『塑造美國成為一個獨特而幸福的國家和人民』這件事上,已經做了非凡的貢獻……我們許多偉大的國家領導人一一包括華盛頓、傑克遜、林肯和威爾遜等多位總統一一都讚揚聖經對我們國家的發展,有巨大的影響,正如傑克遜總統所說的,聖經是我們共和國賴以生存的磐石。」

美國第16任總統亞伯拉罕·林肯是品德高尚的人,他有個綽號叫「誠實的亞伯」。他曾說過:「我相信聖經是神賜給人最好的禮物。所有從這位世界救主而來的美好,都通過這本書傳達給我們」。林肯是一個熱切的聖經讀者,並且是一個禱告的人。他作見證說到,他常在巨大的困難中被驅使跪下禱告;神回應了他的祈求,他的禱告和對神的信心,使國家安然且未分裂地度過內戰。他十二歲的兒子威利(Willi)於1862年去世後,根據他的牧師——華盛頓特區紐約大道

的長老教會——菲尼亞斯·格利(Phineas Gurley)博士說:「人們經常看到林肯手裡拿著聖經,而且他花更多的時間禱告」。

美國第二十八任總統伍德羅·威爾遜(Woodrow Wilson)是另一位敬虔的國家領袖和聖經的堅定信仰者,他談到聖經時說:「你若讀過聖經,就知道,它是神的話語,因為你會發現它是一把鑰匙,能開啟你的內心、你的幸福和你的職責...聖經是一個啟示生命意義的至高來源…它是生命唯一的指南,真正能引導心靈走向平安與救贖…我為沒有每天閱讀聖經的人感到難過,我不明白,為什麼他們剝奪了自己的力量和快樂。」

國會決議指定1983年為「聖經年」,這指出:「聖經教 義啟發了包含在《獨立宣言》和美國憲法中的『公民政府』 概念」。研究顯示,儲存在華盛頓特區國家檔案館的94%的 歷史文件,都引用聖經。

聖經教育

美國早期的歷史,聖經不僅是政府事務的啟發和指導來源,它也在教育界甚至新聞業中,扮演重要的角色。例如,備受尊敬的記者查爾斯·達納(Charles A. Dana)在內戰時擔任戰事部長助理之前,曾是《紐約太陽報》的主編,他談到聖經的起源和價值,說:「我相信聖經是神的啟示,基督教

是任何其他宗教都無法比擬的,它是從神口中的話而生出的宗教;因此是唯一真正的宗教,在所有的書籍中,最不可或缺、最有用、知識最有效的,就是《聖經》。」

與此相同的是,美國第一所公立學校,是從以聖經為基礎教育的教會主日學發展而來的。1946年秋天,達拉斯的高中,發佈了《新約聖經》學習課程,該課程是在1946年4月23日獲得教育委員會的授權,其前言說到:「達拉斯的高中,允許所完成的聖經通識課程的一半學分,可以算在高中畢業學分裏。1939年,決定分別提供舊約和新約課程,每門課程,都可以將一半的學分算在高中畢業的學分裏。」

美國最負盛名的大學,尤其是哈佛、耶魯和普林斯頓,都是以聖經為基礎而開始的學院;當初建立的目的是為了培訓神職人員和耶穌基督福音的傳道人。哈佛大學,原名馬薩諸塞州劍橋學院,成立於1636年,經由約翰哈佛牧師捐贈財產和圖書館,目的是在培養「有文化的神職人員」,並教導學生「認識神和耶穌基督…並因此奠定基督為所有知識和學習的唯一穩固的基石…」。哈佛所有的創始人都相信「沒有基督,所有知識都是徒勞的」,哈佛的座右銘是:「為了基督和教會」。

然而,隨著歲月流逝,哈佛大學緩慢且逐步地變得自由 主義化。1775年5月,哈佛大學校長撒母耳·蘭登(Samuel Langdon)在馬薩諸塞州省議會的講話中鄭重地說:「我們背 叛了神,我們已經失去了基督教真正的精神;儘管我們保留 了外面的事務和形式…但我的弟兄們,讓我們悔改並祈求神 的憐憫,讓我們改正我們的方式,改革一切激怒至高者的事 情,願主在這困難的日子垂聽我們的禱告。」

將近兩個半世紀之後,蘭登的呼籲仍然適用,也許現今 比以往任何時候都更加適用。1995年6月,我的兒子約翰從設 計學院畢業並獲得建築碩士學位時,我參觀了哈佛及其神學 院。而如今的哈佛大學——美國成立的第一所大學——是高 等教育中最自由化思想的機構之一。

耶魯大學是美國第二古老的大學。它最初被稱為康乃狄克州塞布魯克的大學學院,由十位公理會牧師於1701年共同創立,後來搬到紐黑文市,並更名為伊利胡·耶魯大學(Elihu Yale),伊利胡·耶魯是一位美國出生的英國基督徒商人,他將當時價值2,800美元的個人財產捐贈給大學,目的是「在神的祝福下,以純潔的秩序和敬拜,來培養並傳揚蒙福的歸正的新教」。

普林斯頓大學,原名新澤西學院,由長老教會成立於 1746年。1902年之前的一百五十年裏,普林斯頓大學的每 一位校長都是基督徒牧師。強納森·愛德華茲(Jonathan Edwards)他火熱的講道引發了被稱為第一次「大覺醒」的復 興,他是普林斯頓大學的第三任校長;學校的官方座右銘是 「在神的力量下,茁壯成長」。

華盛頓的基督教遺產

我在美國首都華盛頓生活工作了多年,我們七個孩子也在那裡長大。美國許多的歷史及基督教遺產,在華盛頓都顯而易見。華盛頓也是世界權力中心,其決策經常影響世界其他地區;更是特殊利益集團遊說活動最為活躍的地方,因此成為腐敗政客的溫床。華盛頓地區有句諺語:「絕對權力絕對腐敗」。

華盛頓也是一座歷史悠久的城鎮,展示著美國歷史的點 點滴滴及基督教傳統;擁有數十座博物館和多座紀念碑,例 如該市地標性建築華盛頓紀念碑,上面刻有「讚美上帝」字 樣,林肯紀念堂,傑弗遜紀念堂和林肯遇刺的福特劇院。華 盛頓也是美國的旅遊勝地之一,尤其是在一年一度的春季櫻 花節期間,有數以百萬計的遊客來自全國和世界各地。

擔任《中國時報》華盛頓記者期間,我在白宮發現了總統約翰·亞當斯(John Adams)的美麗祈禱文。他是第一位搬進白宮的總統,這祈禱文刻在國宴廳的壁爐架上:「我祈禱上天將最好的祝福賜予這座房子,和以後居住在此的所有人,願只有誠實和智慧的人,才能在這個屋簷下統治」。

在美國總統發表年度國情咨文,或有國家元首受邀來訪 在美國國會發表演講時,通常會在國會山莊的眾議院,舉行 國會聯席會議。我注意到美國的國家座右銘「我們信靠神」 是刻在眾議院議長座位上方的牆上,這句座右銘,也出現在 所有美國硬幣和鈔票上。美國可能是世界上唯一一個,以其 貨幣宣告信靠神的國家,儘管常常被大多數消費者忽略。

國家座右銘的起源,可以追溯到19世紀中葉,當時在賓夕法尼亞州里德利維爾市,有一位名叫威爾金森(M.R.Wilkinson)的牧師,於1861年11月13日給當時的財政部長賽爾門·切斯(Salmon P. Chase)寫了一封信,他建議:要用這幾個字來表達民族的宗教情感,並把它們刻在美國硬幣上;切斯部長也收到了那時其他宗教領袖的類似呼籲。一週後,切斯部長在一封日期為1861年11月20日的信中,指示費城鑄幣局局長詹姆斯·波洛克(James Pollock)使用這句座右銘。值得注意的是,切斯部長在信中說:「沒有一個國家可以強大,除非有神的力量,沒有一個國安能有安全,除非有祂的保護。我們的人民對神的信任,應該在我們國家的硬幣上聲明出來。」

今日的美國

美國至今仍然是一個獨特的國家,但它已千差萬別,和 從前大不相同了。美國文化已經變了,而且還在變;不幸的 是,從傳統/聖經的角度來看,不是變得更好,而是變得更 糟。過去五十年裡,身為記者和牧師的我,觀察到美國的道 德一直在淪喪。美國,曾經是世上最受祝福的國家,但如今 已不再如效忠誓言中所宣稱的那樣:「在神之下一個不可分 割的國家」。它曾經是一個敬虔的國家,但它似乎越來越遠離神。這個國家現在基本上是分裂的,共和黨人士和民主黨人士不斷地互相對峙;他們很少表現出:將國家利益,置於個人或黨派利益之上;法治原則,也似乎被多數決原則貶謫或取代,而不是考慮國家的福祉。

持不同觀點或信仰的人,被貼上保守派、另類右翼保守派、自由派、極端自由派、獨立人士、種族主義者等標籤。 貼標籤本身就是潛在的分裂;一些所謂的「庇護」州,甚至 與華盛頓聯邦政府格格不入。本應是中立和客觀的新聞媒 體,被分為左派媒體和右派媒體,而主流新聞媒體似乎扮演 著反對黨的角色。這個國家不再團結如同「一個國家,不可 分割」,因為它似乎不再像以前那樣「在神之下」,神似乎 已經從這句話中被除去了。

作為一名前記者,我對現今主流新聞媒體很少提供客觀和公正的事實,感到失望。今天的許多新聞報導,都帶有偏見或固執己見,在全國主要報紙的社論版面,和直接的新聞報導之間,幾乎沒有任何的區別。由於聲音很多,要分辨真假或知道該信任誰,已經不再容易。唯一的聲音——神的話語,不再被認為是最終的權威和衡量的標準。因此,今天的美利堅合眾國,在很大程度上是一個「分裂的」美利堅合眾國;正如舊約先知耶利米正確地指出:「他們棄掉主的話,心裏還有什麼智慧呢?」(耶利米書8:9)。神是智慧和力量的源泉,而祂的話語充滿智慧。以美國憲法為例,它充滿智

慧和遠見,因為它的制定者和編寫者,都受到聖經原則的啟發和指導。

大衛是以色列最受愛戴的國王,以及合神心意的人。在他向主的禱告中寫道:「祢的話是我腳前的燈,是我路上的光」(詩篇119:105),沒有神的話,就沒有光,只有黑暗。世人在黑暗中行走,不知道該往哪裡去,除非他們認識耶穌是「世界的光和救主」。因為世界處於黑暗中,因此,無法無天、暴力和恐怖主義,在世界各地層出不窮,正如先知以賽亞所說,「黑暗籠罩大地,幽暗遮蓋萬民」(以賽亞書60:2)。

美國曾經是一個安全、又平安的國家。五十年前我第一次來到美國時,人們普遍都友好、誠實和值得信賴。有時我們到了晚上要睡覺時,雖然門開著或沒有上鎖,但是仍然感到安全;我們去商店和銀行,不用擔心和害怕會被搶劫或襲擊。現在,我們被告知無論何時去銀行、自動取款機或百貨商店/超市都要小心。

聽到或讀到有關年輕女子失踪,然後屍體在一個意想不到的地方被發現——這樣的新聞報導幾乎是司空見慣;年幼的孩子也獲報失踪或被綁架、騷擾甚至謀殺;在家庭糾紛的報導中,常看到家庭成員之間的殘殺。看來很多人的良心「如同被熱鐵烙慣了」,但「你該知道」,使徒保羅警告說,「在末世必有危險的日子來到」(提摩太前書4:2;提摩太後書3:1)。近年來,我從未見過如此多的槍擊和殺戮事件,不

--- 我的屬靈旅程

僅在芝加哥和其他犯罪猖獗的城市街道上,就連在學校、教 堂等這些以為不會發生的地方也發生了。

因為人在黑暗中,看不到黑和白或其他顏色,也分不清 什麼是對或錯,什麼是正常和不正常,什麼是自然或不自 然。關於同性戀和同性婚姻的爭論,根本不是公民權利或平 等問題,很顯然地,它是個自然或不自然的問題。即使同性 戀沒有違反神的律法,但無庸置疑地,它違反了自然法則; 如果同性婚姻是一種正常的生活方式,那麼有人會問:世界 上所有的男人和女人最初都是從哪裡來的?

然而,即使是美國最高法院——或坐在美國最高法院的 大多數法官——也看不到自然與不自然之間的區別,他們在 2015年裁定:同性婚姻在美國五十個州都是合法的。為什麼 即使是美國最頂尖的法學家和憲法專家,也會誤解和誤用源 自聖經原則和戒律的美國憲法?答案很簡單:人們正行在黑 暗中。

聖經是神聖的書,歷史悠久且被證明是真的;它比任何百科全書都要豐富。對於人類的所有問題,聖經都有答案,並且據實以告,例如,在婚姻問題上,聖經明確指出這是一男一女之間的婚姻。關於同性戀,它的原因和行為的後果,聖經簡單地這樣解釋到:「他們雖然知道神,卻不當作神榮耀祂,也不感謝祂,他們的思想變為虛妄,無知的心就昏暗了…所以,神任憑他們逞著心裡的情慾行污穢的事,以致彼此玷污了自己的身體…因此,神任憑他們放縱可羞恥的情

慾,他們的女人把順性的用處變為逆性的用處;男人也是如此,棄了女人順性的用處,慾火攻心,彼此貪戀,男和男行可羞恥的事,就在自己身上受這妄為當得的報應」。(羅馬書1:21-27)。

美國最高法院下達「同性婚姻合法化」的裁決時,宗教界曾警告說,這會造成人際關係的混淆和混亂,從而引發更多的反常現象。果然,在那項裁決之後不久,媒體報導說,有一個女兒正在考慮嫁給自己的父親。在我寫這最後一章時,福斯新聞電視台報導說,一名四十二歲的北卡羅來納州男子,和他二十歲的女兒生了一個「愛的孩子」,因亂倫罪名被捕。報導接著說:「據WNCN-TV報導,四十二歲在奈特代爾市的史蒂文·普拉德爾和二十歲的凱蒂·普拉德爾,於1月27日被捕,他們還被指控通姦和助長犯罪。亂倫指控的最高刑期為十年監禁。」他們的孩子是一個男孩,四個月大,據報導,這對父女是在馬里蘭州結婚,然後搬到了北卡羅來納州。

最近,許多性虐待和性騷擾案件曝光,幾乎遍及美國社會的各行各業;其中一些報導在新聞媒體上發表和播出後, 許多知名人士,被迫辭去滿有權力和聲望的職位。此外,美國還受到一系列其他社會問題的困擾,例如種族緊張、吸毒成癮、未成年懷孕、墮胎、非法移民、販毒,許多抑鬱症患者、死於鴉片類藥物過量等等。

美國有什麼問題?

依我的觀點來看,簡單地說,美國已經緩慢但持續地離開了神一一這位偉大的神,在兩個半世紀前,創立了這個國家,並使它成為世界上最偉大、最富有的國家!神祝福美國,比歷史上任何其他國家都多,並且自二戰結束以來,也使美國成為許多國家的祝福;美國可能是世界上唯一去幫助和重建在戰爭中被它所擊敗的國家。神有意興起美國來彰顯祂的榮耀、公義、正義、愛、慷慨、憐憫和同情心,這些都是美國作為一個基督教國家的特徵。美國之所以偉大,根本原因在於:開國元勳和其後的國家領導人,承諾尊崇神並視聖經為神的話語。「尊重我的,我必尊重他,藐視我的,必遭藐視」(撒母耳記上 2:30)。

儘管「我們信靠神」的國家座右銘,仍然在美國國會大廳和美國所有貨幣上展示著,但公眾和政界人士,幾乎沒有注意到它,更不用說要美國人民來實踐了。按照傳統,參議院和眾議院的牧師仍然在場,以真誠的禱告開啟國會會議;但是,有多少人民的代表,將這些禱告銘記在心呢?

中國有句諺語是這麼說的:「飲水思源」。「聖經」是開國元勳制定美國憲法時,獲得靈感和引導的來源,但它沒有像以前那樣受到重視;儘管有時在政府或法院官員就任時仍會使用到聖經(手按聖經宣誓)。聖經,雖然仍然是美國最暢銷的書,但已普遍被忽視,或看為像任何其它的書一

樣。在指定1983年為「聖經年」時,雷根總統和國會顯然是看到了,有需要恢復聖經在美國人民生活中具有影響力的角色,意識到這個國家正朝著錯誤的方向前進,因此作出特別的聲明「認識到聖經對我們國家形成的影響性,以及我們國家學習和應用聖經教導的必要性」。

雷根總統的母親是一名聖經教師,他本人也經常閱讀聖經並力行實踐。雷根曾經說過:「我的母親是一名非常虔誠的基督教會成員。她諄諄教誨我閱讀聖經和禱告的必要性,並且要生活得像基督就快要再來一樣。」在美國近代史上,從艾森豪總統以來,雷根一直是美國最受歡迎的總統——甚至他的政敵也喜歡他。

今天,我們在美國所聽到的眾多聲音中,不論好的或壞的,只有一個聲音是重要的:隱藏在聖經中神的聲音。人們、政治家和媒體專家,可以針對第一修正案,說他們喜歡說的話,但只有神所說的才能成立。正如主耶穌所說:「天地要廢去,我的話卻不能廢去」(太24:35)。

五十年前我來到美國時,心裡很有負擔為美國禱告,天 天向神呼喊:「美國,美國,願神將祂的恩典賜給你…」, 當時我不明白為什麼這樣禱告,因為我從來都不是一個懷有 美國夢的人。直到我親眼目睹美國所發生的道德敗壞和墮 落,我才明白過來,對於這個國家所犯下的所有罪孽——無 論是隱藏的還是顯露的——神一直仁慈地、耐心地,在延遲 祂的全面審判;神似乎聽到了祂子民的呼喊和祈禱,他們是 一群耶穌真正的跟隨者和聖經教義的實踐者。美國在外表上 仍然是最強大的國家,這一事實表明,神還沒有離開這個蒙 福的國家。

全能的神,似乎正在使用越來越多的自然災害、各樣的 事故以及恐怖分子的威脅,來喚醒這個國家,並且呼喚她能 回歸神,好叫祂可以繼續傾倒祂的祝福在我們身上。神似乎 給了我們額外的時間,來悔改我們的罪,並使我們的家庭恢 復次序,然而這時間可能不會太長。

美國的希望

今天美國唯一的希望,就是回到神面前,像以前一樣尊崇祂,恢復聖經教義的應用,不僅在我們的個人生活中,而且也要在我們的國家中。因為神應許說:「這稱為我名下的子民(佔人口78.3%的基督徒)若是自卑、禱告,尋求我的面,轉離他們的惡行,我必從天上垂聽,赦免他們的罪,醫治他們的地」(歷代志下7:14)。

再一次,我們最好記住我們的第一任總統喬治·華盛頓 所說的話:「沒有神和聖經,就不可能正確地管理世界(或 國家)。」那些直言不諱地提倡美式民主的人,也應該牢記 我們的第二任總統約翰·亞當斯所說的話:「我們的憲法, 是只為有道德和宗教信仰(基督教)的人民制定的,對於任 何其他(人民/國家)的政府來說,是完全不合適的。」換句 話說,美國的政府制度將無法有效運作,除非人們敬畏神, 順從權威,具有崇高的道德價值觀,並按照聖經的教導愛人 如己。

今天美國的問題不在於制度本身,而在於人民和他們的心;這是一個內在的、屬靈的問題,政治無法解決它。聖經說:「人心比萬物都詭詐,無法醫治」(耶利米書17:9新譯本),只有創造人心的神,才能修復或改變它。從聖經神的律法中所繼承而來的法治,似乎已被「多數決法治」所取代,而多數決法治,並不在乎開國元勳所聲稱的神的存在。我們就像古時的以色列人民一樣,如聖經所說:「那時以色列中沒有王(或神),各人任意而行」(十21:25)。

FOREWORD

Patrick Henry's Last Will and Testament ended with the following words: "This is all the inheritance I can give to my dear family—the religion of Christ—which can give them a legacy which will make them rich indeed." Similarly, Jack Chow has left a legacy like that first of all for his family, then for us who look over his shoulder as he writes. By tracing God's guiding hand in his life and the life of his family in this book, Jack is leaving legacy footprints on paper which will not wash away in the sands of time.

Because he was unable to reach very far back in his or his wife Nancy's generational heritage is not important. It is overshadowed by the precious treasure of the spiritual record he has left of what God did in and through him in his own generation, just as David of the Psalms served his generation.

Jack looked into the future and has written for the generation of children in his family yet unborn. (Psalm 48:13; Psalm 102:18; Psalm 78:3-7).

At the same time, he has written for the wider readership of all of us who seek a deeper, closer walk with God which Jack helps us to discover through his own spiritual journey. He has taken seriously the stewardship of the experiences God brought him through and what he has been teaching widely in his many preaching missions worldwide in recent years. It is no wonder that he found hungry hearts by the thousands, particularly in Asia, prepared and longing for the message of "Waiting on God" that burns within Jack's heart.

For decades Pastor/Journalist Jack Chow's Chinese readers have benefited from his spiritually challenging books written in the Chinese language. English readers have missed out on the opportunity of joining that feast. At last, his vision, message and the witness of his life are available within the covers of this book. Join him as he draws you too into the "Waiting Room" where the Holy Spirit teaches you to listen for God's "still, small voice."

If I were to choose one verse which embodies what I believe is Jack's life testimony through this book, it would be:

"O God, You have been my hope, my confidence since my youth. From birth I have relied upon You. You brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will always praise You. Since my youth, O God, You have taught me, and to this day I declare Your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God. Keep me alive until I declare Your power to the next generation. Your might to all who are to come" (Psalm 71:17 and 18).

Leona Choy
Author and Editorial Director
Golden Morning Publishing

Dedication

To my beloved Lord Jesus Christ
for His unfailing love and boundless grace;
To my dear wife Nancy
for her unconditional love and faithfulness;
To our seven beloved children and their children
and children's children;
To all who seek to know God the Father, Jesus the Son

To all who seek to know God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit.

To know the Almighty God in His eternal fullness is to have all the best in life now and forever.

Acknowledgments

First of all, I wish to thank God my loving Father for His boundless grace shown me since I was an orphan. I cannot thank Him enough for what He has done for me since my conversion to Christianity, especially after the life-changing experience of what the Bible terms "the baptism of the Holy Spirit." I thank Him for the inspiration, the anointing and the supply of adequate words in English, my second language, enabling me to share my spiritual journey not only with my English-speaking family but also with all our friends in the English-speaking world.

I decided to write this book initially for the information and benefit of our posterity, as Moses the servant of God commanded the people of Israel not to forget the things that God had done for them and "Teach them to your children and to their children after them." As I started writing, the Lord brought back to my memory many things that have happened since my childhood, particularly the wonderful things He has done for me and my family.

Next, my heartfelt thanks go to Nancy, my dear wife of sixty-five years. She has been the mainstay of our family, my best friend and closest partner in our ministry, known as Jesus Ministries International (for further information, please visit our website: jmiinnerlife.org). She is a woman of few words but of much prayer. Her prayers sustained me throughout the writing of this book. Prayer has been the secret of her strength, patience and perseverance in raising our seven children; all of them turned out to be successful in one way or another. I feel indebted to her for her selfless sacrifices which are largely responsible for the success and happiness of our adult children and grandchildren today.

I should also give much credit to all our children and grandchildren for their self-supporting efforts and work-study programs that resulted in outstanding achievements in their respective professional fields such as architecture, law, medical science, health, high-tech, education and business.

My sincere thanks go to Paul Munsinger, Director of *Pilgrim Camp* at Brant Lake, New York, for taking considerable time to read and review the entire manuscript and making corrections and improvements in the English language. He worked on the manuscript even while away on vacation, an indication of his sacrificial love for the Lord Jesus Christ and the brethren.

Special thanks are due to Martha Weldon, JMI Associate Minister/ Treasurer, for her painstaking efforts and extreme care in reading and re-reading the lengthy manuscript to ensure correctness in my English grammar and clarity in the text and continuity in context. Her administrative role of book project coordinator is equally appreciated.

Last but not least, I am especially grateful to Leona Choy, Editorial Director and Publisher of *Golden Morning Publishing*, a friend and celebrated author in her own right, for her invaluable help in terms of the final editing and publishing without which this book would not have come out in time and in such good shape. She has authored and co-authored over 40 books. At 93, she is still writing in addition to coaching young aspiring writers.

Her son, Richard Choy, in charge of the layout and production of this book, deserves much credit for speeding up the entire process in order to meet the deadline for our planned family reunion to celebrate Nancy's 90th birthday.

Introduction

This is the story of my spiritual journey, my bread-and-butter career and my service to the Lord. I feel compelled to explain why I gave up my thriving journalistic profession in favor of an unpaid church ministry. For me, it was like switching news reporting from earthly to heavenly; from often reporting bad news to my target readership to always bringing the Good News of the Gospel to all men and women.

My journey has all been under the direction of God, my Heavenly Father, who sent His Son Jesus to be Emmanuel (God with us, with me) as I sought by the power of the Holy Spirit's indwelling to bring His love and presence to the world.

My original purpose in writing this book was to provide some history of the Chow family for our seven grown children and seventeen grand-children. I wanted them to know *where* I came from, *what* has made me who I am, *what* we have been through as a family, and *how* it happened that we have come through with flying colors to the glory of God. I wanted them to know how my dear wife and I have lived happily together since our marriage sixty-five years ago in spite of the inevitable challenges in life. I wanted to leave a record of the many things that happened to us since our children left our family nest for college and to lead their own lives.

As my writing progressed, I realized that it was not only my life story; it was a narrative of discovering the secret of success and happiness in real life which perhaps may be of wider interest to the average reader, especially a Christian believer.

Although I have written and published many books in my native language of Chinese, this is only the second book I have written in English. Ironically, English has become the mother tongue of most of our children and of our grandchildren who either grew up or were born and educated in the United States. This book is, of course, made available for all other interested English-speaking readers.

I wanted to share my own experience of how as an eleven-year-old boy, suddenly deprived of formal schooling and virtually disowned by his single parent, I struggled to make a living and simultaneously pursued self-education; how I eventually became a successful journalist and a respected pastor later in life.

I wanted to pass along something that I found to be most precious in life, the secret of happiness and a workable way of living a successful Christian life. It is my Christian faith, tested and proven to be true, that changed my life for the better, once and for all, and made me a truly happy and fulfilled person.

For the benefit of devout Christians and regular churchgoers, I felt obligated to share some of the relevant and fundamental Biblical truths which I found to be discernible and practicable from my own in-depth Bible study and personal experience with respect to actual spiritual growth and church involvement or commitment.

I have noticed over the years that many sincere Christian believers have failed to grow spiritually in their personal relationship and walk with God simply because they have not been given sound and comprehensive Biblical teachings. It is my hope that this book might be of some help in that respect.

As part of my personal growing pains, God allowed me to be deeply involved in two large churches-one evangelical and the other charismatic-where I saw two extremes and excesses resulting from unequal emphasis or misapplication of certain Biblical truths. Consequently there were endless divisions due to the lack of sound and balanced Biblical teachings.

It is therefore essential and incumbent upon every serious Chris-

tian believer to attend a Christ-centered, Biblically-based and Spirit-filled church in order to grow spiritually in the love and service of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The last chapter in this book, I titled the final chapter "America As I See It" as a summary of my fifty years of observation and personal views of the social and political conditions in the United States from the perspectives of both a professional journalist and an ordained minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Those of us who are aware of what is going on in America today may readily recognize that there seems to be no effective solution to the continuing moral decline, social violence and political divisions in the country, no matter how hard the politicians might try and media pundits might analyze and offer alternatives to help solve these problems. I heartily agree with the Founding Fathers of our nation who forewarned centuries ago that without God and the Biblical principles as the standards for moral conduct, it is impossible to have a peaceful, orderly and loving society.

George Washington was the first to caution the governing authorities by emphatically stating: "It is impossible to rightly govern the world (or the nation) without God and the Bible."

The existing system of government based upon the Constitution of the United States was designed largely by and for people of the Christian faith; it will not work for a mixed culture of so-called pluralism and diversity.

Therefore, I have reached the conclusion that the only hope for America's bright future is to return to the same God of the Bible who has made the United States the greatest and strongest nation on earth.

The Author Dallas, Texas, 2018



Chapter One

Childhood



I was born in Nanjing (Nanking), the former capital city of the Republic of China, on August 17th the year of the sheep (1931) according to the Chinese lunar calendar.

I was the only child born to a poor, dysfunctional family. My mother died in her early twenties, when I was three years old. No one told me the cause of her death. My father was serving in the army at the time, so my grandmother took care of me until I reached school age. She sent me to live with my father whom I was to meet for the first time. He was living with a woman whose background, it seemed to me, was questionable yet I was obliged to refer to her as my stepmother. She did treat me well and I especially enjoyed her cooking.

Recently discharged from the army, my father began working as a mailman in a local hotel for a meager salary. We lived in a shabby neighborhood behind the luxurious hotel, a stark contrast! Our family of three shared a small dilapidated, single-room dwelling in which we did everything together. We cooked, ate and slept in the same room. We didn't complain about our living conditions, content to have food on the table and shelter. We understood that China was a poor country.

Feeling more or less like an orphan, I do not remember any happy days during my childhood. Because my mother died young, I never got to know what she was like. The only thing I had to remember her by was a picture in her wedding dress. It had been cut in half with the bridegroom missing! I was never told why. My mom's death and her relationship with my dad have remained a mystery. I do not have any photo of my father. I only remember him as a benign, lanky, middle-aged man with a ruddy face, pedaling his bicycle daily back and forth between the hotel and the post office. We were separated by the Chinese Civil War in 1948 and I never saw him again.

I had a weird experience in the late 1950s while living in Taiwan. I woke up in the middle of the night with a strange feeling about my father, who remained in Nanjing when I left for Taiwan to escape the Communist rule. For years we had no way of communicating. Not long after I had that strange feeling, I received word through a friend in Hong Kong that my father had died. No details were given.

As far as my grandparents were concerned, I knew little or nothing about them except that they did not get along and that they were not living together while I was under my grandmother's care. She was a devout Buddhist, faithfully chanting her singsong prayers every morning. She never seemed happy. She never told me anything about my mother or about her relationship with my father. Probably because I would have been too young to understand. Later, as far as I could remember, the only thing she told me was that when my mother died, strangely enough, her eyes had remained open. Until she had been repeatedly assured that my grandmother would take care of me, did she slowly close her eyes.

As a boy I also lived through the terrible days of the Japanese occupation of China. I could never forget the atrocities committed by Japanese troops against the Chinese people following their invasion of China in 1937. Known as the "Nanking Massacre", Japanese soldiers killed tens of thousands of Chinese civilians, including women and children.

I vividly remember seeing armed Japanese soldiers carrying rifles fitted with bayonets, going from house to house in search of young Chi-

nese women. I saw those women dashing off trying to find hiding places while being chased by the Japanese soldiers. When they were caught, they were dragged into nearby houses and raped. Many were killed, including some who were pregnant.

These horrible childhood memories cannot be erased. To this day, post-war Japanese authorities have refused to acknowledge the Nanking Massacre committed by their occupational forces in China and have deliberately excluded this portion of the Sino-Japanese war from their history textbooks.



Wedding picture of Jack Chow's mother whom he had never seen.



Chapter Two

Education



I am basically a self-educated man. My scanty schooling consisted of five years in grade school, a one-year correspondence course in journalism with the University Extension Department of UC-Berkeley, and one semester spent studying broadcast journalism at the University of Syracuse in New York. The latter was part of an eight month technical training program sponsored by the U.S. Information Agency under the State Department in 1955. The program also provided opportunities for me to travel in the United States to observe first-hand how American TV-radio networks ran their news operations. The technical knowledge and skills I gained from this trip were shared with the English-language news organizations in Taiwan in the form of short-term training classes that I was privileged to conduct.

One of the highlights of my U.S. study tour in 1955 was a meeting with Edward R. Murrow, an iconic American broadcast journalist at that time. His unique "As I See It" CBS-TV show was one of the most-watched interview programs in the U.S. It was my privilege to watch him produce the show and discuss with him some basic principles of American journalism. The conversation I had with this widely-respected American journalist in his New York office had a significant impact on my journalistic career.

In a nutshell, the bulk of my education/knowledge has come from two sources: the Bible and 80 years of real-life experiences. The Bible has been my companion and teacher ever since I became a Christian at the age of 17. It has taught me much about the meaning of life and the knowledge of God as well as our relationship with the Creator of the universe and humankind. The application of biblical principles in my Christian life has made me a better person-as a husband, father, journalist, preacher and grandfather.

Why I quit school early

Because my father could not afford the school fees, I had to quit school early. I barely finished fifth grade when he pulled me out and put me to work to support myself. So at the age of eleven, I was left to fend for myself-sink or swim.

I felt sad that I couldn't go back to school. I often cried when I thought of other boys and girls being able to go to school while I was deprived of the opportunity of education. Nevertheless, I determined to study and learn by myself. I worked hard and studied hard.

With the money I earned from working as a bellhop at the same hotel where my father was employed, I bought books to read and additional workbooks in which to practice calligraphy. I wanted to be able to write fine Chinese characters with a brush pen like any Chinese scholar. I made use of all my spare time to study like a bookworm. I probably wouldn't have applied myself so hard if I had been kept in school.

As years went by, I kept up self-study. Then the eight-year war with Japan ended in victory. The two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States, China's chief ally in the war, caused Japan to surrender in 1945. With the establishment of the first U.S. military advisory mission in China, there was a great influx of American military personnel who needed a lodging place in the capital city. The hotel

where I was working was commandeered by the Chinese government to house the American military. I was able to keep my job there as a bellboy, which provided a golden opportunity for me to learn to speak and write in English. Again, if I were still in school, I would not have had the opportunity nor the ideal environment to learn the language which would later become a vital asset in my career and future.

How I began to learn English

Among the Americans staying at the hostel was a veteran journalist by the name of John Roderick. He was covering the Sino-Japanese war in China for the Associated Press. He later became the first American reporter allowed to enter China during the period of "ping-pong diplomacy" which led to the resumption of diplomatic relations between China and the U.S. in 1979. Though a total stranger, he took a personal interest in me as a teenage boy and offered to teach me English free of charge. John Roderick also gave me my first English name, Jack-which was his nickname. Normally, Chinese people do not have first names like Westerners do, unless they have adopted English names. Traditionally, Chinese first names are their last or family/surnames.

John Roderick was the first and last English teacher I ever had. He would spend hours each week teaching me to read and write in correct American English. As a veteran correspondent, he was a terrific reporter/writer. He worked with me on my pronunciation for three months until I was able to say English words and phrases the American way! That's why I have an American accent when I speak English. I picked this up in China!

Nevertheless, learning English with an American teacher aroused my interest in American culture and history. As I worked and lived among the Americans, I noticed that they had a lot of respect for individual freedom and human dignity. The average American seemed to be better ed-

ucated in social decorum. Their way of being courteous is different from the Chinese who tend to be more respectful to the elderly.

I noticed, for example, that when Americans accidentally bump into someone, or when they must interrupt a conversation, they would usually say, "Excuse me" or "I'm sorry." American motorists, by and large, yield to pedestrians; they almost always stop for or give right of way to them.

Another example is when they stand in a queue, usually no one ries to cut in to get to the front of the line. They will wait in line in an orderly fashion. I also noticed that when people had to sneeze or cough, they would cover their mouths with a handkerchief. I have never seen an American spitting in public places, or yelling while talking on the telephone.

How English changed my life

I began to like Americans and Americana. I wanted to know more about American culture and history. For some reason, I had developed such an intense interest and love for the English language that I studied it day and night, literally eating it and sleeping with it! I worked on my English so fervently that I had to keep replacing my English-Chinese dictionary one after another. I tried to absorb every word and phrase I possibly could. Within a matter of two years, I learned to speak English fluently and was able to use an English typewriter and type as fast as a trained secretary.

In 1947, when I turned 16, I got my first salaried job with the U.S. Military Advisory Mission in China, first as a clerk-typist and later as a translator. From that point I started on an upward career ladder. I began to receive better job offers one after another. My knowledge of English seemed to pave a way for a brighter future. Especially in post-war China, there was a great demand for people with knowledge and skills in the English language both in government and the private sectors.

Advantages of knowing English

My command of the English language, for all its worth, had thus become a principal means of financial earnings, not only to support myself but also eventually to provide for my family. It may be said that without the knowledge and skills of English, I would not have had a successful career in journalism. For that matter, I would not have been sent to the United States where I have had greater exposure to American politics, culture and history and eventually where I became a naturalized U.S. citizen.

Furthermore, I have had access to English-language literature which helped to broaden my knowledge of America and the world at large. With my knowledge of English, I acquired advanced technical knowledge and skills in the field of journalism, able then to pass this on to promising young Chinese journalists in Taiwan. It was my great joy to see some of the up-and-coming journalists whom I helped to train eventually employed by Chinese government information offices and private news organizations.

With adequate knowledge of English, I have enjoyed numerous advantages of living in the United States, especially in my role as a foreign press correspondent. I have been able to cover presidential press conferences and White House briefings as well as to interview Congressional leaders and other government officials. I've had access to American mainstream news media and various publications in English and have been able to obtain much of the news and information first-hand without waiting for the Chinese translation.

Another great advantage is that I have been able to read my Bible in Chinese and English side by side, comparing the Chinese and different versions of the English translations, thereby helping me to gain a greater and fuller understanding of the original meaning of the Scriptures. I also feel privileged to have been able to read spiritual and devotional classics available only in English, which has helped me to develop a closer relationship with God.

Being bilingual has brought great benefits not only to myself but also to many others through my journalistic reporting and subsequent Christian ministry to both Chinese and English-speaking congregations. All in all, it has made my life and hopefully the lives of others more meaningful, enjoyable and worth living.

The Bible as a tool in self-education

Since I was deprived of formal education, I have relied on the Bible as a major tool in self-education and self-improvement, especially in my pursuit of a higher knowledge of the Almighty God. It has truly shaped my character and molded me into someone who looks like a scholarly person.

I have read and studied the Bible time and again for over 50 years since I became a Christian. I have come to love and treasure the Bible as a source of inspiration and a gold mine of inexhaustible riches of wisdom and knowledge. I have discovered that this incredible book has all the answers to human problems and tragedies seen around the world today.

Because the Bible is believed to be the inspired Word of God, it has been miraculously preserved throughout the ages and has remained to date the best-selling and most widely-read book in the world-with translations, in part or whole, into 2,530 different languages or forms of speech.

To sum up, my self-education has been derived from two main sources: The Bible and work experience, the latter including over 30 years in journalism, 20 years in pastoral work and another 25 years of extensive travels related to the Christian ministry. I would attribute to my God and the Lord Jesus any success that I may have achieved in these human endeavors.

In recounting the benefits of self-education, I never imagined that learning English as a second language would have had such an impact on nearly all aspects of my life. It suddenly dawned on me that the passion I had for the English language in the early days of my young life must have come from a higher Source, and that it was given for a reason. How could I not believe that the Omniscient God who is our loving Father had my whole life planned out, even before I was born, and brought it to fruition for His own glory?

This has led me to believe that God has a plan not only for my life but for the lives of everyone of His children who are born again of the Holy Spirit, as He emphatically declares in His Word: "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11).



Nancy's mother Lan-Lan



Chapter Three

Conversion



I became a Christian and was baptized in 1948. It wasn't because I had an unusual religious experience, but because of the testimony of a Christian friend. One of my colleagues at work, Xu Yun Kui (徐云逵) invited me to church one Sunday morning to hear him preach. I didn't know he was a lay preacher. That was my first time ever to go to church and hear the name of Jesus Christ. Before then I had only heard about Buddha from my grandmother, or Muhammad from some of my relatives who were Muslims.

After that, Xu would show up at my apartment every Sunday morning, rain or shine, wait for me to get up, and then take me to church with him. Xu was the kind of person you could hardly say no to. He was always kind and friendly, and his patience and persistence definitely had an impact on me. So, I kept going to church with him for about six months, and I liked what I heard. One day, the church announced a baptismal service was to take place and those wishing to be baptized could sign up for an interview with the church elders.

During the interview, I was asked some simple questions: Do you believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He died on the cross for your sins, that if you accept Him as your personal Savior, your sins would be

forgiven, and that when you die, you will go to heaven? I answered yes to every one of these questions, and I was baptized as a new member of that church. Even though I didn't know much about Christianity, I thought I did the right thing. In fact, as time went on it turned out to be the best thing that has ever happened in my life!

Following my baptism, I went on to live like a zealous practicing Christian: I attended church services regularly, I prayed daily and read my Bible, I gave time and money to the church, I participated in Bible training classes and evangelistic activities. I served in various capacities such as leading worship, leading a cell group, and doing home and hospital visitation. I even cleaned lavatories. In those days they were quite primitive!

By doing all of these things, I thought I was a "good" Christian. I was just acting like a truly religious and spiritual person. But as I found out later, I wasn't even born again! Because there wasn't any sign of a new life in my behavior. I was still the same old self-self-centered, arrogant and ill-tempered. I couldn't get along with any of my colleagues. In church, I pretended to be nice and spiritual, but at home I was a totally different person. I often gave my wife and children a hard time! I envied other Christians who were so nice and happy, but I had neither peace nor joy in my heart. This situation went on for more than ten years. I was getting sick and tired of trying to be a good Christian.

Gradually I realized something was missing in my Christian life, but I didn't know what it was. I sought answers from our ministers in church, but none of them could help me. I became so desperate that one day I took off from work in order to seek an answer directly from God as to where I might have failed. I needed to know what was missing in my faith.

I spent the whole day in prayer, searching the Scriptures for an answer. But it seemed as though God was so far away from me. By the end of the day, I was ready to give up. I said to Him, "God, if you don't give me an answer today, I will cease to be a Christian." Then, all of sudden, this familiar Scripture verse popped up in my mind: "I have been crucified with

Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). At the time I did not understand what it means for a believer to be "crucified with Christ" and to say that "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." I thought the Apostle Paul was only talking about his own Christian experience. Although I had been a church goer for many years, I had never had the experience of "Christ living in me." I had no idea of what it is like when "Christ lives in me." If that is what Christianity is all about, then I was not a Christian in the true sense of the word, but a mere religious person. It is often said that Christianity is not a religion; it's a personal relationship with the living Christ.

So I continued seeking for the real thing. As Jesus promises, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8). I just kept seeking and knocking. It took me seven years to find the truth-Christ living in me-and I was no longer the same person!

In 1962 I began a new job in Hong Kong, so we moved from Taiwan. We began to hear stories about a church where "signs and wonders" were said to be happening almost daily. We learned that the woman who started the church was a former popular movie actress who had a marvelous experience of conversion and that she was filled with the Holy Spirit and was being mightily used by God.

My wife Nancy and I (see Chapter 5 for our courtship and marriage) became increasingly intrigued and curious until one day we decided to visit the church to see for ourselves what it was like. The actress-turned-evangelist was preaching that night on what was billed as "The Baptism of the Holy Spirit." This was a topic that we had never heard in our own church, where women were not permitted to speak in public-and were taught to have their heads covered while in church as a sign of obedience. Women were only allowed to preach to women.

The former Cantonese-speaking actress (known as Mui Yee on the screen) preached a powerful sermon on the necessity of Spirit baptism. Until then, we had known only water baptism. Evangelical believers are usually baptized in water or sprinkled with water, but we had not been taught any "baptism in the Holy Spirit." She made a case for the first 120 believers who were baptized in the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. She stressed that every Christian believer needs to be baptized in Spirit as well as in water, as Jesus commanded His disciples just before Pentecost: "For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit". "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses." (Acts 1:5,8).

As she finished preaching, that petite woman preacher, dressed in a black traditional gown with a Bible in her hand, stepped off the platform and started walking directly toward us, smiling as if she already knew us. She greeted my wife and me warmly and invited us to stay for a late-night snack, as was the custom among the Cantonese people. We began wondering what God had in store for us.

As we sat down to eat, I was asked to pray a blessing on the food. As soon as I started praying, I heard my wife speaking in tongues for the first time ever, and even before I had finished praying, I found myself surrounded by Evangelist Mui Yee and her associates who started praying in unison and laying hands on me so that I, too, would be filled with the Holy Spirit. They all believed that speaking in tongues, as manifested by the early disciples on the Day of Pentecost, is a sign of being filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit as the Scripture says, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4).

They prayed, prayed, and prayed, but I didn't speak in tongues. I wasn't rejecting speaking in tongues because I knew that it was clearly recorded and taught in the Scriptures. What I did not accept was the fact that these women laid their hands on me without first asking for my permission! As mentioned before, we came from a church background

where women were taught to be submissive to men and to be quiet in meetings. (1 Timothy 2:11-12) *As they kept praying for God to fill me with the Holy Spirit, I kept struggling in my mind as to whether women should be allowed to "lay hands*" on men!

The women kept praying for me for at least half an hour, until I heard these words in my spirit: "......You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children". "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 11:25, 18:3).

I knew immediately that these words came from the Lord, and I began to understand that I needed to be childlike, humble and simple. I also knew in my spirit that God was doing something new for us that night. My wife received the gift of speaking in tongues so easily because she was simple and childlike. So I knew I needed to become like a child in order to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

As soon as I surrendered my heart to God, in a split second, I burst out speaking in another tongue! I felt as though something had exploded from within me! I kept talking in tongues loudly and almost uncontrollably for about half an hour! In so doing, I heard the clapping of hands by people around me as they fervently prayed for me! They all seemed to be rejoicing over the fact that I had received the Spirit baptism.

For me, the best part of the baptism with the Holy Spirit was when I saw Jesus standing before me—not with my physical eyes but with my spiritual eyes, so vividly in my spirit—as I consecrated myself and my all to Him. It was made so real to me that I didn't feel the need to open my eyes to see if He was there. He was there standing before me! Because it was Jesus who baptized me with the Holy Spirit! John the Baptist had foretold this, "...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11).

Until I had this wonderful baptism, I believed only mentally that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead; but now I believe empirically that

Jesus Christ is indeed alive! He is not only alive in the world but also lives within me! Then I began to understand what it means when the Apostle Paul said, "....Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20)!

What happened on that night was a turning point in my life. Everything was changed! My worldview, my value system, my understanding of Christianity, my relationship with God, my view of the Church of Christ, my relations with fellow Christians and non-Christians, the meaning and purpose of life-all had changed!



Chapter Four

Career



Backtracking a bit to my earliest days as a Christian, the first time I ever prayed earnestly was when I was in dire need of a job. I was on an emergency evacuation ship that had just left Shanghai in advance of the Communist invasion. My friend, Li Shengyu, a senior military officer in the Nationalist army, was in charge of the ship headed for Canton (now Guangzhou). I was offered free passage with the understanding that I would have to be on my own once we reached our destination. I seized the opportunity to flee from Communism after my father instructed me to "go with the Nationalist government wherever it takes you." That was the last time I talked to him on the phone not knowing I would never see him again.

Fighting had already broken out between the Nationalist garrison and the invading Communist forces. I could hear the exchange of gunfire between the two sides as our ship sailed out of the Shanghai harbor. Within a matter of days, the metropolitan city of Shanghai fell into Communist hands.

As our ship was cruising on high seas the next morning, I stood alone on the open deck. As I looked out upon the vast ocean, the sky and waters seeming to merge together. I wondered who would help me once

I reached my destination. Because I didn't have any money and I didn't know anybody in the strange city I was about to reach, I was worried about my future.

Praying for the first time

I prayed to God in earnest: "Dear Lord, if you help me find a job in Canton, I will treat you as my God all the rest of my life. In Jesus' Name. Amen." As a young Christian, I really didn't know how to pray. But I learned later that my simple prayer was similar to the one prayed by Jacob in the Old Testament while he was in the wilderness fleeing from the wrath of his brother Esau (Genesis 28:20-21).

After the ship docked at the southern port city of Canton, I immediately went ashore job hunting. I was told there was a section of the city called *Shamian*, near the beach, where clusters of foreign companies were located. I called at some of these firms offering my service as an English-speaking typist and translator. No one would hire me during the first two days. On the third day, I landed a job at a semi-government organization called Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction(JCRR). This was a U.S.-funded joint undertaking whose task was to help China carry out agricultural reforms. Its employees were better paid than most other organizations.

I was hired as a clerk-typist. Two weeks later, on my first pay day, to my amazement, I was paid seventy-five Chinese silver dollars! (The runaway inflation during the war had rendered the then Chinese currency worthless.) Silver dollars were almost as good as U.S. dollars. As I walked out of the pay office carrying two piles of the silver dollars in my hands, I was so thrilled that I just couldn't stop thanking God for answering my prayer while on the ship! So, God hears prayers, I thought! This experience had undoubtedly strengthened my faith in God. As I promised, I have trusted Jesus Christ as my Lord and God ever since.

Soon the Communist forces were advancing toward the city of Canton. JCRR and other Nationalist government agencies were ordered to evacuate to Taiwan. My service was thus terminated along with other local employees. However, I was surprised when my boss, a gracious American lady in charge of JCRR personnel, told me that she could re-hire me in Taiwan, if I could obtain an entry permit. With her consent, I listed her name as my guarantor, a requirement on the application for any Chinese citizen to enter Taiwan at that time. My entry permit was quickly granted and mailed to me in Hong Kong. When I arrived at the Taipei Sungshan Airport, a senior JCRR official sent by my former boss was on hand to greet me, and I started working right away! God was so good to me!

Miracles still happen

If my employment/re-employment by JCRR was a miracle, it was only the beginning of more to come. Of the multiple jobs I have had so far, I would say the one with JCRR in Taiwan was the best thing that ever happened to me for two main reasons: first, it led to my surprise encounter with the former Miss Nancy Sun who was to become my wife and life-long companion; second, it provided an unlikely catalyst for a new successful career for me in journalism!

The publisher of the newspaper was Nancy Yu Huang (余夢燕), an enterprising Chinese newswoman who had a journalism degree from Columbia University in New York. Her lean, fledgling paper was in dire need of staff writers and editors well versed in both Chinese *and* English, since much of the news information was available only in Chinese. Yong and I had just finished our journalism course, and so we stepped up to fill in as part-time news writers and editors. It seemed like a perfect time for me to put into practice what I learned from the correspondence course.

A full-fledged journalist

As I gained some experience in newspaper work, I wanted to find out how well I was doing as an English-language reporter/writer. One day, the official Central News Agency (CNA) in Taiwan posted openings for news writers/editors in its English Department. They invited young, aspiring journalists with college degrees to compete for these positions. Although I never went to college, I decided to take the test just to see how I would do compared to those who had college education. To my great surprise, among dozens of contestants, I came out on top! Another miracle for me! I was so happy to get an idea of where I was in my continuing self-study of the English language as well as a potential foreign-language journalist.

Mr. Tseng Xubai(曾虛白), a veteran journalist and noted political commentator in Taiwan, was head of the official news agency. He was also the interim CEO of the Broadcasting Corporation of China (BCC) where he was in need of someone to manage the foreign language broadcasts. He asked to interview me personally to determine if I would be qualified to fill that position at BCC. However, I had no intention of giving up my well-paying job at JCRR.

In our first meeting, Mr. Tseng displayed an intense interest in training a new generation of journalists. He had been the founder and Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at the National Chengchih (Political) University in Taiwan. Eventually, it was this influential journalist and educator who would persuade me to leave JCRR in favor of a lower-paying job, which, he said, would offer better prospects for a career in journalism. It was a difficult decision because at the time I had to provide for a growing family. But, I am glad I took his advice.

First visit to the U.S.

Amazingly, less than six months after I joined BCC as head of its English Department, I was chosen as one of Taiwan's two journalists to participate in an information technical training program funded by the U.S. State Department in Washington, D. C. It was one of those rare opportunities that a journalist in Taiwan would dream of.

The eight month program paid for my extensive travel in the United States to gain some firsthand knowledge of American broadcasting techniques as well as to get some hands-on training in the newsroom operations of major U.S. radio and television network stations. These included CBS, NBC and the then Mutual Broadcasting System network stations in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago and Los Angeles. I also spent one semester in the Department of Mass Communications at Syracuse University in New York, where I attended lectures and did lab work in TV broadcasting.

Armed with some new knowledge and the skills I gained from the various American broadcasting networks, I initiated two training programs upon my return to Taiwan-one for broadcast journalists and one for newspaper reporters and writers. I was also invited by the then Minister of Education, Mr. Chang Chi-yun(張其昀) to conduct the first experiment of educational TV broadcast in Taiwan in 1956. The plan was to use television as a new medium for mass education. Unfortunately, it never took off due to lack of funding.

When Taiwan launched its first-ever TV station in 1961, I was recommended as the first candidate to be its programming director. However, due to my commitment to China Post where I was in charge of the news desk and my publisher's refusal to release me "under any circumstances," the position was filled by a fellow journalist who had also been trained at

Syracuse University in upstate New York.

First Asian Journalists Conference

While passing through Hong Kong on my return to Taiwan, something good happened unexpectedly. I was visiting with a veteran journalist friend in Hong Kong, Mr. Woo Kiatang(吳嘉棠), then Editor-in-Chief of the *Hong Kong Standard*, one of the two leading English-language newspapers in Hong Kong. At that time, he was looking for someone to fill the position of Chief Reporter on his newspaper and, to my surprise, he offered me the job which I gladly accepted and agreed to assume as soon as possible.

Time to move on

I took the Hong Kong job offer as a sign from God that it was time for us to leave Taiwan after living there for 13 years. Shortly after I returned to Taipei, I resigned from the China Post effective immediately. Graham Jenkins, the then Australian General Manager of the *Hong Kong Standard*, was instrumental in facilitating the swift transition.

We lived in Hong Kong for six years from 1962-1968, during which I had four other jobs, apart from the *Hong Kong Standard*-namely, Radio Section Chief at the U. S. Information Center in Hong Kong, Correspondent for the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, Reporter/Writer of

World Today magazine, and Trade Adviser/Writer with the Hong Kong Trade Development Council. These jobs were offered to me one after another even without my solicitation. Each one was better than the other! By this time, I became fully convinced of such teachings as divine intervention and unconditional favor from God.

Spiritually speaking, the unexpected experience of the "Baptism with the Holy Spirit" I had in Hong Kong has had far-reaching consequential effect upon my personal relationship with God and subsequent service in the evangelical churches in the United States.

Major news events covered

Among the most significant and historic news events I covered during my 33 year journalistic career were: the open ideological dispute and split between Communist China under Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong) and the former Soviet Union; the social unrest in the British colony of Hong Kong caused by the leftist-inspired riots in the early1960s; China's chaotic "cultural revolution" during the late 1960s; the U.S. landing of the first man on the moon in 1969; the re-election of President Richard Nixon in 1972 and his historic visit to China in the same year; the annual debate over the issue of China's representation in the United Nations which ended with the Republic of China (Taiwan) being replaced by the People's Republic of China in 1971; the much-publicized "Watergate" scandal that forced Nixon to become the first U.S. President to resign from office in 1974; and the normalization of relations between China and the United States. (This consummated with the re-establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries in 1979, while the traditional ties between Taipei and Washington, notably the formal Mutual Defense Treaty, were replaced and hitherto maintained by the so-called Taiwan Relations Act passed by the U.S. Congress and signed into law by President Jimmy Carter.)

I consider my assignment as the Washington/New York Correspondent for Taiwan's *China Times* as one of the highlights in my journalistic career. It came at a critical time when U.S.-China relations were undergoing a historic change. The Nixon administration was trying to formulate a new China policy whereby Washington would recognize Beijing as the only legitimate government of China, while still keeping its existing ties and moral obligations to the Nationalist Government in Taipei.

At that time Taiwan was also facing a grave diplomatic challenge in the United Nations over the issue of Chinese representation. Professionally speaking, for a journalist from Taiwan to be assigned to Washington and New York was both an exciting time and a great challenge.

There was so much news to report to Taiwan at the time, yet government censorship was still in force in those days. I had to walk on thin ice, so to speak, when covering those sensitive political issues involving the United States, China and Taiwan. In New York, meanwhile, the diplomatic tide in the United Nations was turning increasingly in favor of Beijing's admission into the world organization. There had been wide-spread predictions that Taiwan would have been dealt a fatal blow politically, diplomatically and probably economically as well if it were replaced by Communist China in the United Nations. In order to prepare the people in Taiwan for possible diplomatic shocks, I wrote my dispatches in a way people could read between the lines and perceive what might be coming.

One of the privileges of a journalist is that you get to see history while it is in the making. I was there on the spot when the Republic of China (Taiwan) was forced out of the United Nations and the People's Republic of China was overwhelmingly voted in. I could never forget the embarrassing scene when ROC Foreign Minister Chou Shu-kai 周書楷 led his entire delegation to walk out of the UN General Assembly Hall only moments before a vote was taken to admit the PRC as the legitimate representative of China and as one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. It was a sad day for the ROC, which had been one of UN's founding members since 1945.

On a personal level, as a Christian believer I had prayed much for God to keep Taiwan in the world organization. Like many others who supported Taiwan, I was saddened to see Taiwan lose its representation in the UN. I wondered why God didn't answer my prayer. As I sought the Lord for an explanation, He gave me this Bible verse: "A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out. In faithfulness, He will bring forth justice" (Isaiah 42:3).

To the degree I was able to understand the Biblical text, I took it to mean that despite ROC's losses in the UN and international relations, God Almighty "who is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth" (Daniel 4:17,25) was going to undertake for Taiwan's future.

Strangely enough, shortly after the ROC was ousted from the UN, Taiwan's economy, instead of taking a beating, began to take off in the early 1970s. Its manufacturing industry and export trade grew exponentially, and so it became one of the world's leading trading nations with the second largest foreign exchange reserve! Taiwan has been able to maintain economic and cultural relations with some 120 countries around the world, although only a small number of them (23 in 2012) still recognize the ROC as the legitimate government of China.

Despite Beijing's consistent claim that Taiwan is part of China-a stance that the United States still acknowledges but does not accept in reality-the fact is that Taiwan, or the Republic of China as it prefers to call itself, has remained a free, democratic and independent country since the Chinese Nationalist Government retreated to Taiwan in 1949 after losing the civil war.

For all practical intents and purposes, Taiwan and its offshore islands have never been under the control of the PRC. This has been a sticking point in the U.S.-China relations since the two nations established diplomatic relations in 1979. The United States, for its part, would prefer to allow the perennial issue of reunification to be resolved peacefully over time. Until then the United States has moral and legal obligations to come

to Taiwan's defense in the event of military conflict.

The political status quo is likely to continue as long as the U.S.-Taiwan Relations Act is in effect. As a Christian believer, I would attribute this unique international situation to none other than "divine intervention" or Providence.

Employment History

I started working at the age of eleven. Since then I have had 13 different jobs over a period of 43 years (1942-1985). As part of our family record, here is my employment history in brief:

- Bellhop, Nanking Central Hotel, now renamed Nanjing Centre Hotel (1942-1947);
- Clerk-typist, U.S Military Advisory Group in Nanking (1947-1948);
- Processing Clerk, United Nations Refugee Relief Organization Office in Shanghai (Jan.-May 1949);
- Administrative Assistant, Sino-U.S. Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction (JCRR) in Canton and Taipei (June 1949-1955);
- News Editor & later General Manager, *China Post* in Taipei (1960-1962);
- Copy Editor, English Department, Central News Agency in Taiwan (1955);
- English Program Manager, Broadcasting Corporation of China in Taiwan (1955-1962);
- Chief Reporter/Columnist, *Hong Kong Standard* (1962-1964); Hong Kong Correspondent for the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe (1962);
- Chief, Radio Section of U.S. Information Service in Hong Kong & Feature Writer & Editor of *World Today* magazine in Chinese (1964-1966);
- Trade Adviser/Journalist, Hong Kong Trade Development Council

(1966-1968);

Washington Bureau Chief & United Nations Correspondent for Taiwan's China Times (1969-1975);

News Editor, *The Washington Post*, Washington, D.C. (Jan.-April 1970);

President, China Times in Taiwan (1971-1972); and

News Editor & Broadcaster, Voice of America in Washington, D.C. (1977-1985).



Jack and Nancy's wedding



Chapter Five

Marriage and Family



I met Nancy Sun, a.k.a. Sun Nanxing(孫南星)in Taiwan in the summer of 1950. (Nanxing means South Star). This was approximately six months after I started working again for JCRR. The encounter took place at the home of Ms. Grace Chen, a Christian colleague from work. Grace had invited her friend Margaret Ma, Nancy and me to dinner at her house. Margaret was also Nancy's teacher/counselor at the Young Women's Christian Association where Nancy had enrolled in an English class. The dinner was purposely a set up for me to meet the 19-year-old girl who was to become my lifelong companion. I was given the reason for the dinner in advance, but Nancy wasn't.

My first impression of this modest young woman was hugely favorable. She was tall, plainly dressed, good looking, and a bit shy. Her hair was in a pair of pigtails. She probably would have dressed up had she been forewarned that this was a special occasion. I learned later that that was the way she usually looked, and I liked it. I said to myself, "She is my kind of girl!"

Without even trying to find out what she thought of me, I decided to date her. At first, she didn't seem to be at all interested in me. I wrote letters and made phone calls, but she wasn't responsive. I had invited her

at least three times to dine out or to see a movie, but each time I got a flatout refusal. At first I was disappointed and later angry. I felt my pride had been hurt. Since she had repeatedly spurned my love, I started dating a female colleague at work.

As a teenager, I adopted what might be called a "three-strikes-out" policy when it came to dating. If I was interested in a girl, I'd reach out to befriend her first by inviting her out to dinner or to see a movie; if she turned me down three times, I'd say, "You're out!" So, whenever I told Grace that I was ready to give up on Nancy, she'd always encourage me saying, "Just be patient, Jack."

Our courtship

One day I learned that Nancy had broken her arm falling off a bicycle and that she was in a cast recuperating at home. I took the opportunity to visit her again and again at her home. I brought flowers and tried to comfort and encourage her. Gradually she changed her attitude toward me and began to show an interest. She had obviously decided by this time that I wasn't such a bad guy after all.

After she recovered completely, I invited her to a Christmas party given by our organization for its employees. I was so happy when she accepted my invitation. I don't remember the dress she wore that day, but she looked so attractive in her natural beauty. Even now, she never wears makeup-not even at our wedding. We mingled well with others at the party, and we danced for the first time. That was our first date.

We found out at the party that we both were attending the same church, and we both were Sunday Christians only at the time, not taking seriously the things of God. As we continued dating, I decided to stop seeing the other girl from the office.

One of the benefits of working at JCRR was that each staff member . 226 .

was entitled to use an office car for personal business on weekends. During those days, not many people could afford to own a car in Taiwan. As Nancy and I began dating and seeing each other every weekend, I would always book a car early for our weekly rendezvous. At that time, since she was working as an announcer on a radio station located on the outskirts of Taipei, I would not have been able to see her every weekend without an automobile.

As we continued to spend time together each weekend, our relationship grew steadily closer. In those days, however, young Chinese women, unlike their Western counterparts, were too reserved to say, "I love you" to their boyfriends. When Nancy and I were in love, she was so shy she had not even once verbalized her love for me until the day we became engaged.

The first time she showed her love for me was on my 20th birthday, when she gave me a journal as a birthday present. On the first page she attached a plastic wrapped dried flower, and underneath she wrote, "Forget me not." That was also the name of the pressed flower. As a bashful young woman, that was about as far as she would go in expressing her love for her future husband! I don't know why I wasn't expecting more from her.

Our marriage

After more than two years of courtship, we both thought it was time to talk about getting married. One day, we mustered enough courage and went to see her mother to secure her permission for us to marry. Not unexpectedly, our request was turned down probably for two reasons: first, her mom was concerned about my long-term health. Not long before I had an issue with tuberculosis; second, she had a desire to see her daughter marry someone better educated and wealthier-perhaps someone like her second husband, who was a Japanese-trained medical doctor.

We decided not to rush into marriage or to marry anyone else for that matter-waiting it out as long as necessary-until her mother changed her mind. At the same time, we began to pray for her mother's change of heart, as well as for the salvation of her soul. We don't remember how it happened, but her mother gradually came around and gave her permission for us to be united in wedlock.

We chose the day after Christmas for our wedding. In deference to the wishes of our church leaders who shunned all forms of worldliness, we had a simple wedding ceremony in church presided over by several elders and attended by many other members of the church. Our certificate of marriage was especially handwritten in Chinese by an accomplished calligrapher on a piece of delicate red paper-signed by both the bride and the bridegroom, as well as by two leading elders as witnesses.

The church was so conservative and legalistic that the bride was not even allowed to wear a modern wedding gown for the ceremony! So, without any makeup whatsoever, she was dressed in *Qi Pao*, a Chinese traditional gown usually worn by women on formal occasions. Instead of a tuxedo, I wore a new suit. After the ceremony, we had our wedding pictures taken in a studio by a professional photographer.

Following our ceremony in church, we gave a dinner party at a large Chinese restaurant attended by more than 300 friends and relatives, including the bride's happy mother and step-father and our skillful match-makers, Grace Chen and Margaret Ma! The announcement of our wedding was published in the December 26, 1952 issue of China Post along with our wedding picture.

After 40 years of marriage and many moves, we thought we had misplaced our wedding photos and that we had lost them forever. During a ministry trip to Taiwan, I went to the same studio where we had them originally taken, wondering if the business was still in existence. Not only was the studio still at the same place, but to my pleasant surprise they were able to locate all the negatives. I had eight sets made and brought

them back to the States as keepsakes for our seven grownup children and one set for ourselves.

Our family

We have been blessed with seven children, two sons and five daughters. In addition, we have 17 grandchildren, seven grandsons and ten granddaughters. David, our oldest son, was born on July 20, 1954, the day the Korean peace treaty was signed. Two years later, Ruth came along. We thought we had an ideal family-a family of four with a boy and a girl. We wanted no more children. Lo and behold! John, Mary, Esther, Susanna and Martha came in succession. On average they were two or three years apart. David, Ruth, John and Esther were born on Taiwan, and Mary and Susanna were born in the then British colony of Hong Kong. Martha, the only ABC (American-born Chinese) in the family, was born in Maryland.

Following are the profiles of our seven adult children and seventeen grandchildren at this writing:

- 1. David (周大衛), entrepreneur, born on July 20, 1954, married to Cindy Feng (馮國美) on March 15, 1978; they have two children, Alex (周世浩), born in Taiwan on February 22, 1981, and Jessica (周思妤), born in Los Angeles on June 11, 1986, married to Zachary Lopez (7/17/1984) on May 18, 2013. David has two younger sons by his second wife Liping Wang (王麗萍); their names: Alvin (周世逸), born in Shanghai on November 26, 1997, and Justin (周育霆), also born in Shanghai on May 10, 2001.
- 2. Ruth (周路得), CPA/entrepreneur, born on July 15, 1956, married to James S. K. Ku (顧紹箕), business executive/entrepreneur, on March 6, 1982; they have two daughters, Samantha (顧芷瑜), born in Taiwan on June 27,1989, and Tessa (顧芷甄), born in Hong Kong on December 2, 1990, married to Jesse Samberg (3/8/1987) on October 14, 2017.

- 3. John (周約翰), architect, born on November 16, 1959, married to Nancy Molan Wong (王慕蘭) on June 5, 1993; they have three children, Corrin (周恩霖), born in Boston on January 24, 1995, Timon (周恩萍), born in New York on July 1, 2000, and Bethany (周恩惠), also born in New York on January 23, 2004.
- 4. Mary (周小麗), IT architect, born on November 27, 1962, married to Wayne Chih Kang Kao (高志綱), entrepreneur/golf instructor, on May 30, 1988; they have three children, all born in Maryland, Christa Danille Kao (高家儀), on March 5, 1990, Isabelle Tiffany Kao (高家玲) on March 11, 1992, and Christopher Samuel Kao (高家恩) on March 18, 1999.
- 5. Esther (周以斯帖) ,biologist/school teacher, born on June 1, 1966, married to Trevor Shaffer, graphics designer, on April 15, 1995; they have two daughters born in Maryland, Caitlin on Christmas Day, 1996, and Lisette on July 26, 2003.
- 6. Susanna (周珊珊) ,RN/NP, born on November 30, 1967, married to Peter Young, financial analyst, on November 1, 2008.
- 7. Martha(周瑪莎),school teacher, born on April 23, 1970, married to William Knaupp, MD, on January 6, 1996. They have three children all born in New York, Andreas(柯德華)on December 4, 1998, Mariana(柯德美)on October 29, 2001, and Nicolas(柯德榮)on January 6, 2004.

Our ancestors - on my side

There is no record to trace our family tree on my father's side. I was an only child. My mother died when I was three years old. On my mother's side, the only information I have is that my grandfather came from Qufu, Shandong Province, the hometown of Confucius (551-479 BC) or *Kong Fuzi* (孔夫子) in Chinese. Since my grandfather's surname or family name was the same as that of Confucius, and my mother's maiden

name was *Kong Qinglian* (孔慶蓮) , we are supposedly descendants of Confucius; but I have not been able to verify the linkage.

When I learned that the fifth edition of the Genealogy of Confucius would be published in several volumes in 2009, and that new entries might be included for a small fee (the deceased could be added for free), I made several attempts to trace the root of my mother's family to see if her name could be added to the fifth edition-only to be told that only male names with surname *Kong* are listed in Confucius' genealogy. I had an uncle whose last name was Kong, but I never knew him personally or his full name. My mother also had two younger sisters, whom I met briefly in my early teens but never saw again.

With a history of over 2,500 years and more than eighty generations, the genealogy of Confucius is the longest family tree record in the world, according to the Guinness Book of Records. It was first printed in 1080 AD. Since then it has been revised three times, the last revision in 1937 with 600,000 new entries. The fifth edition contains almost two million Kong entries.

On Nancy's side

Nancy's grandparents, Mr. & Mrs. Lan Yunsheng(藍韵笙)were both born-again Christians. They came to Shanghai from Fuzhou, hometown of well-known Chinese evangelist Watchman Nee, in Fujian Province. He was a salt merchant in Shanghai. They had three daughters, Lan Fuqing(藍馥清)who would become Nancy's mother,Lan Furong(藍馥榮)and Lan Fuxin(藍馥馨)It was Nancy's grandfather who introduced her to church when she was eleven years old. Her childhood experience in Sunday school has impacted the rest of her life.

Nancy's father Sun Yi (孫誼), alias Sun Shiyi(孫世毅), was a pro-Communist playwright and an acquaintance of Chou En-lai. After he joined a leftist theatrical troupe in the late 1930s, the family never heard

from him again. Later he was found living in poverty with drug addiction in Hong Kong. Chou En-lai had him brought to Beijing for medical treatment and care, according to a relative who knew him in Hong Kong. Sun Yi is said to have contributed to the composition of the national anthem of the People's Republic of China.

Nancy's mother Lan Fuqing, better known as Lan Lan(藍蘭) in pre-Communist China's Hollywood, was crowned "Queen of Yenching University at Peking"(北平燕京大學校花) in Beijing in the early 1930s. She became a famous actress in Shanghai for the leading roles she played on stage as well as in silent motion pictures in the old days.

Nancy's parents were separated because of the civil war between the Chinese Communist and Nationalist forces in the late1930s. After many years of separation, her mother filed for divorce and married Dr. Shen Tinghsin(沈鼎新醫師), a Japanese-trained medical doctor who died in Taiwan in 2015 at the age of 100. Her mother became a Christian before she passed away in May 1966. We had prayed for the salvation of her soul for 13 years! *So do not stop praying for your unsaved loved ones!*

Nancy's brother Robert Lan(藍國慶), 82, is a retired real estate broker. He is married to his second wife Peggy Lee(李文珠), 81; they live in San Gabriel, California with their 33-year-old son Ribin. (Note: Robert adopted the same surname of his mother in order to maintain the continuity of the Lan family tree.) Robert has two older children from his previous marriage and five grandchildren; Robert C. C., 50, CEO of UCA General Insurance, one of the largest insurance companies in California; he is married to Mary Lee, 47; they have two children, Haley 20, and son R. J., 18; Daphne, 45, she is married to Greg Cicci, 45, engineer; they live in Chicago with their three daughters, Gabby, 8, and twin girls Guiliana & Elisa, 7.

Nancy's sister Nell Ho(孫南强), a retired real estate manager, passed away in 2012 at the age of 80. Her husband S. H. Ho(賀尚賢), who died several years earlier, was a professor of linguistics at the Univer-

sity of Hawaii where they lived for many years. They are survived by two children and four grandchildren; younger son Jimmy, 51 (9/3/1966), an electrical engineer, married to Japanese-born Ai Tomita, 39 (8/24/1978), an airline employee, they have two children, a boy named Kaito, born on June 15, 2011, and Mia, a girl, born on April 14, 2016; they live in Honolulu, Hawaii. Nell's only daughter Peggy, 60, married to Wally Lee, 67, a retired state government employee; they live in Oakland, California. Nell's oldest son John Ho (1960-2004) died of an accident in California. He is survived by two daughters, Jessica, 28, and Jennifer, 27, they live in Maui, Hawaii.



The author's seven grownup children at Susanna (6)'s wedding L to R. Martha (7), Ruth (2), David (1), John (3), Marry (4) and Esther (5).



The Chow family reunion on the occasion of the matriarch's 80th birthday. 3rd from right: The author and his wife of 65 years.







Chapter Six

God's First Call



An encounter with God, in the Biblical sense of the word, means a life-changing experience for every Christian believer. When the disciples met Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, their lives were changed in one way or another. The same is true with many other believers whose lives have been touched by their Master.

My first encounter with God took place in the summer of 1965. It happened at a mission church in Hong Kong. Speaking in Biblical terminology, I was baptized with the Holy Spirit, or filled with the Spirit, and I saw in my spirit-to my amazement-the risen Savior Jesus Christ standing in front of me! The surreal suddenly became real to me! I didn't have to open my eyes to see if it was Jesus; I knew it was the Lord just as real as if my wife were standing before me. Since then, I have never been the same.

As the early disciples experienced on the day of Pentecost, I was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled me. (See Acts 2:4) For me, it was more than speaking in tongues. It was Christ Himself appearing before me! My hardened heart was melted before Him as I consecrated my life and my all to Him. He came into my heart and made it His dwelling by His Spirit ever since!

Christ living within

Before I received the baptism with the Holy Spirit, I only knew mentally what the Bible says about the resurrection of Jesus. I did not have the personal experience of Jesus Christ living within me, leading and guiding me by His Spirit. For the first 17 years of my Christian life in the church, I had not been taught about the ministry of the Holy Spirit and His role in the lives of individual believers. Now I began to understand its true meaning.

For the first few months following my Spirit baptism, my heart was filled with such joy that I felt like I was living in a new world! Indeed, it was like heaven on earth! I was so taken up with Jesus that the world had lost all its attractions! I used to love my profession as a journalist; I enjoyed reporting and writing, and I loved to see my byline in newspapers and magazines. I loved to go to movies and concerts and, of course, I loved my Chinese food! But for all its worth, everything in this world seemed to have lost its beauty and charm. The only thing I cared about was to live for Jesus and to tell the world about Him!

God's first call

In the midst of my excitement, I heard God's calling for the first time in my life. One day, in the middle of the night, half awake and half asleep, I found myself engaging in a dialogue with the Spirit of God. I don't remember the content of the conversation, but it went something like this:

God: "I want you to quit your secular job and start preaching the Gospel."

Me: "How can I? I have to work to support my family-my wife and four kids."

God: "I will take care of your family. I will supply all your needs."

Me: "But how, Lord? I know that when you sent forth your disciples to preach the Gospel, you told them not to bring anything-"no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt" (Luke 9:3). But how can I and my family survive in this way?"

God: "I will supply all your needs."

Me: "But how, Lord? You know that I do not have that kind of faith."

God: "As long as you are faithful to Me, I will be faithful to you."

That was the end of the conversation. It seemed like God had struck a deal with me: if I would be faithful in preaching the Word of God, He would be faithful in providing all our needs. When I woke up the next morning, I immediately told my wife what had happened during the night. I said, "God is calling me to step out into full-time ministry and to begin to live a faith life, depending upon Him for our livelihood." She took it calmly without asking any questions, and said: "Well, let's pray about it and ask God for confirmation."

I want to insert a word here about my good wife. Ever since we were married, she's been my best friend and co-laborer in the service of God. She has rarely questioned any of the decisions I have made over the years for the good of the church or for the sake of Jesus, whom we both love. I am forever thankful for her love, support and prayers.

Together we prayed every day for two months until we were certain of God's call. For us, it would mean for me to quit my well-paying job and give over to the mission church everything we owned. With our understanding of Biblical teachings, it would be like what the disciples did when Jesus called them to follow Him-and much like those Spirit-filled believers in the early church who sold and shared their possessions with other believers as they lived together in a communal life. (See Mathew 4:18-22, Acts 2:44-45).

While praying together one day, I asked my wife this tough question: "After I quit my job, if it turns out that our life becomes so hard that we

have no money and can't afford even to have a decent meal, would you still be willing to stick with me?" Without any hesitation, she said, "Yes, I'll be with you no matter what..."

Praying for confirmation

In asking God for confirmation, we followed the example of Gideon, who put the fleece out twice to be sure that he heard God correctly. (See Judges 6:36-40.) We asked God specifically to do these three things to confirm His call: (1) to heal my skin disease; (2) to send domestic help to take care of our children free of charge; and (3) to reduce the rent to a certain affordable amount for an apartment near the mission church where we were to work full time.

Within a period of two months God granted our requests one by one: first, the chronic skin rash which had covered a large area of my chest suddenly disappeared; second, a Christian woman who loved the Lord volunteered to help take care of our children, freeing us to do the mission work; third, the landlord finally agreed to lower the monthly rent for the apartment to a level we could afford. God did exactly what we prayed for! We were thus convinced of God's call for me to step out full time.

As soon as we received the confirmation, I resigned from my dual position as head of the USIS Radio Section and staff writer for World Today magazine in Hong Kong. When the announcement was made, all my colleagues in the two offices were caught by surprise. They had no inkling that I was contemplating giving up a job with such good pay and prospects for promotion.

Giving up all to follow Jesus

The call of God was so powerful that I found it so easy to quit my job and give up our earthly possessions to follow Jesus just like the early dis-

ciples did so readily in answer to His call. We owned a modest high-rise apartment and a Volkswagen Beetle, and so we signed the deed and title over to the mission church accordingly. Then we moved into our rental apartment just across the street from the church.

Many others who joined the mission church also gave up their property and valuable possessions, including savings, jewels and gold. One Bible woman gave up everything she owned except a couple of dresses, one she kept for cleaning and another for a change! A Christian lady from Singapore gave a large amount of money along with gold bracelets, earrings, etc. A young couple gave up their business and possessions in Singapore and came to live with us in Hong Kong. For all intents and purposes, the church was in a revival! The mission work expanded rapidly throughout Southeast Asia!

Learning to pray and fast

After joining the mission, we had to work day and night in addition to attending a prayer meeting every morning and a church service almost every evening. There were also occasional weeks of prayer and fasting, eating only one meal a day. Sometimes we had a three-day prayer and fast without solid food; only water or soup was permitted. Once we went on a three-day prayer and fast without any food or liquid. I remember vividly on the second day I was so weak that I couldn't get out of bed. Spiritually speaking, however, I found out that fasting was good for my soul because it gave me time to get closer to God and made me stronger in the inner being.

Since I came from a church well-known for good preaching, they thought I was a good preacher and decided to let me have the Sunday pulpit indefinitely! But after a few Sunday services, I felt that was not what God wanted me to do there, at least not yet. Instead I needed to learn some practical lessons to prepare me as a servant of God and His

children. These lessons included prayer, fasting, hard labor and self-discipline. Good preaching alone was not enough. I needed to learn to be like Jesus who told His disciples, "Learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart" (Matthew 11:29).

I had to learn to eat less and sleep less, pray more and study moreand toil more, if need be. I needed to learn how to get along with people, to accept and love them as they are. Pretty soon I realized that God did not bring me to this mission church just to preach and teach others, but to learn these basic lessons of humility and obedience so that I could be the kind of preacher that God wanted me to be.

More important, I discovered this previously unknown truth: It is relatively easy to give up the outward things for the sake of Jesus or His service-things like money, position, labor, and material possessions. It is not so easy to let go of the internal things-like egoism, pride, self-right-eousness, or as the Bible calls "the flesh," the greatest enemy of God and often a great hindrance to the fulfillment of His divine purpose. Self-denial seems to be the only condition laid down by our Lord Jesus for those who wish to follow Him.

"Public trial"

During our association with the mission, God allowed my wife and me to be subject to misunderstandings, criticisms, and unfounded accusations by fellow Christians inside and outside of the mission. We had to learn not to defend ourselves. One day, the mission director called a meeting of all staff members in a manner that amounted to a "public trial" where we were openly scrutinized. Some of the co-workers expressed themselves freely about what they thought of us, for the most part in a negative way.

The young couple we had invited to live in our home and allowed the use of our master bedroom took the opportunity to find fault with us and publicly criticized and humiliated us. By the grace of God, Nancy and I just listened quietly, although with tears streaming down our cheeks, and chose not to respond. On the inside we felt like a knife was piercing through our hearts. Moreover, the "public trial" continued and was intensified among the churches affiliated with the mission even after we left, as directed by the Lord.

While under these attacks, we were reminded of our Lord Jesus standing in trial before Pilate and facing false charges from the accusing crowd; and of how He remained calm and silent and chose not to answer His accusers: "When He was accused by the chief priests and the elders, He gave no answer.not even to a single charge" (Matthew 27: 12-14).

Sometimes, as we have experienced, simply by dwelling on Christ's sufferings while He walked on the earth, we would feel encouraged and strengthened to endure our portion of trials. Suffering for the sake of Jesus is profitable, for it makes us stronger and better Christians.

God had allowed these things to happen in our life so that we would grow spiritually and become more like Jesus. Although those were difficult days for us, they were part and parcel of the spiritual training and discipline we needed to make us the kind of servants that God intended.

Excesses discovered

After we had been with the mission for about six months, working and living among those supposedly Spirit-filled Christian workers, I began to see some serious problems regarding the way things were being done in their midst. For instance, one of the leaders had prophesied that a new church was going to be birthed at a specific place on a specific date in Thailand. When nothing seemed to be happening, some co-workers were quickly dispatched to the scene to make it happen.

The mission leadership appeared to be overly dependent upon the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as prophesying, speaking

and interpretation of tongues, dreams and visions rather than following Scriptural teachings and principles. Another example of excess was that while divine healing was being preached and practiced, the emphasis was such that people in the congregation would feel guilty or come under condemnation if they were to seek medical help in case of sickness.

For example, the head of the mission who had experienced divine healing herself was suffering from the last stage of cancer. She was in such unbearable pain that she had actually attempted to commit suicide by jumping from her high-rise apartment building, rather than seeking medical treatment. She had preached strongly on divine healing and had written extensively about this subject. Finally, she had to be taken to the hospital-secretly and in the middle of the night-where she spent her last days.

Another example of misinterpretation and misuse of the Scriptures was a flawed suggestion made by the head of the mission before her death. After she died, her body was to be placed at the center of the church meeting hall waiting to be brought back to life on the third day, as Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day.

While she was fighting the cancer, I had a strong desire to talk to her about some of these issues from the Biblical perspective, but she was in constant pain and her condition was deteriorating rapidly to the point where she wasn't able to speak.

However, I did have a meeting with her associates and presented my views on the excesses from the Biblical standpoint, but they refused to accept what the Bible has to say and maintained that their leader had been correct all along.

That was when I decided it was time for us to leave this misguided, charismatic mission. Not long after we left, we began to hear about divisions taking place and people leaving the churches established by the mission.

The Bible says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my

path" (Psalm 119:105). We would certainly be in the dark without the Word of God, not knowing where to go and right from wrong. "Sincethey have rejected the Word of the Lord, what kind of wisdom do they have"? (Jeremiah 8:9).

Lessons learned

By this time, we had ended our relationship with two large Christian fellowships. Both had passion for evangelism, zeal for serving the Lord, and a willingness to give up all for the sake of Jesus. The first fellowship was much larger, well over 300 churches in pre-Communist China, later growing into the thousands overseas. Their emphasis had been on the so-called "local church ground," as they saw it from the Bible, but without any sound teachings on the role of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ. For the most part they were functioning in the intellectual and rational realm instead of the spiritual realm. In other words, they had a lot of head knowledge and very little, if any, spiritual reality. When faced with tests and practical challenges, they had no power to overcome.

The second fellowship of churches mentioned above, known as *Charismatic/Pentecostal*, was sort of "Johnny-come-lately," having come out of traditional, denominational churches. Fresh from being filled with the Holy Spirit, its emphasis was on signs and wonders and the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, but with little or no attention to the fruit of the Spirit or the proper understanding and application of the written Word of God.

These two extreme groups of churches had apparently failed to strike a balance, as they should have, between the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The two must go hand-in-hand, like the two tracks on a railroad on which the train-the Body of Christ, the Church-can grow and go safely forward. Christ as Head of the Church must be exalted above all "so that in everything He might have the supremacy" (Col 1:18). Failing this, the Church, or any local church for that matter, cannot be strong and remain

united to manifest the presence, the power and the beauty of Jesus Christ.

These were the primary reasons, as far as I could see, for the recurring divisions that led to the disintegration of the two large fellowships that we had been involved with over a period of nearly 20 years. Through it all, I have learned this invaluable lesson: We must always keep a balance; better yet, a linkage between the written Word of God and the Spirit of God as a safeguard against excesses and fanaticism. More importantly, with all eyes constantly fixed on Jesus Christ!

The Word of God and the Spirit of God are inseparable, for they are essentially one. The Bible says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.God is Spirit." We need to know the Holy Bible, the written Word of God. We also need to know the Holy Spirit, who is God Himself and without whose presence and revelation we cannot know Jesus Christ-who "is all and is in all." (See John 1:1; 4:24; Col 3:11.)



Chapter Seven

Doing God's Will



"The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:17)..

The most important thing in the life of a Christian believer is to do the will of God. Doing God's will does not necessarily mean being in the ministry, attending church services, making charitable contributions, or doing missionary work; it is doing what God wants you to do and being what He wants you to be.

Doing the will of God is the only thing that matters to Him. Jesus warns that not everyone who calls Him "Lord, Lord,"and/or not everyone who claims to have done mighty things in the name of Jesus "will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father" (Matt 7:22).

As related previously, we joined the mission church because we were convinced it was what God wanted us to do at that time. We did it only after it was confirmed in a number of concrete ways as we prayed it would be. Once we saw the excesses and deviations within the mission circles, it was clearly time for us to leave. Since God had brought us there, we thought we had better let God take us out. As you will see, the way God worked it out was amazing.

Realizing the importance of being in the will of God, I endeavored to ensure that every step we took to part from the mission was in accordance with God's will. We had said to the Lord, "We would rather die in your will than to live outside of your will." I had learned through the vicissitude of life that being in the will of God is the safest place on earth one can be, especially in these last perilous days. Knowing that you are in the will of God brings a real sense of peace and security, if you believe with all your heart that God is over all and that He has every situation under His control.

However, doing the will of God could be a real challenge and test of one's faith and obedience and seemingly risky at times; but the result is invariably an increased knowledge of the goodness, faithfulness, and trustworthiness of the Almighty God.

We do well to remember that God loves us with an everlasting love. He knows all about us and cares for us in every minute detail of our life, agreeing with what Jesus said: "And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Therefore, no harm can come to us, or as Jesus put it: "... not a hair of your head will perish" without the permission of our Heavenly Father (Matt. 10:30, Lk.21:18).

How to know God's will

Regarding the will of God, a question often raised is "how can one *know* it?" The will of God—the eternal purpose and desire of God—is described in great detail in the Scriptures. Romans 12:2 tells us "*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is...His good, pleasing and perfect will." Reading the Bible will enable us to prove this true.*

In practice, however, as a rule of thumb, I have found that there are three ways in which one can determine the will of God: (1) a constant prompting of the Spirit of God within;(2) a definitive word from God in

the Scriptures; and (3) circumstantial confirmation. In addition, consultation with a spiritually mature Christian leader would further help ascertain the will of God.

God works in all things for our good

When it became clear to us that it was time to leave the mission church, Nancy was pregnant with our fifth child, and the baby was due in less than two weeks. While preparing for her childbirth, we received an urgent telephone call from her step-father in Taiwan asking for Nancy to return home immediately to be with her mother, who was dying of cancer.

Because Nancy was so close to her due date, the airline did not allow us to book her flight without a doctor's written permission stating that she was fit to travel. I went to see Dr. Eric Fishbacher, a physician friend and brother in Christ, who gave her the go-ahead to fly to Taiwan.

The trip was expected to be a short one, but after Nancy arrived in Taiwan, her mother's condition improved, and she was asked to stay and provide continuing care for her. It appeared certain that my wife was going to have the baby in Taiwan. I was still in Hong Kong at the time with our four children, waiting for a clear sign from the Lord regarding whether or not I should book our passage to Taiwan. I prayed and waited.

One evening as I was praying on the rooftop of the six-story mission building, I heard these words clearly in my spirit: "You are to bring your children back to Taiwan on a ship scheduled to sail from Hong Kong on July 23rd [1966]." Three days later I received a letter from Nancy reporting that she and the new-born baby were doing well, and additionally: "You should come back to Taiwan with the kids on the ship scheduled to depart from Hong Kong on July 23rd." The same departure date mentioned in her letter was a surprise to me because I didn't tell her anything about what I heard on the rooftop. I took this as confirmation that should be the day God wanted me to leave the mission for good.

Nancy also reported in the letter that after Esther was born, she and the baby had been under the care of our church friends in Taiwan who had known us for years. God had impressed upon them to bring food and cash gifts to her. Among other things, she said, "I believe this is the way God is going to provide for our needs in the near future." For the next eight months, until I returned to secular employment, God met our financial needs in a wonderful way.

Divine protection

Indeed, our Heavenly Father took care of us every step of the way as we were led by His Spirit. While boarding the freight-passenger ship in Hong Kong with our four children, when our little Mary was three years old, I put her on the top of a bunk bed. I went to help the three older children with their bags when suddenly I heard a "bang!" I quickly turned around to see Mary on the floor crying. She had fallen off, but she wasn't hurt. Thankfully, and amusingly, I called it a "soft landing!"

When we arrived safely in Taiwan, we were now together as a family. Esther was already seven weeks old, and that was the first time we saw her. Mom had been alone, with no one to provide the kind of "special care" as was traditionally done by Chinese custom, for the first 30 days after childbirth. Although there were some church friends who came to visit her and who brought food and money, she was too weak to cook or do any house chores besides feeding the baby. The loft of the four-story house where she and the baby were staying had only a single bed and a shanty crib. The place had been vacant for quite some time, and the windows needed repair. Nancy was in dire need of help.

Then came a timely God-send! Pastor James Shao(邵遵瀾牧師), a former co-worker and close friend of our family, came to visit Nancy and found mother and baby in urgent need of care. His wife and my wife were close friends who in the past spent time together seeking the Lord. He immediately offered to take them to his home where his wife and mother

could provide the badly needed help. Without hesitation, Nancy accepted the offer, quickly wrapping the baby and gathering all their personal belongings. She got on the back seat of his scooter, one hand clenching the four-day-old baby and another holding onto the middle rail heading off to the pastor's residence.

When they arrived, his mother and wife were already at the door waiting to receive them with open arms. They quickly cooked some hot noodle soup for Nancy. Although they had no crib for the new-born "special guest," Mrs. Shao instantly came up with the amusing idea of using one of the chest drawers, wherein the tiny girl was put to rest comfortably. That's where Esther got her nickname "drawer baby." The Shaos took loving care of Nancy and baby Esther until the traditional 30-day post-natal home-care period was fulfilled.

There was something else special about the "drawer baby." She was unusually quiet, seldom crying except when hungry or needing to be changed. She quietly slept in that drawer for the whole time at the Shaos. She continued to be such a good baby even when seven months later and in her own crib, she scarcely required being picked up. This made her mom's life considerably easier, especially during those difficult early months.

Divine provision

For the first eight months after we moved back to Taiwan, we had no money and no savings, literally penniless. We had to learn to trust God to provide for our basic needs. Although my previous employer, the publisher of China Post, had twice invited me to rejoin the English-language newspaper, I did not feel free to go back to work, at least not yet. I felt like God wanted me to trust Him, to honor His promise that He would supply all our needs in His own way.

With five children, ages 12, 10, 7, 4 and 8 weeks, we moved in with Nancy's step-father, living on the top floor of his four-story commercial

building where he had his medical practice. Nancy's mother had died two months earlier. We had only some simple furniture in the loft and no bedrooms or a kitchen. Sister Wang Tan Meili (王譚美利姊妹), a former church friend, came to visit us and took note of what was lacking. She immediately went to work on our behalf.

Without saying a single word to us, Sister Wang quietly ordered building materials which were later delivered in batches. When there were enough materials, she hired a carpenter to build partitions and a small kitchen on the veranda. The children could have their bedrooms, and we had a place for cooking and washing. Other church friends who loved the Lord also contributed toward the cost of construction. But it was all done without our asking! Once again, God demonstrated His faithfulness in meeting our family's needs.

The way God provided our living expenses was also most amazing. Every Sunday morning after church service, the ushers who opened the offering box would find an envelope with my name written on it and containing a cash gift just enough to feed a family of seven for one week. This happened for eight months! From week to week we lived on this cash offering from an anonymous giver.

What was even more amazing was that when an additional need arose, we would receive an increased amount of cash to cover that need. Once, when Nancy's step-father's birthday was coming up and we needed extra money to buy him a birthday cake, we prayed for that specific need. Lo and behold! On the following Sunday morning we received additional cash which enabled us to buy a beautiful birthday cake for him.

Another time, we needed some extra money to pay for home tutoring. Before our 12-year-old David left for school that morning, he reminded his mom that the teacher was to be paid later that evening. His mom told him to pray for it. Early on that afternoon, a sister in Christ showed up for a time of fellowship and prayer with us. After she left, as she got down to the second level of the four-story building, she suddenly turned

around and came back up to the fourth floor, handing us a sealed envelope and saying: "Sorry, but I almost forgot this." We opened the envelope and there was the exact amount of money we needed to pay for the tutor!

When David came home from school, he asked, "Do we have the money to pay my teacher?" Before Nancy answered him, she first asked, "Did you pray?" He replied, "I did." Then she said, "Yes, we have the money."

Since the time I gave up my secular employment 32 years ago to step out into full-time ministry without taking a salary, God has not failed to supply all our needs. It is just as He promised when He called me the first time: "As long as you are faithful to Me, I will be faithful to you. I will supply all your needs."



Jack and Nancy on his 80th birthday.



Chapter Eight

Ministry vs. Marketplace



"I am a Hebrew [or Christian], and I fear the Lord" (Jonah 1:9).

It was at this time, after God had been marvelously supplying all our needs from week to week without fail for eight months straight that I was asked to return to work for my former newspaper employer. However, I did not have the liberty to do so unless I received some kind of clear indication from God that it would be permissible to return to secular employment. At the same time, I knew I had to learn to trust the Lord for all my needs under any circumstances.

I received still another job offer from a good friend in Hong Kong, George Paterson, a former British journalist and author, also a brother in Christ. He had just been appointed Editor-in-Chief of *Hong Kong Enter-prise*, a monthly business magazine published by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, a semi-government organization in the then British Colony. The position, listed as Trade Adviser/Journalist, was to report and write about some of the best light industrial products made in Hong Kong.

When this job was first offered to me, I didn't give it much consideration, as I was too preoccupied with the ministry to think about returning to the business world. However, Brother George called me repeatedly to

ask me to help him out, because none of the multiple applicants he had interviewed met his requirements, and he thought I would be a perfect fit for the job. He also stated his urgency to have this position filled.

Seeking God's guidance

I debated with myself whether it is right before God and man for me to quit the ministry in favor of a secular job, since I knew I'd been called into full-time ministry. How do you explain your decision to the church people? How do you reconcile a job in the "marketplace" with my having given myself as a full-time minister to serve the Lord without salary, yet fulfill my responsibility to provide for a family?

These were some of my questions. I was in a dilemma and wrestled with the problem for quite a while. I didn't want to displease God, nor did I wish to face embarrassment before man. I sought the Lord directly. I earnestly prayed and searched the Scriptures for an answer.

Although I usually don't take dreams seriously, one night I had one. In this dream I saw myself standing on a seashore in front of a huge rock. Further out in the ocean, I saw a man with his right hand pointing to the south, as if he were directing me to go in that direction. I woke up the next morning wondering if Hong Kong was located south of Taiwan. Referring to a map, I found that Hong Kong was indeed southwest of Taiwan. That, however, was not enough for me to make such an important decision; I needed to hear from God for myself.

One morning, as I was reading the Bible, my attention was directed to the story of Jonah, a prophet in the Old Testament whom God had sent to Nineveh, the ancient capital of the Assyrian Empire (900-605 B.C.) with a message of salvation-"for their wickedness has come up before Me." But Jonah ran away from God. He took a ship going in the opposite direction and fled to Tarshish, an ancient mining colony in southwestern Spain. On his way, God sent a severe storm so violent that the ship was

about to break up. Those on board were all scared, blaming Jonah for the near disaster. The sailors asked him, "What is your occupation? And where do you come from?" He said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord" (Jonah 1:2, 8, 9).

A word from the Lord

While reading this particular passage, I felt God was answering my question. He seemed to be saying to me, "It does not matter what your occupation is or where you are coming from. What matters is that you fear the Lord." I took it to mean that of most importance is being in the will of God, being where God wants me to be, doing what He wants me to do. Whether I am in the ministry or in secular employment, what matters to God is that I fear Him and keep His commandments.

Isn't this what King Solomon concluded after all his studies and experiences? After all, he was the wisest man who ever lived on the face of the earth. He ended the Book of Ecclesiastes with these words: "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind" [of all men and women] (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

As I searched the Scriptures I found examples such as the Apostle Paul and his co-workers. Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, Aquila and his wife Priscilla and others who were apostles all had their own secular businesses. Dr. Luke undoubtedly continued his medical practice while serving the Lord; Aquila and Priscilla were tent makers by trade. So was Paul, who joined them to form a business partnership. Still, their primary call was to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to live out the life of the resurrected Savior.

So, with perfect peace in my heart, I decided to accept the job offer and relocate our family to Hong Kong. I thought, "Never mind what people might say about my decision; my perennial call is to deny myself and take up the cross and follow Jesus." This is Jesus' call for everyone who wishes to follow Him. The Lord's entire mental attitude toward the Father throughout His earthly life of thirty-three and a half years was "not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42).

I also realized that when God called me to "preach the Word" two years earlier, He did not mean for me to do all my preaching just within the confines of a church environment, but also out in the market place and in society as a whole. God did not call me to preach the Gospel only by mouth and/or by other means of communication. More importantly, I was called to preach *by the way I live*.

There is as great a spiritual need outside of the church as within the church. The so-called five-fold ministry-apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers and pastors-is needed in the market place as much as in the body of Christ. I believe there are those who are called to be these apostles, evangelists, teachers and pastors in the market place! In a word, *the world* needs Jesus more than ever before!

To all Christians, including pastors and preachers, Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth" [to influence all people]. "You are the light of the world." "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds [living out the life of Christ] and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:13,14,16).

Not my will, but Thy will

When God calls you—and you will know it—it does not necessarily mean that you are to leave your secular occupation to become a full-time pastor, evangelist or missionary. When God calls you, or when you think that God is calling you, the first thing that probably will come to your mind is that you need to attend a seminary for training to qualify you as a minister. But this is not the way the disciples of Jesus were trained. None of them went to a seminary. The Apostle Paul was an accomplished

Jewish scholar before his conversion, but he never went to a so-called theological seminary.

God has His own ways of training His servants. Also, God does not call everyone to be a pastor, evangelist or missionary. His vineyard is worldwide, and there are various needs. God has a place for everyone who is called. He alone knows where to send and place His servants. It is our duty to obey His bidding.

The question now is: How do you know what God wants you to do? As I have outlined in the previous chapter, I have learned to ascertain the will of God for me in three basic ways: a constant prompting of the indwelling Spirit; a definite word from the Lord; and circumstantial confirmation. It pays to wait for God's direction and confirmation to ensure that we are in the will of God and doing what He wants us to do.

The rule of thumb I generally use is whether I have peace in my heart when I try to do what I believe God desires. When I don't have peace, or if I am uncertain regarding what to do, I would not do anything but pray and wait and see. When there is uneasiness while doing something or going somewhere, it may well be a sign that we should stop or back off. God certainly will make us know what to do in His time, since He desires everyone to do His will. The indwelling Holy Spirit, or the "holy anointing," as referred to by the Apostle John, "teaches you about all things as that anointing is real, not counterfeit..." (1 John 2:27).

As we are taught and led by the anointing that abides within us, we stay attached to the Lord of life, as the branch is attached to the Vine, thereby bearing much fruit. Bearing spiritual fruit such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control which are commonly called the "fruit of the Spirit," is a natural consequence of constantly abiding in the Lord.

Finally, we should also give God time and space to manifest the gift or gifts which He desires to impart to members of the Body of Christ, His children. The Apostle Paul teaches that not all members have the same gift or ministry. (see 1 Corinthians 14:26-30) But if we would wait patiently and humbly, God will show us the part or parts we are to play in the church or in the market place. To do the will of God is the primary thing, the hallmark of the life of Jesus. And so it should be ours.



Chapter Nine

Divine Plans



"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Life is full of challenges; it is forever a learning and growing process. As the good old Chinese saying goes, "You don't stop learning as long as you live." At age 87, I am still learning because the more you learn, the more you feel you need to learn, especially in this hi-tech, fast-changing world.

Particularly for serious Christian believers, life is a growing and ever-enriching experience as you continue to learn about the secrets of the kingdom of God. The challenges in life are opportunities for us to grow in faith as well as in the grace and knowledge of God. Life also allows us to gain wisdom and understanding, both more precious than silver and gold.

During the six-year period from 1962 to 1968, we moved between Hong Kong and Taiwan four times. We made these moves not only because of job situations, but also because we believed God was leading the way and that He had a plan and divine purpose for our lives as His children.

What were His purposes for these transitions? I once asked God, "What do you want from me, Lord?" He answered, "I want just you. If you would give me yourself more completely, you can have more of Me." At the time I did not understand what it meant to have God Himself. As I continued to grow in Christ, I began to see that having God Himself means possessing all the riches of God, all that He is and all that He has. As the Apostle Paul put it, "...the boundless [unsearchable] riches of Christ..." (Ephesians 3:8).

Lessons learned

Just what were some of the lessons God had for us to learn? First and foremost, He taught us to live what I would call a "tent life" on earth since life is short, living the kind of life that Abraham of old lived as he followed God all the way into the Promised Land.

When Abram (his former name) left his hometown of Haran with his family, he did not know where he was going. He moved his tents as God led and directed him, because he believed there is a better homeland. "For he was looking forward to the city with foundations whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

God also taught me how to get along with people, people who are different from me and of diverse cultures and ethnic origins-to accept and love them as they are.

As City News Editor and Chief Reporter on the English-language newspaper *Hong Kong Standard*, there were people on my staff from Australia, England, India, Portugal, North America and North and South China. I had to learn how to establish a rapport with them in a working relationship despite our differences.

Even Chinese people from the same country are different from each other. The northerners are more straightforward and physically rugged than the southerners, who are more suave and sophisticated. These observations from my personal experience proved to be helpful subsequently in my role as pastor of a church where I had to deal with various kinds of people and problems.

Hong Kong is a fascinating city with international flavor. It is also where I went through a series of spiritual crises. While my baptism of the Holy Spirit brought about a revolutionary change in my life, it also caused a stir in my church, resulting in my suspension from a leadership role and eventually to our total withdrawal from the church we loved.

For reasons stated in the preceding chapters, we had to leave two rather large churches. The first was opposed to my experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit; we dissociated ourselves from the second church because of its excesses and deviations from the Scriptures.

Challenges in life

Our departure from these two churches had been widely criticized, ridiculed, and ruthlessly attacked especially by leaders of the second church. We had given up all of our possessions when we joined them, and these criticisms and attacks especially caused us deep hurt and pain. I became so discouraged that I didn't want to have anything to do with any church. I thought the church should be a place where people are supposed to love each other, but what I experienced in these churches was no different from what I saw in the world.

For a good while I kept asking the Lord, "Why do such things happen in Your churches?" I was confused and perplexed with many questions concerning the church. For nearly two years I didn't go to any church at all. I spent a lot of my time reflecting on my bitter experiences. I'd gone into partial seclusion since I was still working in order to be with God alone. I would come home from work and spend hours in my room resting, praying, and reading my Bible, waiting on the Lord for answers to the many questions troubling me. Only on Sunday afternoons, we would meet with a few Christian friends in a private home.

Miracles begin to happen

During this quiet season, nearly all my baffling questions simply disappeared. My hurts and pains inexplicably vanished, bitterness was gone, hatred was taken away and peace and tranquility were miraculously set into my heart and soul. I didn't know what happened!

All I could remember was that during those restful, quiet times, I did a lot of praying-silent prayer for the most part—and Bible reading and meditating. All the questions I had were gradually answered one by one. I was completely healed and restored—as though all past criticisms and malicious attacks had never taken place.

I could not explain what transpired. The only way I could describe it is to say, "the Almighty God did it!" How? I don't know. But I took by faith what the Bible says: "*By His* [Jesus'] *wounds you have been healed*" (1 Peter 2:24). I had no doubt that God healed me and fully restored me! Now I could say, "I am at peace!"

All things work together for our good

Gradually I came to understand the truth of one of the often quoted Bible verses: "And we know that in all things [good or bad] God works for the good of those who love Him" (Romans 8:28). Whatever happens to a Christian believer is for a divine purpose. It is the result that matters; the outcome is always for the good of those who love God.

I learned that nothing can happen to us as children of God without His permission and divine purpose. Bad things happen to Christian believers just as they do to non-believers, but for the ultimate good of those who love God. As the apostle Paul put it, "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him*" (Romans 8:28).

For children of God, there are no such things as good luck or bad luck because we have a loving Father in heaven who has loved us with His infinite and everlasting love. As the Creator and Sovereign Lord of the universe, all things are under His control. Everything that God allows to happen to us is meant for good. This is one of the most precious truths I learned through my unpleasant experiences in Hong Kong.

What may be one of the most profound lessons I learned through my spiritual crises is the "mystery" of spending time alone with God-not necessarily praying or reading the Bible all the time, but simply being quiet and still in His presence. I did this for one to two hours daily for nearly two years. As a result, I was completely healed of my inner hurts and wounds, and all my questions dissolved. This practice, which in reality I had started aimlessly, is referred to in the Scriptures as "waiting on God," which is also the title of my first book in the English language.

During the healing process, I asked God time and again why He allowed me to go through the unpleasant experiences in the two churches in Hong Kong. His answer always was loud and clear: "All things work together for the good of those who love God." It took me years to see the results and to be convinced of the validity and depth of this wonderful truth. I realized what I had considered as "bad things" that happened to me were meant for good in the end.

A good God gives only good things

Apart from material blessings, God, in His goodness and mercy, has blessed me with so many good things: the wonder of His presence; inner peace and joy in my heart; power to forgive and forget; ability to be tolerant; ability to love those who have hurt me and spiritual insights into some of the deep things of God, only to mention a few.

For those who truly love God, our heavenly Father has only good things in store. Even when bad things happen to us, He can cause them to work for our eternal benefit. Once we realize this wonderful truth and begin to apply it to our personal lives, there will be less grumbling or finger pointing.

There will always be things happening in this world that we may not understand. Nevertheless, our Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, knows all about us. He loves us and knows what is best for us. We need simply to trust and love God wholeheartedly, because He not only has our best interest at heart, but always works on our behalf for our benefit.

Adorned with spiritual jewels

Whenever you find yourself in a difficult situation, remember this: God has all things under His control, and He will cause all things to work "for the good of those who love Him." If you love God, no matter what happens to you, everything will turn out to be beneficial for you.

God is going to work on your behalf if you are willing to learn the lesson that He has for you, whether it be patience, faith, love, forgiveness, hope, or humility. These are among the spiritual jewels with which God desires to adorn us in order that we may be prepared as part of the collective Bride of Christ, the ultimate church described in the Bible "...as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:27).

Instead of running away from difficult circumstances, let us embrace hardship and gladly accept it as from the skillful hand of our loving Father who "works in all things" only for our benefit. God has also promised that He will not allow us to be tried beyond our ability to bear. As Scripture says, "God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

To those of you whose faith is being tried, let me say this: After our faith is tested and proven to be genuine, it will be more precious than gold. Let us, therefore, take every lesson that God has for us to learn, and learn it well by the grace of God. Only in that way may we grow spiritually

and become mature Christians to reflect the beauty of Jesus Christ in the world.

There is no fear in God's love

Let me repeat this: Nothing can happen to us or harm us without the permission of God. God loves and cares for us to the minutest details of our life: "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:30). Therefore, we have nothing to fear since we know that our life and times are in His hand. "There is no fear in love. But [God's] perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18).

It is reassuring to know that nothing can happen to us without God's permission. His divine purpose is to bless us, to strengthen us, to help us grow spiritually, to prosper and enrich us in Christ, so that we may know Him better and eventually be changed and become like Him. This is the ultimate purpose of God's salvation—not only to save us from eternal damnation, but more importantly, to gradually change and mold us into the glorious image of Jesus Christ!

The secret of waiting on God

"For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, 'In returning [to God] and rest [before Him], you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength. But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 30:15; 40:31 NKJV).

The practice of waiting on God—getting alone with God in quietness and stillness—is the most valuable lesson I learned through my spiritual wilderness experience. "The secret of waiting on God" is how we are ushered into God's treasure house.

Waiting on God, a deeper form of prayer life and intimacy with God, is a devotional lesson no one had ever taught me. It was through my spiritual crisis that the Spirit of God led me into this blessed state. Through this practice, however, I discovered the easiest way to get connected to God, a way of entering into His presence in order to develop an intimate relationship with Him.

I found that as we come to wait on the Lord, we are actually coming into the presence of God, to have fellowship with Him, and to be spiritually attached to the One who is the Source of life, light, power, wisdom—all and all that we need in order to live a full Christian life. God refers to Himself as "...the spring of living water..." (Jeremiah 2:13) which means He is the endless Source of all our supply.

Jesus Christ is the ultimate answer to all our problems in this life. As I have recounted above, the Lord performed miraculous inner healings for me and answered all my troubling questions as I continued to spend time waiting upon the Lord. As Scripture says, "*But, those who wait on the Lord shall renew their* [divine] *strength...*" (Isaiah 40:31).

Every Bible-believing Christian may come to God in time of trouble or peace. The Bible clearly says, "Come near to God and He will come near to you" (James 4:8). But you must believe that God is there for you. The Bible also admonishes: "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). When we approach God, we must do so by faith, simply believing in our heart that He is there, and that He is within us by His Spirit.

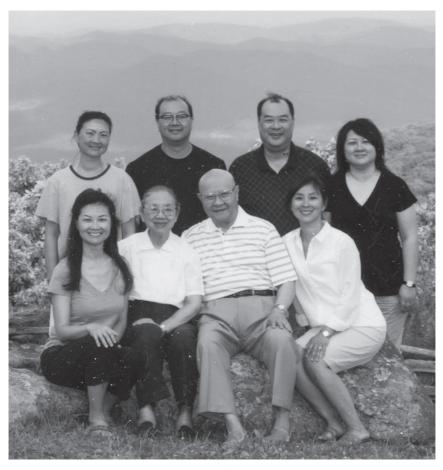
As we draw near to God by faith, praying in our heart not necessarily with words, silently and patiently waiting before Him, we should expect Him to work on our behalf and to meet our needs, whatever they may be and in whatever way He may choose. I have found this way of approaching God to be very powerful and rewarding!

I also found waiting on God to be an effective way of overcoming

our own weaknesses, those hidden things such as pride, self-righteousness, jealousy, bitterness, hatred, and our own complex personality. God knows all our needs, and He is always there to help us as we approach Him in earnest. By waiting on God, I can have serenity and inner peace in the midst of any storm, stress or pressure.

In short, the practice of waiting on God, if done consistently on a continuing regular basis, would eventually ensure the success of a happy, triumphant Christian life. For pastors, ministers and missionaries, continual waiting on the Lord will be your secret of an anointed and fruitful ministry!

(For further discussion on the subject, please read my book "Waiting on God" available in most online bookstores.)



Jack and Nancy with six children on his 80th birthday



Chapter Ten

Led to the U.S.A.



"For this God is our God forever and ever; He will be our Guide even to the end" (Psalm 48:14).

This God is the only true God, and I have come to know Him experientially as a loving Father and Savior Lord Jesus Christ. He not only answers our prayers, but He also leads and guides us unerringly in the choices and decisions to be made in our life. As we deliberately seek to live in accordance with His will, He ensures our well-being, peace and prosperity. As long as I keep endeavoring to do His will to the best of my knowledge, He will continue to lead and bless me, even to the end of my life.

When I was offered the position of General Manager of *China Post*, an English-language newspaper in Taiwan, I saw it as a significant step up the professional ladder. I also felt it was a signal from God that He would have us move on again after living in Hong Kong for another two years (from 1967-1968). Our previous sojourn in the then British colony had been from 1962-1966.

During the late 1960s, while working in Hong Kong, I witnessed the fallout from the "Cultural Revolution" in China, where countless peo-

ple were subject to ill-treatment and cruelty by the "Red Guards" of the Communist leadership. Dead bodies, some dismembered and some with hands tied to their backs, were seen floating on the waters of Hong Kong Harbor, presumably originating from across the Chinese border. We also weathered a period of social unrest in Hong Kong where home-made bombs, both fake and real, were placed on the streets by British colony pro-Communist leftist unions. This caused a mass exodus of wealthy Hong Kong residents to Western countries like Canada and the United States.

During our six years of residence in Hong Kong, I had several journalism jobs: namely, News Editor/Chief Reporter for the English-language newspaper *Hong Kong Standard*; Staff Writer/Reporter for *World Today*, a widely circulated Chinese-language magazine published by the U.S. Information Service in Hong Kong; Special Correspondent for the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe; and Trade Adviser/Journalist with the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, a semi-government organization. I accepted the job offer from *China Post* on condition that the first six months would be a trial period. If the results proved to be satisfactory to both sides, I would sign a longer-term contract. With this understanding, I resigned from the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and started preparations for the transition.

First missionary venture

During the interim, however, I felt a call from God to go to Singapore on a short-term missionary trip—my first such trip ever. Since it would last one month and I would be without income, I would have to trust God to meet my financial needs. I didn't know anyone in Singapore at that time except a Christian businessman whom I had only met briefly in Hong Kong. But the call was so strong and clear, I could not but obey.

I remember after paying for my airfare, I had only about \$30 (U.S.

currency) when I boarded the plane. I had no idea where I was going to stay while in Singapore, so I was prepared to sleep on the street of the tropical city-state, if need be. Whatever decision I made for the sake of the Lord Jesus, however foolish it might seem, my dear wife would always support me with her prayer and faith.

To my pleasant surprise, when I arrived in Singapore, Zhou Ming, the Christian brother whom I had met in Hong Kong, took me into his home. His house was like a mansion, and I stayed there for exactly one month. Through this brother in Christ, God opened a door for me to preach at two evangelical churches in Singapore, one of which was established by Watchman Nee during his early missionary journey to the South Seas.

With about 200 people in attendance, I preached in that church three nights in a row. On the first night I preached on the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, and there was hardly any response. On the second night, the audience seemed to be paying more attention to my message. On the third night, toward the end of the meeting, to the surprise of everyone present, there was suddenly a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit! People rose up from their seats as they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Many of them came forward to confess their sins or repent of their lack of love for Christ. An 80-year-old lady who had been with that church all her life later told me, "I've never seen anything like it in our church!"

That still small Voice

On the last day of my stay in Singapore, I received a phone call from a church elder in Penang, Malaysia, inviting me to speak in his church. As I spoke to him on the phone, the Holy Spirit clearly whispered to me: "Your one-month mission in Singapore is fulfilled. You are to return to Hong Kong and pack up for your move to Taiwan!" I knew it was the Lord speaking to me as clearly as He told me to go to Singapore. I had no

choice but to decline the invitation.

Surprisingly, on the night before I left Singapore, Brother Zhou Ming handed me a large envelope which contained a bundle of cash. He said the money was his tithes and offering, which he was giving me for my ministry in Singapore. When I counted the bills, the total amount came to be more than enough to compensate for the one-month pay I gave up for the mission trip! Time and time again God has proved Himself to be faithful in supplying my needs, whether in secular employment or doing church work.

New job, new challenges

I started my new job as CEO of *China Post* in the fall of 1968. In addition to my salary, we were provided an apartment behind the newspaper office building, and we settled in fairly comfortably. I enjoyed my job, since we had good public relations with both the Government and the private sector, especially with the foreign communities in Taiwan, including the then U.S. Embassy and the Taipei American School. We were fortunate enough to get full scholarships for David and Ruth, our two oldest children, to attend TAS. In those days, only elite Chinese families could afford to send their children to the American school.

Soon after we settled in, our faith was tested again. One day, we found all six children sick with the flu, all running a fever and several badly coughing. I had to be at work while Mother was home taking care of the ailing children. In those days, we couldn't afford to have any health insurance in Taiwan, and it was not our habit to bring our children to a doctor when they took ill. We would just pray for their healing, and they would always get well.

When I got home from work, seeing all six children sick in bed, Mother and I decided to go into each bedroom to lay hands on them. One by one we prayed earnestly for divine healing. After we had finished praying, we returned to our own bedroom, got down on our knees and praised the Lord loudly for about half an hour. We did it because we had been taught that praising God is a powerful weapon against the devil. Several days later, all six children were up and running again!

Child lost & found

One of the most unforgettable scary experiences we had in Taiwan involved our two-and-a-half-year-old daughter Esther. Because she was missing for several hours, it caused quite a stir. Concerned that she might have been abducted, many of us, including some office staff members, were all out trying to find her.

That afternoon Mother needed to go out on an errand. As she left our apartment, Esther followed her without Mother knowing it. As little Esther tried to catch up with Mom from a distance, Mother came to an intersection where she made a turn, thus disappearing from Esther's sight. Not knowing what to do, the frightened child started crying for help.

A lady in the neighborhood saw her crying and came to her rescue. She picked up Esther and carried her to her own house. Then she reported a "missing girl" to the nearby police station. The officer on duty immediately made a phone call to the newspaper office and gave the information for publication, including the name and address of the lady who had called. My staff realized it must have been their CEO's daughter *Yee Si Tie*, (Esther in Chinese). Upon receiving the report, Mother rushed to the lady's house and there found her little girl crying. The moment Esther saw her mom appear at the door, she jumped off the lady's lap and ran into her arms. We all breathed a sigh of relief and thanked God for her safe return.

From Taiwan to the USA

At first, I thought our move from Hong Kong back to Taiwan was permanent. To my surprise, just before my six-month trial run at *China Post* was due to expire, I was approached by another newspaper tycoon, Mr. Yu Chi-Chung, owner and publisher of the mass circulation newspaper *China Times*, with an offer to be its editor-in-chief. It was an attractive position because *China Times* is one of the two largest, most influential newspapers in Taiwan.

The offer, if agreed upon, would have meant we could settle in Taiwan permanently as we had intended. It would have been an ideal situation, since most of our children had been born there and since I had good connections with the Nationalist Government and foreign communities. Nevertheless, the negotiations hit a snag. The proposal was strongly opposed by the senior editorial staff within the newspaper. Mr. Yu then made another offer—to send me to the United States as the *China Times* Bureau Chief and assigned to Washington, D. C. I turned down the second offer because I wanted to remain in Taiwan indefinitely.

Strangely, after I rejected the offer, I had no peace in my heart. For several days, I couldn't sleep well at night. I wondered why. Was God trying to tell me something? I reasoned in my own heart, "During the last six years, we moved back and forth between Taiwan and Hong Kong four times. Are we to move again—even to the other side of the Pacific Ocean?" I shared my heart with my praying wife, and she said, "Maybe God wants us to move to America. Why don't we pray about it?"

As we started praying together, strange things began to happen, one after another. First, one of our prayer partners, Brother Jonah Huang, suddenly showed up at our apartment one morning. He quickly pulled up a chair to sit down. He was very serious as he said to me, "Brother Chow,

while I was praying last night, the Lord told me to come to tell you that He wanted to send you to the United States." It sounded like the second offer made to me by the publisher of *China Times*!

Brother Jonah, who later became "Pastor" Huang, went on to explain why he believed he got the word from God. That morning, before he had come to our apartment, he was praying by himself in the house where we held our prayer meetings. The road outside was blocked because of construction work. He said to the Lord: "If you want me to take the message to Brother Chow, please send some workers to remove the roadblock." As soon as he finished praying, he lifted his eyes and saw the blockade being cleared!

Shortly after he brought me the message, his wife An Jing (Peace) came to our apartment for a visit. Acting somewhat oddly, she looked around the apartment, going through every room. She looked at every piece of furniture even the old refrigerator. Then she said to my wife, "I heard you are planning to move to America. Are you going to sell your furniture lock, stock, and barrel?" Nancy replied, "Yes," realizing this was an answer to her prayer. Without telling anyone about it, she had been praying secretly, "Lord, if it is your will for us to relocate to the United States, please send somebody to buy our furniture lock, stock and barrel!" An Jing was the answer. She offered to purchase all our furniture, knowing we needed money to pay for our passage to the U.S. She actually paid more than the furniture was worth!

Encouraging words from God

During my devotions one morning, the Lord confirmed His leading when He gave me these encouraging words: "You are my servant; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. 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" (Isaiah 41:9-10).

Even having sold our furniture, we still needed additional money to cover the airfare to the U.S. for all six of our children. At first, my employer had offered to pay only for my airfare; then, to my surprise, he also offered to pay for my wife's ticket. Even so, we didn't have enough money to cover the whole family. We kept praying, believing that if it is God's plan to send us to America, He will provide sufficient funds.

To raise more money, we also had to sell the piano we had owned since our Hong Kong days. In answer to our prayer, God sent a brother in Christ. He previously had been used by God to meet our needs during my eight months of unemployment. He bought the piano, deliberately paying more than the price we asked because of his desire to help us with the airfare.

At about the same time, I received a letter from Jackson Chou, an old friend working for the Voice of America in Washington, D. C., offering a place for the family to stay temporarily until permanent housing became available. The letter was another encouraging sign that God would be meeting all our needs in the U.S. if we determined to follow His leading. I also took it as further confirmation that *God* was indeed sending me to the U.S. and using the *China Times* assignment as a vehicle.

Since the travel expenses we had raised were only enough for the family to fly from Taipei to Los Angeles (when our final destination was Washington, D.C.), I arranged for Nancy and the children to continue by train. On the way she could visit her sister Nell and family in Madison, Wisconsin, until I found housing in the D.C. area.

Amazingly, the day after we arrived in Los Angeles, visiting with Nancy's brother Robert and his family, I received a telephone call from my friend Jackson. He sounded quite excited when he said, "Your God is really looking after you guys. I've just found a house for you and your family. It belongs to a colleague of mine who is also a Christian. The house is furnished, and some students from the University of Maryland are living there right now; but it will be available when school is out. The

owner said since you are a servant of God, you are welcome to move in and just pay whatever rent you can afford..."

This was yet another answer to our prayers. Even before we left Taiwan, we were asking God to provide two essential things once we set foot on U.S. soil: a suitable house for a family of eight and an automobile. We had also heard that housing in the Washington, D.C. area was very expensive, and that it would not be easy for a family with multiple children to find an apartment.

The four-bedroom house was located in College Park, not far from the University of Maryland and only half an hour from the nation's capital. Because the house had been leased to college students, it was fully furnished and complete with kitchen utensils. It also had enough beds for every one of our six children!

The way God gave us a V-8 Oldsmobile convertible was most incredible. I was on assignment in New York covering the ongoing debate in the United Nations General Assembly over the issue of China's representation in the U. N. On my way back to Maryland, I stopped in Elizabeth, New Jersey, to visit a friend for whom I had done a favor while living in Hong Kong. He and his wife both were medical doctors, and each had a car. They had just purchased a new one and were trying to get rid of an old one—the 10-year-old-convertible—with very low mileage.

My friend took me to dinner at a Chinese restaurant. Upon returning to his apartment, he showed me the brand-new car they had just bought. Then, a short distance away, we stopped to see the old car they were trying to get rid of. He said, "We've been trying to decide whether or not to give it away. If you're interested, I'd sell it to you for \$1.00."

Back in his apartment, he signed the title over to me for the nominal sale price, thus completing the legal transaction. Almost immediately I took the car to a nearby gas station and filled it up. Gratefully and joyfully, I drove it back to Maryland! The next day, when my wife and our six children arrived in Washington, D.C. on the train, I had our first Ameri-

can car with which to pick them up at Union Station. The V-8 was just big enough for a family of eight including all their personal belongings!

Orientation to the American way of life

It was good for Nancy and the children to have spent some time with her sister Nell and her family in Wisconsin. It was a period of orientation to the American way of life, especially for a Chinese housewife and mother of six children. At the time, our brother-in-law, S. H. Ho, was working on his PhD at the University of Wisconsin. The Ho family later moved to Hawaii, where he became a tenured professor of linguistics at the University of Hawaii.

Even though the owner of the four-bedroom house in Prince George's County, Maryland, was willing to accept "whatever rent" we could afford to pay, I insisted that a lease be signed for a mutually agreed upon rental amount. We decided to each pray about a fair figure and then come back to compare notes. Lo and behold!—the amount each of us independently came up with was exactly the same! A lease was signed.

We lived in that house for less than a year. Then, in early 1970, I took an interest-free loan from my company and purchased a slightly better house on the next street in the Hollywood section of College Park. This house, our first one ever owned in America, had three bedrooms, with two smaller rooms in the basement, some play space for the children, plus an extra bathroom. The dining room, with barely enough space for a family of eight to eat in, was an extension from the kitchen-with a small window through which food items and dishes were passed. After our seventh child, Martha, came along, we could still squeeze in a high chair for her!

Family worship

Although the shanty dining room was crowded, we were happy to- .280.

gether, and there was always plenty of joy and laughter at the dinner table. I decided to incorporate a "family altar" or "family worship" into our lives. It was the spiritual bond that held us together, even though we may have been lacking financially. I came to believe in the expression, "The family that prays together stays together." Not only were we close together as a family, we were always happy as we read the Bible and prayed together.

I included daily worship at the dinner table as part of our family life because I learned from a New York pastor that it was the best way to protect our children from the evil effects of this world. It was important to establish a family altar and start teaching our children from the Bible the things of God as early as possible. "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

I followed this admonition because I became aware of my responsibility as a parent to pass along my faith to our children, so they and their children might be blessed as much as I have been, if not more. I realized the intrinsic and lasting value of family worship, which is even more important than church attendance. I am a firm believer in this tremendous promise of God for every family "...showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20:6).



Jack and Nancy with their grandchildren on his 80th birthday.



Chapter Eleven

First Severe Trial in the U.S.A.



Shortly after we moved into our own house, Nancy became pregnant with baby No. 8. One week prior to her first prenatal checkup in the fifth month of her pregnancy, she suddenly developed severe abdominal pain. I rushed into her room and prayed for her, something I would normally do when anyone in the family was sick, and God would always answer our prayers. This time as I prayed for Mother her pain grew worse to the point that she started screaming. It seemed as if her whole body was under attack. Recognizing the seriousness of the situation, I rushed her to the Emergency Room of Prince George's County Hospital. As soon as she was admitted, she suffered an attack of convulsions and ended up in a coma.

A team of doctors later found that the five-month female fetus had been dead in the mother's womb, which, according to a medical report, was due to premature separation of the umbilical cord, causing blood poisoning. Her case was diagnosed as "eclampsia," a serious disorder late in her pregnancy. The reason she didn't have her prenatal checkup sooner was because we had taken for granted that everything was going to be normal, since all our other seven children were born without any problem. It was also because we didn't have health insurance coverage at the time.

A dead fetus in a mother's body puts her life in grave danger. Although the doctors had considered immediate surgery to remove it, Nancy was in a deep coma with exceedingly high blood pressure. The chance of her survival was only 50-50. The doctors decided to hold off and "wait and see." I wasn't given any information about my wife's condition until she had been in a coma for three days.

The news came as a shock. I was stunned and speechless. I immediately placed long-distance calls to our church friends in Taiwan, and in New York and Houston, urgently asking for prayer. Our friends at the Ridgewood Pentecostal Church in New York prayed earnestly and persistently for her and for the family as well.

As I drove to the hospital to see her the next day, my faith suddenly came alive as I kept singing the words of the familiar chorus, "This mountain shall be removed; this mountain shall be removed...by my Spirit, saith the Lord." I sang it daily on my way to the hospital for the following several days. I was conscious of the fact that those prayers had lifted me up spiritually. My faith was stirred and strengthened, and I began to believe in earnest for her healing and recovery.

One morning about 8 o'clock, I received a phone call from Dr. Suki, one of the gynecologists on the medical team. "I'm glad to inform you that we don't have to operate on your wife because the baby came out by herself. We think your wife is lucky, but she remains in critical condition." I took the news as the first sign that God was answering those prayers on behalf of my dear wife.

However, as I continued my daily visits with her in the hospital, she remained unconscious. The doctors and nurses tried repeatedly to test her reflexes but to no avail. They all seemed to have given up on her case. Humanly speaking, it was indeed hopeless. During one of my evening visits, I asked a female doctor on the treatment team whether she thought my wife was going to make it. With her eyes glued to the breathing machine, she simply said, "We're just waiting..."

When I saw her lying in the hospital bed unconscious and motionless, seemingly in a hopeless condition, I couldn't help but feel downcast. She was at such a low point and unable to breathe on her own, that a tracheotomy was performed in order to hook her up to a breathing machine. She had tubes all over her body, her hair was disheveled, and her face was pale. She lay there in ICU, literally looking like a dying person. I was afraid to bring any of our children to see her in that condition.

Pastor Waldvogel of the Ridgewood Pentecostal Church called me from New York almost daily to inquire as to my wife's condition. He sent Pastor Charles Andrews of the Fredericksburg Pentecostal Church in Virginia, one of the Ridgewood Fellowship churches, to the hospital to pray for her. Several times he drove some 90 miles each way. On one occasion, he brought along a missionary friend to our house to pray for my wife, who was still in ICU. This man had great faith and was said to have brought a dead man back to life through his powerful prayers.

On his last visit to the hospital, Rev. Andrews and I together laid hands on Nancy uniting our faith, claiming the resurrection life of Jesus Christ. As we finished praying, I called out to my wife, saying, "Mama, I'm here to see you!" For the first time in many days, she began to respond, turning her head very slowly toward my side of her bed. She opened her eyes for just a few seconds and then closed them. Both eyes were blood-shot. At that moment I felt as though the same power of resurrection that raised Jesus Christ from the dead was working within her body to quicken her and to cause her to make that initial move.

However, it took another week for her to become fully awake and conscious. She had been in a coma for two weeks. Her first question was: "What's wrong with me?" She realized now she was in a hospital. At first I couldn't understand what she was saying because she had lost her voice as a result of the tracheotomy. I had to ask her to repeat her words so I could read her lips and figure out what she was trying to say.

Meanwhile, after the hospital staff moved her from ICU to a regular

ward on the fourth floor, the place suddenly seemed lit up-as if someone had been raised from the dead! At the time she was moved, two or three patients on the same floor had just died, and there was a general sense of gloom there. Suddenly the spirits of the nursing staff seemed lifted up now that they had a new patient who had just come out of a week long coma. It felt like they had received someone who had been "resurrected!"

The day she was discharged from the hospital, I took her in a wheel-chair back to ICU where she had been bedridden in a coma, to thank the doctors and nurses who had cared for her. They were all surprised and happy to see her alive and well, ready to go home! Many of them said to me, "Mr. Chow, you are lucky to take your wife home alive." One of the doctors who had treated her asked her, "Are you Mrs. Chow? I thought you were dead!"

At home, however, she didn't even recognize our car parked in front of the house. As we entered the house, she also didn't recognize Martha, who was about 12 months old at the time. When she asked, "Who is this girl?" I suspected that she had either lost her memory or suffered some other brain damage during her prolonged deep coma. Interestingly, she could still recall things that happened far back when we had our first child. It took her about six months to gradually regain her lost memory.

Apart from our many friends' prayers on behalf of my wife, I had been greatly inspired and encouraged by the same Scripture two Christian families had received separately and independently, which they passed on to me while Nancy was in the coma. The verse was John 11:4: "Jesus said, 'this sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."

I tried repeatedly to share this powerful word with her while she was unconscious. Although I couldn't communicate with her, I would read this verse out loud into her ears, praying and hoping she could hear and be encouraged by the Word of God. I did so because I was told that people in a coma could hear. I had noticed a sign posted on the wall beside her

hospital bed with these words: "Speak carefully. Patient hears." I read the verse out loud to her also in the belief that there is healing power in the Word of God. "For every word comes from God with power" (Luke 1:37, Chinese Union Version). Later at home, I asked her if she had, in fact, heard my reading. She said she had not.

What about our huge medical bill? As I mentioned before, we had no insurance coverage at the time. But God provided again! He always seems to have a way of helping those who put their trust in Him in time of dire need. One day, just a few days before I took my wife home, a social worker at the hospital asked to see me to determine if I would be eligible for the State Medicaid program. After reviewing my financial status, she concluded that I should apply for Medicaid from the State of Maryland. The total medical bill came out to be more than \$10,000, of which I was required to pay only \$2,000. Since there was no interest charged on medical bills, I was able to pay a minimum of \$100 each month until my portion was paid off.

Unfeigned faith

The near-death experience of my wife has had an enormous impact upon my life, faith and family values. It taught me how to grow in faith, to trust in God for all my needs, and to love my wife and family more. During that testing season, I learned what it means to have "unfeigned faith," a quality that Timothy had inherited from his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). This unfeigned faith is an unalloyed, pure, genuine and wholehearted trust in God.

I recall the days when the doctors had exhausted their brain power, skill and the medical technology available in an effort to awaken Nancy out of her deep coma. They all seemed to have come to the end of their rope. Practically nothing they could do revived her. On the surface, it was an utterly hopeless situation. Somehow I did not give up hope, even

though my faith was small. I knew I had to learn to trust in God no matter what because my only hope was in Him. I also knew I needed to grow in the grace and knowledge of my Lord. I used to tell others what Jesus has said, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23).

During those trying days, I had many sleepless nights as I wondered why my wife couldn't be awakened. The only thing our children and I were hoping and praying for was that their mommy would wake up. While she was in ICU, the more I stared at her, the more depressed I felt. Through my despair the Spirit of God inside would say, "Fight the good fight of faith" or "For we live by faith, not by sight" (1 Tim.6:12; 2 Cor. 5:7).

Three of our children—a one-year old, a two-year-old and a four-year-old—were too young to be without their mother. A group of Christian women who knew Nancy in Taiwan were pleading for God to spare her life. They would pray, "These kids need their mommy!" I also cried out to God, "Please save her life for the kids' sake." I prayed that God would extend her life for at least 15 years, until our youngest child turned 16 when she would be old enough to drive a car and take care of herself. My plea for a 15-year extension to her life was borrowed from the Biblical example of Hezekiah, king of Judah (726-697 B.C.). He had been told by the prophet Isaiah that he was going to die. Hezekiah, weeping bitterly, prayed to God to spare his life, and God heard him. God told Isaiah to go back to tell Hezekiah, "I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life" (Isaiah 38:1-5).

Nancy was 42 years old at that time. God not only heard my prayer by graciously and generously granting her many more years than I had asked for. Today, by Chinese count, she is approaching her ninetieth year, and in all respects she is still going strong. Praise and glory be unto God throughout all generations!



Chapter Twelve

An Encounter that Changed My Life



I was preparing to move from Taiwan to Hong Kong to start my new job in early 1967. Dr. Donald Dale, a British missionary doctor friend of mine, who was attending our Chinese Christian Assembly in Taipei, told me that an American pastor from New York was planning to hold special meetings in Taiwan and asked if I would be willing to be his interpreter. At the time, I was in the midst of packing and didn't give much thought to the idea. I simply said, "Yes, if it is God's will."

Through Dr. Dale and his wife, Penelope, I had come to know Pearl G. Young, a missionary from Nova Scotia, Canada, who founded the Zion Church in Taiwan. She was associated with the Ridgewood Pentecostal Church in Brooklyn, New York, of which Rev. Hans R. Waldvogel was the founder and pastor. Back in New York, the folks at Ridgewood were praying for the "right interpreter" for Pastor Waldvogel's first Taiwan crusade. I had never expected that my meeting with this American pastor would turn out to be an important milestone in my life and ministry.

A new milestone

It wasn't until we came to the U.S. that I learned Hans Waldvogel

was a well-known Pentecostal evangelist in the United States and Europe, mightily used of God in tent meetings with signs and wonders following his ministry. His frequent trips to post-war Europe had resulted in the establishment of many churches in Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia. Switzerland and other European countries. His Brooklyn-based home church had also branched out into many other New York-New Jersey areas as well as in Northern Virginia. These churches came to be known collectively as the Ridgewood Fellowship. The Chinese Christian Church of Maryland, which I founded in 1979, also became a part of that fellowship as a result of my connection with Pastor Waldvogel.

Several things happened that led me to believe my encounter with Hans Waldvogel was a divine appointment. In addition to his church in New York praying for the proposed conference in Taiwan and the right interpreter, in Hong Kong my wife and I were also praying for confirmation that I would be the one God had in mind. Through a chain of events, then, I was led to believe it was God's will for me to go to Taiwan to serve as his escort-interpreter.

At that time my wife was pregnant with baby number six to be named Susanna. Her estimated due date conflicted with the scheduled conference in Taiwan. We prayed specifically that the baby would arrive before, so that I could leave home without any worry. Our domestic helper, who was not a believer at the time, would laugh as she heard this "strange" prayer daily. The baby was delivered safely three days prior to the start of the conference in Taiwan! It gave me just enough time to bring mother and baby home from the hospital, grab a taxi heading to the airport, and catch my flight to Taiwan. Our maidservant, by the way, later became a Christian believer.

Earlier that year, one of the airlines in Hong Kong was having a sale, and fare to Taiwan was slashed by as much as 50%. I took advantage of the discount at the time and purchased a round-trip ticket, not knowing when I would use it. Six months later I would use it to fly to Taiwan for the express purpose of translating for Hans Waldvogel at his crusade.

A modern-day Brother Lawrence

When I arrived in Taipei, the first thing Pastor Waldvogel said to me was: "Your coming here is a confirmation for me, too." Apparently, he was seeking to confirm that his trip to Taiwan was in the will of God. For the first time in my life, I met a man of God who was entirely devoted to doing God's will. He seemed to be so filled with the Holy Spirit that he was constantly in communion with God, whether in public or in private. I had the privilege and pleasure of being with him in and outside the meetings and witnessed how he lived and functioned in the Holy Spirit. He was truly a Holy Ghost, Spirit-filled minister. I would call him "a modern-day Brother Lawrence"—a sixteenth-century saint known for his book, "The Practice of the Presence of God."

I remember interpreting for Pastor Waldvogel at his first meeting in Taiwan. The Spirit of God was so copiously poured out upon the attendees, causing nearly everyone to laugh heartily and loudly for an extended period of time. Miss Pearl Young, the Canadian missionary of Scottish descent, a very strict and reserved person, laughed joyfully while I, too, was laughing so uncontrollably that my stomach hurt! I said to the Lord, "That's enough, Lord, that's enough!" This was my first time ever to have been in a meeting full of joy in the Holy Ghost. Looking back, I would have described Hans Waldvogel's ministry as "truly inspired and Holy Ghost directed."

To my surprise, as I interpreted for him, there was such unity and harmony in our hearts that I felt we were in the same Spirit. Every word he said struck a chord within my spirit, as if they were my own. Thoughts were so powerfully expressed by Pastor Waldvogel! I had never felt so free and liberated in a Christian conference or while interpreting for a speaker. As the Bible says, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17). The Spirit of God truly had His way in those meetings. As we emerged from one of the first meetings, he said to me, "We both were preaching."

A most unforgettable experience

One of the most unforgettable experiences I had with Hans Waldvogel occurred during a morning session at Zion Church in *Gou Zi Kuo* outside of Taipei. Only about two dozen people were in attendance, many of them pastors and ministers from the local churches. He was speaking on the subject of "Christ's Humility." While interpreting for him, I was translated into a spiritual state where I found myself kneeling alone before the Lord Jesus as though there was no one else around. He said to me more than once, "Learn to be humble as I am humble." I was made completely oblivious to the fact that I was still interpreting for Pastor Waldvogel as he preached! It was such an unusual experience—one that I will never forget.

Although I was with Hans Waldvogel for only two weeks during his 1967 Taiwan crusade, his exemplary life and ministry, the way he walked with God left an indelible impression so deep that it has had a lasting impact on my own life, ministry and personal relationship with God.

Two years later, in early1969, I was getting ready to leave for the United States to assume my duty as the Washington Correspondent for the Taiwan newspaper *China Times*. I had been looking forward to seeing Pastor Waldvogel again in New York. To my keen disappointment, I received the sad news from Pearl Young that Pastor Waldvogel had gone to be with the Lord. He would be missed, not only by me but by the many who had benefited from his ministry. He was 76 years old and had never married, devoting his entire life to serving the Lord Jesus whom he loved with all his heart, all his mind, and all his strength.

A new relationship

In September 1969, I went to New York on my first assignment to

cover the United Nations General Assembly debate over the question of China's representation in that world body. I decided to visit the Ridgewood Pentecostal Church in Brooklyn, despite Pastor Waldvogel having gone to heaven. Armed with pictures of his Taiwan crusade showing I was his interpreter, I met his nephew, the Rev. Edwin H. Waldvogel, who had succeeded him as the church's senior pastor. He kindly received me with open arms and invited me to dinner at his home, where I also met his wife Edith and their three children.

Through "Brother Edwin," as he was affectionately referred to within the Ridgewood Fellowship, I met the Rev. and Mrs. Gordon P. Gardiner, then co-directors of Pilgrim Camp, a summer camp and retreat center founded by the Ridgewood Pentecostal Church, and many other pastors and ministers from churches affiliated with the fellowship. Edwin Waldvogel and Gordon Gardiner were the two most senior pastors of the Ridgewood church. Mr. Gardiner was also the editor of *Bread of Life*, a monthly church publication, and the author of *Radiant Glory*, a biography of Mrs. Martha Wing Robinson. He was instrumental in my ordination into full-time ministry in 1985, when our church from Maryland joined the Ridgewood Church in observing their 60th founding anniversary and the 6th anniversary of our Chinese church in Maryland.

Prior to the establishment of the Chinese Christian Church of Maryland, we had lived in New York for about two years after I quit my secular employment. I thought the Lord would have me start a church there in Queens or Chinatown, where there was a heavy concentration of Chinese people. During this time, our family attended the Church of the Good Shepherd at Ozone Park, one of the Ridgewood Fellowship churches, where Frank and Emma Posta served as pastors. I would also make an effort to attend the church at Ridgewood as often as possible, especially the ministers' prayer meeting every Monday morning at the Faith Home. Gradually I was made to feel like I was one of them. I also had oppor-

tunities to visit the other churches of the Ridgewood Fellowship. As my relationship with the fellowship ministers grew, I would be called to fill in when a minister had to be away on any given Sunday. Because of this, I came to know almost all the Ridgewood fellowship churches in the New York-New Jersey area.

While I was still employed by the China Times, whenever on assignment to New York, I would choose to stay at the Faith Home, part of the Ridgewood church, so that I could attend their meetings as much as possible. I could have stayed in any New York hotel at company expense, but I wanted to be in their meetings, where the presence of God was so evident. The people at the Faith Home always graciously received me and treated me with exceeding kindness and hospitality. I felt privileged and specially blessed when they put me in the same bedroom used by the late Hans Waldvogel. The Lord even blessed the news stories and articles I wrote in that room and sent to my newspaper in Taiwan. Some of the reports had been brought to the attention of the then President Chiang Kai-shek, according to my employer Mr. Yu Chi-chung. Chiang Kai-shek's eldest son, Chiang Ching-kuo who had also followed my reporting from U.S., received me twice in Taiwan before he became the President of the Republic of China. I believe these were some of the reasons for my promotion to CEO of China Times in Taiwan.

While we lived in Queens, New York, I waited on the Lord desiring to know what He would have me do in that city while attending the Ridgewood church. Both Brother Edwin and Brother Gardiner had prayed for me on several occasions, particularly with the thought that I was going to start a church in Manhattan Chinatown. Brother Edwin had said to me on at least two occasions, "You are welcome to use our lower auditorium (of the Ridgewood church) if you were to start a Chinese work in New York." But I told him that I had not received an indication or clear light from the Lord as to whether I should do so. Nevertheless, I continued attending the

various Ridgewood fellowship meetings, especially the Monday morning ministers' prayer meeting, where I received considerable spiritual help.

Jehovah Jireh (The Lord Provides)

Without a regular income, life in New York was not easy. Our faith was tested again money-wise. At that time we had five children. Although I was being paid by the newspaper for my writing on a piece-by-piece basis, we often found ourselves in a tight spot. For instance, one Monday morning, as I was near the refrigerator and, without saying a word, my wife opened its door and showed me the inside, which was almost empty. I understood what she meant. I said, "Let's pray." We prayed together before I left to go to the Faith Home for the ministers' prayer meeting. My wife called after me that she was encouraged by the Lord's prayer: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread" (Matthew 6:9-11).

At the end of the prayer meeting that morning, Brother Edwin walked over to me and shook my hand as I was about to leave. He stuck a bill in my hand, and whispered to me saying, "This is my tithe." I knew it was money. When I got into my car, I saw it was a \$20 bill. That was a lot back in the 1970s. I stopped at a grocery store on my way home and bought four or five bags of foods, sufficient to feed our family for about two weeks!

Housing in New York was by far more expensive than in Maryland. Fortunately, we were living in a rent-free apartment owned by a Christian friend we had known in Hong Kong. As power-of-attorney for her, I was asked to handle the transaction on her behalf when she purchased the property in Elmhurst, Queens. She invited us to live there, hoping that I would start a church in the basement. She loved the Lord and wished to

be a part of the work. But things did not turn out the way she expected. Two years later we moved back into our own house in Maryland.

I often wondered why the Lord led us to New York and allowed us to live there for two years without anything concrete seemingly being accomplished. As I waited on the Lord, it gradually became apparent to me that it was a time of preparation—necessary for the Lord to train and further equip me for the Spirit-led ministry ahead. In looking back, I cannot help but thank God for the spiritual benefits I have received from the Ridgewood fellowship, without which I would not have been able to undertake the kind of ministry that He has given me.



Chapter Thirteen

Last Secular Employment



When I was offered the job of Washington Correspondent for the *China Times* in Taiwan, I took it as a "Macedonian Call" (Acts 16:9) to come to the United States-ultimately to serve God as He desired. The newspaper job was to be of secondary importance, as a livelihood. Even before the opportunity presented itself, I was ready to answer God's call to serve Him in any way and wherever He might send me. So, when God opened a door in New York by providing a rent-free apartment in the city, I quit my secular job to start a work for the Lord and "live by faith," totally depending upon Him to provide for our needs. It was also a welcome opportunity for more and closer fellowship with our friends at the Ridgewood Church.

Although we lived in New York for two years without seeming to accomplish anything, our sojourn there was not in vain: we learned some precious lessons we might not have learned elsewhere, and which afterward not only proved beneficial to our family and church life in Maryland, but conducive to my later ministry as well.

Back to Maryland

We moved back to Maryland mainly because we were unable to find a tenant for our house which had been standing vacant for two years. One day in early 1977 while I was on a ministry trip to Atlanta, Georgia, my wife had to rush back to Maryland to single-handedly deal with a major flooding problem in the basement. We had to deal with that repeatedly and some other issues associated with a house unoccupied for an extended time. During our respective morning devotions, we both received a word from the Lord indicating that we were to return to our own house in Maryland.

The unusual thing about it was the exact same Scriptural verse had been given to us separately and independently. Leviticus, Chapter 25:13: "In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to their own property." We were convinced it was the Lord speaking to us both, and that it was time for us to "return to our own property" in Maryland. Back in Maryland, the question was what to do next? I needed to know whether I should start a church in Maryland or return to secular employment. I prayed much seeking God's will regarding the direction I should go.

One day I asked my wife and six children if they would be willing to join me for a special day of fasting and prayer, specifically for the purpose of seeking God's leading and guidance. They all readily agreed to skip three meals that day so that we could pray together as a family. I made a list of several job possibilities, including my former employer in Taiwan.

I also called Brother Gordon Gardiner at Pilgrim Camp and asked him to pray with us for direction and guidance. As one of the two most senior pastors in the Ridgewood fellowship, I held him in high esteem. Two months later he wrote back suggesting that I return to secular employment temporarily, in order to provide for my family while waiting for God's clear leading.

Divine Providence

I started my job hunting, and by divine Providence, Senator John Sparkman, once a Democrat vice presidential candidate and the then Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, took a personal interest in my job search. As the former *China Times* correspondent in Washington, I had on occasions interviewed him regarding the then-evolving United States policy toward China. He became aware of my need through his press secretary, whom I got to know very well. Even without my asking, the Senator from Alabama wrote a letter of recommendation and sent it to the Director of the Voice of America, who happened to be his longtime friend from the same State.

After submitting a lengthy federal job application to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, I was called in to be interviewed and tested for the job of news translator-announcer in the Chinese-language section of the Voice of America, the international broadcasting arm of the U.S. Information Agency under the State Department. I was immediately hired as a U.S. Civil Service employee, one grade higher than the average entry level. I never imagined that a United States Senator would be involved in securing my last secular employment!

As far as I was concerned, the job at VOA was supposed to be a temporary one, but it lasted eight years. I didn't expect it would turn out to be a prolonged, deep-valley "furnace experience." It was like the one Daniel's three friends had (Daniel 3:24-27)! I had listed six different job opportunities, and providentially I ended up with the one I wanted least!

In my 32-year journalistic career, I have had 12 different jobs with various news organizations in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Washington, including executive positions on three leading newspapers; but the VOA job turned out to be the most unpleasant one. The pay was fairly good, but

the working environment was not. There was a lot of inter-office politics and bickering. A former employee once said ruefully, "That place could drive you crazy!" An insider had warned me even before I started working there, saying, "This place is like purgatory!"

God's higher purpose

Nevertheless, God had a higher purpose for my life when He saw fit to use the good offices of a senior U.S. Senator to put me in that "furnace" and allowed me to be tried and refined for eight years. Given my seniority and extensive background in journalism, my big ego allowed me to think that I knew better how to run the Chinese section of VOA. After the first few years of working and observing how things were being done there, I concluded that these people were either not doing their jobs or did not know what they were doing.

I had a strong desire to help improve the news operations in the Chinese service, but I was not in a position to do so. I felt frustrated and useless. The situation got even worse for me when I was assigned to the all-night shift, where I had to report to every news editor on duty, many of whom were younger and less experienced. I balked at the idea of working the night shift. I began to hate my job and the fact that everybody was made to be my boss at one time or another. As a former CEO of three major newspapers, I formerly had hundreds of people working under me. For a long time I wondered why my professional experience was not recognized and utilized. One day I heard the Lord saying gently to me, "I didn't bring you here to change others—but to change *you* and make *you* what I want *you* to be!"

Then I began to understand why God put me in that awful place and kept me there for so long. It was that I should be humbled and emptied, broken and stripped of my hidden pride and self-righteousness. I didn't know that I still needed to learn to be obedient, patient and tolerant. I had

to learn to accept and love people as they are. These are the characteristics of Jesus Christ, which God desired to instill into my soul in order that I might be a true servant of God and follower and lover of Jesus.

God saw what I was lacking. He always knows when, how and where to fill my needs. But I had never expected that it would take such a long time for me to learn the lessons that I needed to learn. I found out what a poor student I was in the School of the Holy Spirit. So, my last secular job was literally an advanced training course to further prepare me for my full-time ministry. But until it was God's time to bring me out of that hot place, how desperately I wanted to escape from there! I tried very hard to get a new job or to be transferred to another department. All I wanted was to get out of that fiery furnace!

I recall when I became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1980, I thought I would have a much better chance of getting a job in some other agencies within the Federal Government where citizenship was required. I had applied for as many as forty-two different positions that were posted on the federal job listing. To no avail! To my keen disappointment, I was told by several interviewers that I was "over-qualified" for some of the positions I had applied. But I said in my own heart, "Never mind, just give me a job!" They had no inkling that I was trying so desperately to quit my existing job.

Toward the end of the eighth year, the trial and suffering became inwardly almost unbearable so that one afternoon I got up from my office desk and went to find a place where I could cry out to God for help. I said to myself, "I can't take it anymore." As I was walking to an upstairs conference room, I seemed to hear a loud voice saying, "*Because I live, you also will live*" (John 14:19). It hit me like a hammer, and I was instantly lifted out of my darkness and gloom and filled afresh with hope, strength and confidence to go forward!

I responded to the Lord in real time, saying, "Yes, Lord, I am willing to stay put as long as you want me to." The voice was a wake-up call for

me, reminding me that the Lord Jesus is alive, and that He lives within me to give me power to triumph over the difficulties and trials in this earthly life!

During this long period of trial, I became convinced of the truth of this Scripture: "What He [God] opens, no one can shut, and what He shuts no one can open" (Rev. 3:7). More important, though, is that I learned something about the meaning of Christian suffering. It is good for our souls "because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3,4). King David said, "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees" (Psalm 119:71). Job, a man who had an "intimate friendship" with God, was allowed to suffer perhaps more than anyone except the Lord Jesus. Yet of his trials, Job said, "... when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

By the grace of God, I can also say that suffering was good for me because it made me a better Christian believer/minister, father and husband. I realize that without the trials I had on my last secular job, I would not have been able to be a good pastor and love the people of God, accepting them as they are, regardless of their ethnicity, culture and religion or lack of religion.

Call for full-time ministry

After I told the Lord that I would be willing to stay on my job as long as necessary, He began to unfold His plans for my future. He indicated that it was time for me to step out into full-time ministry. I understood this would mean we were going to trust God to provide for our needs. At that time, our church was still small and did not have the resources to support a family of nine.

My concern was that since three of our children were still in col-

lege, how were they going to complete their education if I quit my job. I was worried also about our monthly mortgage payments and a host of other bills. So, my wife and I prayed together over this vital decision. We asked God for confirmation and assurance that He was going to supply our needs and see to it that our three children complete their college education in time.

In November 1984, after praying for over a month about leaving my employment, Yang Xian Ming, a brother in the Lord and well-known artist from our church, stopped by our house one day. He brought along a newly-finished painting, which he wanted to give our family as an early Christmas present. It was a picture of mountains and trees with birds flying over them. Within the painting was calligraphy with the words: "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they" (Matthew 6:26)? The message was clear. Continuing our prayers, we asked God as further confirmation to take away our worries about financial needs and to give us perfect peace, and to fill us with faith for living a" faith life." As weeks went by, the Lord took away all my worries and doubts and granted me perfect peace, joy and confidence.

Amazingly enough, those who had been hostile to me in the office suddenly became my friends. They joined the rest of my colleagues to honor me with a large farewell dinner party at a Chinese restaurant. Thankfully my departure from VOA was with a happy ending to what used to be an unhappy working environment. Only God could have done it.

When I stepped out into full-time ministry, our church was only five years old. I believed from the Scriptures and from being led by the Holy Spirit that I was not to take a salary from the church. I was to accept my pastoral role not as a job, but as a calling from God and that I was to look to Him for provision. The question of pay was not even mentioned. With this understanding, however, the church began voluntarily to support us

in the form of their tithes and free-will offerings to God.

Finally, our three children, John, Susanna and Martha, not only completed their college education, but went on to finish their graduate schools with Master's degrees from such prestigious universities as Harvard, Columbia and Georgetown. One of them also received a bachelor's degree from Johns Hopkins.



Chapter Fourteen

From Journalist to Pastor



As a teenager, my dream was to become an air force pilot. I had never thought of becoming a journalist or church pastor. I recall, however, that even as a young man in my early twenties some of my friends at work started calling me "Pastor Chow." At the time I thought of it merely as a nickname and it didn't sound bad at all! But Almighty God had a plan for my life which was yet to unfold. As a Christian, I became a firm believer in the Biblical truth that God has a plan for every one of His children even before they were born, an eternal plan to be revealed to those who love God and believe in the truth and infallibility of the Bible as His Word.

One of the outstanding extra-curricular activities of the Chinese students studying in America is their active participation in Bible study groups existing on most university campuses. Many of those students and exchange scholars who come from China and Taiwan have been converted to Christianity through these Bible studies. The prime force behind these Bible study groups has been such organized ministries as Campus Crusade for Christ, Campus Christian Fellowship, the Navigators and so on.

Many of the Chinese churches in America have grown out of small Bible study groups, as did the Chinese Christian Church of Maryland.

Actually, this church began in the private home of a Christian couple who had recently earned their PhD from the State University of Florida in Tallahassee. Only a few of us met once every weekend, and as the attendance grew steadily, I began to hear calls for starting a church so that others could attend. It must be remembered that we had come to the United States with an eventual goal of doing the Lord's work. The news media job was only secondary as a means of livelihood for me. Amid these calls, I decided to seek God's clear guidance to ascertain if starting a church was what the Lord desired.

By this time I had been working for the Voice of America for two years while leading the Bible study group. For my first annual vacation, I took the opportunity of driving across the continental U.S. to deliver one of our cars to our daughter Ruth, who was attending the California State University in Los Angeles. My wife, my four young daughters, my son John, and one of his friends also came along, the two young men serving as alternate drivers. We made a point to do some sightseeing along the way, since we had heard much about the National Parks and the Grand Canyon. We had a good time. But on our way back, I was the lone driver. All I remember was that I had to drive eight hours every day for five straight days before we arrived back in Maryland! When we got home, I said to myself, "Never again!" Nevertheless, I thought this one experience is something every man and woman ought to have in their life time, if at all possible.

The following year when I was to take my summer vacation, I decided to set aside a week to pray and fast, and just be alone with God. I wanted to be able to hear from the Lord myself as to whether I should start a church, in response to the desire of my Bible study group. I got in touch with Pastor Walter Fette of the Bowling Green Pentecostal Church in Virginia and asked if I could come down to spend several days in his church just seeking the Lord. We came to know Rev. Fette and his wife Anne through the Ridgewood Pentecostal Church in New York and at their suggestion began attending the Bowling Green church for a while.

Without hesitation, Brother Fette gladly received me and put me up in a house-trailer which used to be occupied by his late mother. The mo-

bile home, complete with two bedrooms, shower, kitchen and a sitting room, sits on the church property. To my surprise, he stocked up a lot of food in the refrigerator, including "fortune cookies," and said to me, "Please make yourself at home." Actually, I didn't feel like eating anything. I was just there to pray and read my Bible.

On the fourth day, at approximately 10 o'clock in the morning as I was having my devotions, I suddenly felt a strong and definite Presence in the room. It was as though someone had walked in and sat in a chair next to me. In my spirit I knew instantly, beyond any doubt, that it was the Lord Jesus! Speaking by His Holy Spirit, He directed me to open my Bible to the Book of Isaiah, Chapter 55. As I began to read it slowly and attentively, the Lord gave me specific instructions concerning the establishment of a new church in Maryland. In addition to these instructions, He made certain promises which He would fulfill if I would follow His directions faithfully.

As I read the chapter carefully, I felt the Holy Spirit speaking to me verse by verse in a new way. The following are some of the instructions given to me, which I recorded in the back of my King James Bible on June 14, 1979:

- 1. You are to exalt Jesus Christ and let Him be the Lord and Commander-in-Chief.
- 2. Your one desire must be for more of Christ who is All in all.
- 3. You are to seek the Lord with all your heart, and you shall find Him.
- 4. You are to enjoy the presence of the Lord and have constant fellowship with Him.
- 5. You are to preach the Word faithfully for His Word shall not return void.
- 6. You are to lead people to Jesus Christ Himself Who is the answer to all their problems.
- 7. You are to help people to be filled with the Holy Spirit and live by the Spirit.

8. You are not to have your own agenda but to learn the thoughts and ways of God which are higher than the thoughts and ways of man.

In return, this is what the Lord promised to do for us, providing I would discharge my pastoral duties faithfully and consistently:

- 1. The presence of God shall be manifested among us.
- 2. He shall bring people to our church—people we had never known before.
- 3. He shall baptize them with the Holy Spirit and bless them with peace and joy.
- 4. He shall cause people to know Him and to have intimate fellow-ship with Him.
- 5. He shall add to the church such as should be saved.
- 6. He shall cause His Word to go forth and bear much fruit.
- 7. Thus He shall make our Christ-centered church a lasting testimony.

Armed with these instructions and promises from the Lord, I approached Rev. Granville Slye, Pastor of the Glad Tidings Assembly of God Church at Beltsville, Maryland, and asked him if I could rent his facilities for a Chinese church to meet every Sunday afternoon, since they had their own Sunday morning service. My wife and children had been attending this church for some time already while I had to be out of town speaking in some Chinese churches in the New York-New Jersey area. I asked Pastor Slye how much we should pay for the use of his church, and he replied, "Never mind about the rent. God will supply." I took it as another confirmation from God.

On Thanksgiving Day, 1979, the Chinese Christian Church of Maryland came into being. As founder and pastor, I sent out notices to all our friends in the Washington, D.C. area where I had preached, inviting them to attend the inaugural service of our new church. That first Sunday, the church was packed to capacity with more than 100 people. The service was marked with the glory of God's presence, and the people were filled

with joy, praise and thanksgiving. It was indeed a grand opening and a historic day for our new church.

A new lesson

No sooner had the church opened when something puzzling happened. To my absolute bewilderment, the attendance on the following Sunday abruptly dropped by almost 50%. On the ensuing Sundays, the drastic decline in number continued unabated until it was down to a handful of people. The only people attending were my family and Brother Yu Tao-chieh with his wife, Sister Ying, a couple from my Bible study group. Where is the crowd that attended the first Sunday service? Why did they suddenly stop coming? Did I say or do anything wrong that might have turned them off?

I searched for answers to these questions. The only explanation I could give was perhaps the way I conducted the service was different from their traditional form of worship. Instead of the sermon being the main part of Sunday worship, we would spend considerable time waiting on the Lord in silence, undoubtedly new to those who came merely to hear the preaching of the Word. They stopped coming apparently because we had failed to meet their expectations. But I could do nothing on my own without being directed by the Holy Spirit.

This awkward situation continued for approximately two years. There were times when I found myself preaching to an audience made up mostly of my own family. I thought, "If this is the case, I could have preached to them at home!" Nevertheless, I couldn't shut down the church that I had just opened. I was in a dilemma. I couldn't help asking, "Lord, why don't you bring in people as you promised?" Time and again, I asked the same question.

One Sunday afternoon after another service attended by only a few people, I repeated the question. To my surprise, the Lord asked me this question in plain English, "Do you want Me or just crowds?" I answered, "Of course I want You, Lord-more than I want people." On another oc-

casion when I grumbled about the scant attendance, the Lord again surprised me by asking: "Do you want large attendance or My holy presence?"

It dawned on me that I wasn't following the instructions the Lord had given me: namely, to exalt Him and desire more of Himself, not a greater number of people; and to seek Him first with all my heart so that I may find Him Who is all in all. I seemed to have lost sight of this one thing: To have Christ Himself and His presence is to have everything I need!

Misplaced focus

I began to realize I had my focus misplaced. It should have been on Jesus Christ instead of people, and on His presence rather than attendance. In hindsight, I realized I wasn't doing what God wanted me to do. He was teaching me certain spiritual lessons which would have eternal value, but my eyes were on external things such as "more people," which would have only temporary value. There was a paradigm shift in that not only my focus had been reset, but my value system was properly adjusted as well.

The Lord was using this particular season to instill in me this vital but simple truth: I must have Him and His presence with me before I can satisfy the needs of others. As Jesus says, "... Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). In ministering, which is essentially the work of the Holy Spirit, I found out it is "not by might nor by power [natural talent or human resources], but by My Spirit, says the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6). Therefore, we must have the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon us in order to be effective instruments in God's hand.

Keep your eyes on Jesus. This is the secret of successful ministry as well as Christian living. But it took me a long time to learn this most precious lesson. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). For the first few years of our fledgling church, we had this key verse on the wall above the pulpit. Whenever I felt low

or downhearted, I would turn my eyes to these words, and I would be quickly lifted in my spirit! What an invaluable lesson the Lord has taught me! It would become the secret of my life and ministry for years to come.

The Church began to grow

As I learned the secret of keeping my eyes on Jesus and always having Him at the center of church services, the Lord began to bring new people in, just as He promised-people we had never met before. Though still small in number, these newcomers were precious brothers and sisters in Christ who truly loved the Lord and desired to have more of Him. They were so special that in comparison each one was equal to 10 average churchgoers.

As Jesus says, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men [and women] to myself "(John 12:32). I remembered the first thing Jesus had commanded me: to keep Him preeminent in all things. As I endeavored to follow His instructions, the Lord began to draw hungry hearts to Himself, and, as He promised, He manifested His presence among us in a wonderful way.

In addition to our Sunday afternoon service, we started a second meeting for those who would want to spend more time seeking and waiting upon the Lord. There were approximately 12 of us who met regularly every Saturday morning at six o'clock, just to sit in silence before God and pray. Rain or snow in the winter, these "early birds" would come together to seek the Lord. This unique weekly meeting went on for 10 years. There were days when the church was snowed in, and the ones who got there first would shovel snow and clear the driveway.

One of the instructions and promises given for the new church was to "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call on Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6). Those who came were sincere seekers and lovers of Jesus and found Him to be near, true, and precious in a personal way. God honored His words by manifesting His presence and revealing Himself to those who sought Him earnestly.

As the church grew in number, we began to have a Christian retreat twice a year; the first one, known as the Thanksgiving Weekend Retreat, is held to mark the founding anniversary of the church on Thanksgiving Day, 1979. The second event, called the Memorial Day Weekend Retreat, is intended primarily for the congregation to relax and recoup as they spend time resting and waiting upon the Lord. Many attend and leave refreshed, renewed and strengthened. As the Scripture says, "...they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31).

For the first several years we held our Thanksgiving Weekend Retreat at the Bowling Green Pentecostal Church, a small American church in rustic southern Virginia. Our Chinese church had developed a bond of affinity despite cultural and linguistic differences. As more people and those from other churches began to attend the retreat, we had to move it to the larger sanctuary of the Fredericksburg Pentecostal Church in another town about 25 miles away. Twelve years later, we secured the lease of the Hispanic Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland, which has a seating capacity of 250-300 people. We relocated our church to accommodate our own growing congregation as well as the expanding Thanksgiving Weekend Retreat. The Seventh-Day Adventists, like the Jewish believers, are a Christian denomination that keeps Sabbath by having their regular worship service on Saturday instead of Sunday.

Another annual event that has contributed to the spiritual growth and development of our church has been the Labor Day Weekend Retreat held at Pilgrim Camp, a Christian summer camp and retreat center operated by the Ridgewood Pentecostal Church in Brooklyn, New York. Many from our small church would travel to Pilgrim Camp in upstate New York for the Labor Day Weekend Retreat to be taught and built up by the Word of God preached by anointed ministers from the Ridgewood Fellowship.

Pilgrim Camp, founded in 1946, derived its name from John Bunyan's book "Pilgrims Progress" as well as in honor of the pilgrims who immigrated to America from England and Europe. The motto of the camp is "Holiness Unto the Lord." The endeavor of the ministry since its beginning over 70 years ago has been to keep holiness clearly the focus of all that pertains to the camp. Its major attraction has been the manifest presence of God as evidenced by the transformed lives of those who attend-both children and adults alike. Many of our people have been richly blessed and strengthened at the Labor Day Weekend Retreat at Pilgrim Camp.

The greatest benefit I personally have received from the retreats was observing how Christian meetings or New Testament church services were conducted by spiritual men and women under the control and direction of the Holy Spirit. I was impressed particularly by the way Rev. Gordon Gardiner presided over those meetings as he was led by the Spirit of God. While declaring that one never knows "the twists and turns" of a Holy Ghost-led meeting, he still seemed to know the flow of the meetings, every step of the way, conducting them so appropriately and beautifully. He was also an excellent Bible teacher.

Mrs. Gardiner, Sister Caroline as they called her, was seen usually at the organ, yet in real time she would provide a prophetic word that perfectly fit his teachings "like apples of gold in settings of silver." It was said that she used to be a better preacher but deferred to her husband after they were married. Nevertheless, she proved herself to be a perfect match and supporter of her husband whenever she was moved by the Holy Spirit. I have never seen a husband-wife team working in such harmony and unity while under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Full-time ministry

For the first five years of our church, I gave as much time as possible to the ministry while still working at the Voice of America in Washington. As the congregation grew in number, there were increasing demands on my time and attention. By the end of 1984, God called me again to step out by faith to serve Him full-time. This would mean that I was not to be on salary again and that I was to live by faith, to trust God alone to supply all my needs. That was what I had been taught if I were to step out full-time.

The first time God called me to step out full-time was in Hong Kong shortly after I had received my baptism in the Holy Spirit. Once, in the middle of the night, I found myself engaging in a sort of dialogue with God. I do not recall how the conversion began or its full content, but the following short exchange has remained in my mind:

God: "I want you to step out to serve Me full-time."

Me: "Yes, Lord, but I can't step out right now because I need to provide for my wife and four children. I know I am not supposed to ask anyone for money-and am to totally depend on You for our livelihood."

God: "Follow Me. I am the Lord your God. I shall supply your needs."

Me: "But, Lord, I am not ready yet for this kind of faith-based life."

God: "If you will serve Me faithfully, I will be faithful to you."

That was the end of the conversation.

The following year, after we moved back to Taiwan where our fifth child Esther had recently been born, I remained unemployed for a total of eight months while serving in a newly-formed independent church. During this time, however, the Lord supplied our needs marvelously on a week-to-week basis. A cash gift, wrapped in a piece of paper with my name on it, regularly came from an anonymous donor. It was found among other tithes in the church offering box every Sunday morning. The amount of money was always just enough to meet our physical needs until the following Saturday. And then the following Sunday, there would be another offering envelope marked "For Brother Jack Chow." This happened consistently week after week for eight months! Amazingly, whenever there was a special need during a particular week, there was always some extra money in the offering packet.

God's call renewed

One night in December 1984, I was driving to work on my late-night

shift. I had just finished listening to a recorded sermon by Rev. Hans Waldvogel. I don't recall its content, but no sooner had the sermon ended, when God renewed His call in these three words: "Now or never!" The voice was so powerful that it hit me like a hammer on the head, and instantly I burst into tears. I knew without any doubt that it was the voice of God issuing an ultimatum to me. Two months later, I turned in my resignation.

On November 29, 1985, I was ordained to full-time ministry in New York during the 60th anniversary services of the Ridgewood Pentecostal Church. The ordination was recommended by Rev. Gordon P. Gardiner and performed by Rev. Edwin H. Waldvogel in the presence of eight other ministers from the Ridgewood Fellowship.

About 15 years after I left my secular employment, our church, even without my request, took upon itself the responsibility of supporting us in the form of tithing and free-will offerings that enabled us to maintain the same standards of living. This allowed me to devote my full attention and energy to the needs of the young church.

Now I was able to take advantage full time each morning to further engage myself in in-depth study of the Bible and contemplative prayer. I devoted four hours a day, five days a week to digging deep into the Word of God and waiting upon the Lord in silence. I did this for five years from 1985-1990. This period of solitude not only deepened my personal relationship with God, but also gave me a better and broader understanding of the eternal will of God concerning His Church, the Body of Jesus Christ.

Transition

Little did I know that this period of seclusion was divinely appointed to prepare me for an upcoming transition from pastoral ministry to a traveling and apostolic ministry in the future. The transition began in early1991with a strange chain of events which unexpectedly took place far away in Asia. Our oldest daughter Ruth had just given birth to her second child named Tessa. She was living and working for American Express in

Hong Kong. According to Chinese tradition, able-bodied parents are supposed to do all they can to provide special care for the mother and baby during the first 30 days. So, we decided to travel to Hong Kong to be of some help to them. On our way there we stopped over in Taiwan to visit some of our relatives and church friends. While there I was invited to speak at a church in Taichung, a major city in central Taiwan. To my surprise, the meeting drew a crowd of over 200 people who were singularly blessed of the Lord.

After we arrived in Hong Kong, again to my surprise, I received an invitation to preach at a special conference to be held in Ling Liang Tang (Bread of Life Church), one of the largest churches in the capital city of Taipei. I was completely overwhelmed, because I had never been a conference speaker before. After much prayer and waiting upon the Lord, I regained my calmness and sent a reply of acceptance.

I flew back to Taipei alone for the conference, leaving my wife to take care of our daughter and new granddaughter. The Taipei Bread of Life Church, with a 1,000-plus seating capacity, was packed the first night. As soon as I got up to preach, my fear was gone; I spoke freely under the anointing of the Holy Spirit such as I had never experienced before. When I gave an altar call at the end of my sermon, the response was simply overwhelming. The crowd that surged quickly filled the huge stage. Many of them lying on the platform were apparently touched by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It was an awesome scene, entirely shocking and new to me as a speaker.

As it would later unfold, the 1991 conference in Taipei was the precursor and pattern to the new traveling ministry that God had prepared for me without any advance inkling. It also marked the beginning of our frequent travels to Asia, culminating in our first visit to China in 2008. This was my first trip back home since I left Shanghai in 1949 just before the Communist take-over.

I recall when I stood up to speak at a church in Hangzhou, back in China for the first time in almost 60 years, I was speechless. I was so overcome emotionally that I remained silent for several minutes. I felt like crying. This was also the same year a major earthquake occurred in

Wenchuan, Sichuan Province, in northwest China, killing tens of thousands of people. In fact, I felt the shocks while I was meeting with a group of Christians gathered in a private apartment in Hangzhou.

My wife and I continued to travel to China every year to preach in different churches throughout the country-until the Communist authorities canceled my visa. Since I had an American passport, and since they considered a naturalized United States citizen a foreigner, all such persons, including citizens from Taiwan and residents from Hong Kong and Macao, are prohibited from carrying out religious activities in China. They have banned me from reentering the country ever since.

Since the first conference in Taipei, I have been traveling more than ever before, initially to Taiwan, California, Canada, and Europe, and subsequently, to Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and Australia. I found myself increasingly away from my own church for as many as two or three months out of the year. I realized the time had come to add a second pastor or a full-time replacement pastor. So, I asked the congregation to start praying for a new pastor.

From the beginning of the church, the Lord marvelously supplied three men to comprise the pastoral team. Brother Yu Tao Chieh, one of these faithful men, emerged as the most likely successor. Nevertheless, we had to wait for the Lord to work out His will and perfect timing, fully convincing Brother Yu himself of God's call to step out into full-time ministry. For him to quit his lucrative employment in exchange for an unsalaried pastoral position was to be one of the most important decisions in his life.

At the beginning of 1999 when he received confirmation from God that it was time for him to leave the corporate world, he tendered his resignation without hesitation. But the news came as a shock to all his colleagues, many of them senior engineers who had worked under him for years. Some wondered why he chose to give up his executive position with tremendous potential for the future, especially at a time when he had just won an international achievement award. It was difficult, of course, for them to understand this sacrificial decision was made out of his devotion to the Lord Jesus Who loved him and died on the cross for him.

With my recommendation and acceptance by the congregation, Brother Yu was ordained on July 18, 1999 in Silver Spring, Maryland by a team of pastors headed by Rev. Edwin H. Waldvogel, senior pastor of the Ridgewood Pentecostal Church in Brooklyn, New York. He became my successor as full-time pastor of the Chinese Christian Church of Maryland on September 1, 1999. By the time I stepped down, the church had grown to some 150 people representing well over 40 families.

Reflections

As I reflected upon my 20 years of tenure as a church pastor, I see it as the most worthwhile investment of my mid-age life, learning valuable life lessons I could not have learned in school. Some of those lessons are:

(1) Serving God and others instead of living merely for myself has made life much more meaningful; (2) Being able to get along with everybody is one of the greatest human achievements; and (3) Being able to love people who are different and seemingly unlovable is the greatest accomplishment in the pursuit of personal successes.

Love is the greatest thing in the world. Without love, as the apostle Paul puts it, "I am nothing." One may acquire everything there is in the world, but without love, he/she is nothing and has nothing but a sense of emptiness. Therefore, Paul admonishes all men and women, "*Pursue love*" because "*Love never fails* ... *And now abide faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love*" (1 Corinthians 14:1; 13:8,13 NKJV).

Apart from love, I also learned the value of faith. When it comes to dealing with God, faith is a must; it is the key to receiving anything and everything from God. "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

One of the definitions of faith in the Webster's New World Dictionary is: "unquestioning belief in God" or "complete trust, confidence and

reliance" on God. For 20 years, while serving as a church pastor without salary, God has not failed to supply all my needs as I put my complete trust in Him. As a pastor, I have had to deal with all sorts of people, and every one of them-male or female-is different, even within the same culture. There were many well-educated people in our church, including those with PhDs, while I had to preach and teach with little or no formal education. I had no other capacity to satisfy these people but to rely entirely upon God and the anointing of His Holy Spirit. When confronted with relational issues in the church, I could only take them to God in prayer and trust Him for solutions. Time and again God has proved Himself to be faithful.

Patience is another important lesson I learned during my pastorate. How I needed patience! Yet when I first became a pastor, the Lord forewarned me that there were going to be differences of opinion and personality conflicts in the church; but that I was going to learn to be tolerant and patient. On one occasion, He clearly said to me, "Others may be angry and lose their tempers, but not you—because you are the pastor."

During the two decades of my pastoral ministry, I did have serious differences of views with my co-workers and faced opposition from two of them. One of the two brothers even challenged me publicly while I was preaching from the pulpit. However, I do not recall if I have ever lost my temper in church. I asked my wife several times if she had ever heard or seen me "blow my top" when I had a disagreement with the co-workers, and she said she could not remember if I ever did. I can only attribute this to my God and give Him the glory if that were the case.

I would be less than candid if I didn't admit to my own weaknesses. During my pastoral years, I have had my moments of discouragement, displeasure and internal struggle to the point I was ready to give up. Each time I thought of leaving, the Lord said to me, "If you love me, feed my sheep." I knew I needed to have more love—more of God's love—in order to stay on.

Fortunately, I learned earlier in my Christian experience that it is always better to bring my needs to God than to seek human help. I found out, as the Bible says, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in (or rely on) man" (Psalm 118:8 NKJV). So, whenever I had a problem with my co-workers or others in the church, I would always take it to the Lord in my private prayer time and trust Him for the solution. Time and again, He has proved Himself to be the answer to all my problems.

In closing this chapter, let me state in all honesty that of all the jobs (totaling 13 or 14) I have had throughout my life, the pastoral role has been the most challenging of all. As far as I am concerned, however, it wasn't just a job but a sacred calling from on high. Through it all, I have learned to overcome difficulties simply by waiting upon the Lord and trusting Him for the victorious outcome. By the grace of God, I passed the tests and trials and came out with flying colors!



Chapter Fifteen

My Faith and Vision



My faith is quite simple. It's strictly based upon the Bible. I believe in everything that is written in the Bible. My vision is that every Christian who practices what is taught in the Bible will eventually become like Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He or she is destined to be part of what the Bible calls "the Bride of Christ" or "the Holy City, the new Jerusalem"—the consummation of that perfect and glorious Church which is the ultimate goal of God's eternal plan.

I believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Every book in the Scriptures has been written by godly men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I believe in the authority and infallibility of the entire Bible, time honored and proven to be true. An intellectual understanding of the Bible is inadequate; it must be accompanied by spiritual enlightenment and understanding. This comes only from a revelation by the Spirit of God. A. W. Tozer, known as a twentieth-century prophet, once asked this question: "Are you Bible-taught or Spirit-taught?" In our pursuit of God, we must be taught by both the Bible and the Spirit.

The intrinsic and lasting value of Scripture lies not in the letter of the text but in the Spirit, "for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (II Cor.3:6). Jesus says, "*The words I have spoken to you are spirit (or Spirit)* and they are life" (John 6:63). Therefore, the Bible is not merely to be understood in the literal sense, but, more importantly, in the spiritual meaning as revealed by the Holy Spirit, the original Author. The Bible is to be accepted not in part but in its totality. Everything written in the Bible is for our instruction and edification and, therefore, acceptable. Any doctrine or teaching not in the Scriptures or which is contrary to the Word of God is unacceptable and should be rejected.

The Jesus I had believed in for the first 17 years of my Christian life was merely an objective historical figure as recorded in the New Testament. The Jesus I now believe in is truly the risen Christ Who has become personal and precious to me through what the Bible terms "the Baptism with the Holy Spirit."

Through the teachings of both the Bible and the Spirit, I have come to know Jesus Christ as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit—the Holy Trinity, as referred to in traditional theology. Since "*God is Spirit*" (John 4:24), He can come and live within us by His Spirit. It is therefore absolutely necessary for us to relate to Him in our spirit and soul, not by intellect alone.

God as the Spirit is not far from us; He is accessible at anytime and anywhere. As a Bible-believing Christian, I believe the Lord Jesus Christ lives within me to teach, correct and guide me daily by His Word and Spirit. My Christian life may be best described by the following chorus:

"He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today! He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way. He lives, He lives, salvation to impart! You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart."

A growing process

I have been an evangelical Christian for almost 70 years. When I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior at the age of 17, I knew practically

nothing about Christianity. I just thought it was the right thing to do, since all religions (except radical Islamic extremism) teach people to be good and do good things. So, for the first 17 years I was a zealous, religious person, giving all my spare time and money to the church. I participated in all sorts of church activities, namely, attending regular services, Bible studies, outdoor evangelistic meetings and various training programs, and volunteering for work in the church. As a result, our church grew exponentially.

However, my own spiritual life did not grow simultaneously. I found myself increasingly weary and unhappy. I had no inner peace and joy. My big ego continued projecting itself as a problem at home and in the workplace. I was self-righteous, self-centered, and hot-tempered. My loving, patient wife had to put up with me for many years. The biggest problem I had was my inability to get along with people. I didn't know how to be tolerant, respectful, and to accept people as they are, regardless of race, culture or educational background. I felt powerless and helpless. It was as the apostle Paul said, "I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" (Romans 7: 18).

I was also not doing well in the church, where I would spend all of my spare time seeking to be spiritual. I began questioning my faith. "Why am I not doing better? What's wrong with my religion? Is there something missing in my faith?" I started searching for answers. I went to my pastor and other leaders in the church asking these questions, but none of them could help me. One day I took off from work in order to pray and study the Bible, hoping to hear from God. At the end of the day, I had received nothing but this familiar Scripture: "I have been crucified with Christ; and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

Although I had known this text and even had preached on it, I didn't know how to apply it in my own life when confronting practical issues. I never understood what it means to be crucified with Christ, or to die to the "self-life" as described by some spiritual men and women. Not until 17 years later did I begin to discover the truth of the great apostle's dec-

laration. One night, my wife and I skipped our own church to attend a so-called Spirit-filled meeting at another church. To my surprise, at the end of the meeting, we both were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, just as the disciples of Jesus experienced on the day of Pentecost, according to Acts 2.

What was remarkable was not my speaking in tongues for the first time, but my sudden realization that Christ is indeed alive and that He lives in me as well. This was the original Gospel-the Good News-preached by Paul and other apostles/disciples who received the same Spirit baptism at Pentecost. I began to consider the significance of Pentecost-the outpouring or in-filling of the Holy Spirit. Ever since I was baptized with the Holy Spirit, the fact that Christ lives in me has become increasingly real and personal. My life has never been the same since that day. For the first few months, I was in a state of ecstasy. It was like heaven on earth! I lost all my interest in earthly things; namely, western movies, good music, my job, my journalistic career, etc.

Jesus became so real and precious to me that I began to understand what it means when Paul writes, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). I found the inner peace that had been missing in my early Christian life. I was filled with joy almost daily; I felt as though I was walking on a cloud! I was living in another world! Jesus was no longer a historical figure to me, but a living reality—One Who dwells within me by His Holy Spirit! I could truly say, "I had found Him!"

The best part of being filled with the Holy Spirit was not speaking in tongues or the impartation of certain spiritual gifts; it was an entrance into a personal, living relationship with Jesus Christ. I found that there is a notable difference between a church-going Christian and a Spirit-filled Christian; the former merely being religious, the latter, having the Spirit of Christ living within. I also began to see the point in the oft-quoted statement that Christianity is not a religion, it's a relationship with the living Christ.

"I want to know Christ," declares the apostle Paul, and "the power of His resurrection." That is the essence of Christianity. Humanly speaking, this erudite apostle has an impressive record of accomplishments. By Jewish standards, he had arrived at the point of being "faultless based on the law." Yet he said, "Whatever was gain to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:5-10).

In-depth Bible study

After I had the Pentecostal experience, I began a thorough study of the Bible on the subject of the Holy Spirit. I began to see the importance and necessity of receiving the Holy Spirit, or the "Baptism with the Holy Spirit," as it is often referred to in Pentecostal/Charismatic circles. In fact, both John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus taught about two baptisms, the water baptism and the Spirit baptism, and the inherent connection between the two. (See Matthew 3:11 & Acts 1:5.)

The water baptism performed by John the Baptist is for repentance, and the Spirit baptism given by Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, is for empowerment-the indwelling of the One who conquered sin, the world, the flesh, the devil and death! Before the Lord Jesus returned to heaven to pour out the promised Spirit, He told the disciples, "For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit...But, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:5,8).

Jesus Himself is our perfect example. When He was baptized in water by John, He was also baptized with the Holy Spirit, as recorded in the three Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. We also have the example of Jesus' disciples. They were apparently baptized in water by John and later in the Holy Spirit by the Lord Jesus on the day of Pentecost. Accordingly, we can see the striking difference in the lives of the disciples before

and after they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit!

Peter is a good example. Before he was baptized with the Holy Spirit, he had denied Jesus three times. After his Spirit baptism, when the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish civil and religious authorities, forbade the disciples from preaching, he boldly stood up and said, "... Which is right in God's eyes, to listen to you, or to Him? As for us, we cannot help but speak about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19,20). Empowered by the Holy Spirit dwelling within them, they not only had courage to face persecution, but also had power to heal the sick and cast out demons. They were living out the life of Christ!

After studying the Old and New Testaments, I've concluded that every born-again Christian should have received two baptisms, water and Spirit. Without the second baptism of the Holy Spirit, evangelical Christians will remain weak and poor spiritually, however strong and rich they might be intellectually.

What is Christianity after all? Though often described as the world's largest religion with an estimated total of three billion adherents, Christianity should neither be classified as a religion nor treated as an equation with any other religion because it is the antithesis of religion. Otherwise, Christ would not have been put to death by the religious leaders of his day.

Christianity is a personal, very practical relationship between God and man. In a much broader sense, it is about God the Creator and His dealings with His created. Or, as the apostle Paul preached and practiced, it is about knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection as well as living out the life of Christ from within. In another portion of Scripture he puts it this way: "...may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2: 2,3). This is, as I see it, what Christianity is all about.

From newsman to Churchman

Journalism was not just a job for me; it was my love, my life, my cup of tea. I ate, lived and slept with the news. I seemed to have a knack for it. I knew what would make an eye-catching headline. I was a died-in-the-wool newsman. Even after I became a devoted Christian, I still considered myself half-newsman and half-churchman, dividing my time between journalism and evangelism.

With little or no formal training in the trade, I fell in love with the news business in my early twenties. With what I considered adequate knowledge and a good command of the English language acquired through self-study, I took a one-year correspondence course in "News Reporting and Writing" with the Journalism Department of the University of California.

During my studies, I had to do actual assignments as a cub reporter covering sports, court, trade, politics and community events. Almost immediately after I had completed the course, a friend of mine, along with his business partners, launched the first English-language newspaper in Taiwan known as China Post. I was invited to join them as a part-time writer on the staff where I was able to put into practice what I had learned from the course. As the paper expanded from the size of a tabloid to a full-fledged newspaper, I became its full-time news desk editor.

After I joined the Broadcasting Corporation of China (BCC-Taiwan) in 1955 as head of its English Service, I was selected to participate in an eight-month practical training program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State to study broadcast journalism at Syracuse University, in upstate New York. As part of the program, I had opportunities to travel and observe firsthand news operations at some of the major network stations such as NBC, CBS, ABC and Mutual Broadcasting System in New York, Boston, Chicago and Los Angeles. I had the pleasure of meeting some of the then well-known national news anchors, including Edward R. Murrow.

Upon my return to Taiwan with the newly acquired knowledge and techniques in broadcast and print journalism, I conducted a series of training programs in both fields for those English-speaking Chinese young men and women aspiring to be professional journalists like myself. A good number of them turned out to be successful news persons working for various news organizations, including the Voice of America in Washington, D. C.

My journalistic career spanned over a period of 33 years, reporting and writing for the most part in English as a second language. During my two-year stint as a newscaster and commentator at BCC in Taiwan, I had to write my own script and deliver it in my native Chinese Mandarin language. I also had to write and speak in my mother tongue on my last job for eight years in Washington. It wasn't until I came to the United States that I started reporting and writing in Chinese! Being bilingual has had numerous advantages in my profession as well as in my private reading and study.

The Washington assignment was the highlight of my journalistic career. During this eventful period from 1969-1974, I had to cover, among other things, three major historic events: the three American astronauts landing on the moon; President Richard Nixon's surprise trip to Beijing which led to the resumption of diplomatic relations between China and the United States; and, the "Watergate Scandal," which forced Nixon to become the first U. S. President to resign from office.

Historically, President Nixon's China initiative had helped not only to open the Communist country to the outside world but has literally changed the world. As one of the few Chinese journalists reporting from Washington at the time, I had written extensively on the evolving U. S. China policy with veiled warnings to the Chinese Government and people in Taiwan to be prepared for the twin shock and blow against the fall-out from Washington's shift of diplomatic ties from Taipei to Beijing and Taiwan's eventual humiliating departure from the United Nations. Those were difficult days for Taiwan and its diplomats. It was then officially re-

ferred to as the Republic of China. The ROC Ambassador to Washington, James Shen, once remarked to me, "The days I'm spending here are like years."

In the United Nations General Assembly in New York, I was watching the procedural voting on the resolution calling for the admission of People's Republic of China. As the trend was turning overwhelmingly in favor of PRC, Mr. Chou Shu-kai, Foreign Minister and Chief of the ROC delegation to the United Nations, quickly stepped up to the podium and announced ROC's prompt withdrawal from the world organization, ending twenty-five years of representing the whole of China as one of its founding members.

A higher calling

As a journalist who lived in Washington for over 30 years seeing many historic events unfold, I think I could have written a memoir. But, this book is not intended to be a record of history; it is about a genuine Bible-believing Christian who has found true meaning in life and put into practice what he has learned and preached. It is not about Christianity as a religion, but about what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

For over three decades I have enjoyed my work and life as a journalist, loving it so much as to give all my time and energy to its pursuit. I thought I had achieved some measurable success as I made myself a reputation in the Chinese news media. My success might be measured by the fact that I rose from a cub reporter to the top position of CEO of one of the largest newspapers in Taiwan. Nevertheless, to me it was just one of the many jobs I have had in order to make a living and provide for my family.

It still seems strange to me that even in my youth I did not attach importance to success, fame or wealth. As a successful journalist, I had opportunities where I could have made a great deal of money or arrived at

a position of power and influence had I pursued it. For instance, some of my colleagues in journalism rose to become the country's top diplomats, including one foreign minister.

Regarding wealth, I can't remember ever looking at millionaires with envy. Money can be useful, but there are also many things that money cannot buy. And often, money can be detrimental. But through faith in Jesus Christ my Savior and Lord, I have found things that money cannot buy: unchanging love, inner peace, everlasting joy, and a real sense of security. I can truly say I have found the secret of happiness and contentment whatever my circumstances might be.

What is it that caused this paradigm shift in my life? In the Christian world, it is often referred to as "an encounter" with God much like the experience of the apostle Paul, whose life took a 180-degree turn when Jesus Christ appeared to him on the road as he trekked to Damascus to round up Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem to be jailed. (See Acts 9:1-6.)

There were two turning points in my Christian experience that totally changed my perspective and value system. The first one happened long ago when I was in a house prayer meeting attended by several other young people. Everyone was earnestly praying, and some were weeping. When it was my turn to pray, I started crying uncontrollably. I don't remember what happened, but I saw in my spirit Jesus hanging on a cross bleeding profusely from His thorn-crowned head, His hands, and feet. The scene was so real and vivid it was as if a motion picture were being played before my eyes.

The scene brought conviction in my soul in a way I never had felt before. I realized I was a sinner even though I wasn't conscious of any specific wrongdoing at the time. I became keenly aware of how much Jesus loved and cared for me to die for my sins on the cross. I repented of my love for the things of the world and dedicated myself to loving and serving Jesus my Savior and Lord.

The second turning point in my life was when I was filled with the Holy Spirit, an event that settled my future once and for all. It took away all desire and ambition for any other pursuit in the world, and it set me on fire for Jesus and for service in His kingdom. It reset my goal in life: to seek the things of eternal value rather than the things of temporary value in this world. It gave me a proper perspective of things seen and unseen. Above all, it gave me an entirely new Biblically-based worldview.

Then *came* the midnight dialogue with the Lord, described in previous chapters. As if I had forgotten about the first call, God had to serve what sounded like an ultimatum to me again, although I had already been pastoring a church in Maryland. The second call had effectively put an end to my journalistic career for good.

As a journalist, I used to report and write about earthly news events for a certain targeted audience. I brought both good and bad news to people. Now, as an evangelist, I bring only "Good News"—the Gospel of Jesus Christ—to all needy people around the world. My wife and I have traveled extensively in Asia, Europe and North America for the past quarter of a century, bringing the good message of Christ and the Inner Life—living out the resurrected life of Christ by His Spirit dwelling within us.

I do not have adequate words to express our deep sense of gratitude for all the blessings God has bestowed upon us as a family of seven adult children and seventeen grandchildren plus two grandsons-in-law at this writing. By the time this autobiography is published, we will have celebrated our sixty-fifth wedding anniversary. There is a popular saying often heard around Christmas time: "Jesus is the reason for the season." I can truly say Jesus Christ is the reason for the longevity of our marriage.

Operating under the name of *Jesus Ministries International* (indicating it is His ministry), inner-life conferences have been held in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, Japan, also Africa, the Middle East, Belgium, France, Germany, Canada and the United States. (For complete information, please visit our website: www.jmiinnerlife.org). God seems to have a mysterious way of making connections

with the local churches in these countries through the Internet and by word of mouth.

Our ministry team, a loosely organized but tightly knit spiritual fellowship, is made up of ministers and Christian workers from various churches in different countries, some of them are lay preachers and others are stay-at-home moms, but all are genuine followers and lovers of Jesus donating their time and energy to the work of the Lord.

Because of access to the Internet we launched an e-school in early 2015 with only a dozen students. It suddenly grew to hundreds of students the following year. In less than two years, the student enrollment jumped to 1600! This year in 2018 the total enrollment has exceeded 2300! There were countless hungry Christians out there, mostly in China, seeking to know God better and have a closer walk with Him. What caused the phenomenal growth of our e-school? I can only attribute it to the Spirit of God drawing these hungry souls unto Himself.

As a non-profit religious entity, JMI is a strictly faith-based ministry with a small all-volunteer staff of dedicated and faithful workers. We do not have any operating budget as such. We depend entirely upon private contributions from individuals who love the Lord and give sacrificially as they are moved by His Holy Spirit.

For instance, it was a sizable donation from one Christian businessman who had been healed of cancer through our budding ministry that enabled JMI to kick off its first inner-life conference at our home base of Dallas in 2006. After the first three annual conferences in Dallas, we were invited to conduct similar conferences and seminars overseas every year since 2008. From our first conference God has not failed to provide our financial needs.

No Retirement in God's Vineyard

God's calling is for a lifetime. There is no "retirement" in today's

sense of the word. If our Master has seen fit to bless us with long life, it is to continue to serve Him in ways that He adjusts to our season of life. Jesus was known for saving the best wine until the last, as He did at the wedding in Cana. The ripest fruit sometimes lingers on to the tree after the first touch of frost. Because of the wonders of today's technology, the Good News can reach thousands or even million of people worldwide not only instantly but at one time. It is like the "latter day rain" God sends just before the Great Harvest in preparation for Christ's second coming.

The Lord is doing just that in an amazing way! His timing is perfect. Instead of downsizing due to our age, He opened the door even wider when we ourselves could no longer go forth physically to preach, especially in our elderly years when travel has become more arduous. He gave us the vision of an online e-school only a little more than three years ago. We stepped into a marvelous opportunity, through a door that when God opens, no man can shut.

The courses we offer are free of charge, as Jesus has commanded, "Freely you have received, freely give." However, students are required to submit a report at the end of each course giving an account of what they have learned. The subjects we teach basically deal with the development of a Christian's inner life and intimacy with God. In a word, it's all about Jesus our wonderful Savior and Lord. Yes, God's eternal message to us is as fresh and powerful as the day God first revealed His secret to us personally. It is the emphasis of what the "mystics" call Waiting on God and Walking in the Spirit. The courses are all taught in Chinese Mandarin by Chinese pastors and ministers from China, Taiwan, Malaysia and North America.

To include English listeners, Martha Weldon, our associate minister, has stepped up to answer God's call by teaching in English with a Chinese interpreter. As Jesus taught the multitudes from the hillsides or from a fishing boat pushed off away from the shore, so we can do what He promised would be "greater works than these" through His Spirit now in this high-tech age. We must continue to work the works of God's King-

dom while it is day. "The night is coming when no man can work." To tell the ever-expanding story of JMI I have yet to write another book!

We are humbled and blessed and full of joy to be able to continue being about our Father's business leaning hard on God for strength and wisdom. "He addeth more grace when the burden grows greater," as the classic hymn proclaims. But "His grace has no measure, His power has no boundary" as we wait on Him in quietness and stillness. These are the works of the Holy Spirit, as we always say: "It's all God's doing!" Blessed be the name of Jesus!

We are not rich by the world's standards, but we have Jesus Christ who is "all in all." In Kenneth N. Taylor's paraphrased translation of the Bible, "So you have everything when you have Christ, and you are filled with God through your union with Christ" (Colossians 2:9). So we have peace, joy, love and a sense of security and contentment in spite of our need to deal with age-related problems like any other elderly couple. We are thankful for being still together in our octogenarian years. We wake up every morning thanking God for each new day as a gift from Him, living one day at a time and believing "our times are in His hands."

I would like to leave you with this expression often heard among our Chinese students, 有耶穌真好 (You Yesu Zhen Hao) "It's just wonderful having Jesus!"



Chapter Sixteen

America As I See It



"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He chose for His inheritance" (Psalm 33:12).

America is a nation of exceptionalism in many aspects. It began with the first group of 102 immigrants from England who set sail for America on a ship named the Mayflower on September 6, 1620. After two months of experiencing a brutal stormy sea journey, they landed in New England at Plymouth Rock, where they established the first overseas Colony.

They started building shelters for themselves as soon as they set foot on the new soil. However, as they were unprepared for the severe cold weather, half of them died during the winter. With the help of friendly Indians, notably two of them named Samoset and Squanto who had learned to speak English from early traders, the new immigrants learned to farm and raise livestock in order to survive in the New World.

When they reaped a bumper harvest in the spring, they invited their Indian friends to join them in a three-day thanksgiving festival with various activities and sports competitions. The annual Thanksgiving season in America has its origins in the first immigrants. The idea of work ethics also developed from the early settlers.

Separation of church and state

They were not only good, hard-working and law-abiding immigrants, but also devoted Christians who chose to leave behind their homeland and the state-sponsored and ritualistic religion (Church of England) to secure a place where they could freely worship God and practice their pure religion without any governmental restriction. They called themselves Puritans, also known as Pilgrims, and their sole purpose of settling in America was to live a simple and peaceful Christian life and share their faith with others.

The much-talked-about concept of separation of state and church, which to the Pilgrims obviously meant non-interference from the government in the free exercise of religion, was inspired by these Christians. This thinking made its way into the Constitution of the United States. The first Amendment of the Constitution begins with these words: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

Unlike any other country on earth, the Constitution of the United States was framed and written by the founding fathers, almost all of whom professed to be Christian believers. Virtually all fifty-five writers and signers of the United States Constitution, including those who signed the Declaration of Independence at the risk of their own lives, were dedicated Christians who belonged to various mainstream denominations.

The Mayflower Compact

The first immigrants did not come to America to pursue the so-called American dream, but simply to practice their Christian faith in a new free world. Upon disembarking from the *Mayflower* on November 11, 1620, the Pilgrims held a prayer service and signed a covenant known as the

"Mayflower Compact" which stated clearly that the voyage was undertaken "for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith" as well as to "plant the first Colony" in America. They also pledged their "all due submission and obedience to the just and equal laws, ordinances, acts and constitutions to be enacted from time to time for the general good of the Colony..." The Mayflower Compact was so politically significant and revolutionary that it was actually America's first governmental document that has influenced all other constitutional instruments since then.

Following the Pilgrims, there had been a continual influx of immigrants from the United Kingdom and other European countries in 1630, 1640 and the ensuing decades. But the overwhelming majority of the early immigrants were well-educated, law-abiding and highly moral religious people. It is true that America began as an immigrant nation, but more significantly it was born out of a Christian community founded upon centuries-old Christian-Judeo heritage, a new nation where the immigrants were reverently subject to God as the Sovereign Lord and to the Biblical principles as the only standards of their conduct. This was the American way of life, which continued for the first couple hundred years of American history.

I am not a history buff, nor was I ever a fan of America, but I began to really love and appreciate America as a Christian nation after I dug into the beginning of the American history. I even began to think that it is almost impossible to love God without loving America when one is informed of the American history.

As an ex-journalist, I remember covering my first Fourth of July celebrations in Washington for a newspaper in Taiwan. I was deeply impressed with the enthusiasm and patriotism manifested by the crowd gathered in the nation's capital; I wanted to know what they thought of America, and virtually every one of those I interviewed on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial said, "I love America, but I am Christian first, American second."

The influence of the Bible

The Bible, which has been the main source of my self-education, played a prominent role in American national life since the arrival of the Pilgrims. Even to date, by tradition, every government official from the President of the United States on down would place their hands on the Bible at their swearing in ceremonies. The Bible was the source of inspiration for the formulation of the American Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. Those who are not unfamiliar with the Holy Scriptures can readily perceive or detect Biblical principles and precepts welded into these and other historical/governmental documents.

The system of checks and balances in the form of three branches of the Federal government—the executive, legislative and judicial—was said to have developed from the Old Testament Scriptures, specifically from the Book of Isaiah, chapter thirty-three and verse twenty-two which says, "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Law-giver, the Lord is our King; it is He who will save us" NKJV. The framers of the Constitution apparently foresaw the need to share these powers among three branches of government so as to prevent the rise of a king or dictator in the United States, a possibility thus forestalled once and for all. Under the American form of government, it is impossible to have one-man rule or even one-party rule. The system of checks and balances is another evidence of the far-reaching influence of the Bible in American democracy.

Nevertheless, as John Adams, the second President of the United States, cautioned in an address in 1798:" Our Constitution was made *only* [emphasis mine] for a moral and religious [Christian] People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." In other words, there is always a possibility/danger for immoral and non-religious people (those who do not believe in the Bible as the Word of God) to misinterpret and misapply the Constitution which is described as a "living document."

George Washington, the first President of the United States, a godly man hailed as being "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen," once said, "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."

John Adams had such high regard for and faith in the Bible that in .338.

his diary entry dated February 22, 1756, he wrote: "Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible as their only law book, and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited. Every member would be obliged in conscience to temperance, frugality and industry, to justice, kindness and charity (love) toward his fellow men; and to piety, love and reverence toward Almighty God...What a Utopia! What a Paradise this region [nation] would be."

John Quincy Adams, the sixth President of the United States and son of John Adams, had this to say about the Bible: "The first and almost the only book deserving of universal attention is the Bible...The Bible is the book of all others, to be read at all ages, and in all conditions of human life...So great is my veneration for the Bible that the earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens of their country and respectful members of society."

The Year of the Bible

While President Ronald Reagan was in the White House, the Congress, by a joint resolution passed by both the Senate and the House of Representatives and signed by the President on October 4, 1982, declared 1983 as the "Year of the Bible," recognizing the fact that "the Bible, the Word of God, has made a unique contribution in shaping the United States as a distinctive and blessed nation and people...many of our great national leaders—among them Presidents Washington, Jackson, Lincoln and Wilson—paid tribute to the surpassing influence of the Bible in our country's development, as in the words of President Jackson that the Bible is 'the rock on which our Republic rests'."

Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, a man of highest moral character and nicknamed "Honest Abe," once remarked: "I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from The Savior of the world is communicated to us through this Book." Lincoln was an avid Bible reader and a man of prayer; he testified that oftentimes in the midst of great difficulties he was driven to his knees

and God answered his prayers. His prayers and faith in God saw the nation through its Civil War safe and undivided. After the death of his son Willie at the age of 12 in 1862, Lincoln "was seen more frequently with a Bible in his hand and that he spent more time in prayer," according to Dr. Phineas Gurley, his pastor at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, D. C.

Woodrow Wilson, the 28th President of the United States, another godly national leader and firm believer in the Holy Scriptures, said of the Bible: "When you have read the Bible, you will know it is the Word of God because you will have found it the key to your own heart, your own happiness and your own duty...The Bible is the one supreme source of revelation of the meaning of life...It is the only guide of life which really leads the spirit in the way of peace and salvation...I am sorry for men [and women] who do not read the Bible every day. I wonder why they deprive themselves of the strength and pleasure."

The Congressional resolution designating 1983 as the "Year of the Bible" points out that "Biblical teachings inspired concepts of civil government that are contained in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States." Research has indicated that 94% of the historical documents stored at the National Archive in Washington, D. C. contained quotes from the Holy Scriptures.

The Bible in education

Not only was the Bible regarded as a source of divine inspiration and guidance in governmental affairs in the early days of American history, it also played a cardinal role in education as well—and even in journalism. For example, Charles A. Dana, a highly respected journalist, was editor-in-chief of the *New York Sun* before he served as Assistant Secretary of War during the Civil War. Referring to the origin and value of the Bible, he said: "I believe the Bible to be a divine revelation. Christianity is not comparable with any other religion. It is the religion which came from God's own lips; and therefore the only true religion. Of all the books, the

most indispensable and the most useful, the one whose knowledge is the most effective, is the Bible."

For all intents and purposes, America's first public schools grew out of the Christian Church's Sunday schools where the Bible was used as a basic tool of education. In the fall of 1946, the Dallas High Schools published a Bible study course on New Testament. The course was authorized by the Board of Education on April 23, 1946 with its foreword stating: "The Dallas high schools allowed one-half credit toward high school graduation for the successful completion of a general survey course in the Bible...In 1939, it was decided to provide separate courses in the Old and New Testaments, each course carrying one-half unit of credit toward high school graduation."

America's most prestigious universities, notably Harvard, Yale and Princeton, began as Bible-based colleges established initially to train clergymen and ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Harvard University, originally known as the College at Cambridge, Massachusetts, was founded in 1636 with the donation of property and the library of Rev. John Harvard for the purpose of training "a literate clergy" and of teaching students "to know God and Jesus Christ…and therefore to lay Christ as the only sound foundation of all knowledge andlearning…" The founders of Harvard all believed that "all knowledge without Christ was in vain." Harvard's motto was: "For Christ and the Church."

However, slowly but steadily as years went by, Harvard became liberalized. Samuel Langdon, the president of Harvard University, in his address at the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts in May of 1775, solemnly said: "We have rebelled against God. We have lost the true spirit of Christianity, though we retain the outward profession and form of it.My brethren, let us repent and implore the divine mercy. Let us amend our ways and reform everything that has been provoking the Most High.May the Lord hear us in this day of trouble…"

After almost two and a half centuries, Langdon's appeal is still applicable, perhaps more so today than ever before. I had an opportunity to visit Harvard and its School of Divinity in June 1995 when my son John graduated from the School of Design with a Master's degree in architec-

ture. Today Harvard University, the first college established in America, is one of the most liberal institutions of higher learning.

Yale is the second oldest university in America. Originally known as the Collegiate School at Saybrook, Connecticut, it was jointly founded in 1701 by ten ministers of the Congregational Church. Later it was moved to New Haven and renamed for Elihu Yale, an American-born British Christian businessman who donated his possessions to the college valued at the time in the amount of \$2,800. Its purpose was "to plant and, under the Divine blessing, to propagate the blessed Reformed and Protestant religion in the purity of its order and worship."

Princeton University, originally called The College of New Jersey, was established in 1746 by the Presbyterian Church. For the first one hundred fifty years until 1902, every president of Princeton University was a Christian minister. Jonathan Edwards, whose fiery preaching touched off the revival known as the first "Great Awakening," was the third president of Princeton University. Its official motto was, "Under God's Power She Flourishes."

Christian heritage in Washington

In Washington, the nation's capital, where I lived and worked for many years and all our seven children grew up, much of the American history and its Christian heritage is in evidence. Washington is also a world power center where decisions made often affect the rest of the world. It is also a place where lobbies for special interest groups are most active, hence a hotbed for corruptible politicians. Washington has a saying, "Power corrupts."

Washington is also a historic town where bits and pieces of American history and its Christian tradition are on display, with dozens of museums and multiple monuments, such as the city's landmark Washington Monument whereupon the words "Praise to God" were etched, Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial and Ford Theater where Lincoln was assassinated. Washington is also one of America's tourist attractions, es-

pecially during the annual Cherry Blossom Festival in the spring when millions of visitors would come from around the country and the world.

During my tenure as Washington Correspondent for the *China Times*, I discovered in the White House this beautiful prayer by President John Adams, the first President to move into in the White House, engraved upon the mantel in the state dining room: "I pray Heaven to bestow the best of blessings on this House and all that shall hereafter inhabit it. May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof."

On Capitol Hill, in the House chamber, where joint sessions of Congress are usually held when the President of the United States delivers his annual State of the Union address or in the event of a visiting head of state invited to address the United States Congress, I noticed America's national motto, "In God We Trust" inscribed on the wall over and above the House Speaker's seat. This motto is also found on all American coins and bank notes. The United States is probably the only country in the world which declares its faith in God on its monetary currency, though usually ignored by the average spender.

The origin of the national motto dates back to the mid-nineteenth century when a pastor by the name of M. R. Wilkinson of Ridleyville, Pennsylvania, wrote a letter dated November 13, 1861, to the then Secretary of Treasury Salmon P. Chase, suggesting that the nation's religious sentiment be expressed in these four words and that they be inscribed on U.S. coins. Mr. Chase also received similar appeals from other religious leaders of his day. One week later, Secretary Chase, in a letter dated November 20, 1861, directed James Pollock, Director of the Mint at Philadelphia, to prepare the motto. The letter was noteworthy in which Secretary Chase stated: "No nation can be strong except in the strength of God or safe except in His defense. The trust of our people in God should be declared on our national coins."

America today

America remains unique as a nation, but it is vastly different and

diverse. American culture has changed and is still changing, but unfortunately, not for better but for worse from the traditional/Biblical point of view. America has been consistently on moral decline for the past fifty years that I have observed both as a journalist and pastor in the United States. America, probably the most singularly blessed nation on earth, is no longer "one nation under God, indivisible." as declared in the Pledge of Allegiance. It used to be a godly nation, but it seems to be increasingly Godless. The country is now largely divided, with Republicans and Democrats constantly pitted against each other; rarely have they shown to have put the national interest above their personal or partisan interests. The rule of law seems to have been relegated or replaced by the rule of majority without regard for the well-being of the country.

People with different views or beliefs are labeled conservatives, altright conservatives, liberals, ultra-liberals, independents, racists, etc. Labeling in itself is potentially divisive; some so-called "sanctuary" states are at odds even with the Federal government in Washington. The news media, supposedly neutral and objective, are divided such as left and the right-wing media, with the mainstream news media seemingly playing the role of an opposition party. The country is no longer united as "one nation, indivisible" because it seems to have ceased being "under God" as it was before. God seems to have been taken out of the context.

As an ex-journalist, I have been disappointed with the mainstream news media which offers very little objective and unbiased factual information. Much of the news reporting today is slanted or opinionated. There is hardly any distinction between the editorial pages and straight news reports in the nation's leading newspapers. It is no longer easy to sort out truth from falsehood or to know whom to trust because of the many voices. The one Voice, the Word of God, is no longer referred to as the final authority and standard of measurement. Consequently, the United States of America today is largely a "Divided" States of America. As the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah rightly notes: "Since they have rejected the word of the Lord, what kind of wisdom do they have?" (Jeremiah 8:9). God is the Source of wisdom and power and His Word is full of wisdom. Take for example the Constitution of the United States which

is filled with wisdom and far-sightedness because its framers and writers were inspired and guided by Biblical principles and precepts.

David, the most beloved king of Israel and a man after God's own heart, writes in in his prayer to the Lord: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105). Without the Word of God, there is no light but darkness. The people in the world are walking in darkness not knowing where to go unless they know Jesus who is "the light and Savior of the world." Therefore lawlessness, violence and terrorism are taking place all over the world because the world is in darkness, just as the prophet Isaiah says, "Darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples" (Isaiah 60:2).

America used to be a safe and peaceful country. When I first came to America 50 years ago, people by and large were friendly, honest and trustworthy. Sometimes we would leave our door open or unlocked when we went to bed and still felt safe. We would go to the store and bank without being worried and afraid of being mugged or attacked. Now we are told to look out for ourselves whenever we go to a bank or an ATM machine or department/grocery stores.

It is almost commonplace to hear or read news reports about a certain young woman missing from home and then her body found in an unexpected place later on. Young children too are sometimes reported missing or being abducted and molested or even murdered. Domestic disputes are often reported to have resulted in killings among family members. It seems that the consciences of many people "have been seared as with a hot iron." "But mark this," the Apostle Paul warns, "There will be terrible times in the last days" (1Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:1). I have never seen so many shootings and killings as in recent years, not only in the streets of Chicago and other crime-infested cities, but in places like schools and churches where such things are not expected to happen.

Because people are in darkness, they cannot see black and white or any other color, nor can they tell what is wrong or right, or what is normal and abnormal, what is natural or unnatural. The debate over homosexuality and same-sex marriage is not a civil rights or equality issue at all, but it is clearly a question of naturalness and unnaturalness. If homosexuality is not a violation of the law of God, it is indisputably against the law of nature. If same-sex marriage is a normal way of life, then one would ask: Where did all the men and women in the world come from in the first place?

Nevertheless, even the United States Supreme Court—or the majority of the justices sitting on the nation's highest court—failed to see the distinction between what is natural and unnatural when they ruled in 2015 that same-sex marriage is legal in all fifty states of the United States of America. Why is it that even the nation's top jurists and constitutional experts could have misinterpreted and misapplied the Constitution of the United States which derived from Biblical principles and precepts? The answer is simple: People are walking in darkness.

The Bible is sacred book, time-honored and proven to be true; it is more than any encyclopedia. The Bible has all the answers to all of the problems of humanity, and tells it like it is. On the question of marriage, for instance, the Bible states clearly that it is one between a man and a woman. Concerning homosexuality, its cause and the consequence of its practice, the Bible explains it in plain English:

"Although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust with one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion" (Romans 1:21-27).

When the United States Supreme Court handed down the ruling legalizing same-sex marriage, there were warnings from religious circles that it would cause confusion and chaos in human relationships, giving rise to further abnormalities. Sure enough, shortly after that ruling, press reports had it that a daughter was considering marrying her own

father. While I am writing this final chapter, Fox News-TV reported that a 42-year-old man of North Carolina and his 20-year-old daughter with a "love child" have been arrested on charges of incest. The report went on to say: "Steven Pladl, 42, of Knightdale, and Katie Pladl, 20, were arrested on January 27, WNCN-TV reported, citing 'warrants.' They have also been charged with adultery and contributing to delinquency. The maximum sentence for the incest charge is 10 years in prison." The child, a boy, was four months old, and the father-daughter couple were reportedly married in Maryland before moving to North Carolina.

Recently there have been numerous cases of sexual abuses and harassments brought to light virtually in all walks of life in American society. Many high-profile people were forced to step down from their positions of power and prestige after some of these reports were published and broadcast over the news media. In addition, the country has been beset with a host of other social problems such as racial tensions, drug addictions, teenage pregnancies, abortions, illegal immigration, drug trafficking, many people with depression, people dying of opioid overdose, etc.

What is wrong with America?

In my opinion, simply put, America has slowly but steadily walked away from God—the Almighty God who literally created this nation two and half centuries ago and made it the greatest and richest country in the world! God has blessed America more than any other nation in history, and made it a blessing to many other countries since the end of World War II. The United States is probably the only country in the world which has helped to rebuild the nations it had defeated in war. God has purposely raised up America to show forth His glory, righteousness, justice, love, generosity, mercy and compassion which are the characteristics of America as a Christian nation. The fundamental reason for America's greatness is that the founding fathers and the national leaders after them undertook to honor God and the Bible as the Word of God. "Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained" (1 Samuel 2:30).

While the national motto "In God We Trust" is still on display in the great hall of the United States Congress and on all American currency, it is hardly noticed by the public and politicians, much less practiced by the American people. The chaplains of both the Senate and the House of Representatives, by tradition, are still present to open the Congressional sessions with sincere prayers. But just how many of the people's representatives take these prayers to heart?

There is a Chinese saying which goes: "When you drink water, think of its source." The Bible is the source of inspiration and guidance used by the founding fathers to formulate the Constitution of the United States, but it is not taken as seriously as it was before, even though it is still used on occasions upon assumption of office by government and court officials. The Bible, though it remains the best-selling book in America, has been generally ignored or treated just like any other book. In designating 1983 as the "Year of the Bible," both President Reagan and Congress apparently saw the need to restore the influential role of the Bible in American national life, realizing that the country was headed in the wrong direction. The special declaration was made "in recognition of both the formative influence the Bible has been for our Nation and our national need to study and apply the teachings of the Holy Scriptures."

President Reagan, whose mother was a Bible teacher, was a regular Bible reader and practitioner himself. Reagan once said, "My mother was a very devout member of the Christian Church denomination. She instilled in me the necessity of reading my Bible, saying my prayers, and living as though the Second Coming of Christ was just around the corner." Ronald Reagan has been the most favorite President of the United States—even his political enemies liked him—since President Dwight D. Eisenhower in recent American history.

In the midst of all the voices, pros and cons, heard loudly in America today, only one Voice matters: the Voice of God as concealed in the Bible. People, politicians and media pundits may say what they like under the First Amendment, but only what God says shall stand. As the Lord Jesus says, "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away*" (Matthew 24:35).

When I came to the United States 50 years ago, I had a real burden in my heart to pray for America, crying out to God daily, "America, America, God shed His grace on thee..." I didn't understand why, because I was never an American dreamer until I became an eyewitness to the moral decay and depravity taking place in the United States. For all the sins that have been committed—hidden and revealed—in this nation, God has been mercifully patient in delaying His full judgment. God seems to be hearing the cries and prayers of the remnants of His people, the true followers of Jesus and practitioners of Biblical teachings. The fact that America has remained the strongest nation outwardly indicates that God has not yet taken His hand off this blessed nation.

The Almighty God seems to be using an increasing number of natural disasters, accidents and terrorist threats as His means of waking up the nation and calling it to come home so that He could continue to pour His blessings upon us. God seems to be giving us additional time to repent of our sins and to put our house in order. But the time for setting things right may not be long.

Hope for America

The only hope for America today is to turn back to God, honor Him as before, and reapply the Biblical teachings not only in our personal lives but in our national life as well. For God has promised, "If my people, who are called by my name [Christians who form 78.3% of the population], will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).

Again, we will do well to remember what our first President George Washington said: "It is impossible to rightly govern the world [or the nation] without God and the Bible." Those who are most vocal in advocating American-style democracy should also bear in mind what our second President John Adams stated: "Our Constitution was made *only* [emphasis mine] for a moral and religious [Christian] People. It is wholly inade-

quate to the government of any other [people/country]." In other words, the American system of government cannot work effectively unless people fear God, are submissive to authorities, have high moral values, and love their neighbors as themselves as taught in the Bible.

What is wrong with America today is not the system itself; it's the people and their hearts. It is an internal, spiritual issue. No politics can ever resolve it. The Bible says, "*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure*" "Jeremiah 17:9". Only God, who created the human heart, can fix or change it. The rule of law inherited from the law of God in the Bible seems to have been replaced by the rule of the majority irrespective of the presence of God as claimed by the founding fathers. We are like the people of ancient Israel. As the Scripture says, "*In those days Israel had no king* [or God]; *everyone did as he saw fit*" (Judges 21:25).