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Trusting God When It Hurts

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Trusting God When It Hurts



by Natasha Gayle

“For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well” (Psalm 139:13–14, ESV).

For many couples, having children is easy. They don’t spend a lot of time considering the complex and miraculous process of getting pregnant. But for couples like my husband and me who struggle with infertility or pregnancy loss, having a baby is anything but easy. The miracle of childbirth is not something we take lightly. God does a mighty work to make it come together, and when it doesn’t, we are left with questions. Fortunately, we are not without hope.

The Excitement

December 2014

My husband and I sat and talked about whether we were ready to start our family. *Yes... No... I don't know. YES!* We were as ready as we'd ever be. It was time to trust God with our family's future.

February 2015

I wasn't feeling like myself. *Fatigue. Nausea. Headaches. Maybe I'm pregnant?* I thought. The next day, I took my first pregnancy test and couldn't believe my eyes. The second line started to color! Pregnant.

I could barely hold back my excitement. I smiled. I laughed. I couldn't wait to go home to tell my husband. Wanting to do something fun to tell him the news, I found a little stuffed elephant and put it on the counter along with the positive pregnancy test—and waited for him to come home.

When he walked in the door, I tried to wait patiently on the couch. He came up the stairs, saw the stuffed animal on the counter, picked up the pregnancy test, and looked at it for several minutes. Then he turned to me and said, "Does that mean you're pregnant?"

"Yes!" I cried. We were both so excited. We couldn't wait to tell people. I went to the doctor a few days later who confirmed the

pregnancy but said it was still very early. That night we went to dinner with my husband's parents and shared the good news with them. While we were at dinner, my stomach started cramping. I had read that could happen in early pregnancy, so I tried to ignore it, but a sliver of fear crept in. *What if I'm miscarrying?*

The Heartbreak

A few days later, I woke up with more stomach cramps. Worse still: *I was bleeding.* My husband took me to the emergency room, and we received the gut-wrenching news that we were losing our first baby.

I cried so much. *Why was this happening?* The months that followed were painful. A coworker in my office was pregnant, and it pained me to see the joy and glow of her smile every day, and her growing belly. I cringed when I heard her complain about her different pregnancy ailments. *How I wished I had that to complain about.* I had to excuse myself often to go to the breakroom to cry or take a walk around the building.

I sought comfort from friends and spent time in the Word and prayer. I painted and crocheted. I found comfort in worship songs that spoke of the Lord being with us in our suffering and our waiting.

May 2015

I was busy planning my husband's

birthday when I started feeling similar symptoms to what I had experienced in February. *Fatigue. Nausea. Headaches.* I took a pregnancy test and discovered I was pregnant. But my excitement didn't last long. I started bleeding just a few days later. I hadn't even confirmed the pregnancy with the doctor. But I knew I was pregnant, like before.

My heart sank. I tried not to dwell on the pain as much as I had before. I knew this might happen again. My doctor in the follow-up appointment after my first miscarriage had told me as much. I was at risk of miscarrying, but a successful pregnancy wasn't out of the question.

July 2015

I found out I was pregnant again at the end of July. I was excited but tried not to get my hopes up. I prayed so much that this would be it. That this pregnancy would last. That this baby would be okay. *Please let him or her be happy and healthy,* I prayed.

Every day I was anxious. Every day I thought I would wake up bleeding like I had before. Every day I tried not to tell anyone about my pregnancy. I didn't want to welcome people into the heartache I was sure was coming. But every day I woke up and I was still pregnant.

I learned a lot about trusting God in this season. I had to. I had absolutely no control over the situation, but I

knew God did. The time came to get an ultrasound at the doctor's office. I went in. I was so anxious. Anxious there wouldn't be a heartbeat. Anxious they would tell me I was miscarrying again. Anxious I wouldn't get to meet this baby either. Instead, I heard a heartbeat. "A healthy little heartbeat," the technician said. I started to cry.

Our Love

March 2016

On March 31, 2016, I delivered a healthy, beautiful baby girl. It was amazing how much love filled my heart when I saw her and held her for the first time. Our little girl. The child we had prayed for, hoped for, and longed for.

"For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition that I made to him" (1 Samuel 1:27, ESV).

Oh, how this verse had meaning for me. I imagined the anticipation, fear, and excitement Hannah in the Old Testament must have experienced when she finally got pregnant. Every day of my pregnancy I prayed that our daughter would be healthy, and she is.

The Uncertainty

July 2018

We had just moved out of state to be closer to friends and my family. I felt exhausted but figured that was



When the baby was born



Natasha with husband and daughter

normal with the move. I fell asleep quickly that night and awoke the next morning feeling a little dizzy, a slight headache, and nauseous. I took a pregnancy test and the result was positive.

Woah. My first feeling was disbelief, the second excitement, the third panic. I rushed into the next room where my husband sat working and showed him the test. His eyes grew wide and he smiled. My mind began to race: Maybe we shouldn't put your office here. Maybe this would make a better nursery. What about the cruise we have planned with my family? We probably can't go now. "We'll figure it out," my husband assured me.

Weeks went by and I kept my pregnancy a secret. Since it was still early, we decided to wait to tell people. While visiting a friend, I shared the news of our pregnancy. I

couldn't keep it a secret any longer! I told her it was sort of unplanned, that we weren't expecting it to happen, and it threw off some of our plans—but we were excited!

Shortly after, I excused myself and went to the bathroom. Then I saw the blood. *Was it because I said the pregnancy was unexpected? Was it because I was disappointed that we didn't get to go on a cruise with my family?* Guilt and worry flooded my heart. I held it together a bit longer and cried all the way home.

The next morning, I started having significant pain in my side which didn't feel normal. I didn't know if I should go to the hospital so I asked my mother-in-law to pray that God would lead me in the decision. When the pain worsened, I decided I should go.

They took my blood. They sent me to get an ultrasound. I waited for the doctor. The doctor came in and explained that there was no baby in my uterus. My HCG levels were high though. I was pregnant, but the baby was not in my uterus. A small mass was in one of my fallopian tubes. I was experiencing an ectopic pregnancy.

My heart sank and my face paled. I had read about these when I miscarried years ago. There is no way to save the baby, and if left to grow, the tube will rupture, and I could die. "What do I do?" I asked, trying to hold back tears. "We need to treat you for an ectopic pregnancy," the doctor said.

It's hard to fully explain my emotions over the next several months. I went through treatment, wrestled with finding doctors for follow-up, spent nights lying awake—afraid the treatment hadn't worked, afraid my tube would rupture and I wouldn't get to the hospital in time, afraid I would leave my daughter motherless and my husband to raise our daughter on his own. All the while, I was heartbroken over the baby I was losing.

Again, I was left with no control. I couldn't control this situation. Fortunately, I wasn't supposed to; God was. I spent many nights in prayer. I prayed God would help me trust Him in this, that I would be able

to sleep, that I would trust whatever He had planned for us.

Finally, my HCG levels started to go down at the rate they needed to go down. I had taken all the steps I needed to take to get through this miscarriage. All that was left was to grieve. Grieve the third child I had lost.

The Decision

My husband and I agonized over what to do in the year following my last miscarriage. *Do we keep trying to get pregnant? Do we pursue adoption?* We wanted to adopt. It had been on both of our hearts for a long time. The only question for us was when.

There are so many children in this world without parents and homes. As I think about trying to grow our family, I am continually reminded of the children who might be out there



right now waiting for us to come for them.

I by no means want to neglect that call, but I also want to pursue this time of childbearing while I'm able. My husband and I decided we would wait a year and discuss next steps at that time. We needed time to recover emotionally, physically, and financially. Once a year had passed, we talked and decided we would try again, but if it resulted in another ectopic pregnancy, we would be finished.

November 2019

For some reason, I knew we were pregnant long before a pregnancy test told me so. I just had that feeling. Also, our three-year-old daughter who doesn't like to pray started asking people to pray for her baby sister or brother in mommy's tummy. Her prayers were consistent. Every night at bedtime she would pray for a baby brother and sister. And I would think that maybe I really was pregnant. Maybe my daughter just knew somehow.

December 2019

Finally, enough weeks had passed that I could take a test. We were pregnant. We asked our friends to pray. I tried not to be anxious. I tried to trust the Lord and pray with confidence. I truly saw this as an answer to our prayers and our daughter's. This was it; I was sure of it.

Then, it started happening again. I was losing our baby. It's difficult to fully describe the feeling. As a woman, you're used to bleeding every month, but a miscarriage adds so much more intensity and so much more emotion. I was watching my child slip away and there was nothing I could do about it.

I quickly scheduled a doctor's appointment—to make sure this pregnancy wasn't ectopic too. Fortunately, the doctors got me in right away and were able to start testing my levels. Relief flooded my heart when I found out it wasn't ectopic. But it was still heartbreaking, and I didn't want to think about going through this season of Christmas with such heavy hearts.

That night a friend sent me a group text. She had just found out she was pregnant. Of course, I was happy that my friend was pregnant. *But why, oh why, did God answer in this way and in this time? Why did I have to know in the middle of this miscarriage that my friend was being given a child she would likely get to keep—a child who would be born the same month as mine would have been.* My heart hurt so much. I sobbed on my husband's shoulder.

The Anger & Bitterness

I think it's common when experiencing infertility or pregnancy loss to feel some anger and bitterness. You see

other women and families with what you had hoped for yourself. There's disappointment and heartache.

I wasn't angry with my friend. But I started to wrestle with anger toward the Lord. *How could He do this? Why was this happening?* Like Job in the Old Testament, I knew I could confess my feelings to the Lord. He knew them. He would meet me in them. So, I just prayed to God that He would help me understand. That He would help me through.

Acceptance

I've just begun working through the grief and heartache this last miscarriage has brought, but God has not abandoned me. I've felt His presence and His answers even when I've felt confused and angry and upset.

I looked for a book to read that could help me work through some of these emotions and feelings. The first book to pop up in the Kindle Book Store was a book by Lysa TerKeurst, *It's Not Supposed to Be This Way: Finding Unexpected Strength When Disappointments Leave You Shattered*.

Lysa reminded me that to suffer is a privilege God calls us to—to rely on Him more deeply, to comfort others, and to make Him known. We experience suffering and the extent of suffering in different ways, but He

has called us to it and will be with us in it.

So, while I have a lot more to process and a lot of questions to answer, I pray for increased strength and trust in Jesus as I've seen Him get me through times like these before. I pray for joy when I don't feel joyful. I pray for patience with others when it's hard. I wait in expectation for the day I get to meet the four little children I've lost—the day I get to learn who they are, and the names God has given them.

And I take comfort in knowing that God is with me in my grief.

"And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you" (1 Peter 5:10, ESV). ■



Natasha Gayle is a wife, mother, writer, editor, and marketer. She works from home part-time as an SEO (search engine

optimization) specialist. Natasha and her husband live in Oklahoma and are part of an Acts 29 network church. Touched by her story? You can reach out by emailing gaylewriting@gmail.com.

The Doctor Who Prays for His Patients

by Lai Kwong Wong*



Dr. Wong:

Dr. Vijayan Charles is a highly respected surgeon at a hospital in my city. At age 81, he says he will retire soon! Each day, before his consultations or surgeries, Dr. Charles prays for his patients and the operations scheduled for that day. Before returning home in the evening, he thanks God for the successful outcome of his surgeries

and prays for his patients. As a devoted Christian, this doctor stands out among his colleagues.

During the 48 years of Dr. Charles' medical practice, the number of patients treated by him exceeds not hundreds, but tens of thousands! During his career, he has seen cases of every conceivable abnormality.

Having known of Dr. Charles' years

of work in the medical profession and his belief that “faith helps cure,” I was eager to interview him to hear some of his medical experiences firsthand. Below, in his own words, is one success story of how he prayed for a terminally ill patient and God healed him miraculously!

Dr. Charles:

First, I will tell you a little bit about myself. I am from India. I got my medical degree and training in my home country and have been practicing medicine for 48 years. In India, Hinduism is the conventional religion, embraced by 79.8% of the population, the Islamic religion comes in second with 14.2%, and Christianity ranks low with only 2.3%. In such disproportionate religious circumstances, to become a Christian is not easy at all. But I was blessed! I became a believer during my childhood as my grandfather and my parents were all Christians, giving me a Christian environment to grow up in. From my very young years, I learned to pray to God with thanksgiving.

After high school graduation, because my academic performance

was exceptional, I was accepted into the top medical school in India. But, unfortunately, my family was too poor to pay my tuition at this school. My entire family prayed for me, but they still could not afford the tuition. Eventually, my mother decided to travel to a distant city to seek help from a high official in the government’s Department of Education. At that time, many people were trying to see this official. Several hundred people were standing and waiting in a long line, but the official could only see a handful of people each day. My mother stood in line for three days and three nights. Then on the third day, the official noticed her. Perhaps it was the contrast of her dark skin and her white attire that made her appearance prominent among other people in the crowd.

The official asked, “Mom (Indian respectful name for the elderly), have you been waiting to see me for three days? What is on your mind for me to help you with?”

My mother clasped her hands in a prayerful position and said in a respectful manner: “Sir, God bless you! My son got admitted into the top medical school in India, but our



family cannot pay the tuition. Sir, can you help us?"

The official replied: "I'm afraid I can't help. This medical school is out of my jurisdiction." Then after only a moment's hesitation, he said: "Mom, I have a deep feeling in my heart. I want to help your son. I want to help him become an excellent doctor some day!"

My mother had persisted, and this official had looked with favor on us, but I knew it was God who had intervened! I not only got to enter medical school, but all my financial problems were solved too. I did not have to pay for my tuition the entire five years of medical study! From this time on, I became confident in my Christian faith. I knew man is limited in what he can do, but there is no task that God cannot do!

During medical school, I never forgot to worship my Lord Jesus Christ, no matter how busy or how difficult life got. When I began my internship, I began the habit of praying for my patients, and I continue it to this day. Each day before I start my work, I pray for the day ahead, for my patients, and for peace as I look to God to

guide me through every surgery. God has been faithful to protect me all the years of my medical practice. I have not encountered a single case of a patient dying on my surgical table, nor have I had any incident that got out of control during a surgery. For this, I am most thankful to God. During 48 years of medical practice, God has protected me and all my patients!

The Story Of Wanga Chu Chu

I once had a patient by the name of Wanga Chu Chu who was from the Congo originally. He had become successful in the U.S., running a family business with several factories. His son was a congressman in the Senate of Congo. When Wanga was young, he had considered entering politics but gave up that intention to continue running his business and operating schools for students. Besides being my patient, Wanga and I were friends, but we did not have intimate social contact with each other since both of us were busy people.

Then one day, I received a phone call from Wanga, asking me to visit him at his home as soon as possible. I remembered him as a talkative and



outgoing person, yet on the phone his voice sounded faint and weak. Surprised by the phone call and the sound of his voice, I asked him if something was wrong. “I’m going to die soon,” he answered.

Questioning him further, I learned that he had just arrived back to the States from visiting his home country, the Congo, and that he had been diagnosed with liver cancer by doctors at Johns Hopkins University Hospital. The tests had shown that the cancer was a malignant tumor in his liver, and the cancer had spread to his stomach and surrounding internal organs. Surgery was not a possibility—not by me or any other doctor. The doctors told him that he only had a short time to live. By then, half of the predicted three weeks the doctors had given him had already lapsed. He had about 10 days before he would leave this world forever. Unable to eat normally, he was taking only liquids and had become very weak. Knowing that I was a Christian doctor who always prayed for my patients to get well, he asked to see me before his pending death, so that I could pray for him.

My wife and I went to visit him at his home right away. When we were greeted at the door, we held Wanga tight while he slipped down to sit on the sofa that was near the door. He indeed looked like a dying patient with extremely weary and lifeless eyes. His voice was very weak, and

when he tried to speak, he panted. Seeing him in such a state, my wife and I knew we shouldn’t stay long, so we held his hands firmly and prayed for him. We asked God to heal him, to destroy the tumor and—according to His will—to restore his health. We had faith in God’s power to heal, but we had no visible evidence that God would answer our prayer for Wanga’s healing. The tumor had already spread, and Wanga had reached the end stage of his diagnosis.

As we prayed, Wanga seemed like a corpse, with blurry, protruding eyes staring straight forward and no movement in any part of his body. After we finished praying and got up to leave, Wanga did not thank us for coming. He seemed aloof, detached from reality. So, we quietly closed the door and left. It was strange to observe this person who previously had great passion for life and now had become another person, disappearing from life.

After the home visit, for a long time we didn’t receive any news about Wanga, thinking—naturally—that he had died. Then three months later, we received an unexpected phone call. A familiar voice identified himself as my dear friend, Wanga Chu Chu!

“You’re still alive?” I blurted out this question with obvious astonishment as I recalled our last visit and the doctors’ prediction of his chance of survival. But now I was hearing his



voice which was quite normal, as his words energetically conveyed!

“Thank God! I am still alive! When can you drop by to see me?”

With this invitation, my wife and I made plans to go to his home without delay. When we rang the doorbell, the door opened immediately. The person standing before us was like a stranger we were meeting for the first time. He was all smiles and walked steadily with assured steps—not at all like the person who was getting ready to meet death that we had seen three months earlier. He welcomed us to sit on the sofa with him, and we eagerly awaited the good news he would share.

In a happy, reflective mood he explained: *The day you prayed for me, I felt as if I was struck by lightning! There was a sensation of heat that began in my head, flowed through my body, and extended to the soles of my feet. I felt frozen—numb—so that I could not move, and I was not able to speak. I am sorry that when you left, I could not utter a single word to express my gratitude to you for coming to pray for me.*

After you left that day, I lay on the sofa and slept for a long while. When I woke up, I suddenly felt hungry. For days before, I had had no appetite and could not swallow. I only drank liquids. But then I stood up and wanted to eat some solid food. The

next day, I had a better appetite and started to eat normal meals again. I slowly regained my energy. Gradually, I could walk inside my house. Eventually, I was able to walk outdoors and stroll along the small road in front of our house.

My next questions to Wanga were “Where is the tumor now? Is it completely gone? Are you completely healed?” I suggested that he go back to Johns Hopkins Hospital immediately for a thorough evaluation and that he get regular check-ups.

So, he returned to the hospital again, as I suggested. The surgical team was absolutely amazed at the results of the tests. The cancer surrounding the liver and other areas had **DISAPPEARED!** They were astonished at what they were seeing right in front of their eyes. It was too incredible to be true! This patient who had been diagnosed three months earlier with an untreatable, terminal, malignant liver cancer, with a life expectancy of only three weeks—unanimously agreed upon by an expert panel of attending surgeons—was healed!

This was one case in my medical experience where the outcome could not be explained short of a **DIVINE MIRACLE!** Later, it was determined that Wanga needed a liver transplant because of an abnormality with his liver. A matching liver was identified soon for him and he underwent



transplant surgery successfully. He is still alive and remains healthy to this day!

It is easy to be surprised when there is a miraculous outcome to our prayers. I was surprised at Wanga's healing too, even though I was his attending surgical doctor. Wanga Chu Chu is a Christian like me, and as a result of his miraculous healing—even though he is an extremely busy businessman—he faithfully attends church. He also gives generously to relieve the suffering of people living in poverty.

As a doctor who believes in God and who prays for my patients, I know sometimes my prayers may not be answered according to what I ask. A patient may die rather than recover and live. Yet God has His own sovereign will. He answers our prayers according to His own way—for the good of ourselves and others! Let us choose to trust Him always! ■



**An interview with Dr. Vijayan Charles conducted by Dr. Lai Kwong Wong. This article was extracted from the March*

2020 issue of Chinese Today and translated into English by Philip Yu, a violin teacher and retired educational consultant in Monroe, New Jersey. Philip and his wife, Kwok Hoi Wong, attend Rutgers Community Christian Church of New Jersey.

HE FO

Not long after I joined the Air Force, I found myself in conversation with others about how they were raised to believe: Catholic, Mormon, Pentecostal, etc. They all were sure their parents would not lie to them about religion. With this thought in mind, I asked my dad how he knew that what he believed was the truth and the only way to believe. He held up his well-worn Scofield King James Version Reference Bible and said: "The answer is in here. I can't make you believe it all, but the answers you are looking for are in here." –And so, my search for "Truth" began.

A Youthful Choice

I had been raised in a godly, Christian home. My parents served the Lord

FOUND ME!



by Gordon Woods

faithfully through the church. Dad was a deacon and Mom played the piano—and they sang together beautifully. Both taught Sunday school. So, growing up, I spent a lot of time attending church and going to Bible and missionary conferences. From my parents' example, I learned to “walk the walk” and “talk the talk” of a Christian, but I, myself, was lost. What I had was only head knowledge of the gospel.

No surprises, then, when as a teenager, I rebelled and fell in with the wrong crowd. Causing my parents great grief, I ran away from home, only later to return to find that I had one of two choices—go to reform school or join the military. Tired of taking orders and desiring to be on my own, I chose the military—

and my life of adventure began.

Much later I found out that my father had claimed God's promise: *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6, KJV). Dad probably felt he had failed me because of my rebellion, yet he trusted that God would make up for his shortcomings and bring me to a knowledge of Him in due time. He had done his very best to raise me in a godly home. Although my father did not live long enough to see God answer that faithful prayer, I am certain that he is aware of it now.

To the Air Force and Back

In my search for the truth, I gathered material on various religious beliefs,

including the Bible, hoping to find the one that had its basis in truth. None gave me help beyond what I had already explored. But I kept reading and searching. In the meantime, I, a medical corpsman (enlisted) met and married my wife, Patricia, an Air Force nurse (officer). Of course, this was not supposed to happen, according to Air Force fraternization regulations. But the nurses found the enlisted fellows to be more gentlemanly than their officer counterparts, and many nurses stationed with us ended up marrying my enlisted comrades.

Our first son, Paul Douglas, came to us seven years later. Shortly after that, we left the military so I could attend optometry school in Oregon, from which I graduated in 1975. While in Oregon, our second son, John Gordon, joined the family. It was during the last year of optometry college that our funds ran out, and I faced the need to seek financial aid. I applied for and received a scholarship which paid for my last year of

college—but with the stipulation that I pay back the government with two years of active duty as an Air Force optometrist. Since I had nine years of enlisted time in the Air Force, it seemed like going back home.

God's Overseas Assignment

Two years later, we found ourselves stationed at Zweibruecken Air Force Base in Germany. At this point, my search for truth had come to an abrupt stop—because it was proving to be fruitless. Every cult and “ism” I studied was fraught with error. I realized that this intellectual effort was getting me nowhere! In total frustration—and with tears streaming down my face—I uttered this prayer: “God, I cannot find you! If you exist, you will have to reveal yourself to me, and then you will have to show me where truth is, because I cannot find it!”

My search for truth was now in His hands—if indeed He existed at all—and I ceased my searching. Of



The Woods family in 1983



Gordon & Pat Woods



course, now I realize that God had been waiting for me to let Him take over, once I realized that my human efforts had failed me. And things began to happen once I put all my study material to the side and left it up to God.

We lived in base housing (a six-apartment stairwell), and in every apartment the families living there were either atheists or agnostics. Then, suddenly, all these families moved out, and we were the only family left! Slowly, God began moving new families in, and in each apartment, at least one member was a born-again believer.

Oblivious to what God was doing, I signed Pat and me up for a Bible study at the base chapel. When I came home and told her what I had done, she began to cry. All teared up, she said, "This is what I have been praying for!"

What was so interesting was that at least one member from each apartment in our stairwell had also signed up for the study! We went to class together once a week, and the material we studied led to many conversations in the stairwell as we

discussed God and His Word. It was a wonderful and fulfilling time. This was God's way to begin to soften up my heart.

Our sons, Paul and John, rode a bus to Sunday school at Zweibruecken Baptist Church where they also attended Daily Vacation Bible School. During the Friday night service where the parents were invited to see what their children had been learning and doing all week, God gripped my heart even tighter—to the point of breaking, but not quite! Seeing my two sons up front, professing that they had received Christ as their Savior, something was happening to me! I was not sure what it was, but my heart was softened even more.

At this point, we began to attend Zweibrucken Baptist Church as a family. I enjoyed the fellowship, but at the same time discomfort gripped my heart. It finally came to a focus when at home one Sunday afternoon (April 4, 1980) for the first time in my life, I knelt down on my knees and dealt with the Lord regarding my eternal destiny. It was then that I opened my heart and received Christ as my Savior, and I was baptized a few weeks later.

What a release of pressure! I no longer felt the need to search for truth, because I had found IT! No, I found HIM—or rather, He found me! When I sought the Lord with my heart—and my mind—He revealed Himself to me and answered my prayer. *“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart”* (Jeremiah 29:13, KJV). Why? Because *“... without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Hebrews 11:6). Now I know that He is mine and I am His!

The Way of Truth

Truth was an important theme in the Apostle Paul’s letters to young pastor Timothy. He first speaks of *“the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Timothy 2:4, KJV) as required for salvation; then of his own teaching as *“the truth in Christ”* (1 Timothy 2:7, KJV); then of the *“the church of the living God”* as *“the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Timothy 3:15, KJV); and of Christians as those who *“believe and know the truth”* (1 Timothy 4:3, KJV).

Paul stresses the importance of studying the Bible as *“the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV) and that true repentance requires *“the acknowledging of the truth”* (2 Timothy 2:25, KJV). Jesus Himself, in His high priestly prayer for His followers, prayed *“Sanctify them*

through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17, KJV).

Just as my father said, I found the truth in my King James Bible! *Jesus said, “... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). I came to Jesus; He saved me and now guides me. He is the source of my blessings, and I am confident that He is sufficient for my needs. Looking back at how God worked in my life while I sought for truth, I have complete joy knowing that He is in control of my life.

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:13, KJV).

I know that I am His and He is mine! ■



Dr. Gordon Woods served in the United States Air Force as a medic for nine years and as a doctor of optometry for 15 years. He taught science at Trinity Baptist College in Jacksonville, Florida, for 15 years and has been with Baptist Missions to Forgotten Peoples (BMFP) since 2005. Dr. Woods taught at Ark Baptist College in Saint Augustine, Florida, for several years and now serves with Berean International Bible Institute.

the greatest artist of all—because He painted the sky! Sometimes I would write to God in my diary, and I never associated the giant, scary statues of Buddhas I saw in the temple with God.

Bargaining

About a month after I finished my high school exams, a classmate invited me to her church youth group's camp. I went hoping to have some fun and, instead, I learned about the true God. I was deeply touched one evening during camp when the pastor preached, and I heard about Jesus' love and sacrifice for my sins. I knew then that Jesus was God—the God who painted the sky—and that He loved me and wanted to save me from my sins. I was so grateful and joyful that my tears flowed! A few days later, I prayed and accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

After camp was over, I started going to church, and my parents became concerned. Then, the Friday evening confrontation with my father

happened. My 18-year-old self would normally have gotten into a heated argument with my dad. However, that evening, as I tried to calm down, I prayed that God would help me to really listen to my dad.

My dad had always had a poor impression of Christians. Beginning in the 1950s when he was a young man, there had been a strong student evangelistic movement in Singapore, and many highly educated young men and women became Christians. To my dad, the Christian young people appeared snobbish. They spent a lot of time in church and openly criticizing Chinese ancestor worship practices. Dad thought they were betraying their family and their Chinese identity.

As I prayed that Friday evening, I felt led to tell my dad that I understood where he was coming from. And God worked a miracle in his heart! He then actually paid attention to what I wanted to say! In a traditional Chinese family, parents often say: "I've had more salt in my lifetime



*Laikein and her husband Derek
and son Caleb*



Laikein and her father



than you've had rice"—meaning, "I know better than you." So, it was a big deal when my dad listened to me as I pleaded with him. I begged him to give me one year to prove that my newfound faith would make me a better person and a better daughter. After a year, if I had not become a better person, and he still wanted me not to go to church, I would accept his decision. And he agreed! So, I was able to go to church—and my family accepted it. Even on days when I felt lazy and was tempted to skip Sunday worship, they would remind me it was time to go to church!

A Change for the Better

One way I began to change was in my relationship with my younger brother. For years, we had had a volatile relationship, provoking each other into fights and arguments, and this grieved our parents. One day I read a verse in the Bible: *"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen"* (1 John 4:20, ESV). At that time, I did not know that the word "brother" was a general term, so I understood it as God speaking to me about my brother! The next time I had a heated argument with my brother, I felt convicted immediately, so I wrote him a note of apology. For Chinese, it is rare for someone older to acknowledge to someone younger that he/she is wrong. And,

in my family, we usually did not resolve conflicts. We merely stuffed them down and pretended nothing happened. But with God's help, I was beginning to change. I did not want to provoke my brother, and even if I lost my temper with him, I would apologize afterward. Once, when he jeered at my faith and said very hurtful remarks about Jesus, instead of fighting back, I wept—and prayed that God would forgive him because he did not know what he was saying. Gradually, with God's help, I changed, and my relationship with my brother improved.

Disappointments

During my college days, the campus student minister who was discipling me encouraged me to pray for my family's salvation. She quoted Acts 16:31, *"... believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."* So, I began praying that my family would come to know the Lord. But years went by, and at times I felt discouraged. Then my best friend Judi told me: "When you are weak, I will have faith for you. I will keep praying that your family will become Christians." I really appreciated that others would pray for my family whom I longed to experience Christ as I had. But even when I got baptized, only my elder sister attended the ceremony. And, praise the Lord, years later, she and her husband accepted Christ after they moved to California.

After I graduated from college, I heeded God's call to serve Him in campus ministry. My mom became angry with me and would not speak to me for months. My dad was disappointed too. Both my parents did not have the chance to be educated because of World War II and poverty, and they worked very hard to put their children through college. They thought that by going into Christian ministry I was wasting my education. They knew that Buddhist monks and nuns did not need a college degree to chant in a temple, and they didn't understand that Christian ministers needed to be educated. Much later, I realized that my mom thought I was going to be a celibate nun! She was angry because she loved me and wanted the best for me.

God's Faithfulness

Whenever I had a chance, I tried to explain the Christian faith to my parents. Once, when my sister and I invited my dad to church, the Bible study that morning was on the Ten Commandments. I took the chance to point out to my dad that God commands us to obey our parents. (The Chinese Bible translates it as: *"to be filial to your parents."*) I pointed out that filial piety is a core Chinese value and being a Christian did not go against our Chinese values.

Thankfully, over time, my dad's attitude towards Christians changed. When I got married, both my

When Dad Listens

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parents came to church to attend the ceremony. During the reception, they heard young people thank me for the influence that I, as their youth pastor, had had in their lives. That evening, my parents finally understood what my job as a Christian minister entailed. My dad told me afterwards: "Your job is very meaningful."

Twenty-two years after I became a Christian, my dad accepted Christ. I could not believe it when my brother-in-law told me the news. My atheist dad had accepted Christ! A few years later, he was baptized at the age of 80. Since then, he has been attending church faithfully every Sunday, traveling by public transport. He is now 87 years old. Whenever my sister or I go back to Singapore (my husband and I now minister in China), we accompany my dad to church, and he proudly introduces us to his church friends.

Open Her Eyes, Lord!

My mom is still not a believer, though her attitude towards Christians has softened somewhat over the years. When my brother had marital problems, and when my niece was going through teenage rebellion, my mom asked me to bring them to church! She is impressed by Christians' commitment to relationships and their efforts to resolve conflicts. She even said, "If your God helps your brother, I will become a Christian." To her, God is



a supernatural power to whom we turn for help in times of need. People make vows with God and when their wishes come true, they have to fulfil their vows. She does not yet understand that being a Christian is more than that. It is entering into a personal relationship with the only true God, made possible by Christ's death on the cross, paying the penalty for our sins. I earnestly pray that my mom will one day recognize God's great love for her and humbly accept His salvation. My dad, my sister, and I all pray that she will have eyes to see and ears to hear the Spirit of God—and she will accept the salvation that Christ so freely gives.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). ■



Laikein Atkins served fourteen years in campus ministry and as a youth pastor in her home country of Singapore. She presently lives in East Asia with her husband and teenage son, where they seek to be Christ's witnesses. Besides doing English-to-Chinese translation work for Christian broadcasts and Bible schools, Laikein loves to befriend and encourage women and young moms in their faith journey.

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When Dad Listens



by Laikein Atkins

It was Friday evening and I was about to leave for my church's weekly prayer meeting. When my dad found out, he lost his temper, slapped me in the face, and threatened: "If you dare go to church, I will disown you immediately!" "Oh, God, what am I to do? Please help me!" I cried out to God silently in my heart.

Through the Eyes of a Child

Growing up in a Chinese family in Singapore, I often heard my dad say: "It is no use praying to gods or Buddhas. Believe in yourself and work hard." My mom, on the other hand, saw ancestor worship as part of her duty as a filial daughter-in-law. Every first and fifteenth day of the month she would offer up worship to the gods. But I, as a child, believed in God. Loving to draw, I marveled at the beautiful, ever-changing sky and thought that God was



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