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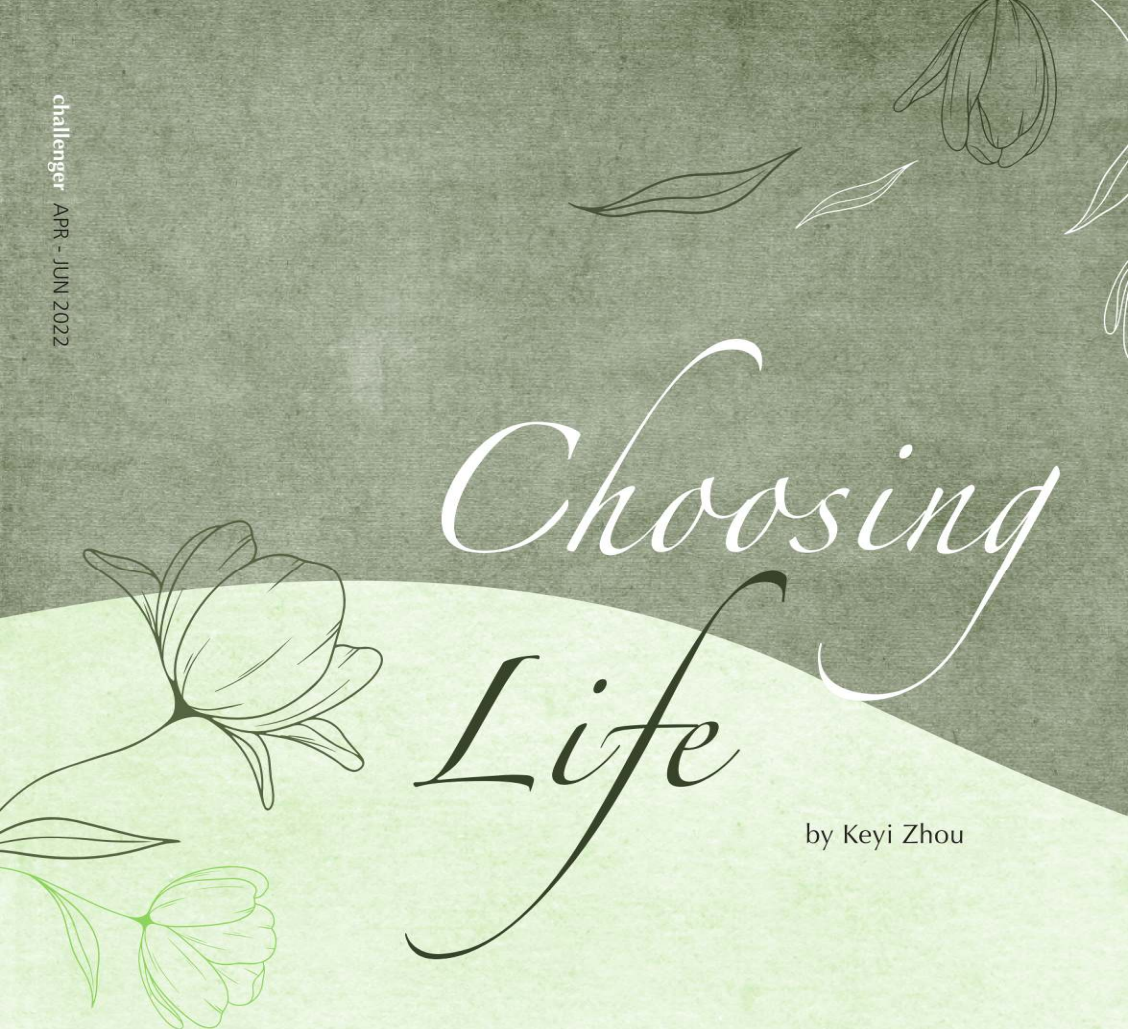
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A large, light brown silhouette of a woman with a ponytail and a young child, both facing each other in a tender moment. The background is a textured, light brown paper.

Choosing Life

/ The Name That Spans Time
/ The True Meaning of Abundant Life
/ Breaking Cellular Habits
/ Why Do We Pray?

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Choosing Life

by Keyi Zhou

Esther's story had crossed 1,000 kilometers to my hometown in China. I knew that she was a young lady diagnosed with a rare kind of cancer while pregnant with her second child. Instead of aborting the child, as most of her doctors advised, she chose to give birth first and then receive treatment for the cancer. Her story reminded me of the courage of Esther in the Bible.

Wanting to know more about this remarkable woman, I sent her a friend request on WeChat and was able to set a time for an interview with Esther the following week. On the phone, she sounded friendly, reserved, and a little bit shy.

Esther lives in Chengdu, the biggest city in Southwest China. She quickly filled me in on some interesting facts



about her hometown: Chengdu is one of the original habitats of the world-famous pandas. The people of Chengdu live under humid weather conditions year-round because of the lower terrain, and they love spicy food.

From our conversation, I learned that Esther has a kind of malignant tumor called Ewing's sarcoma, a very rare

type of cancerous tumor that grows in the bones or soft tissue around the bones. It is more common in children and teenagers but can occur at any age. Because of the tumor's rareness, medical research lags behind other more common cancers, and aggressive treatment with chemotherapy and radiation is required. At this point, Esther had already gone through four surgeries,

including the c-section with her first baby and seven rounds of chemo. She still would need 10 more rounds of chemo, 25 rounds of radiation, and possibly two more surgeries.

Esther gave birth to her first child in 2018, and with much joy, she was expecting her second child in August 2021. She had always lived a healthy lifestyle—no drinking or smoking—and got plenty of sleep. Her friends often teased that she lived like an old person! So, in January, when she discovered a small protrusion on her right clavicle, she was not expecting it to be a serious problem. Just to be sure, she went to the orthopedics department of West China Hospital for consultation. The doctor suggested a color ultrasound, and no tumor was found.

By April, the small protrusion had grown into a bigger bump, and she returned to the hospital. This time

the doctor looked at it more seriously and contacted the dean of the department, who oversaw a second color ultrasound.

Speaking to Esther's husband (not directly to Esther, as is the custom in China), the doctor suggested that they give up their unborn child and give time to treating Esther's cancer. "This is a typical sarcoma, the king of cancers," the doctor said, pointing to the ultrasound film.

"It was the darkest time in our lives," Esther recalled. "Everyone, except one doctor from Taiwan, strongly suggested that we give up our child. We had lots of concerns and fears, and we agonized over our decision. We considered whether it was fair to our son, who would be three when his sister was born. If she were born with mental or physical problems, after my husband's and my deaths, he would be the one to take care



of her. However, we finally made the decision to do the c-section first because we realized the baby was from God, who loved her much more than we did. We believed that He would take care of her, as well as our first child, all the way. It was not an easy decision, but we chose the best answer with His grace."

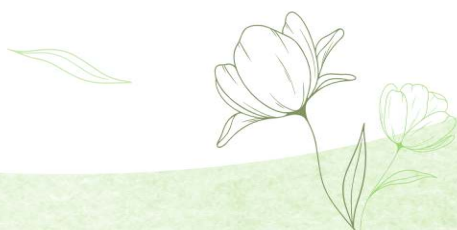
I wanted to know what led her to keep her child at all costs, and her answer didn't surprise me: "We are Christians and know the meaning of life. God gives life, and it is not for us to kill. My husband and I always wanted to have this baby. We always wanted to have a second child. After praying, we were assured that our daughter was a gift from God. I was four months pregnant, and I could feel her alive in me. Her heart was pulsating in my body. When we made the decision to keep her, I felt peace immediately."

I told Esther that I understood her deep connection with the baby and her great respect for life. I explained that in the United States, abortion has been argued for decades—whether it should be considered as a woman's right to her body and whether it

should be legal or illegal. But China, known for its previous one-child policy, promotes abortions. So, I knew Esther's decision took great courage! Printed ads publicizing the so-called painless, induced abortions are glued to roadside telephone poles, and seen on big screens on buses and subways, showing a woman with a big smile, singing cheerfully, "The trouble is gone easily after a nap." Aborting an unborn baby is never considered as something inappropriate by the broad masses of people in China.

At this point, things were dark for Esther and her husband. They cherished the life of their unborn daughter, but they were alone in their wishes. The oncologist told them that chemotherapy treatment for the cancer would be hard on her body and the baby. So, Esther made the decision to give birth to the baby first—to allow the baby to be born prematurely and cared for in an incubator.

"The decision was easier for me than for my husband," Esther explained. "I wouldn't mind giving up my life for my child, but my husband had to



think of us all. He was very good to me. Though he was struggling, afraid that keeping the child would do harm to my body, he kept his worries to himself and supported my decision.”

When the baby was 29 weeks old and had a definite survival rate, they made an appointment with the obstetrician. The doctor shared his concerns that even if the child survived birth, it was uncertain if she would be healthy physically and mentally. And he said it would take a lot of effort and a lot of money to raise a child like that! However, at Esther’s insistence, a c-section was performed.

The c-section took almost three hours, with Esther under general anesthesia. The baby weighed only 1.4 kg, around 3 pounds—very tiny—and was immediately taken to the incubator without her mother even getting to hold her.

After giving birth, Esther took two weeks to collect two-month’s milk for the baby. No transfer of the cancer was detected at that time, which the doctor called a miracle. After 35 days, the baby was discharged

and able to go home to be with her parents.

Esther shared some of the insights she gained through her experience: “A lot of people say I gave my life for my daughter, but in fact, she saved me. Because of the progesterone stimulation caused by pregnancy, the tumor grew quickly, prompting me to get it checked out. So, the cancer was found early before it had time to advance. It was all God’s timing.”

After giving birth, the tumor continued to grow to the size of 10 cm, and Esther took the doctor’s advice to have an operation to remove the tumor. He explained the procedure clearly. The excision area needed to be enlarged. Her scapula (shoulder blade), the clavicle (bone connecting the sternum to the shoulder), the acromion (top outer edge of the shoulder blade), and the supraspinatus (a small muscle in the upper back) had to be removed, which could cause damage to the surrounding nerves and ligaments. If the body didn’t repair itself, artificial ligaments would need to be placed. The wound would be too large to be sutured directly, and a machine called



a VAC (vacuum-assisted closure) would absorb and pull drainage from the wound continuously for 7-10 days to allow the front and back skin to expand upward. After 10 days, another operation would need to be done, and the condition of the skin would determine if it was possible to be sutured, in which case much less flap would need to be transferred.

After the operation, there was no need to transfer the flap and suture at all. "It was another miracle," Esther said. "God's favor was on me." Doctors said that after the operation, she might not be able to lift her right arm, and they tried to console her by saying that she should put her life before her limbs. After the surgery, however, the doctor said that the arm function could slowly be restored by exercises, and she would be able to comb her hair and wash her face again. Again, Esther commented,

"God took care of me. His favor was on me." As of this writing, Esther's wound has not healed completely, but she continues to pray for a miracle of healing that would spare her from having to undergo two more surgeries.

While I understood Esther's appreciation of the Source of our greatest strength, I was curious about her perception of it. "My illness has transformed me in many ways," she elaborated. "I now have much more empathy for others. While in the medical ward, I stood out as the mother of a newborn who was being treated for cancer while on the same day pumping her milk for her baby in the incubator. In my sickness, I experienced pain on a completely different level. As I went through many chemo treatments, my roommates in the ward were feeling their own pain and vomiting. We



were all struggling on a mental level as well, with depression and self-pity. My symptoms were not as bad as others, but it was not because I am better than anyone else. God's favor toward me was unmerited, a gift of kindness that gave me the ability to get through the difficult path God had for me in this life. I experienced His favor through the goodness of those who cared for me in the hospital."

"I'll admit, there's a sadness in me," she continued, "and sometimes I struggle with my thoughts. The fatality rate of this cancer is high. I feel very reluctant to say goodbye to this world so soon. It would be so heartbreaking if my husband and children were left in this world without a wife and mother!" As Esther talked, tears streamed down my cheeks. Her words broke my heart: "But knowing that my days are numbered, I appreciate more the moment that is here. I'm more fortunate than a lot of people who die in accidents and don't have the

chance to say goodbye."

Wanting to end our conversation on an optimistic note, I offered: "There's a possibility you might pass young, but you also might be able to live into your 80s. God knows!" "That's true," she said. "My husband looked online and found out that there was a man with this kind of cancer who lived 50 years after he finished all the treatments. Fifty more years of life is very encouraging to me! Nevertheless, even if I can't be here for my family, my husband and I have known God, my children will know God, and God will be there for them till the end."

As I said goodbye to Esther, I prayed she would continue to experience the peace God has promised: "*And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:7). And I thanked God that the "*the favor of the Lord our God*" was on her (Psalm 90:17). ■



Keyi Zhou is a Christian freelancer who lives in Kunming, Yunnan, China.



The Name That Spans Time*

by Song An Chu

For over 2,000 years, the name of Jesus—singularly and uniquely—stands above all other names in the history of mankind. The name elicits fervent worship and zealous admiration by unprecedented numbers of people around the world.

Yet, Jesus, while on earth, possessed nothing of the earthly endowments that assured others a place in history. He said of Himself, *“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head”* (Luke 9:58). Jesus had

no formal education, yet the Jews marveled at His authority: *"How is it that this man has learning, when He has never studied?"* (John 7:14-15).

Jesus spent 30 years of His life working as a carpenter, yet when teaching in the synagogue in His hometown, the local people were amazed. They asked where Jesus got such wisdom and miraculous powers. They knew He was a carpenter's son, His mother's name was Mary, and Jesus had brothers and sisters. So where did He get all these abilities? Everyone took offense at Him! (Matthew 13:54-57).

Jesus' Legendary Name

Jesus possessed nothing of human value on earth, yet the name of Jesus is unmatched and without comparison to any other name in history. What name has been so much remembered and universally praised

as the name of Jesus? It has been imprinted by oral and written word in every language and dialect in the world. Jesus is the most universally recognized icon who ever lived.

When Jesus was born in a humble stable in Bethlehem, an announcement was made to remote shepherds and a vision given to Far East scholars. They were led to Him—and they worshiped Him. Worldly kings and inhabitants of the world alike were frightened and disturbed because of Jesus' birth, yet from then until now, His birth has been celebrated universally—with sounds of joy and gladness—every Christmas.

The birth of Christ is a landmark for mankind's progress on many fronts. History, civilization (culture), politics, society, economy, morality, customs, and traditions—all have been impacted by His appearance.



Researchers on Western civilization acknowledge this impact. Historian Bancroft once said: “I can see the name of Jesus on every page written in contemporary history.” Swiss historian Von Muller also opined: “Christ is the key to world history.” Today, the source of terms such as universal love, sacrifice, freedom, equality, and human rights can be traced to the descent of Christ from Heaven to Earth as an unshakable truth.

The Name Spread Through Persecution

Many of Jesus’ twelve apostles were fishermen, born of low social status. One of them betrayed Him, another denied Him three times. The rest all fled out of fear at Jesus’ arrest. As such, it seemed the apostles of Christ had vanished completely. But not so! Every single one of them (except Judas who betrayed Him) began to spread the gospel with dauntless courage—even facing imminent danger of beatings, torture, and threats of death! Nothing held back their zeal and passion for spreading the gospel in the name of Jesus Christ, their personal Savior and Lord!

Today, wherever Christian faith is spread in opposition to idolatry and pagan practices, violent persecution

inevitably follows. Even so, the growth of Christian churches has never subsided. During Roman rule, over ten episodes of persecution erupted within a span of 300 years (each episode lasting a dozen years or more) resulting in millions of martyrs who died for their faith in Jesus. In the end, however, even Roman kings and many of their citizens converted to Christianity.

In the last 2,000 years, the number of people converting to Christ has been increasing. It is estimated that one third of the world’s population is now turning to Christian beliefs, reflecting the impact of believing families who are passing on their faith to their children and grandchildren. In every corner of the globe, every Sunday, countless people flock to Christian churches to worship Jesus!

The Transforming Progress of Society

In societies where Jesus’ name is spread, there is an accompanying positive transformation. China is a good example. The old practices of slave maids, drowning daughters, binding the feet of young girls, prevalence of concubines, premature marriages, and blind ancestral worship—all have been impacted

step by step by the coming of Christianity. The pioneering work of Christianity is clearly depicted in established hospitals, orphanages, nursing homes, and shelter homes for prostitutes and abandoned women. Also established are youth centers, farm village services, refuges for street beggars, schools for the deaf and blind, The Red Cross Society, refugee camps, lepers' homes, and childcare protective centers. Church-run schools are also helping reform education from the core, and church-run hospitals are introducing new skills enabling patients to be treated with modern methods. The Bible is being translated into vernacular dialects all over China, helping to educate the illiterate public, especially in the rural areas.

Individuals who have come to have a personal relationship with Jesus are able to leave lives of sin and darkness and live in the light of God's presence. With Christ at the center, their lives have meaning. And they are assured of their destiny after death. Jesus gives that assurance as He announced in John 11:25-26, *"I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live; and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."*

Jesus Seeps into Every Part of Society

Even though Jesus was not an artist, He has inspired the best-known painters of the world, and the imagination of the best-known engravers of the world. They created the most exquisite paintings and engravings ever seen.

Even though Jesus was not a musician, He has impacted great musicians to produce lasting melodies and music for people's listening pleasure. Every day, countless people in the world sing praises to God through such remarkable music.

Even though Jesus was not a writer, He has revealed Himself to many proficient writers, who, using Jesus as the theme, have produced volumes of literature for readers all over the world.

Even though Jesus was not an architect, there exist in this world monumental architectural buildings of utmost grandeur, reflecting the beauty and nobility of Jesus, where countless people gather to enjoy and worship Him.

Even though Jesus was not an educator, tens of thousands of schools

from primary to university level have Jesus as the anchor point for their instruction—communicated through thinking, speaking, and writing.

Even though Jesus was not a military leader, His flag is a symbol of the cross, calling millions of people to surrender to Him. He never fired a bullet but can conquer any human heart to yield to Him.

Even though Jesus was not a politician, many kings and political leaders have bowed their knees to Him, hailing Him as “Lord of Lords” and “King of Kings.” Napoleon once said: “Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. **Jesus Christ founded his empire upon love**; and at this hour millions of men would die for him.”

Jesus is so singularly unique throughout the passing ages of time that rational minds simply cannot explain or appraise the extent of His supreme worthiness! He cannot be compared to any other heroic or noble world figure, because—as man—He was also the Son of the Eternal God! It is because of this that He has the role of Savior of all believing mankind.

The name of JESUS! What a Savior!

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

* This article was extracted from *Chinese Today*, Issue 699, July 2020, and was translated into English Philip Yu. He attends Rutgers Community Christian Church in New Jersey with his wife, Kelly Kwok Hoi Wong, a contract editor for CCM.





The True Meaning of Abundant Life

by Angela Chan

Skewed Thinking

Attending church schools from kindergarten to graduation provided me plenty of opportunity to hear the story of Jesus. I knew him as a historical figure—not as the Son of God or the Savior of sinners. I saw people—even my own mother, who paid lip service to Christianity but set a bad example for her children—as hypocritical followers of Christ. Teachers at my schools, too, showed

favoritism and were often lazy. My classmates were like me—only church-goers.

Hearing the statement by Jesus that He came that people may have life and have it abundantly, I fervently longed for such a life. Who wouldn't? In my mind, I had a picture of what an abundant life looked like. It included a comfortable life, having loving parents, good friends, and academic excellence.

My life was not anything like this picture! The material comfort I had had at one time was diminished because my father lost his business. His alcoholism and abusive behavior caused me to live in fear. I often woke in the middle of the night screaming from nightmares. And my grandmother had died too. She was the person who had taken care of me since I was a baby. I didn't have a loving relationship with my mother.

School was another problem for me. I was lonely and depressed. In Hong Kong, academic excellence is the goal of every student. Many of my good friends had gone to science class where they enjoyed "social status," meaning they were recognized as superior students. I was left out of this group because my family problems kept me from concentrating on my studies. For the first time in my life, I failed the HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Exam)! I felt my hopes for a future were gone.

Another relationship I had seriously impacted the way I saw myself and life. A guy I really cared for rejected me because he said I wasn't "feminine enough." This blow to my self-esteem led me to react with bitterness. I deliberately tried to dress, speak, and act like a male. Years later, even after I became a true Christian, I struggled with the idea of femininity. If it meant being submissive, "seen and not heard,"

dainty, and even ignorant, then I was not any of these! It took growing in grace and a deeper understanding of God's love and purpose for my life to free me from these attitudes.

God's Providence Found Me

Fortunately, God sent me a friend who was a genuine Christian. His name was Emmanuel Kao. He invited me to youth fellowship and Sunday services every week. When I confessed to this friend that I longed to experience the abundant life Jesus promised, he encouraged me: "Seek and you will find." Another Christian lady in her eighties befriended me. She played a grandma's role to me when I was grieving the loss of my dear grandma. We sang hymns, read the Bible, and prayed together every Saturday. Even today, I still remember some of the Bible verses we studied. Looking back, I see that God was drawing me to Himself through these two friends.

After becoming a schoolteacher in Hong Kong, I started attending a Chinese Anglican Church. I loved the liturgy and could drown my sorrows in the music, finding a peace beyond description. Thinking that attending church meant you were a Christian, I got baptized and was confirmed in this church. However, I felt no joy and peace in my heart and wondered why. The abundant life Jesus promised was eluding me.

Once again God brought a situation into my life to give me understanding. Because I was a teacher, the pastor of the church asked me to co-ordinate the preparation of Sunday school material. My job was to impart Bible knowledge. As I prepared and taught stories from the Bible, God's words began to speak to me. Then on Easter Sunday 1975, I attended a conference where the preacher explained that "sin" meant missing the mark—the moral standard set by God. He emphasized, however, that no one need despair because Jesus had fulfilled the demand for moral perfection by dying on the cross—in my place. Later, sitting alone, meditating on Romans 3:23, *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,"* I realized that I was a sinner. Not even measuring up to human standards of morality, how could I measure up to God's standard? I confessed myself to be a sinner and asked God to forgive me. In my inner being, I heard God's voice saying, "I love you." In that moment, I experienced His abundant love. I knew I was born again.

Life Lived Abundantly

As a believer in Christ, the life I lived felt truly abundant! My Heavenly Father opened a door for me to continue my studies in Canada—the fulfillment of an academic dream. He abundantly provided all the finances I needed to cover my expenses for not just two years, but eight years.

I came back to Hong Kong with a degree in English and with training from a Bible school and theological college.

During these years, I experienced God's abundant kindness even through hardships. I often suffered from physical, psychological, and emotional illnesses, mainly stress-related. Getting a degree in English—a second language for me—was no easy task, and I was foolish enough to push myself to maintain a GPA of 3.0. Wise professors at Regent College assured me of the truth that it is the person that matters to God, not performance. I later applied this truth to my life when I failed a piano exam. What a relief it was to know that God loved me no less because of my imperfect performance.

Christian friends prayed for my healing regarding my self-image and helped me feel at home with myself. It's a beautiful thought to know you are *"fearfully and wonderfully made"* (Psalm 139:14). Today, I don't worry about my lack of "femininity," and I have friends of both sexes.

A huge psychological burden was lifted when I patched up my relationship with my father. He remained an alcoholic till the end of his life, but after he got cancer, he began to treasure life more. Because God worked in my heart to forgive him, I was able to witness to him of God's love. At his deathbed, I



*Angela (third from left, middle row)
leading a small group at her flat*

assured him that he could have God's forgiveness too. Tears rolled down from the corners of his eyes when I spoke those words, and I truly believe he died trusting in Christ for salvation.

Abundant life is a reality in Christ, but that doesn't mean we live a fairytale life. The apostle Paul had a "thorn in the flesh," and I have mine too—a mood disorder. Under stress, I easily get depressed or, for no reason at all, overly-excited. This condition was diagnosed by doctors when I was living in Canada, and I'm now treated with medication and will be for the rest of my life. Due to mood swings, I am not able to manage my daily routine, so I must trust God to usher me through all the days of my life.

Till now, God hasn't provided me with a Prince Charming, my budget is often tight, and I'm still working on

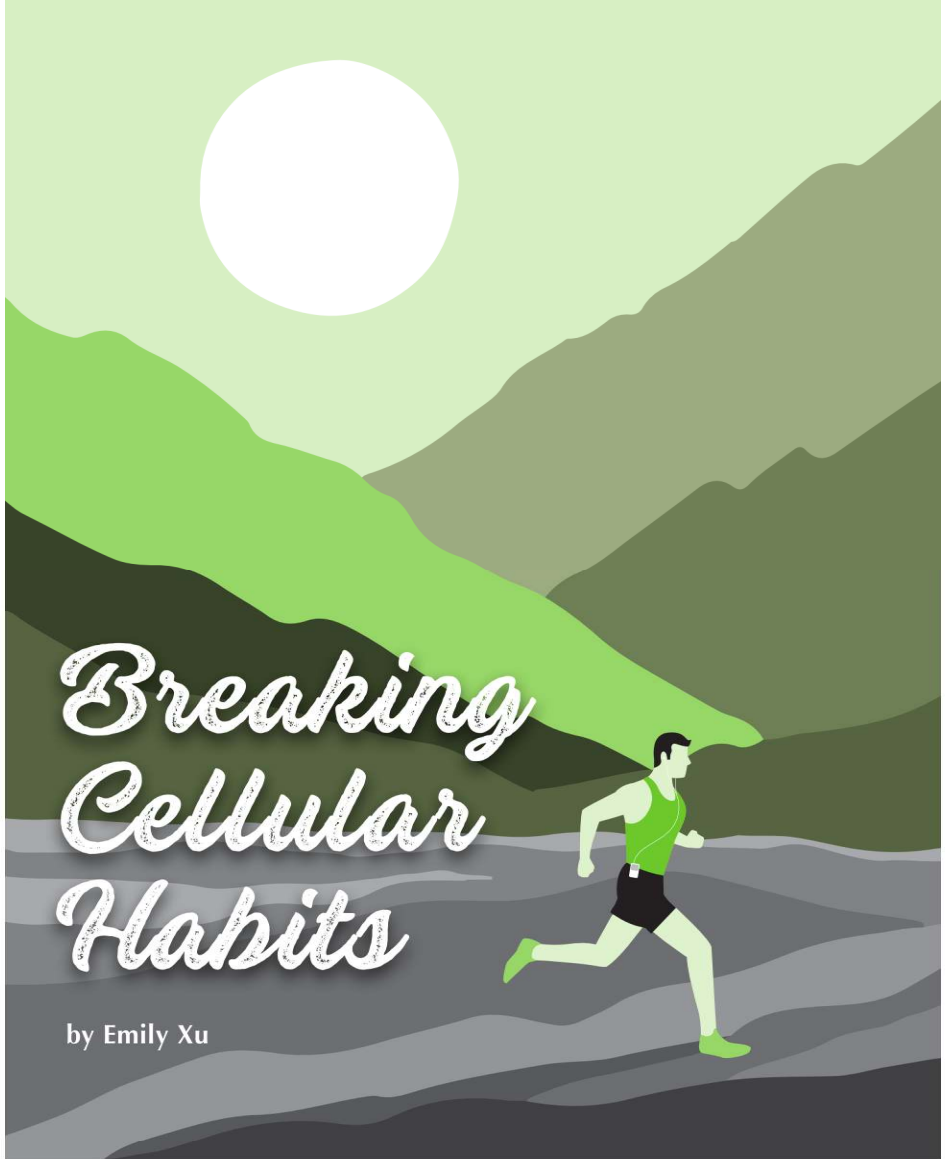
building a better relationship with my mother. However, GOD'S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR ME! I have enough to live on. I have friends. I have found children in my nephews and nieces, and I have good doctors to help with my illnesses. Above all, I have hope of eternal life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The life I enjoy is the best life one could ever lead. It is truly abundant life!

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). ■



Angela Chan is a retired teacher—or "teacher at heart." Her passion is to help and mentor young people. She lives in

Hong Kong, has studied in Canada, and loves reading literature and writing poetry.



Ever since I became a Christian, I have wanted to rise early and read the Bible. Every year I would make it one of my New Year's resolutions. Yet, every year I failed. I was either unable to wake early, or I would get up and then get distracted.

Last Christmas I started thinking again about what I could do with my many failures with this New Year's resolution. As I pondered, an idea occurred to me like a flash of light: The culprit was my cell phone! My habit had always been, once I woke

up, to reach for my phone to check emails and messages. And soon, morning devotions were forgotten.

Our family has a rule that no electronics are allowed in the kids' bedrooms. Due to virtual learning last year, the rule was loosened, but electronics still are not allowed in their bedrooms overnight. Sensing a nudge from the Holy Spirit, I asked myself, "Why not yours too?" Ah-ha! I should apply the rule to myself! Since that revelation, my cell phone has spent the night downstairs.

Our family has a routine of copying the daily verse from the Bible app to the whiteboard in English and Chinese. Once I had no distraction from my cell phone, I started getting up early and had time to copy down the verse and read the corresponding chapter. Soon after, I wanted to incorporate a daily one mile run into this morning plan, so I started listening to the Bible while running. With the arrival of 2021, I found our church calendar which includes a year-long Bible reading plan. Hallelujah! It seemed that several small pieces appeared in place at the right time to make my resolution easier to accomplish. All I needed to do was follow each step.

Now, my day starts like this: I wake up naturally, go downstairs, and open the Bible app to copy the daily verse

in English and Chinese. Then, I find the church calendar's Bible reading of the day, put on air pods and running shoes, and out I go. In the first light of dawn, I jog my mile, breathing in the cool air while listening to God's Word and the background music of birds chirping and flowers rustling. It fills my body, my mind, and my soul with warmth.

Two months have now passed, and my resolution lives on. So far, I have only encountered pleasant surprises. Since leaving my cell phone downstairs, I have more free time for reading in bed instead of scrolling through social media. Hoping to have 30 minutes of reading time daily, I now have an abundance of time! I have discovered new knowledge and connections in the Bible because of the books I've had time to read, coupled with daily Bible listening and weekly Bible Study Fellowship studies. Further, my husband and I have time for deep conversations, delving into theological questions. We have found that everything, including the decision-making process of college for our children, can be traced to Christian theology.

But these are not the only benefits. Not long ago, my 12-year-old daughter asked if she could join me for a weekend morning run. So, each of us wore one air pod, running one after the other, sometimes even

quickly commenting on a Bible story. My 16-year-old, who gets up earlier than me on the weekends, helps me with copying the daily verse. The Chinese version takes her awhile, but it is nonetheless precious time spent together.

Our God is a God who is willing to help us grow. He guided me to leave my cell phone downstairs, and, through that small change, our family has been blessed. This change has enabled me to keep my resolution and to make further lifestyle improvements. I now have the ability to run a full mile, although I had never passed the half-mile mark in my youth! It has also given me time to listen to and ponder God's Word, even creating special bonds for our family as we enjoy God's Word together. God always does immeasurably more than all we could ask for or imagine.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20). ■

Emily Xu is a realtor, a substitute teacher, and an active church member currently residing in San Diego, California.

(Continued from back cover)

Tim is a man who prays. Every morning finds him and his wife prayer-walking. Around the streets in their neighborhood or on college campuses, they meet neat people. As they pray for the people and circumstances, they show God's love. Throughout the day, as needs come up, Tim also prays "breath prayers." And why not? God answers many of his prayers—even ones that seem to be clearly impossible.

Observing Tim's life of prayer got me to thinking about the nature of prayer. If God has everything in His hands and knows what He is going to do already, why do we need to pray? Why does God even bother to answer our prayers? I remember once hearing someone at an ISI national conference say, when presented with this quandary, "Because it works! When I pray, God answers."

To be honest, I wasn't totally satisfied with that answer. Is prayer like a power pill in a video game or called power in an anime that makes us "invincible"—overpowered to give us all the resources we need to impose our will (and hopefully God's purpose) in Jesus' name? That didn't feel right to me.

Time with Tim got me to thinking about the Lord's Prayer found in Matthew 6:9–13. It reminded me again just why we pray.

“Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name.” As we begin praying by focusing on how amazing God is, the troubles and cares of this earth become much smaller. And when we pray and God answers, we and those around us learn more about God’s character and how He is worthy of praise.

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Everything Jesus did—what He taught, what He prayed for, why He did miracles, His parables and stories, even the gospel He taught—was about His kingdom. Jesus wants to show His kingdom not just to us, but also to those around us. When we pray and He answers, people around us see God’s authority and the working out of His kingdom through His people.

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

I often forget that it is God who provides for us and not ourselves. Our utter dependence on Him—our need to abide in Him—is the essence of the kingdom life. The first sin—and every subsequent sin—has been caused by people wanting to get their way on their own terms. Praying for our daily bread puts us in our place and allows people to see how God provides for those in His kingdom.

“And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against

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us.” I am learning a lot about triggers and times when I respond overly-aggressively to things done to me. We can become slaves to attitudes that are unconfessed and injuries that remain unspoken and unprocessed. God knows this, so a huge part of prayer is confession—both to God and man. What greater testimony to the kingdom than a person set free from the chains of sin!

“Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” Every day we are confronted with spiritual warfare. The world, the flesh, and the devil are daily arrayed against us, so we must daily put on the armor of God. Prayer slows us down and focuses us on what is most important. When we pray, God gives us victory in spiritual warfare.

“For yours is the kingdom and power and glory forever.” Prayer is all about God’s kingdom, power, and glory being shown to the world—both to us who believe and to those around us who are not yet believers. Through



prayer, we learn to recognize God at work as we trust in Him.

In short, through prayer, we know that we have a real and genuine God who is involved in building His kingdom, and He has invited us to be an active part. When we consistently pray to our loving, redeeming, and present God, and we see Him answer in spite of our rebellious and obviously flawed ways, then His kingdom is showcased and magnified for all the world to see.

“...Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1b). ■



Roy Yabuki is a Jesus-follower, husband to Lisa, and father to Jonathan, Timothy, and Charis. He loves mentoring

international students to become disciple-makers who make disciple-makers, helping them to become leaders who make leaders. Serving with International Students, Inc. for 25 years in California and Texas, he is presently field director for the Rocky Mountain and Plains regions. He is a member of Fielder Road Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas.

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1269 N. McDowell Blvd.
Petaluma, CA 94954
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Fax: (707) 762-1713
E-mail: lit@ccmusa.org, ccm@ccmusa.org
Web: <http://www.ccmusa.org>

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ASSISTANT EDITORS : Margaret Gayle, Dominic Bush
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A higher purpose.*

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Why Do We Pray?



by Roy Yabuki

On a recent business trip that took me from Dallas to Colorado, I met up with a colleague in ministry, Tim Sigman. Tim works with International Students, Inc. (ISI) and is the area director for ministry on college campuses throughout the Front Range of Colorado. Our time together was full and intense. We visited and planned—and we prayed! I came to understand better why we pray.



(Continued on page 20)

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