

vol.62 no.1

Challenger

◀ JAN-MAR ▶ 23

The Turning Point

in the Life of
a Drug Addict

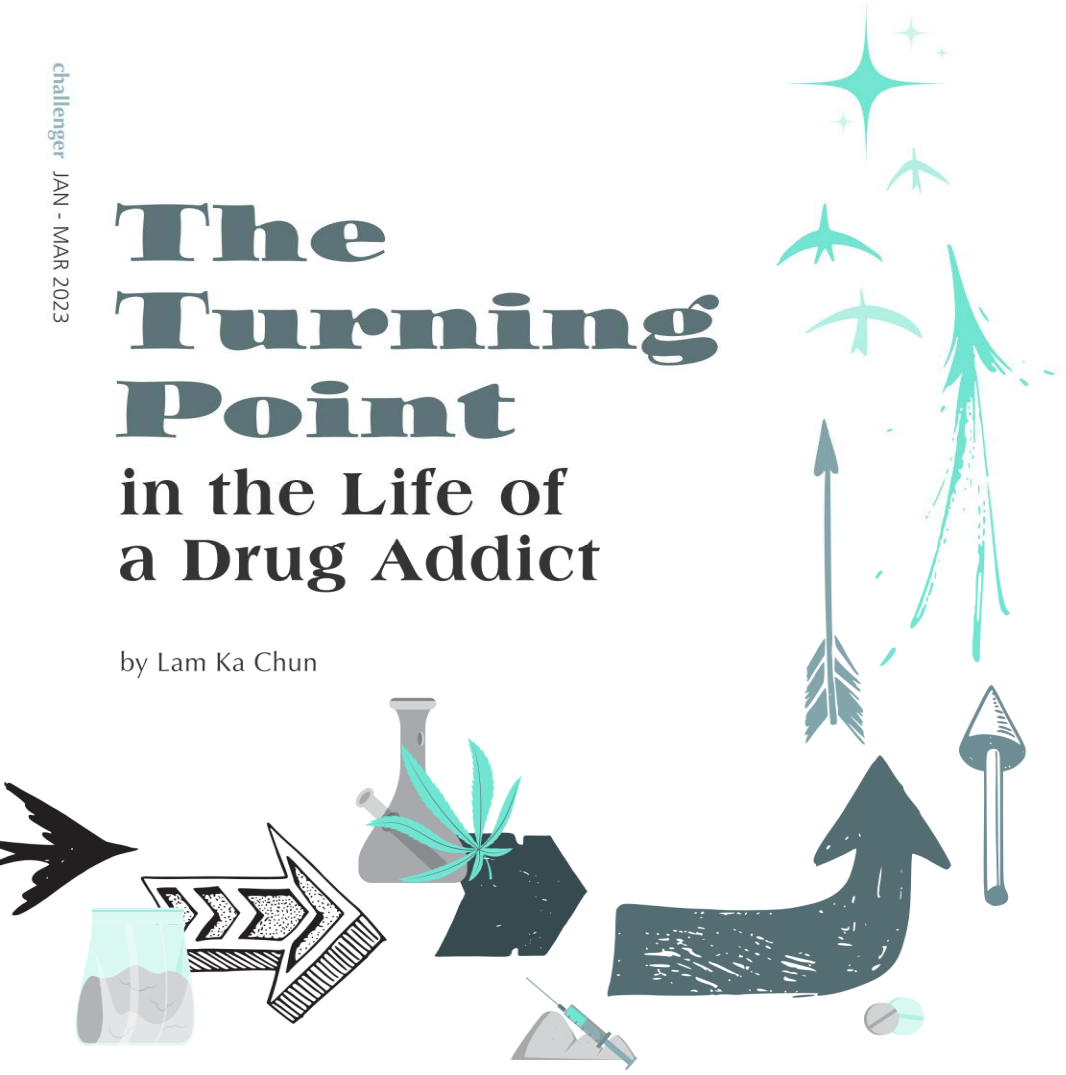
/ To Have and To Hold for 75 Years
/ A Double Lung Transplant:
My Miraculous Journey
/ Safe at Home—at Last!



FREE
subscription
upon request

The Turning Point in the Life of a Drug Addict

by Lam Ka Chun



During the years 2007–2009, I was in a very bad place. After years of substance abuse and failed attempts at recovery, I was contemplating suicide. I planned to take heroin on the roof of our house, pass out, and fall off the building. The plan partially worked. I fell off the building onto a stone railing, but I did not die. Another time I attempted to secretly overdose in the bathroom, but my mother found me and, in terror, pulled the needle out of my arm, thus saving my life. Thankfully, my mother had already met Jesus or else she may have died from grief.

Unhealthy Formative Years

I grew up in an environment where both my parents indulged in the vices of drinking, smoking, and gambling. We were a moderately well-off family in Hong Kong. My father was a driver and my mother made garments at home and later worked in insurance. I had two half-brothers.

When I was in Primary Four in school, I started smoking, disrespecting teachers, and acting out. Later, in secondary school, I stole chocolates from supermarkets during lunchtime and sold them back to schoolmates to have money to buy cigarettes. Since I had never been caught, I became bolder. During summer vacation in Form Four, I was supposed to attend supplementary tutorial, but instead forged a letter from my parents claiming that I had to travel with my family. When the school found out that I was actually working at a warehouse, they ordered me to voluntarily drop out.

So, I left school when I was 17 years old. I was rather sad leaving, because I would not be able to attend the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination the following year. Feeling helpless, I got a job at a café in a hotel. But because I was impatient and quick-tempered, I argued with my colleagues and was fired by the manager after half a year.

Led Astray by Substance Abuse

While working at the hotel, I tried taking cannabis for the first time. Later, when I was 18 and got my driver's license, I started working as a truck driver and took cannabis with my peers. One of them was younger than me by two years, had been taking heroin for a long time, and was sentenced to a drug rehabilitation center. After his release, I tried advising him to stop using heroin. But my attempts to scold him or even threaten him were fruitless. Out of curiosity at what made heroin so attractive, I started taking heroin. It made me sick at first, but seeing how ecstatic he felt after taking the drug, I did not want to let it go, so I took it again and again. Soon I became solidly addicted.

Eventually, I became such a wasted mess that I could not even work and had to spend \$100 to \$200 on heroin every day. I stole money from home whenever I didn't have an income. My father would put red packets of money underneath the mattress and, year after year, he saved up huge piles of red packets. I would sneak in and steal them one after the other. I also stole from others—even the gold jewelry that my brother's daughter received when she was one month old. In the end, my family found out what I had done, and I became despised by them.

Probation and Rehab, Time after Time

When I was 20 years old, I got caught stealing for the first time, and drugs were found in my car. I had to go to court and pay a fine. The second time I was caught, I was sentenced to probation. But I breached the probation order, and later when I was caught robbing, I was sentenced to three years of probation. Then when I breached the probation order yet again, I was sentenced to the rehabilitation center of the Au Tau Youth Centre.

After my released from the Au Tau Youth Centre, I was clean for only three months before I took drugs again. This time the probation officer sent me to a longer rehabilitation program provided by gospel drug addiction treatment centers. I went to St Stephen's Society for Rehabilitation, but before long, I escaped, continued to take drugs, and was once again arrested for breaking probation.

At this point, I chose to go to Ling Oi Centre (the center that I am serving at now), and later was sentenced to Hei Ling Chau Addiction Treatment Centre, the government facility for adult addicts. I was 21 years old. In three years, I had gone into rehab five times. Two times, I was arrested and sent in. The other three times, I was sentenced by my probation officer for taking drugs again.

When I was sentenced to rehab for the fourth time, I saw how heartbroken my family was. On the day I was released from prison, wanting to please my mother, I voluntarily went to Ling Oi Centre for rehabilitation so that she would see how I had been changed and tamed after spending time in prison. I really did change somewhat and was able to remain clean for a year and a half without a relapse.

In 2002, when I was 25 years old, I left Ling Oi Centre and worked as the manager of a bar. Although I did not use drugs, I kept drinking. We had



Lam Ka Chun and his wife





a lot of customers and business was good. Later, I was asked to manage another bar. One night, my friend asked me to go to a disco for karaoke and cutting cake (which means taking drugs). The people there were already using drugs before our arrival. They said to me, "Take it; it's just cannabis. You will be fine just this once." I thought that since I hadn't used drugs for over a year, I wouldn't become addicted again after this one time. So, reasoning that it would be just like smoking, I took it. Then someone handed me some new stuff, and I took that too.

Sinking Lower and Imprisoned

By 2006, I had fallen very far, had to give up my jobs, was penniless, and dared not go back to my family home. I had always thought I could rely on myself for everything, that I could get away with everything. I had fallen so low that I was robbing people on the streets. I sold drugs too. Wherever there was money, I used all means possible to get to it. When I got caught at my last job, I was taking both methadone and drugs. This time I was arrested and sentenced to the Pak Sha Wan Correctional Institution for one year.

After my release in 2007, for a time I attended the services at the E.F.C.C.

Causeway Bay Tung Fook Church with the brothers that taught the Alpha course in the Correctional Institute. What a pity that I started taking drugs again and gradually stopped going to church. I fell back once again into the dark pit of drug addiction.

Every time I tried to quit drugs, I relied only on myself. I would think to myself: after I get out, I will never take drugs again, and I will find another job. However, whenever I came to certain junctures and had bad experiences, my mood would sink low, and I would turn to drugs again. I had promised my mother that I would abstain from drugs, but I did not make good on my promise. When I could not stand the withdrawal symptoms, I stole to buy drugs and broke her heart. I was helpless and in much pain.

When in prison, I finally realized that I could not rely on myself to quit drugs. Because the will of man is weak and easily tempted, I could not persevere without strength from Jesus. Just as Paul said, *"I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out"* (Romans 7:18).

Faith Changed My Life

In 2009, I made up my mind to

participate in the gospel drug rehabilitation program organized by Ling Oi Centre. This time, I was devoted to the faith and wholeheartedly relied on Jesus. The drug rehabilitation village provided us with a timetable for designated spiritual formation periods. I took the program very seriously and would often read the Bible in the tool room. One time, a verse from the scripture deeply touched my heart, and I knelt down and prayed to God, "Oh Lord! I am a sinner. Please help me. I have tried to quit drugs 14 times relying only on myself, and I have failed every single time. I now know that to succeed, I must rely on you only." After this prayer, I freely admitted my sins and repented of them and felt certain that God's saving grace was upon me. That prayer was the turning point of my life!

When I first went to Ling Oi, the center had already been providing counselling for family groups. My mother was invited to join and heard the gospel for the first time. At first, she told me, "Son, I am only listening to the gospel for you." Yet, after three months, she told me, "I'm not listening to the gospel for you now; I'm doing it for myself." Thanks be to God! After listening to the gospel, she gradually found faith and was

baptized in Chai Wan Baptist Church. Afterwards, she stopped smoking and playing mahjong, and only drank occasionally. She even started serving at church and introduced a pastor to me.

Seeing the changes in my mother after she came to know Jesus, I thought: "If my mother can change, why can't I?" I realized that I could not restrain myself. So, like the prodigal son, I decided to return, repent fully, and quit drugs with the help of Jesus. My rehabilitation had spanned 15 years, during which time I had been in and out of rehab centers, correctional services institutions, and prison, trying to quit drugs!

The Ling Oi Centre had a new venue uphill from the beach, and a lot of Christian organizations brought guests to visit. Whenever they came, the social workers would ask if any of us wanted to share our testimony. A social worker encouraged me, "You've had an amazing life. Try sharing your testimony!" So, I told my story for the first time. I was very nervous but also deeply touched by the experience. The following week another group came to visit, and I wanted to share my testimony again, but I didn't want to be in the limelight too much, thinking I should



let others have a go at it. Yet, no one was willing to share. So, again, the social worker called on me. From that time, I began sharing my testimony as a way to serve in the village. I even taught others—albeit not very professionally—how to share their testimony. During my nine months at the Center, I was able to share my testimony a dozen times.

In 2009, after finishing the drug rehabilitation program, I moved to the Center and cooperated with the sisters from Barnabas Charitable Service Association. I also participated in the Beat Drug Master Ministry and received official training in giving a testimony. As there were not many male Masters, I gave my testimony 57 times in one year. Through sharing my testimony, I experienced God's grace and His presence. I often reminded myself not to become complacent, get carried away, or be full of myself. At all times, I needed to bear in mind that I was telling my testimony to glorify God.

God Granted Me a Good Companion

During my time at the Center, I grew in faith; God changed me and renewed me. I prayed that God would give me

a companion who pleased Him. Nine months earlier, I had met Chan Ying Yum, a sister in Christ whom I did not see again until April 20, 2010, when I accompanied a brother to give his testimony at Chuen Yuen College. That day, she also shared her past experiences that she was not proud of, and I was deeply touched by her testimony. Her life had been difficult and lonely, and her upbringing was much tougher than mine. Yet, God had amazingly renewed her life!

Nine months passed, and we met again at the Methodist Retreat Centre in Mui Wo, where we both were giving our testimonies. God was working in curious ways to bring us together. So, we started dating and going to church together. Although we were very different, we were compatible and complemented each other. Our marriage is truly God's amazing arrangement. We understand each other, communicate well, share and exchange our views, and support each other. And we cherish the family we have built together.

After I Found Faith

After surrendering myself to the Lord, my life changed in big and little ways. One drastic change was that I



stopped lying. The scriptures showed me the importance of honesty. I also stopped swearing and became less quick-tempered. I used to be very competitive and relied on myself for everything. But now I know that even when I am in a bad situation, God is with me. He showers abundant grace on me every day.

Besides changing my life, God also led me to serve in Ling Oi Centre and gave me a chance to study theology. Tung Fook Church graciously paid for my tuition, and when I was pursuing a bachelor's degree in theology, my tuition was sponsored by another person. I have deeply experienced the abundance of God's provisions and His amazing grace. Whenever I receive my salary, I think of tithing, the duty of all Christians to give back a small portion to God for His goodness to us. Actually, we should give more! We should surrender our entire lives to God and faithfully serve Him! ■



**Lam Ka Chun was interviewed by Yu Wong Kwok Hoi, who collated his story. It was first published in Chinese Today,*

Issue No. 722 (June 2022) and was translated into English by Kiara Ngai.



Opposites Attract

In a tiny town in Southwest Oklahoma you can find a little white house on the corner of South 13th Street. There live JM and Billie Cope, cherished members of the community of Frederick, OK. They are my father's parents—the only grandparents I have ever really known. You may find JM rocking on the porch swing when the weather is right and Billie inside the house setting up their next meal. They have spent nearly their entire marriage in that house, raising two boys into men and celebrating every milestone a family creates. The happy times of birthdays, graduations, and grandkid sleepovers, along with the difficult seasons like sending a son



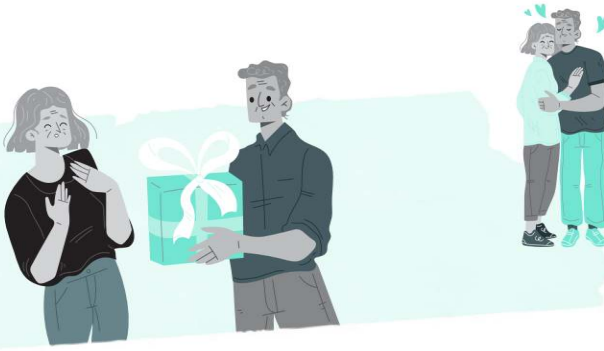
by Judith Cope

off to war and mending each other's health through the years have all been endured within the walls of that two-bedroom house. In March 2022, JM and Billie reached a particularly special milestone, 75 years of marriage. Now, nearing the end of their lives, I spent some time asking them to reflect on how they made it this long. This is their story.

"Do you remember how you met?" I asked them both. My grandfather, JM, piped up with a quick "No, not really," while the sweet voice of my grandmother, Billie, questions him, "You don't?" followed by her signature laugh. Well, she remembers. In those days—the 1940s—on Sunday afternoons, friends would get together

with the one who had a car and go for a ride through town. On this Sunday, Billie rode along with a group of young men and began playing matchmaker to get them dates with the girls she knew. That's how she met JM. At first, she set him up on a date with her cousin, but soon he would give her a call to ask her out on a date. She agreed, and the two went to a movie and took a ride through town. From then on, they were a couple.

JM had been raised, along with his siblings, by a single mother in the neighboring town of Manitou. His father passed away when he was 11. So, as the oldest son, he went to work, always thinking of ways to help



his mother. Billie had been raised by her mother and grandparents in her younger years, until her stepfather came into her life. Still, her grandparents played a key role in her upbringing, and as she says, spoiled her by giving her anything she ever wanted. For that era, JM and Billie would be considered opposites by some, but as the old adage goes: opposites attract!

Covenants Made

With WWII ongoing, JM graduated from high school in 1944, joined the Army and was deployed overseas, where he would earn a Purple Heart. Billie remained home to finish school and began working at the local telephone office. With modern technology, it's hard to think about how calls were connected via switchboard and waiting on the operator to connect you to the right phone line, but there was Billie connecting calls all over the area. One night in November 1946, JM called home from San Antonio,

Texas, to let his family know that he was returning home from the service. Surprised to hear Billie's voice on the line, he recalls, "I didn't know why I could hear her talking to me." The night JM was set to return to Frederick, Billie had her mother take her to the bus station to wait. The last bus was to arrive at 10 p.m. The bus came and unloaded, but JM wasn't there. A small defeat. Word came that another bus would be arriving soon, so she waited. The next one came and the two were reunited, never to be separated again.

A few months later, on March 22, 1947, they would be united in marriage in her grandparents' home in Frederick. JM had been raised in the Baptist church and Billie in the Methodist Church. They both admit that talking about their faith was not discussed as much as it could have been in the beginning of their relationship. Billie says that within a month of being married and attending her new church, she felt God stirring her spirit. Something inside her needed to be different, and one particular Sunday, she felt the

call to walk down the aisle during the invitation, and JM walked down right behind her in support. That Sunday, Billie gave her life to Jesus, and they joined the First Baptist Church of Frederick as a couple.

Work and Fun

I jokingly asked, “Grandmother, did you know how to cook when you got married?” Lighting up the room with her grin, she motioned with her hand, “I had a cookbook!” She recounted how she studied the cookbook and was proud when the recipes turned out well. She says she prefers baking to cooking. For JM, he doesn’t have a favorite meal grandmother makes—they’re all good in his mind. I watch him say those words with subtle appreciation for his bride.

Within two years, their first son, Johnny (my dad) was born and several

years later twins, Joey and Jackie. JM decided it was time to embark on his own business and opened a dry cleaners in the neighboring town of Snyder, OK. From 1962 to 2002, he owned and operated Cope’s Cleaners. Billie worked for the local water and light office until her retirement in 1992. She tells me how the day after retiring, JM walked into their bedroom to say, “Get up, you’re going to work with me.” She wasn’t too keen on the idea at first and said no, but he insisted. For the next twenty years, she would go to work with him every day—another chapter in their book of supporting and being devoted to each other.

As they raised their boys, JM always made sure the family took yearly vacations and had a nice Christmas, even when times were tough. At every place they visited, they took a tour of the city. Billie says that



*JM and Billie's
Wedding*



JM and Billie's 75th Anniversary

sometimes her mind worried about spending money on leisure, but now she realizes how much the memories made during those trips meant to her sons and admits she appreciated the vacations more than JM ever knew.

The Glue

My grandmother has often said she admires my grandfather's character. She even tears up saying that word. "He's the most honest person I've ever known" is her favorite thing to say about him. Asking JM his favorite thing about Billie, he laughs, "Her gray hair—everyone tells her it's beautiful, even strangers on the street."

So, what's the secret to being married for 75 years? Through our talks, the answer always came back to commitment and prayer. Grandmother says that in the early stage, she didn't realize how long it would take to blend the lives of two people. She expected that JM would be or do what she wanted of him and had not anticipated that this idea was

not the way things worked between two people. JM amusingly chimes in with a story of the night Billie tried to leave him. She marched out the door to the car and then couldn't get the car door unlocked. Defeated, angry, and frustrated, she came back to the house, only to find JM laughing hysterically. She adds, "He always laughed during times of adversity." Both of them say that in the era in which they got married, you were dedicated to the commitment you made before the Lord. In simpler terms, "you got married and you stayed married," JM says. Billie says abundant amounts of prayer helped too. In her heart, when times were difficult, Billie says she could not think about going on in her life without JM, and that helped her through the challenging seasons.

I asked again, thinking there was more to know about the secret to long-lasting love. Billie's answer: "perseverance," and JM's answer, "I just loved her." If they had advice to impart to others embarking on their new journey of love together,



grandmother says you must be willing to have the tough conversations—even when it's not pleasant, they are necessary. Grandfather adds that finding a church home where you can grow together in Christian teaching instead of sailing along in life fulfilling your own desires is important too.

Stories that Make Us Smile

I wish I could tell you every detail of what makes my grandparents special to our family. The stories of their lives are as precious as gold, each chapter as unique as they are. There are good, good memories of how JM played Santa Claus for over 30 years, bringing joy to thousands of children all over our region in countless appearances, and Billie right there every time ready to hot curl his long white beard and help him into the suit. There are the scooter years, when JM took up motor scooter riding, and Billie joined him by learning to ride a bike of her very own.

And there's the story of our family's dearest heirloom known simply as Old Blue, a 1966 Plymouth Valiant Wagon that my grandparents loved and couldn't part with. Old Blue was the family and business car that carried loads of dry cleaning to and from my grandfather's shop until it ended up in the back garage collecting dust for decades. Then in 2016, my brother took Old Blue off to try and restore her glory days—not

an easy task. One weekend when our family gathered for an anniversary celebration at the lake, Old Blue was also there to make her surprise renewed appearance debut. As the garage doors rolled up, we watched the awe in my grandparents' eyes as they admired the beauty of their dear Old Blue and remembered her faithfulness throughout the years.

Covenants Kept

JM and Billie's devotion to faith and marriage has given favor to their four living generations thereafter, and those blessings cannot be measured. We simply revel in the time we have been given and praise the Lord for granting us the gift of JM and Billie Cope. ■



Judith, the oldest granddaughter of JM and Billie Cope, lives in Edmond, Oklahoma. For 15 years she worked in

program development and outreach for social services programs within the OKC metro, until leaving in 2020 to be a stay-at-home mother to her daughter, Allison. Judith has also spent the last decade as a foster parent. She says the foster care experience has deeply marked her life for the better, and she continues to support relationships with the children and their families that have come through her home.



A DOUBLE LUNG TRANSPLANT:

My Miraculous Journey

by Kyle Killough

My journey isn't unique, but the "Director" of it is. His providential superintending of events and circumstances in my life can only be understood by us mortals as miraculous.

In July 2018, at age 53, I was diagnosed with a form of PF (pulmonary fibrosis). Simply put, this is scarring of the lungs, which keeps your body from processing

oxygen. While this disease has several forms, doctors were unable to pinpoint specifically which form of the disease I had or the cause. By the following April of 2019, my lungs had worsened and now required that I go on oxygen full time. This meant primarily staying at home, or when going out, carrying a huge tank to keep my oxygen at the right level.

At this point, I could not work, and

therefore lost insurance. I was facing lung transplant surgery which I was told would cost over \$1 million with a minimum of 30 days' hospitalization. My doctors' visits were all cash in hand. I did not know what to do or where to turn. I would love to say I was full of faith and knew without a doubt that God would come through. The reality was, though I was clueless as to how bad my lungs truly were, I did know that I would never be able to have a transplant surgery without having insurance.

As a Christian, I have always been a man of faith, knowing and believing that God will provide our needs. But during those few months of April through June, there were times when I wondered if this was God's plan, was it His judgment, was it punishment, or was it God at all? I was clueless, and a huge support team of family, friends, church family, and other believers began praying for me.

Thankfully, on July 1, 2019, I was able to secure insurance. Typically, you cannot get insurance unless there is a change of life situation. Even then, you must usually wait until the first of the year. In April, I had purchased a supplemental policy before realizing that it was not actually a health policy, as I was told. So, I cancelled it a month later. I then applied for a policy through Affordable Health Care and was able to secure a policy on the grounds of losing my insurance when, technically, I should not have

qualified, because I was the one who cancelled. Some people called this a miracle, myself included, because many prayers were being offered up on my behalf.

Thus began the process of trying to get evaluated for transplant approval. On July 30, 2019, I was able to meet with the lung transplant team at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, Texas. Counting miracles, this would be #2. Only by the swift action of the gatekeeper of the transplant department was I able to get in when, typically, it can take months. The gatekeeper was a lady named Charlene. She was the one who helped me get the right insurance and rushed the pre-approvals through, making it possible for me get into the clinic. Surely, Charlene was an angel on earth. She was my hero!

I met with the head of transplant, Dr. Grazia, and head of pulmonology, Dr. Rosenblatt. For over five hours, these two doctors explained my situation—what the surgery I needed would be like, and the pros and cons. That night they admitted me into the hospital.

In thinking back on that day, I should have been a little more nervous, scared, or at a minimum, a little freaked out at what the doctors had shared with me. I recall Dr. Grazia looking me in the eyes and asking me a question that seemed I should be asking him: "How long do you

think you have?”—meaning how long I believed I would remain alive. I had never contemplated that question before. I knew that at this stage my health was bad, but I still had in mind that I would somehow be okay. I answered by saying six months. Looking over at my fiancé and seeing her eyes full of tears, and then back to Dr. Grazia, I heard the words “not even close.” For the first time, my own mortality was coming into focus.

After being admitted into the hospital, over the next several days a litany of tests was performed to further evaluate my ability to receive a double lung transplant. During the days, I recall having an overwhelming sense of my own mortality. Anxiety was not a normal feeling I struggled with; however, at this time, the stress and simply not knowing tomorrow was overwhelming. Then the first night after I went into the hospital, three couples who are my closest friends showed up within five minutes of each other. They all knew each other, but they do not run in the same circles. I believe this was a God ordained/directed meeting. The six of them, my youngest son, and my fiancé circled my bed and prayed over me. As they each prayed, a deep sense of calm came over me. Oh, how I wish I had an overhead picture of that scene. To me, it is a picture of what the church is—believers coming together for one cause. I have said before and will continue

to state: “I do not know how anyone goes through life without faith in God.” My faith is what carries me through struggles in life and lifts me up during times of great joy.

The first step in getting on the national transplant list was approval by a team of doctors.

Every Thursday a committee of about 25 personnel would meet to evaluate and approve patients to go on the transplant list, as well as to move patients up or down on the list based on rather complex data—an objective number arrived at from a formula brought on by the evaluation testing. By Friday of that week, I had completed testing, and Dr. Grazia informed me that I was a candidate to go before the committee.

To clarify things in my mind, I asked if he would be taking me before the committee the following Thursday, the day the committee would meet. He stated that he was calling a special meeting on Monday to get approval rather than waiting till Thursday. (Miracle #3). As it turns out, the committee approved me on Monday. I was then put on the national list on Thursday the 7th. Had they waited till Thursday, I would not have been put on the list until August 12th. But, praise God, I was on the list, and on Saturday night, August 10th at 10:13 p.m., I received a call from the transplant coordinator asking me, “Would you like a new set of lungs?”

On August 11, I went into surgery to receive them. Had the medical team waited on approving me, I would not have received the lungs I have.

The day and night of my surgery there were roughly 70 family members and friends at the hospital praying over me, my surgeons, and my medical team. The surgery lasted over 11 hours. Though there were a few setbacks over 45 nights in the hospital, all went well. I can't say enough about the culture and wonderful treatment I received at Baylor University Medical Center. Not one single person or employee who came into my room, day or night, during those 45 days ever had a bad attitude.

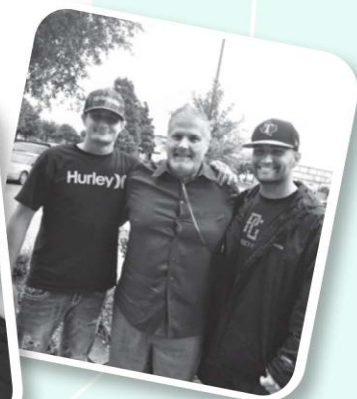
Many might see my journey as a great story of medical technology and timing. They would be correct. It is! But to miss the big picture of

my story would be a shame. My transplant was meant for something greater than just a cool medical story, and even more than the story of a life being saved. God used my transplant for something much greater. A few years before my illness, I had gone through a divorce, one son had been struggling with depression for several years and taking drugs on and off, and my other son was angry over his family disintegrating before him. Our family life had spiraled out of control. When I state that God had something bigger in mind, He used this transplant to restore relationships. *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him"* (Romans 8:28).

God used this transplant not only to give me healthy lungs but to heal my heart! I have been able to restore relationships with my sons and my ex-wife. God blessed me by sending



Kyle and Deborah while he was in hospital



Kyle and his sons

friends I had not seen in 20 years to come walking into my hospital room. One of my favorite Bible verses—and one that is actually a promise—is Romans 8:37 (NLT): *“No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours, through Christ, who loved us.”* This tells us that no matter our struggle, no matter how difficult the battle, we can be victorious because of Christ who loved us. Any battle we face, Christ has fought and won for us. That is the assurance I have as a believer. That is the same confidence I had while lying in the hospital facing possible death.

I am thankful for the journey God has allowed me to walk. Today—three plus years after my illness and transplant—I am enjoying things I had hoped for. Before surgery, I had stated that after surgery I wanted to be able to marry my then fiancé, yell at my sons’ baseball games, cook again, sing again, and see my first grandson born. I have been able to do all of those things and more. I am back at work, walk in 5k races with my wife, teach groups at my church, and enjoy life. When you have in your mind that you should already be dead, not much can get you down. Every day is a blessing!

I have come through this journey—the deep valley and the mountaintop experience—as a changed man. Every day of my life, with deep thankfulness, I extol my donor and their family for the gift of my lungs.

While I know nothing about them, I do know they were unselfish. Through their gifts, many people received life. God has saved my life twice. The first time, He saved me spiritually through His grace by the sacrifice of His Son, my Lord Jesus Christ. The second time, He saved me physically through a new set of lungs and a greater appreciation for LIFE! God used a double lung transplant to shake me up and make me have a greater appreciation for what He has given me. The journey has brought me into a greater understanding of God’s mercy and grace. A Bible verse I have heard all my life finally began to make sense: *“It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness”* (Lamentations 3:22–23, KJV). ■



Kyle Killough is a member of First Church Hurst where he teaches a group Bible study. He values family time with his wife, Deborah, who stood by his side throughout his illness and now in life, and with his two sons and two grandsons. Kyle works as director of sales in North America for two architectural construction companies. In his free time, he enjoys listening to Christian and country music and watching college football. He says that every day is a blessing!

*I am not dead, I've simply gone,
To mansions in my Father's home,
To be with Christ, Whom I adore,
For Whom my heart is longing for.*

*From earth my soul to glory slips,
With salvation's story on my lips,
So sing some songs of joy and praise,
And Jesus' name in honor raise.*

*To all my family, I entreat,
Shed all your tears at Jesus' feet,
Like Mary brave, who long ago,
Fell to His feet her love to show.*

*Who washed them with her tender
hands
And dried them with her hair's soft
strands,
Then poured her ointment out, so rare;
It filled the house with fragrance fair.*

*Once more this day great glory bring
To Jesus Christ our Heavenly King;
Let sorrow deep more clearly prove
How deeply now the Lord you love!*

*My dearest ones, please do not fear,
For Christ your Lord is standing near,
And in His arms you'll solace find
And comfort for your troubled mind.*

*My greatest joy right now would be,
For all of you who mourn for me,
That each of you might know my Lord,
And take Him at His holy Word!*

*What joy we all someday shall share
When we shall meet in heaven there.
Only a while—t'will not be long,
We'll sing together heaven's songs!*

*We'll lift the name of Jesus higher,
And praise Him for His saving power,
And angels tell of Calvary's Hill
While marv'ling at his wonders still!*

*I love you all—love has no end!
So sing those songs of praise again.
My battle's fought! The vict'ry's won!
Now I'm resting safe at home.*



After Richard's death, we found his poem, "Safe at Home," which he had penned 40 years earlier. When he wrote "Safe at Home," he could not have known that the last seven years before his death, he would be tortured by Alzheimer's and his mind and memory would leave him. God, however, in His amazing providence,



inspired Richard to write the words that bring comfort to our hearts today.

Richard had grown up on a farm, and his parents loved the Lord and made sure their children were taught about God. At the age of nine, Richard accepted the Lord Jesus Christ into his heart, and at the early age of eleven, he felt God call him to be a preacher. His mother enrolled her children in a Bible memory program, and in his teen years, Richard began memorizing Bible verses. The program was in the summer when school was out and consisted of memorizing 12 verses a week for the 12 weeks of summer. At the end of each week, he had to quote the 12 verses to the pastor of his church. Thus began Richard's great love for the Bible. He spent countless hours each summer memorizing and studying God's Word. And he began writing down what God was teaching him in the form of poetry.



Richard Grisham

Richard and I met in 1967 while we were freshmen attending Wayland Baptist University in Plainview, Texas. From the beginning, Richard told me he was going to be a preacher. I could understand why—he had a great love of God's Word and studied it a lot! Even on our dates he would bring his Bible and share with me what he was studying and what he understood God was saying to him. I knew Richard's first love was God and His Word.

We married in 1969—on a Friday, the thirteenth. During the wedding ceremony, ominous tornado warnings were going off, the wind was howling, and rain was pouring down. But as we left the church, God provided a huge, beautiful rainbow in a perfectly clear sky. We took it as a sign that God had great blessings in store for us as we started our life together.

I learned right away that it was not always easy being married to a preacher! I learned real fast that I was in trouble whenever Richard brought his Bible out. But I also learned real fast that I needed to know God's Word and be ready to respond to him. Our first fight happened soon after we



were married. I don't remember what it was about, but I was upset, jumped into bed, and rolled over away from Richard. He would not turn the light off and stated: "The Bible says not to go to bed mad, so we aren't going to sleep until we get this settled!" In no mood to respond, I just lay there. He then pulled all the covers off the bed and insisted we would not go to bed angry with each other. I don't remember exactly what happened next, but I learned a very valuable lesson: Richard really believed the Bible!

For 42 years, Richard and I crisscrossed Texas and New Mexico, pastoring small churches and raising our two sons and a daughter. Richard's heart was always for the church. He loved the church, prayed over the church, and shed tears for the church. Accepting the great burden and responsibility of pastoring, he trusted God to guide us, and he worked hard at reaching the towns for Christ. During our many years in ministry, God proved over and over that He was our Provider, our Protector, our everything. It was not always easy, but God never let us down. Believing in God's Word and trusting the truth written in the

To SUPPORT CCM financially, please use the following ways

1. Write check payable to "CCM Canada" and mail it to 4533 Kingsborough Street, Burnaby, BC, V5H 4V3
2. Online Donation: **PayPal**, see www.ccmcanada.org
3. INTERAC e-transfer. Set recipient name to donate@ccmcanada.org. In the "message" section, enter your email, phone number, and if space allowed, your name and address.
4. Credit Card (Visa or MasterCard): Provide us with your name, address, credit card number, expiration date, signature and the amount (please specify whether it is a one time or monthly donation).
5. Electronic Fund Transfer (for monthly donation only): Mail a "VOID" check to CCM Canada and give us your name, address and the donation amount.



WE WANT YOUR Stories

When submitting articles

Please mail your article to:

Challenger

P.O.Box 750759

Petaluma CA 94975

or email to lit@ccmusa.org

Please include your full name, address, daytime phone number, fax number and email address.

Articles will not be returned.



New Subscriber

☐ consent already received)

Name

FIRST

LAST

Address

E-mail

Label Change or Cancellation

☐ Label Change

☐ Please Cancel

Please paste your address label from

CCM right here and mail to 4533

Kingsborough Street, Burnaby, BC, V5H 4V3

New Address is:

Name

FIRST

LAST

Address

Response & Prayer Request (1-3/23)

electronic version available,
online subscription
www.ccmcanada.org

Bible was very easy for Richard. He knew God, talked with Him, and wanted more than anything to be an instrument God could use to tell people about Jesus.

In 2015 after undergoing treatment for prostate cancer, Richard's strength was diminished to the point that he could not keep up with his pastoral responsibilities. We moved to Hurst, Texas, to be near our children and grandchildren. Shortly after moving, Richard began showing signs of Alzheimer's. The disease took away the man who had always been so kind, caring, and optimistic and changed him into a completely different person. The seven years were long and the road rough until on August 16, 2022, God mercifully came for him and took him to his long-awaited heavenly home.

Richard lived his life in the light of eternity: his future home in heaven with the Lord he loved. His life is a testimony of what an awesome God we have. He wanted everyone to know God's love and that Christ died on the cross for them, so that by believing in Him, they too could join him in heaven someday.



Richard's passing has left a hole in my heart, but he left a legacy to be shared with his children and grandchildren and everyone who needs to know the wonderful God he served. A gifted writer, Richard left us over 270 of his poems—some funny, some serious—and numerous articles he wrote for church newsletters and town newspapers. He also wrote songs—even a Christmas cantata that was performed at one of our churches.

In the Foreword to one of his books of poetry, he wrote these words: "I don't claim to be a great spokesman for God, but I know when He speaks to my own heart. Sometimes He convicts me by my own preaching and often by His written Word. But always, it is by His Spirit. My desire is that somehow by God's grace those things that God has made real in my own heart will become real to you too." ■



Velma Grisham served in ministry alongside her husband, Richard, for 42 years. An accomplished artist, she finds solace when alone in her studio and when studying her Bible. She teaches a senior adult ladies' class at her church. Velma lives in Hurst, Texas, near her three children and five adorable grandchildren.

Safe at Home—at Last!

CHALLENGER

VOL. 62 NO. 1 JAN-MAR 2023

Periodicals Postage Paid at Vancouver, B.C., Canada

Copyright © 2022 by Chinese Christian Mission.

All rights reserved. Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of **Challenger** or CCM. Authors are responsible for their own articles.

Published quarterly by
Chinese Christian Mission
1269 N. McDowell Blvd.
Petaluma, CA 94954
Tel: (707) 762-1314
Fax: (707) 762-1713
E-mail: lit@ccmusa.org, ccm@ccmusa.org
Web: <http://www.ccmusa.org>

Distributed by
Chinese Christian Mission of Canada
4533 Kingsborough Street
Burnaby, B.C., Canada, V5H 4V3
Tel: (604) 877-8606
Fax: (604) 877-8676
E-mail: ccm@ccmcanada.org
Web: <http://www.ccmcanada.org>

POSTMASTERS:

Send address changes to
Challenger, CCM of Canada
4533 Kingsborough Street
Burnaby, B.C., Canada, V5H 4V3

EDITOR : Carmen Tsui

ASSISTANT EDITORS : Margaret Gayle, Dominic Bush

EDITORIAL COORDINATOR : Yuan Yuan Sung

GRAPHIC DESIGN : MI Design Ltd.

GENERAL SECRETARY: Yao Kuang Liu

SUBSCRIPTION:

Free upon request. If this publication is helpful to you, a free will offering is appreciated.

SUBSCRIBERS:

Please include your current address label for change of address or cancellation.

Challenger is sent to you as requested by you or your relatives and friends. If you decide not to receive it in the future, please kindly fill out the form on Label Change or Cancellation, page 22 and send it back to us. Thank you.



*A higher standard.
A higher purpose.*

Printed in Hong Kong



Safe at Home— at Last!

by Velma Grisham

“Safe at Home”
(a poem for when I die)

By Richard L. Grisham,
February 1982 / Revised January 1992

*This is a poem for when I die,
It may be far, it may be nigh,
But death for me will be sweet bliss
For Christ is mine and I am His!*

*When I die for me you'll mourn,
But though you grieve, be not forlorn;
Let fall your tears, t'will help you cope,
But sorrow not as if no hope.*

