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# Challenger

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## WHEN SCIENCE AND FAITH BECOME ONE

/ A Laborer in  
God's Harvest Field  
/ Journey to Peace  
/ "Holy" Fire!

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by Doachu\*

*I had worked as a physics teacher and researcher all my life and had always lived for my personal career—that is, until my family and I went through the plight of sickness and pain.*

### **My Christian Background**

Counting from my great-grandparents, I am the fourth generation Christian in our family. My paternal great-

grandparents lived in poverty in their ancestral home in Mianyang, Hubei. When missionaries from the Episcopal Church came to Mianyang, their whole family converted to Christianity. My grandfather worked in the local church and hospital. He received training and was a part of the Gospel ministry for the sick.

The family of my maternal grandfather lived in Taohualun Township, Yiyang, Hunan. They were well-off, senior intellectuals of the Qing Dynasty. The entire family converted to Christianity when missionaries from the Norwegian Missionary Society spread the Gospel there. They even started churches and factories, promoted cultural exchanges and philanthropy, and advocated against the long braid and foot binding. The report of this reached far back to Norway. The original newspaper clipping is still being kept in the Library of Congress in the US, as well as the library in Yale University.

My parents met when they were students of the Xiangya School of Medicine in Changsha and later got married. I was born in my maternal grandparents' home. My grandfather named me Daochu, which was from the first verse of the Book of John: "In the beginning was the Word." So, I was baptized when I was very young (and later rebaptized). Since my mother always brought me to Sunday services, I naturally assumed that I was a Christian. But from the time

I started school, I went on another path—the path of a personal career.

## Eager to Learn

In secondary school, I attended church services and youth fellowship. My mother was a devout Christian and a church elder. At that time, I was particularly interested in mathematics and physics, as well as new knowledge, like materialism taught in politics class, and the theory of evolution taught in biology class. Among these, the cosmic age impressed me the most. Science seemed to prove that the universe was billions of years old. But the Bible said that God created the world in six days and the universe is but a few thousand to ten thousand years old. The Bible said that God created life and animals according to their kind; yet the theory of evolution proposed notions like spontaneous generation, and apes evolving into humans. Even though I felt that the exaggeration was obvious, it was hard to prove its errors. I found materialism to be original and gobbled up books on the topic, talking incessantly about Spinoza or Dialectics of Nature.

As a mischievous teenager, when I attended fellowship activities, I asked my brothers and sisters about their best grasp of the history of the universe: "Science ascertained that the universe is billions of years old. But the Bible says that the world

is created in six days and that the world is only a few thousand years old. Doesn't this make it an unscientific superstition?" The brothers and sisters in my fellowship did not address my question, but smiled and said that one day I would understand. Later, I read in the Bible that: *"With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day"* (2 Peter 3:8). I felt that the question might not have such an obvious answer.

## Academia and Career

Studying theoretical physics at the university, I had a particular interest in quantum physics and the theory of relativity by Einstein. My graduation thesis was on nuclear structure theory, which I jointly published with my classmate in the periodical *Acta Physica Sinica* in China. After graduation, I was assigned to teach at a university and began my career path of science education, working my way from a teaching assistant to a full professorship.

In the 1980s, I was invited to work and further my studies in the Department of Physics, at the University of Alberta, Canada, in the capacity of a visiting professor and scientist. I was later invited to the US to conduct research on the solid interface quantum potential energy barrier. Another professor and I proposed and published a new theory on solid interface heterojunction effective

quantum potential energy barrier, which was recognized in relevant academic annual conference reports. As a result, I was invited to give lectures and speeches in relevant science centers in the US and Japan.

In late 1980, I relocated to the US and was naturalized five years later. Having married back in China, I moved my entire family to the US. My wife was a physics graduate as well, and also a Christian. The Lord blessed us with a son and a daughter, both of whom studied sciences.

While spending a great deal of time developing my personal career, my faith had weakened. After attending university, I had left the church due to the political atmosphere in China at that time. I withdrew into my own world to pursue only my future and career. After I relocated to the US, I resumed going to church services and fellowship meetings, yet I was only a Sunday Christian; my mind was on earthly matters.

## Return of the Prodigal

In 2002, life gave me a huge blow, which changed me for good, and I returned to the arms of Jesus. Early that year, my 90-year-old mother passed away, filling my heart with sorrow. Soon afterwards, my wife was diagnosed with advanced liver cancer. The doctor said she had three months to live. Having shown no obvious symptoms before, my



wife's sudden "death sentence" shocked our family and sent us into deep sorrow. Then during my regular checkup in October, I was also diagnosed with cancer. The biopsy confirmed that it was a fast-progressing kind, which placed me too under a "death sentence." These huge blows happening one after the other, in such a short window of time, left me in an endless dark abyss. The plans I had to serve, to advance in my career and be successful were all down the drain. I was in absolute despair!

This was when God's salvation came to us. My wife showed extraordinary faith, surrendering herself entirely to God. She slept well and was not in any pain. She lived one more year instead of the three months the doctor had predicted and passed away peacefully in the spring. Her testimony, "Faith and Peace," was published in a Christian publication that year.

During this time, my mood fluctuated constantly; I was in pain and unsettled. Then one day, a miracle happened. In my mind, I saw the image of Jesus on the cross, His glory brightly filled the sky. Immediately, I felt that God was calling me, and

I began to understand. Only Jesus was my salvation and hope! I bowed down and with a broken spirit prayed: "Lord, I have wronged You! You only ever showed me grace in my life, while I have kept my distance, not serving You but only my own endeavors. My Lord, please forgive me! You are the only one who truly saves. You are the One True Hope. I am willing to change my ways to follow You. From now on, whatever happens, whether life or death, I will follow You, no turning back...."

After repenting, an overwhelming peace enveloped me. My fear was gone, sorrow and bitterness left me, and I was filled with peace and calm. I was made anew—like the prodigal son returning. I thanked God for lifting me up from my pain.

Now I consistently and meticulously prayed about all the arrangements I made in life, including the treatment of my cancer. Prior to this time, I had only received one hormone treatment to manage the advancement of the cancer. Before official treatment was to begin, something miraculous





happened. During the checkup, it was found that the tumor was gone! It was very surprising—totally unexpected, even unreasonable! How could it be?

Then I understood: This was God saving me! My previously suppressed emotions, depression, not eating or sleeping, had not aided in healing me of cancer. But when I turned to God for my salvation and hope, He saved me. My sickness was gone, and I was saved! My surprise soon turned into joy, and I couldn't help giving praise: "Lord, You saved me with Your amazing ways. My life is Yours; my remaining days are Yours. My life is my offering to You; I will live for You." From a medical point of view, the doctors still advised the usual radiotherapy for me. But I was already liberated and free of fear.

The course of my life changed. I let go of worldly pursuits and realigned my life on fearing and worshipping

God. During this period, I remarried. Together, my wife and I took part in church life and the work of Gospel ministry.

## The Meaning of Life and the Universe

In the two decades that followed, I never ceased to ponder God's creation and truth, the path of life that Jesus left us—the Word made flesh, Jesus crucified and resurrected, redemption offered to all who believe. Many among the teaching staff, students, and intellectual groups I met with faced the need of the Gospel that I once experienced. They faced the conflict between faith and reason. A friend from a church in France told me that his daughter who had a strong faith in God, did well in school, and was well-loved by teachers, came home one day crying because what she was hearing from her teacher was different from what the Bible said. "Which one is true?" she cried, and her parents did not know what to say to comfort her. I was deeply touched by how the child suffered for the authenticity of her faith.

Recalling how—as a young person—I was mesmerized by, yet stuck in, this debate on faith and science, the Holy Spirit inspired me to write many articles on the harmonious relationship between science and faith. I wrote for the benefit of intellectuals, including the youth

much loved by God. I took part in cross-cultural exchanges, examining such topics as Time and Space: the Perfect Creation (to solve the debate on cosmic age), The Mathematical Principle of Biological Intelligence, and The Absolute Zero Probability of Spontaneous Generation (to solve the debate on creationism and the theory of evolution). I also held a series of talks, providing listeners with references and encouraging them to continue exploring. In line with this spirit of pursuit, I have written many apologetic essays, sharing my faith from a scientific perspective.

Christian faith is rooted in truth, and truth never contradicts facts. As objectivity is an ability created by God, I prayed that God would help Christians attain to a harmonious understanding that merges the truth of the Bible and the facts of science. The Nobel laureate physicist, Charles H. Townes, who was one of the inventors of the laser, said: "What humans face is but the exploration of the purpose and meaning of life. Faith is an attempt to understand the purpose and meaning of the universe. Science is an attempt to understand the purpose and meaning of the universe through structure and function.... If any meaning exists, the two must eventually become one."

## My Later Years

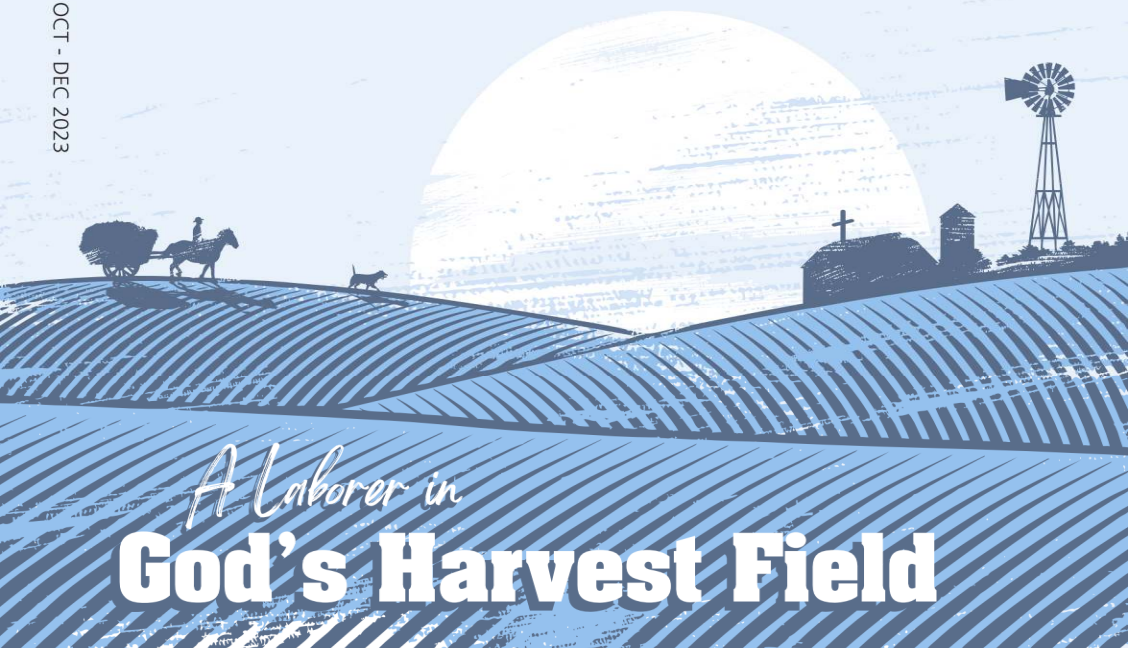
During the past two decades, I have enjoyed good health. Then,

unexpectedly, in my recent physical checkup, cancer markers were once again present. The specialist thought it could be a relapse or metastasis and recommended that I have a full-body radioactive examination immediately, to nip the cancer in the bud. But, today, I am not the person I was before. I don't fear what lies ahead but spend time meditating and praying to God. I had in my heart that I would not undergo treatment but live by the grace of God. I am old in years and showered with grace. The most important thing was to make preparations for my departure. After making this decision, I told all my family members, relatives, and friends. My heart was filled with joy! I had peace, slept well, lived with temperance, led life as usual, continued to let God lead me to spread the Gospel, and gave online talks. Three months later, I went for a follow-up and the cancer markers were all gone! I am full of gratitude and will continue to be a witness for the Lord. May all glory and praise be to Jesus Christ our Lord who loves us so! ■



*\*\*This story was first published in Chinese Today, Issue No. 732 (April 2023) and was translated into English by Kiara Ngai.*





by Ken Chen

*Nothing gives me more satisfaction, more joy, more happiness than being a worker for God. I'm deeply grateful for the calling to be a pastor.*

### My Village

I was born in 1955 in a Taiwanese village of several hundred people. The village had an elementary school and a temple of the local religion. Besides going to the temple to pray, the villagers celebrated the birthday of the deity they worshiped. Their celebration included putting on a show, offering food to be enjoyed by

the deity, and inviting relatives and friends to the feast they had prepared for the occasion. On the birthday of the temple deity, my grandma, with the help of her daughter, would cook a great amount of food to offer to the deity and to share with my relatives. My brother and I would help by running errands to and from grocery stores, buying whatever was needed either for the cooking or for the worship, such as paper money and incense.

For me, the most important event during the festivity was the puppet

show, which was performed for the deity. In those days, there were no TVs and the village we lived in had no cinemas. The puppet show was almost the only entertainment the villagers had once or twice a year. I was attracted to the show and would sit and watch from the beginning to the end, usually until midnight.

There was only one elementary school for four villages, and I was lucky that the school was located in my village. Some of my classmates who lived in other villages had to walk quite some distance to and from school. Education was the school's business. Parents seldom participated in school events. My parents didn't even attend my graduation, when I graduated with the highest honors. The only event parents took part in was the school's annual sports event. They came to see which kid could run the fastest. In general, I enjoyed living in a quiet neighborhood.

In those days, compulsory education was six years. To continue on with junior high school, children had to take entrance examinations. In order to prepare for the competitive entrance examination, when I began the fourth year, I joined a special group, consisting of some 50 kids. The group was referred to as "further education class." My parents had to pay a monthly fee of NTD 50 for extra lessons in this class. When I was in the fifth grade, I topped the class, received the highest honor

when I graduated, and was able to attend the best junior high school in the neighborhood.

For a time, in order to save the transportation fee of NTD 90 per month, I had to ride my bicycle to and from school. A single trip was 22 kilometers. I was often exhausted after I got to school. But one benefit from this was that I got plenty of exercise—the cause of my general good health. I seldom got sick and was kept safe and sound. No accident of any kind happened.

## Grammar and the Bible

A schoolmate from my senior high school told me that if I wanted to learn English well, I had to study grammar. Following his advice, I bought a grammar book and began studying it. The grammar book said that the definite article "the" is needed before the word "Bible." I didn't know what "the Bible" was and was curious to find out.

I brought the grammar book with me wherever I went. When I was fifteen, it was time for me to continue with my high school education. Because my family could not afford to financially support me through senior high, I entered the Army NCO School in northern Taiwan, which had a program equivalent to a high school education. During this time, I continued studying grammar on my own. At 17, after graduating



from the NCO school, I was sent to the army aviation center to be trained as a helicopter mechanic. Once while visiting my brother who was attending a private high school in central Taiwan and living in the school dorm, I noticed that he had a copy of a bilingual New Testament given by Gideons. I asked him if he was reading it, and he said he was busy with his schoolwork and had no time. So, I borrowed his copy and started reading it enthusiastically.

I read the Bible for two reasons. The first was to improve my English. Somehow, I sensed that English was important, and I made up my mind to learn it well. I had the idea that language is not separate from culture: English had to do with Western culture, and the Bible was part of it. The other reason I read the Bible was to satisfy my curiosity. I didn't know what the Bible said, and it was my intention to find out!

With these two purposes in mind, I read the New Testament in both Chinese and English. Because I read in both languages, I was able to communicate with others using both languages. I was able to read the maintenance manuals in English and did well as a mechanic. Later, I became an instructor, teaching test pilots how to troubleshoot flight problems. I even went to the Military Assistance Advisor Group (MAAG) in Taipei to test my qualification to get further training in the Transportation School in America. I scored the highest of those who took the test, but my commanding officer decided not to let me go. He feared that, because I had no living parents, I might desert while in America. All the while, I continued reading the bilingual Bible on a daily basis. I didn't understand everything, but I went on reading anyway.



*Class picture taken with their English conversation teacher (in white)*

## Meeting Miss Sue

The day after I finished taking the qualifying test in MAAG, I was on the train, returning to my military base in Tainan, and met Sue Knight, a missionary with China Inland Mission. I began asking her questions about the Bible that I didn't understand. I asked how a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years could be healed by just touching Jesus' garment. She told me that Jesus had the power to heal because He was the Son of God. But I still didn't get it. When Miss Knight had to get off at Taichung, she asked for my address and said she would send me Bible correspondence courses, which she did, and which I completed. When I learned that I would not be sent to America for training, Miss Knight helped me deal with my hurt and disappointment. She counseled me that God is sovereign and has a purpose for even the bad things that happen in our lives. Looking back, I can see God's providence: Had I been sent for further training, I would not have been able to take the university entrance exam in 1979.

At the end of the Bible courses, I was invited to accept Jesus as Savior. But there was no way I could believe in Jesus. I believed in Confucianism—a system of personal and political philosophy which had been popular with the Chinese people for nearly 2,000 years. When I went to my uncle, my mother's elder brother, for

advice, he warned me not to betray our ancestors by joining the Christian faith. He was afraid that if I became a Christian, I would not worship our ancestors, and I would be an alien to our society.

At this point, my belief system was being challenged! I was torn between the philosophy of Chinese scholars for 2,000 years and Christianity which claimed to be the truth. I knew if I accepted the Christian faith, I would have to abandon my belief in Confucianism. The struggle was not so much in the choice between the two, but more the matter of not knowing what to do once I became a Christian. As a believer in Confucianism, I knew how to behave, but as a Christian, it seemed I would lose my footing.

Then one night in a dream, it seemed that Jesus appeared to me. He asked, "My child, why do you reject Me?" After having this dream, my faith was quickened to believe that Jesus was indeed a real person—and I sensed His presence with me. At age 19, I received baptism at a Presbyterian church in Tainan, and my friend Sue Knight was there with me. Although I was baptized, I was just a baby Christian. For several years I went to Bible study classes, attended Sunday school classes, and participated in Sunday services at First Baptist Church in Tainan, where everything was done in English. I was slowly learning, but it took years for me to grow.

## More Language

At age 23, I was discharged from the army and decided to go to college. I prepared for the university entrance examination, passed it, and went to study at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at National Taiwan University. I tutored students on weekday evenings and the weekends to earn money for my daily necessities. My studies acquainted me with both domestic and foreign literature—good preparation for my work later as a pastor.

One year after I graduated from the university, I became an English teacher, helping high school students to score high in English on the university entrance exam. As I had to give tests and provide sample compositions for students, I developed the art of short essay writing, a skill I have found useful in writing sermons. After teaching high school for five years, I decided to pursue a master's degree at Michigan State University in the U.S. During the 18 months in the States, I participated in the MSU host program and was assigned to a local Christian family. But because I was older than most other students, I focused on my studies and didn't attend many of the church activities.

Returning to Taiwan with a degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), I became a research fellow at the College

Entrance Examination Center in Taipei. I did research in improving the administration of the test of English at the university entrance level, including defining the English word list for high school students and a scoring guide for grading compositions.

## A New Calling

Now, as I write this, I'm looking back some twenty years to when my wife Frances and I had just moved into our newly-purchased apartment. We thought we would find a spiritual home and attend church services regularly. But during one session of early morning prayer at the church, I felt touched by the Holy Spirit and was overcome with emotion. My mind raced back to the time, after graduating from the university, when I had a desire to attend seminary. Now, it was as if my soul was thirsting for a greater knowledge of God. There was so much about the Bible that I wanted to know—so much more about Jesus that I wanted to know. With the Holy Spirit touching my heart again, I knew it was time to make a decision. I decided to study at the seminary.

The four years at the seminary helped clarify my previous struggle between Confucianism and Christianity. While Confucianism emphasizes cultivating one's moral character, it lacks a clear model for one to imitate. In Christianity, the model is



clearly Jesus. While Confucianism advocates a utopian community (a Da Tong world), the Bible declares the Kingdom of Heaven with the Triune God as Sovereign King, Savior, and Lord.

## Afterward

Today at age 60+, after pastoring for many years, I look back on my life and see that a meaningful picture has formed. Like a detective story, I won't know the final outcome until I reach the end. But now I know why my life has turned out like it has. God has a purpose, and everything that has happened in my life means something. For example, I was inspired to study English. By studying English, I came across the Bible, and by studying the Bible, I became a Christian. I even became a preacher years after I became a Christian. As a pastor, my ultimate concern is to glorify God. I have found real satisfaction and joy in preaching God's Word, spreading the Gospel—the Good News that Jesus paid the price for our sin, was resurrected,

and reigns today from His throne in Heaven. Just as God providentially brought me to know Him, I want others to know Him and to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. I am honored to be one of God's laborers in His harvest field. Nothing gives me more delight!

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns" (Isaiah 52:7). ■*



*Ken Chen and his wife Frances live in Taipei, Taiwan, where Ken pastors a Baptist church. Finding Christ through studying the*

*Bible in English, Ken has maintained an interest in language throughout his life. As a pastor and student of theology, he has studied at Methodist Graduate School of Theology and is currently completing his doctor of ministry degree at Gateway Seminary.*





# *Journey to Peace*

by Frances Chow

## **A Tumultuous Time**

In 1998 my husband resigned as Senior Pastor of a Chinese American church where he had served for eight years. Towards the end of this period, conflict arose in the church, which resulted in my husband resigning. His decision to leave was extremely difficult, as the church had almost doubled in size during his tenure, and we had established close relationships with most of the congregation.

My husband's resignation meant each member of our family had to make huge adjustments. Our oldest child would graduate from high school in the summer of 1999. Without knowing where my husband's future ministry would be and what financial resources would be available, deciding where our first son should attend college

became difficult. Our second son and our daughter would be attending eleventh and fifth grades respectively in the fall of 1999. It was important for our son to maintain continuity in academic progress and social relationships during his last two years of high school. Furthermore, I worked as a school psychologist in the San Diego Unified School District, and resigning from this post would mean leaving a job I loved and decreasing our family's financial resources. During this tumultuous time, it would have been easy to lose our peace. However, God used these four years to teach each of us how to experience peace in Him amid uncertainty.

## **New Opportunity and Uncertainties**

We took half a year to prayerfully explore several open doors for





my husband's ministry. Finally, he accepted an invitation to plant a suburban Chinese church on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. Since our seminary days, he had been interested in serving on a mission field. Planting a church in suburban Oahu was very similar to working on a mission field. So I agreed to move to Hawaii, knowing full well that I would not be able to find a school psychologist position there.

In February of that year, we visited Oahu and met with several Christians who would support my husband to plant the new church. I also met with a high-ranking special education administrator who informed me that at that time the state of Hawaii had only seven school psychologist positions, which were filled by educational psychologists. That meant that I would not be able to get a school psychologist position.

However, he promised to help secure a job for me. We also learned that Hawaii's education system ranked lowest in the country. Thus, we knew that even the best public schools would not be able to give our children a sound education.

Soon after arriving in Hawaii, I began to experience doubt, fear, anger, despair, and bitterness. I cried, blamed God and man, and thought I had reached a dead end. But while I was focusing on visible circumstances, God was working behind the scenes far more than I could see or understand. He intended to use this experience to teach me valuable lessons on faith and peace. I gradually learned to accept the hardships we experienced with peace because I firmly believed that it was God Who called my husband to serve in Hawaii at that time. I truly believed what I wrote to my oldest

child on February 3, 1999, upon his receiving his first college acceptance letter. The following is an excerpt from my letter:

*Sometimes obeying God's will may seem to mean we have to give up something for God or "suffer some loss," but when we are obedient in faith, God will see that we do not lose anything from our obedience to Him. Let us hold onto the following promise: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).*

### God Gave More Than We Asked For

During the two weeks before leaving the mainland, we were caught up in a whirlwind of activities. Our oldest son had graduated and left us for Maryland to participate as a Summer Biomedical Fellow at the National Institute of Health (NIH). The rest of us were packing to leave for Oahu, and we visited our extended family in Los Angeles. Finally, we arrived in Oahu on July 4, 1999.

Upon arrival on Oahu, we temporarily lived with an elderly church member. Our house was not ready and our belongings, shipped by sea transportation, had not arrived. What was most difficult was, soon after our arrival, my husband left for Suriname in South America for

two weeks to train lay leaders there. Thus, my two youngest children and I were adjusting to living in a new environment without his support, while missing our oldest son who was a half a world away.

Knowing it would hurt our second son's education and future, even if we enrolled him in the best public school on Oahu, we by faith put in an application for him to attend one of the best private schools in the United States. He was accepted by both Punahou and 'Iolani schools. Punahou gave him almost \$7,000 in financial aid because my husband's salary was minimal, and I did not have a job. We sent him to Punahou, knowing that we had to come up with \$3,000 for his tuition and another huge amount for our oldest son who would be attending Cornell University.

Our second son worked extremely hard to adjust to a particularly challenging yet enjoyable school. He tried his best to establish himself by making new friends and taking leadership positions in various volunteer activities. To our delight, two years later he followed in the footsteps of his older brother and chose to attend Cornell University. This illustrates that when we are obedient to God, we do not eventually lose anything from our obedience to Him.

Our youngest child was not challenged by the public school system, but that was the best we could do with our available resources at that time. She was given vocabulary words that she already learned while she was in second grade. To make the best use of her time, she devoured all the books in the Junior Section of two public libraries and learned to bake, crochet, and sew. Two years later, after I had obtained a school psychologist position, we had enough financial resources to transfer her to Punahou.

There were very few children my daughter's age in the church my husband was planting, but she never complained about her social isolation. In January 2002, when my husband accepted another ministry position which required that we move from Hawaii, my daughter and I stayed behind so she could finish the school year. During this time, we grew close, sightseeing, sharing meals, and depending on each other. I confided in her—my 13-year-old daughter—many of my fears. Where should the two of us live if our house sold before the end of the school

year? How could the two of us pack up everything? Would I be able to get a school psychologist position after we moved?

Very often my daughter acted like a mature adult, shouldering many responsibilities. For example, she did most of the strenuous work during our packing and moving sale. She was brave and strong, and her composure and support gave me peace. This daughter of mine grew up to be a caring, considerate person who can shoulder many responsibilities—no doubt due to the hardships and uncertainties she experienced as a young person. I always thank God for giving me such an understanding and supportive daughter.

## An Unexpected Open Door

Living in Hawaii was a learning experience for all of us, and I tried hard to help our children adjust well to the new environment. For me, I also had to learn how to be useful in a church with just a handful of people. With very few coworkers, my husband and I were all things to all men.



The most difficult thing for me was as I expected—I could not find a school psychologist position on Oahu, and my income was needed to support the family. Finally, I was offered a one-year uncertified elementary school special education teacher position. That meant, if I wanted to maintain the position, I needed to take courses and pursue a teaching certificate, else I would be terminated at the year's end. My income would be about half of what I used to make, but I took the job. One nice aspect of the job was that Punahou was at the foothill of Manoa Elementary where I would be working, so I could give our son a ride back and forth to school every day. Our house was only twenty miles from Punahou, but because of traffic congestion, it usually took me an hour each morning to make the trip.

The circumstances I was in shook my faith. I was in a bind. I did not want to study to get a teaching certificate. But if I didn't, what would happen to my family after the year was over? I cried a lot and blamed my husband and the circumstances. I did not realize that God had deliberately brought me to this place. He would use my most hopeless circumstances to shape my character so that I would become a courageous person instrumental in the restoration of Hawaii's broken education system.

I learned that since July 1994, the state of Hawaii had been under a

Consent Decree because a student's parents had sued the State of Hawaii in a federal district court for failing to provide adequate mental health services to students in need of these services. Since that time, the Department of Education had been forced by the Federal Monitor to make sweeping changes in the way it delivered special education services to students in Hawaii. One of the benchmark rulings was that by June 2000 an adequate number of school psychologists who possessed specialist's certification needed to be employed. Suddenly, I saw an open door because I had a specialist's certification!

### An Agent of Change

I have always been a timid person, and it has never been my nature to rock the boat. However, for the sake of my future and the future of the special education program in Hawaii, I asked God for strength and courage so that I could become an agent of peace to make changes to a deplorable education system.

In December 1999, after doing extensive research, I wrote a letter to the Federal Monitor, the Education Superintendent, and over 30 legislators, urging them to make changes in the special education scene. I particularly emphasized the importance of hiring more qualified school psychologists. These officials responded positively to my letters.



The Superintendent informed me that the legislators had approved the creation of 16 school psychologist positions. By July 2000, the state started by hiring 16—and later a total of 48—school psychologists. I was offered a school psychologist position by several school districts. I accepted an offer from the Kaneohe School District to supervise ten schools.

Once again, God proved that He is a faithful God, and we would not lose anything from our obedience to Him. I learned that obedience also means having the courage to take action to restore a broken education system. I was acting against my nature, and God gave me strength and peace.

God is always faithful to His promises. We experience His peace when we are in His will and maintain a close relationship with Him. The Bible says:

*“You (God) will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you” (Isaiah 26:3).*

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5–6).*

## Epilogue

I thoroughly enjoyed working as

a school psychologist in Hawaii. Because school-based psychological services were so new in Hawaii, the needed expertise was not there. Because of my experience, I was able to provide much guidance and leadership, earning respect and applause from parents and educators. I resigned from the position in June 2002 with mixed emotions—sad to leave my “baby” behind after I had “induced” its birth and cared for it in the “Neonatal Intensive Care Unit,” but happy that the special education system was in a much better place than when I had arrived three years earlier.

I was also happy that the “new” church my husband helped start had grown from a handful of people to an average of 60 attendees each Sunday. Despite my weaknesses, God taught me and my family great faith lessons. And He gave me peace and made me an agent of change.

May all the honor and glory be given unto God. ■



Frances Chow is a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, a minister's wife, and a retired school psychologist and supervisor.





and what our church believed. The following Sunday morning as we arrived for church, Binh Minh stood on the steps again with the book rolled up in his hand. Pounding it into his other hand, he said, "This is the truth!" And again, as though he hadn't made himself clear the first time, he repeated, "This is the truth!"

Later, when visiting with Binh Minh, we discovered that he was a monk from a local Catholic monastery and that he had been reading the scripture and decided that some of the Catholic teachings were not according to the Bible. For several months Binh Minh continued to come, and we would engage in long discussions about the meaning of a particular Bible doctrine. One day he announced that he wanted to be baptized and become a part of our fellowship. I told him that it was up to the church to decide, but I was sure if he presented himself, there would be no objection. He then asked one more question: "Can I continue to wear my robe and my cross?" Confused, I questioned, "What on earth for? You would no longer be a

Catholic, so why wear your robe?" He explained that he would be accepted in more Catholic villages and be able to tell more Catholic people the truth of God's Word.

Before Binh Minh presented himself to the church for baptism, our family moved to another city. But the church did accept his request, and Binh Minh in his robe and with his cross was baptized. Some of our missionary colleagues lovingly dubbed him "our Baptist friar" and referred to him as Vietnam's Martin Luther. He did use every opportunity to visit Catholic villages and share a strong witness about salvation through Jesus Christ alone.

A couple of years went by before I met Binh Minh again. One day he appeared at our front gate—not in his robe and with his cross, but in civilian clothes. I wondered if he had had a change of heart. When I asked him where his robe was, he said the Lord burned it up. Then he recounted how he had fallen sick and gone to the hospital. While in the hospital, the hospital had come under attack,

and all the patients had to flee. When they were able to return, they found the hospital had been burned to the ground, and his belongings had perished in the flames. Binh Minh took what had happened as from God.

Several months went by before Binh Minh came for another visit—this time looking gaunt. Inviting him in, I was eager to know what had happened to him. Again, he explained that at a village police station, he had been tricked into surrendering his official papers and later had been arrested by the national police and accused of being a communist spy. He was put in solitary confinement for 45 days and—according to his account—was treated like an animal. The only contacts he had with other people were two visits—one from a local Catholic official demanding that he recant and the other from a prison guard who twice daily opened his door to shove in his daily ration.

Upon hearing the account of his confinement, I began to express sympathy, saying how sorry I was

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that he had to suffer such things because of his faith and faithful witness. He quickly rebuffed me, "Don't feel sorry for me! It was one of the most wonderful times I have ever experienced!" Then he related how early in his confinement he had gotten the favor of his guard who permitted him to have a small kerosene lamp and his Bible. At night, he said, he would read the Bible until his eyes were tired, then he would extinguish his light and pray until he fell asleep. He rejoiced that for 45 unbroken days, he had had virtually uninterrupted fellowship with the Lord.

I will never forget the determined faith of the Vietnamese man named Binh Minh. His willingness to suffer privation for Christ and the Gospel taught me—an American missionary—much about Christian discipleship.

A note from Margaret, wife of Jim Gayle—

This is one among many stories Jim accumulated while we served as missionaries in Vietnam (1965–1975). Before his passing in 2012, Jim often delighted our grandchildren with "Vietnam stories"—stories



they could only imagine. During the years we were in Vietnam, we saw God at work in amazing ways. After the fall, Jim envisioned an even brighter future for Vietnam—a day when Vietnamese Americans would return to their homeland and bring the Gospel with them. Today, God is opening doors for the preaching of the Gospel, with the historic Franklin Graham's Spring Love Festival in Ho Chi Minh City, where thousands of people filled a stadium and sat on nearby grass to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

May the story of Binh Minh's humble service and faithfulness to God inspire those who want to carry the baton and continue to proclaim the Good News wherever they are. ■



*Jim Gayle (1935–2012) surrendered his life to missions during his seminary days. He served nearly 25 years in overseas missions—first in Vietnam and later in Indonesia. The last years of his life were spent developing international student ministries at universities in Dallas, Texas, through the First Chinese Baptist Church.*

"Holy" Fire!

## CHALLENGER

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# “Holy Fire!”

by Jim Gayle

## A Missionary Memory...

I first met Binh Minh one Wednesday evening on the steps of our little storefront chapel in the city of Dalat. He was dressed in a long tan robe and a black jungle hat. A warm smile covering his face, he asked, “What is Baptit?” (the word “Baptist” in Vietnamese). We talked awhile, and I invited him to join us for our Wednesday evening prayer time. As we were dismissed, he asked if we had anything written about our church’s beliefs. I grabbed a small booklet from our reading room that explained the simple Gospel



(Continued on page 20)

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