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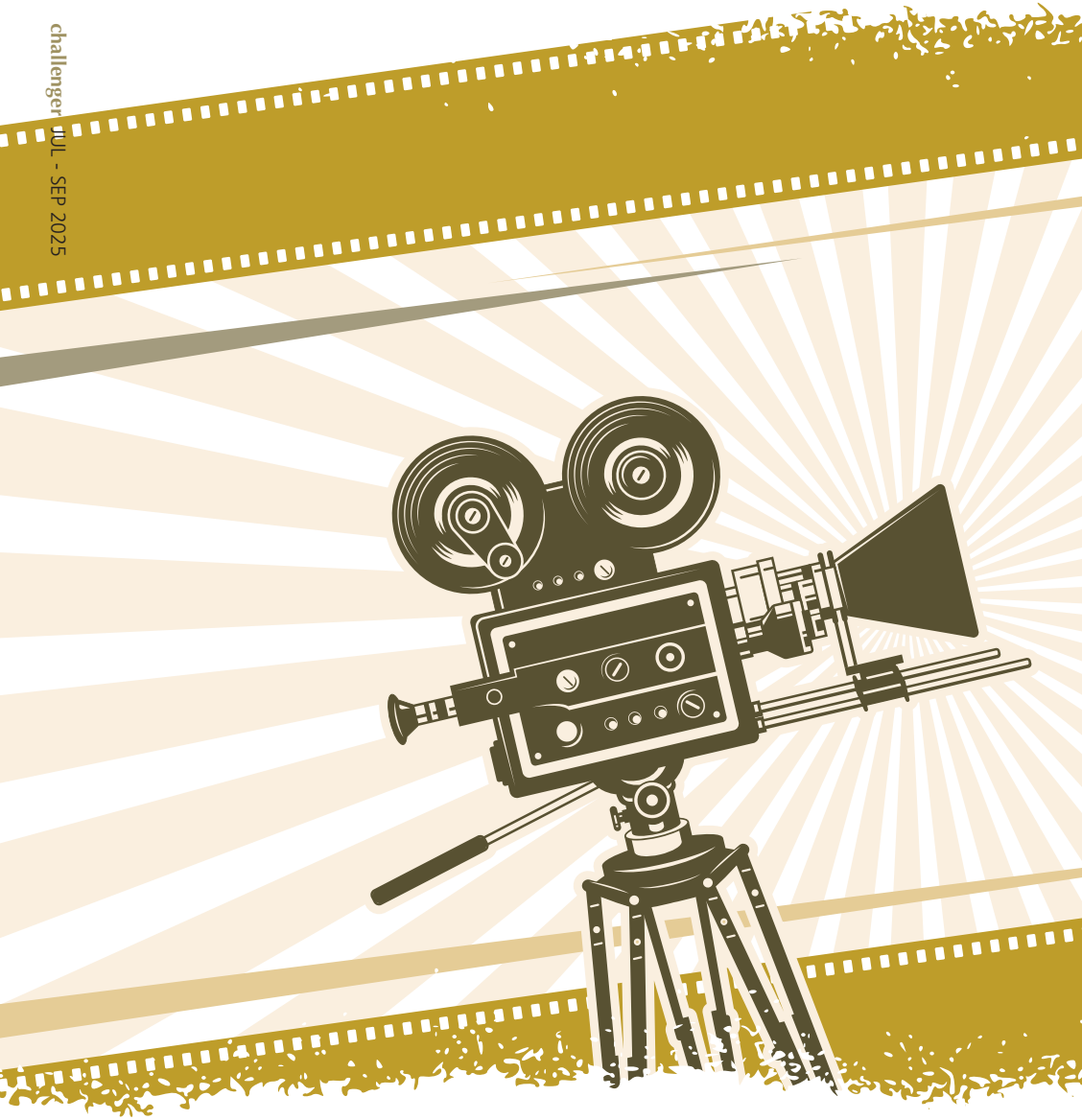
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*Hope in
Despair*



- / Finding the Greatest Love
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- / A Ministry of French Fries

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As a little girl, Li Guang couldn't understand the purpose of living if her own parents didn't love her. She often thought about how to end her life. Then one day a desire suddenly grew in her heart. She decided that when she grew up, she

would become a movie director and turn all the painful experiences of her childhood into a film. She could release all her humiliation, despair, and confusion through this movie, and then she would say goodbye to this world.



Hope in Despair

by Cindy Yang

This desire sustained Li as she grew up, eventually leading her to become an award-winning international movie director. After graduating from the Film and Television Directing Program at the Art Department of Beijing Normal University, Li

worked as an assistant in several films directed by the renowned Chinese director Zhang Yimou and participated in the production of movies like *Not One Less*, *Happy Times*, and *Hero*. In 2002, she served as the assistant director for the film

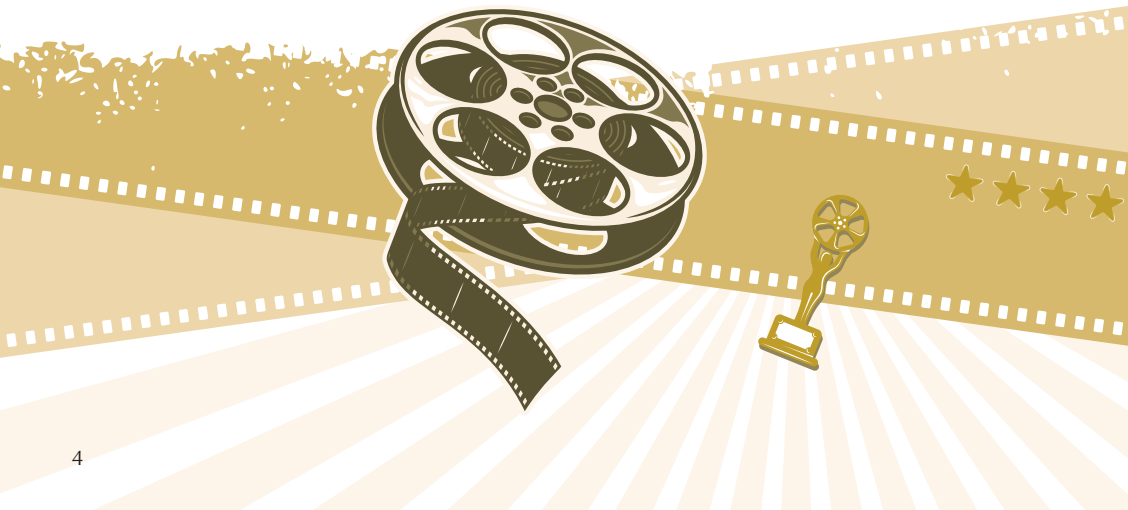
My Heart Flies, which won the Best Film Award at the Lyon Film Festival in France in 2003. Also in 2002, Li directed the DV film *99 Again*, which won the Excellent Award in the Short Film Unit at the College Student Film Festival and was featured in the 9th Hong Kong Short Film Festival and the Oberhausen International Short Film Festival in Germany.

Li Guang was at the height of her career with no thought but that she would continue directing films and winning awards. Little did she expect that after coming to know the Lord, her life would take a different path.

Caterpillar in Bitter Childhood

When Li was a little girl, she was pretty and adorable, but due to her parents' unhappy marriage, constant quarrels and fights were the norm at home. Not only did she not receive love from her parents, but she was

also seen as a burden. She was often sent to live with unfamiliar relatives, where she endured insults and bullying. After her parents divorced, Li thought her situation would improve if she went to live with her father. However, her father's job was unstable, and he often was away for long periods, making it inconvenient to take her along. As a result, Li continued living with her mother and younger brother. Her father's precarious job often led to delayed child support payments, leaving her mother to bear the burden of raising two children alone. Filled with resentment, her mother frequently vented her anger and bitterness towards her young daughter. There were countless nights when her frail body was dragged out of bed accompanied by her mother's hysterical screams: "You've been given to your father, so why are you still here to drag me down? If I can't live well, neither will you!"



In addition to senseless beatings and verbal abuse, Li also endured her mother's unjustified humiliation. She would burn Li's favorite clothes to ashes and stain her red shoes with ink. When she walked into the classroom wearing unattractive clothes and shoes, she was filled with embarrassment and inferiority. Increasingly withdrawn, Li longed for her father to return and take her away from her misery. However, her father had started a new family and didn't want his daughter to become a burden on his path to happiness. At the age of 10, Li's mother forced her to drop out of school to take on all the household chores. Once when Li accidentally broke a dish, her mother flew into a rage and smashed all the dishes in the house, while violently pushing Li to the ground. Trembling in fear, Li's heart felt frozen.

It was at this point that Li began to desire to become a movie director, to make a movie of her miserable life, and then say goodbye to the world.

Butterfly Rebirth Through Faith

Shortly after entering the university, Li wrote a screenplay based on her personal experiences, hoping to turn it into a film. However, making a movie is not something that can be accomplished in a short time. While preparing and waiting, Li met the mother of a close friend from the university, who talked with her about Jesus and showed her a reason to keep living instead of giving up life. She realized that even though her parents didn't love her, there was a God in heaven who loved her unconditionally. The God who knew the number of hairs on her head was

*Li Guang working
in China*



*Li Guang at International Christian Film
and Music Festival*



always by her side. Light had entered her life, dispelling the darkness that once enveloped her.

After graduating from the university, Li was honored to join the crew of the famous Chinese director Zhang Yimou. Starting as a script supervisor, then moving on to the role of office director, and eventually becoming an assistant director, she was incredibly fortunate to work alongside a top-tier director despite having no prior work experience or connections. But Li knew that this was all due to God's grace and favor. "...'*Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,*' says *the Lord Almighty*" (Zechariah 4:6). She was thrilled that her passion for film had turned into a career that she was willing to dedicate herself to. She spent her days learning and working, and over the course of a few years, she shot commercials, feature films, and documentaries, eventually becoming an independent director and completing her own works, earning awards both domestically and internationally.

However, worldly success did not bring Li the true satisfaction she longed for. As work consumed her, she drifted away from God. Reading the Bible, praying, and attending church on Sundays became luxuries. She failed to see that just as her body needed food to stay healthy, her spirit needed spiritual nourishment to guide her in the right direction. By 2009, Li's passion for filmmaking had faded, and she began to question the work she was doing. Did her films contribute to spiritual and mental pollution? Having these doubts, Li returned to the church, began listening to sermons, praying, and actively participating in church activities, all of which strengthened her spiritual life.

In March 2010, Li remembered the promise of the Lord to "*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you*" (Matthew 7:7). So

Li Guang and her husband



she prayed: “Lord, I long to know You. You are the God who created the heavens and the earth. Please help me to know You more, to draw closer to You, and to experience You. Right now, everything seems meaningless to me, but I still love making films. Could it be that I can know You through the profession I have learned?”

Shortly afterward, Li’s prayer was answered. She received an opportunity to work on a documentary in Israel. To prepare for this task, she researched many historical materials about Israel and compared them with the Bible, which greatly moved her heart. She became even more aware that the God she believed in was not only the Almighty who was, who *is*, and who *is to come*, but also the God who transcends time and space, who oversees the past, present, and future!

On October 1, 2010, Li was baptized in the Jordan River in Israel, the same river where Jesus Christ was baptized, and she was baptized in the name of the Lord. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Li’s passion for filmmaking was reignited, and her perspective on filmmaking was renewed. In 2017, she completed a five-year documentary project titled *Home of Mephibosheth*, which aimed to document how Wang Xinwei and her husband Steve built the Home of Mephibosheth with selfless and sacrificial love to rescue dozens of disabled children in China, thus glorifying and manifesting God’s love and power. After the documentary’s release, the film received significant acclaim and won numerous awards



Home of Mephibosheth

at international film festivals. Li stated throughout the filming process that her deepest realization was that her Heavenly Father was the True Director and Screenwriter of this film. She felt incredibly honored and grateful to have been able to work alongside God and to experience His goodness and faithfulness!

The making of the film transformed Li's life. Moved and guided by the Holy Spirit, she enrolled in Agape International Leadership School. During the subsequent seven months of study, her dark life—and once broken and despairing heart—were healed. With the help of the Holy Spirit and Christian pastors/counselors, she was set free. Not only that, but Li met her life partner while at school. Together they built a beautiful family, raising four lovely children. The old Li could never have imagined this. From feeling despair and unworthy of love, to stepping into marriage and becoming a cherished wife was a blessing beyond her wildest dreams. And she knows it is all because she is a beloved daughter of God!

Because of God's grace and love, Li's mother came to know the Lord, becoming a daughter of God too. This once bitter and cold mother rediscovered her ability to love and embrace, restoring the purity and intimacy that should exist between mother and daughter. Through the Lord's healing, Li has fully forgiven her mother. Today, they chat and hug and experience the goodness that Li had always longed for. She knows that all these life changes are because of a loving and gracious God, whose unwavering love continually draws His children, giving them a living hope no matter what circumstances they face! ■

Cindy Yang is a stay-at-home mom and freelance Christian writer. She is also a member of the news broadcasting ministry at Bread of Life Church in Seattle, Washington. Before coming to the U.S. in 2010, Cindy was a middle school teacher in China for 9 years. She enjoys reading, writing, cooking, and playing the piano.



FINDING THE GREATEST LOVE

by Cheng Chan Shun Ying



An Orphan in My Big Family

Throughout my childhood my deepest yearning was to be loved—to be valued. But it never happened for me. I was alone and helpless.

During the turbulent years of regime change in China, my parents

smuggled themselves into Hong Kong from the mainland. They settled down in Hong Kong, and then one child came after another. I have six older brothers and six older sisters. Being the 13th child and the youngest of the family, I should have been the spoiled one. But I never once felt like that.

My parents worked tirelessly day and night to make a living, to support all their children. My father started a rattan factory in the suburbs in Hong Kong and was always busy, so I almost never got the chance to talk to him, let alone to be held or kissed. Aside from worrying about my father's business, my mother also had to tackle the daily chore of feeding everyone. For relaxation, she would play mahjong. My brothers and sisters, too, were busy with studying and making friends and had no time to care for me. I grew into a timid and fearful child that didn't get along with people. When I was old enough to go to school, I went with my niece, my eldest sister's daughter, who did very well in school and was praised by everyone in our family—but I wasn't. I increasingly felt like I was the most useless one in our family.

When I was 14 years old, my parents, along with eight of us siblings, moved to New York. Surrounded by strangers who spoke only English, I thought

this would be a great chance for me to become closer with my parents. But they soon returned to Hong Kong where my father had a stroke. Unable to find suitable treatment in Hong Kong, and counting on the medical technologies of the States, he returned to the U.S. But he was disappointed and later returned to Hong Kong. I never saw my father again, closing the door to ever experiencing the love I imagined.

Feeling neglected by my family since young, I got used to acting independently. When I was in the second year of high school, I decided on my own that I would support myself by working part-time at a dim sum restaurant in Chinatown in New York. I didn't take studying or going to school to heart, just lived one day at a time. Youthful dreaming and passion had nothing to do with me. I had no clue what my future would hold.

One day I left New York on an impulse and went to work for



my third brother, who ran an on-campus Chinese restaurant at the University of Illinois. I worked there for some time and got paid nothing, besides free accommodation and food. The youngest four of us who worked for him protested, yet our communication was futile. So, we left his employment.

Time and again, I had hope but was always disappointed. My life felt meaningless.

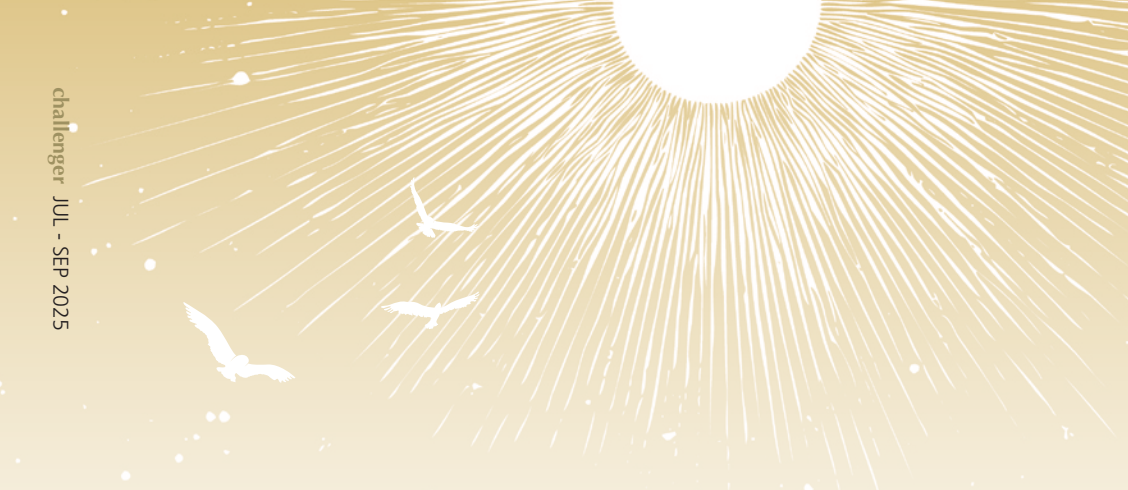
I entered the University of Illinois to study finance and insurance, but that did not bring me happiness. I wallowed in a deep sadness, pushing people away, and surrounding myself with loneliness. Once when I got sick and was hospitalized, I felt so depressed that I wanted to end my life.

Beloved in This Big Family

One day, a university student who used to work at my third brother's restaurant invited me to a church

Bible study class. Having gone to Catholic primary and secondary schools back in Hong Kong, I was no stranger to religion. I had some biblical knowledge, but I had zero interest in Catholicism. Perhaps because I wanted to make friends or to have a social life, I gladly accepted the invitation. I didn't get my hopes up, however, because I had been disappointed so many times before. The Christians at this university fellowship were older than I, but they fully accepted me. The way they looked at me with warmth and love chased away my long-time gloominess and replaced it with relief and joy. They cared for me and prayed for me. When they learned that I needed help with my assignments, they helped me without hesitating. To them, I was a very important person, a well-loved favorite. Their acceptance hugely affected me. I felt a joy that I had never felt in my parents' home.

The church gatherings were like seeing another reality in this world.



In this reality, strangers were being cared for, and everyone was accepted unconditionally. Unlike secular relationships that involved profits and exchange, people would spend their time and effort to help others without asking for anything in return. What exactly drove this group of people to give so unconditionally, so that I—a stranger—could experience this warmth of being family? I learned from the Bible that this love is from Heaven. We are all sinners before God. Yet, to save us, God sent His Son, born as a human, to die for us on the cross. Where could we find such a great love among people?

“Greater love has no one than this...”
(John 15:13).

“... because God is love” (1 John 4:8).

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”
(John 13:34–35).

I began to understand that it was the amazing, life-changing love of God that made people willing to spend time reading the Bible with others and caring for them. I realized that I had never received love from others. I was selfish, self-centered, and always nitpicking faults of others. But these brothers and sisters in Christ, brimming with love, were like a mirror, showing me my true self: an unbecoming, ungrateful person. I admitted I was a sinner before God.

At last, I repented and started believing in God. I read the Bible voraciously, attended church services, and worshipped God. Bit by bit, and without realizing it, God changed me. I became more lively and cheerful. I didn’t get mad or upset because of trivial matters. I stopped dwelling on the past, because I was now a child loved by God. *“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!”* (Isaiah 49:15).

It was in this church that I met, got to know, and fell in love with my husband. He is a manly person of principle, who always cares about my needs, allowing me a great sense of security and trust. In 1981, seven years after I first came to the States, we formed our own little family in Christ. In 1982 and 1989, God gave us our adorable son and daughter.

Love and Passion for the Big Family of Our Heavenly Father

After we got married and had children, I started running a business at home to better support our family. Surprisingly, after a few years and some minor setbacks, the business grew, and we became one of the most successful Chinese businesses in Southern California. Although we became wealthy, whenever we returned from church services, we would always ask ourselves: "Is this business all there is to our lives?" Time and again, we prayed to God, to seek His will, to search for His guidance for us in this life. Finally, in God's timing, we gave up our profit-making business to serve God with all we had. Although we were no longer young, together we went to equip ourselves at seminary.

After graduating, we joined Chinese Christian Herald Crusades to serve full-time. For 10 consecutive years, we served the Chinese elderly living in several senior apartments in Southern California. As we

introduced the residents to Christ, many of them found faith and no longer lived without hope. Instead, they were full of peace and joy. Even in the face of death, they no longer were afraid. Every time we visited the apartments, the elderly there would welcome us with warm embraces and smiling faces. It may seem as if we were the ones helping these elderly people, but often God gave us even more through them. These grandpas and grannies loved us and spoiled us like their own. I gained a deep understanding of the value of living in love. *"So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three: but the greatest of these is love"* (1 Corinthians 13:13, ESV).

God continues to lay the path for our ministry, allowing us to serve in many places in China, even in poor areas in the mountains. As God overcomes all difficulties, our desire and calling is to bring God's love to even more people.

"All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies" (Psalm 25:10, ESV). ■

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A Policeman's Sweet Revenge

by Jimmy Meeks



In my early career as a bi-vocational pastor and police officer, I was often the object of people's criticism. During my time on the police force I met my share of verbal abuse. Surprisingly, some of the most hateful people I encountered weren't the criminals on the streets but my fellow officers.

I remember one stint on the midnight shift that was especially difficult.

Every officer on the shift, except for one, seemed to despise me. They made their disdain known at every opportunity—mocking me, making fun of me, taking verbal jabs at me (even over the police radio).

It wore on me, and, sadly, I eventually reached a point where I despised them just as much as they despised me. I would later learn that their hatred stemmed from the belief that



someone like me—a Christian and a minister—had no business being a police officer.

One night at a prayer meeting, I shared my struggles with my friends and asked them to pray for me. They gathered and lifted me up to God. Shortly after that, an idea came to me that I believe came from God: Follow the advice of the Apostle Paul, an expert on “Christian revenge.”

In Romans 12:20, Paul writes: *“If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.”* He even added that if I chose this path, “burning coals” would fall on their heads.

There it was! A perfect plan for revenge!

I decided to take a risk. I would step out of the boat, so to speak, and see

if the power of God would come through for me. My plan was to “get revenge” on the guys on my shift—all of them! And I knew exactly how to do it. I got excited!

Christmas was just a couple of weeks away, and I decided to buy gifts for every officer on the shift—gifts I knew they would appreciate.

- Wayne was a fisherman, so I bought him some new fishing gear.

- Ronnie was known for his ability to save money: I got him a fancy new piggy bank.

- John was a Texas Rangers baseball fan: I got him a Rangers bobblehead.

And so on...

Each officer got a gift, and even the sergeant—who was also hostile toward me—received one. And the “burning coals” fell from heaven...

The leader of the group, Mike, was particularly cruel. I called him “Mean Mike.” He had a classic case of “short man syndrome” and seemed to go out of his way to put others down to lift himself up. He could walk into a

room and instantly drain the energy from everyone.

For him, I bought a brand-new copy of the New Testament. It was a special edition that contained four different translations. The gift stunned him!

Then one night Mike sent me a message on our in-car computers: “Would you go to lunch with me?” I was shocked because none of these guys had ever invited me to lunch. I gladly agreed.

He brought a few other department employees with him, and we met at Denny’s. We sat in the back booth, and Mike brought his new Bible—along with a list of questions about the Christian faith. We ended up having an impromptu Bible study at Denny’s.

A few days later, Mike told me he had decided to resign and pursue a different career. Then he said, “I’ve treated you terribly. I’ve been awful to you, and you went out and bought me a Christmas gift. I’m really sorry.”

Other officers also came forward to apologize. And things were never the same after that. What they had



* * *

intended for evil, God had turned to good, like Joseph's story in Genesis 50:20.

But I wasn't looking for apologies. I knew that I had been given an opportunity to reflect Jesus, and by His grace, I had managed to do so. And in the end, I realized that what the guys needed to hear from me was nothing less than the words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

I believe that when Jesus uttered those words from the cross, He was praying specifically for THE VERY ONES who drove the nails into His hands and feet. And who were those "very ones?" They were the Roman soldiers, the law enforcement officers of His day!

His prayer seems to have had a positive effect. After He declared, "It is finished," and breathed His last, one of those soldiers standing nearby declared, "Truly this was the Son of God."

I find it fascinating that the first person to confess Jesus as the Son of God after His death was none other than an officer assigned to keep the peace!

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:11–12, ESV).

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21, KJV). ■



Jimmy Meeks has been in the ministry for over 52 years. He also served as a police officer for 35 years. Traveling across the United States, he visits police departments, encouraging and sharing the gospel with many of the officers. Jimmy and his wife, Julie, have been married for 47 years and have six children and seven grandchildren. They reside in the Fort Worth, Texas, area.

A BLESSING IN DISGUISE

by Tan Tri Tieu

In 1970, five years before Vietnam fell to the Communist regime of the North, the U.S. presence was still very evident in Vietnam. With U.S. troops patrolling during the daytime, it was easy to have a sense of security. Then one day as I was walking in my village, out of nowhere, a Vietnamese female soldier hurled a grenade at a troop of American military—and I was standing nearby. When the grenade exploded, it severely injured my left hand and leg, and my left lung.

Even though my limbs recovered without amputation, my left side was weaker than my right. I questioned why God had let this happen to me and why I couldn't live a normal life like others. But God gave me no answer.

Fast forward 16 years after this incident. My family was anticipating immigrating to the U.S. While we were awaiting final approval to leave, one midnight a group of Vietnamese military police came to my house and captured me. Despite my protests and showing them our immigration documents that stated we could leave Vietnam upon INS approval, they took me away under gunpoint, all the time jeering at me: "We'll bring you back when you get your air ticket." The following three years I was forced to work in a labor camp in a hilly region of Vietnam.

Life in the camp was very harsh. My body began to weaken, and mental pressure began to mount. Under stress, I spent about ten hours a day cutting grass in the hills, in rainstorms and blistering sun. And after finishing my assigned tasks, I spent the rest of the time complaining to God. I had a million questions for God. Why did I have to suffer such a fate? I blamed

God and doubted His faithfulness and love. Although I knew at heart that I should fervently pray, yet physical pain, mental stress, seething frustration, as well as missing my family deprived me of a peaceful heart. Satan also brought on a sense of guilt, reminding me of every mistake I had ever made and vividly displaying them before my eyes. (Satan is the accuser of believers, Revelation 12:10.)

But the Holy Spirit was working in my heart as well. I recalled that when I was young, I had committed myself and my whole life to serving God. But I bargained with God, saying I would do anything according to His will except for becoming a minister—for which I deemed myself unqualified. I had observed that many ministers lived in hardship—under constant persecution, being put in prison and in labor camps for no reason except that they named themselves followers of God. Observing these sufferings shook up my fragile confidence and intimidated my infant soul. Therefore, I prayed, "I'm willing to be a living sacrifice, yet please don't call me to be your servant!"

Now, in the workcamp, the Holy Spirit moved my spirit again, urging

me to completely surrender to God. But once again, I stubbornly resisted, turning a deaf ear to His wooing. Under steadily increasing stress from work, my health began to deteriorate further, and soon I contracted dysentery so that my intestines seemed to be coming out. I thought my days were numbered, and I would soon see God face to face. But I also realized that I might not die, because there was still much work to be done for the Kingdom of God. God might still have a purpose for me. However, my stubbornness strapped me deeper in my plight of resisting God's call, and my disgruntlement further hardened my heart.

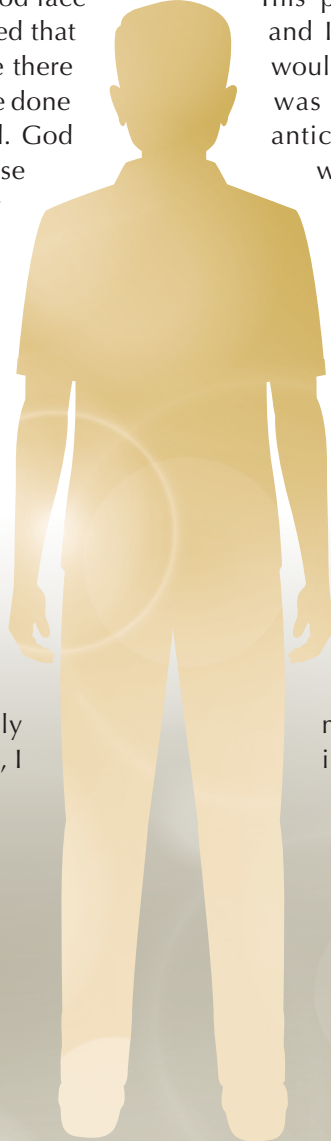
But praise God, when I was at the end of my rope, He turned me back. His love in the end overcame me, and I surrendered completely to God's calling. To be thoroughly convinced of His calling, I

prayed for a sign that I would be able to go home. It would not happen because of money or power, but because of His mighty and wondrous hand. In the camp all practice of Christian worship was forbidden, and severe punishments could be imposed if caught, but I prayed and totally committed myself to Him.

This prayer brought me peace, and I believed firmly that God would lead me home. My heart was full of thanksgiving and anticipation of His wondrous work.

Soon after my full surrender and prayer to go home, I was called into the commanding office of the camp and given a pass home. The pass listed "poor health" as the reason for my dismissal. With the pass in hand, I jumped for joy and praised God for His miraculous answer to my prayer.

I felt I understood the mystery that had lingered in my heart for so many



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years: the injury to the left side of my body was the reason that brought me home. All things happen according to God's wonderful plans. God opened my eyes to see that the injury I experienced as a young person was a blessing in disguise. Often, we only see God's providential plan for our lives as we look back.

I truly know that God is mightily leading my path. Now, besides giving thanks to God for His daily provision and rescuing me from sufferings, I commit my life unreservedly to Him. I trust Him wholeheartedly, for I am like clay under the hand of the all-mighty Potter. Without a doubt, I know that only through obedience can we receive God's blessings.

Today, through God's grace and mercy, I work in full-time ministry. Although my full-time ministry work has just begun, every day I experience God's abundant grace and wonderful guidance. Because He holds my tomorrow—and His way is higher than my way and His will higher than my will—I know that behind every suffering lies a blessing in disguise. ■



Tan Tri Tieu is the senior pastor at Chinese Grace Church of San Francisco, California.

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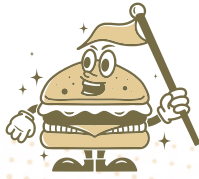


*Dominie and her friend in
the nursing home*

We found a shaded spot right near the building. Patients and visitors were coming and going through the sliding glass doors. Suddenly, a lady about 65 years old came out in a wheelchair. I noticed that her right leg had been amputated about halfway. The stump of her leg was bandaged and propped on a special cushion so she wouldn't fall out of the chair. She parked her wheelchair not too far from us, pulled her hoodie down over her face, and began crying. This heartbreaking scene went on for about 10 minutes.

For some reason, the takeout place had given me an extra bag of fries, so





I went over to the sobbing lady, gently tapped her on the shoulder and asked if she was okay and wanted any fries. She gladly took them. I didn't want her to choke, so I got her a soft drink from the patio vending machine. She was so grateful! Eventually, she rolled herself back into the building. As she passed us, she said: "Thank you! God bless you!" I said, "God bless you, too!" It was such a touching moment. We were in the right place at the right time to encourage a child of God. I don't know if she was weeping due to physical pain, her difficult circumstances, or maybe even a family issue. Whatever the problem, the Lord heard her cry!

We can be the hands and feet of Jesus as we go about our daily lives, walking closely by our Savior's side. ■



Dominie Bush is a traveling piano teacher in Saint Augustine, Florida, where she lives with her husband Don. She is the pianist at McDowell Baptist Church.

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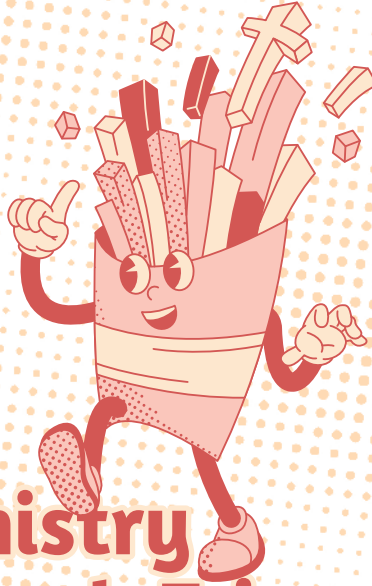
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A Ministry of French Fries

by Dominic Soo Bush

Normally, when I visit my 93-year-old friend in the nursing home, I wheel her outside onto the second-floor patio so she can get some much-needed fresh air. Sometimes I bring her a hamburger and chocolate shake—her favorites! One day, with lunch in hand, we headed to the patio exit on her floor and were surprised to find that all of the furniture had been removed, supposedly because someone had tried to jump over the edge! (There is a lot of sadness in nursing homes.) So, we took the elevator downstairs to see if we could eat on the first-floor patio.



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