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My Journey from Grief to Hope

by Alisa Stevens



*Alisa (right) and family, with her
father in the middle*



One phone call shattered my world. On February 25, 2021, my husband Tim was diagnosed with COVID. Three weeks later, on March 18, he died. In that short time, COVID took a strong, healthy man and ravaged his body. I remember being on the phone with a social worker, planning his move to long-term rehab, when another call came through. It was the doctor. Tim's body had gone into total organ failure, and I needed to come make end-of-life decisions.

Our son was a senior in high school. Our daughter was away at college.

The sudden loss ripped us out of our lives and left all three of us numb. That summer, we focused on survival. We ate dinner together, went to movies, and tried to create a sense of normalcy. Nothing felt normal. We moved through life like zombies.

I checked off milestones just to keep going. Easter—check. Mother's Day and Father's Day—check. Moved my daughter back to college—check. Dropped my son off for his freshman year—check. Then I came home to an empty house. The distractions were gone, and the grief finally caught me. I had spent months holding it together for my kids while ignoring my own pain. When everything slowed down, it hit me like a freight train.

I stopped functioning. I isolated. I drank to numb the pain, and some nights I drank until I passed out—just to forget the silence, the loss, and the life I never chose.

My husband's side of the family disappeared from our lives, and the abandonment was shocking. Nine months after Tim's death—five days before Christmas and what would have been his birthday—they resurfaced, only to unleash cruel and intentionally hurtful words and actions. The betrayal left my children and me stunned. After that encounter, I knew ties had to be permanently severed. They were no longer safe for us. It felt like losing Tim all over again.

I was angry—at COVID, at God, and at life. Angry that my kids no longer had a father. Angry that I had to parent alone. Angry that I was suddenly a 50-year-old widow facing a future I never imagined. Angry that I needed help. Angry that family betrayed us. Angry that God hadn't answered my desperate prayers. I didn't want this life. I didn't choose it. And I didn't know how to live it.



For several years, I white-knuckled my way through life. What sustained me was my church family, who showed up in countless ways. Looking back, I can see how God sent His people—at exactly the right times—to minister to me, to help me, and to hold me up when I could not stand on my own. Through their love, God confronted me with the truth: I had no control. I was drowning in grief and rage. I had to wrestle with whether I still believed He loved me after all I had lost. I had to surrender the illusion of control and trust Him with a heart that had been shattered.

As I dug deeper, I realized I wasn't really living. I was a shell of myself. I wasn't parenting well. I was barely functioning at work. Grief and anger had become my identity—idols I clung to because they felt familiar and safe.

When I began confessing that honestly—to God, to others, and to a small group of women at church—something shifted. Instead of rejection, I found grace. Instead of judgment, I found truth spoken in love. These women became

a safe place for honesty and encouragement. They challenged me when I needed it and reminded me that God's grace still applied to me.

In time, I discovered that grief could coexist with hope. Tim's death will always be part of my story, but it no longer defines me. God pursued me at my lowest—angry, broken, and questioning His goodness. He did not abandon me. He placed His people in my path to carry me when I could not walk. I began to follow Him again—not because life became easier, but because I could finally see His hand, even in the hardest moments.

One of the most difficult steps in my healing was forgiveness. I believed I would never forgive the family we had to walk away from. But God softened my heart and showed me that forgiveness was not about them—it was about obedience, freedom, and peace. I wrote a letter offering forgiveness. They never responded, and that was never the point. The point was releasing their hold on me. Holding on to anger was not strength; it was bondage.

Forgiveness was freedom.

Grief and healing are not linear. Some days I move forward; other days I stumble back. But I no longer live in shame when I struggle. I run to God instead of away from Him. I lean on Him. I cry out to Him. And I choose, daily, to walk in the new life He has given me.

God has sustained me. He has comforted me. He has transformed me. I am not healing because I am strong—I am healing because He is good.



Alisa and her son Owen, daughter Savanna, and son-in-law Corey

This verse anchors my journey:

"All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us" (2 Corinthians 1:3–4). ■



Alisa Stevens is a follower of Christ, widow, mother, and wholehearted lover of all things homegrown and handmade. After

27 years of marriage, she began navigating life without her husband, Tim, learning to walk through grief with faith, honesty, and the steady presence of God.

She is the mother of two and a grateful mother-in-law of one, as well as a devoted dog mom. Home is her happy place—whether she's tending her garden, quilting something cozy, preserving the harvest, or embracing what she lovingly calls her "grandma hobbies." A passionate homesteader at heart, Alisa finds beauty in simple, faithful living and in creating spaces

that feel warm, welcoming, and rooted in purpose.

Church is not just something she attends—it is the heartbeat of her community. The relationships she has built within her church family are essential to her life, sustaining her through loss and shaping her journey forward. In this season, she also lovingly cares for her widowed father, embracing both the weight and the gift of that responsibility.

Through her writing, Alisa shares her story of grief, faith, and resilience, offering encouragement to others learning to trust God in the "after."





40 Years of Prayer: From Idol-Worshippers to Christ-Followers

by Samantha Chao

As a child, I was told to pray a very specific prayer every day. My mom, with patience, love, and sincerity in her voice, often reminded me to pray for my grandparents (her parents) to become Christians. In my very first prayer journal, I wrote down this prayer along with a few more trivial requests. Next to each prayer, I wrote the day it was answered, but for a long time, “for 外婆 and 外公 to become Christians” had a blank next to it, waiting for the day the prayer would be answered. Over time, I grew skeptical that it could really be answered.

Both of my parents grew up in Malaysia. Although my mom’s family did not attend church, her parents allowed her (the eldest of six siblings) to attend kindergarten at a local Methodist church on their street, hoping that this would help her make friends. But God had even greater plans! Because my mom, and later her sisters, went to school there, they were also invited to attend Sunday School. Even when the family moved to a new house and the sisters could no longer walk to church, the church

arranged for a car to pick them up so that they could still attend.

In their home, my grandparents worshiped their Buddhist idols, and their parents before them were also devout idol worshippers. As a child, I visited their home and wondered what the austere figurines on their mantel were. I didn’t fully understand at that time that, when my mother became a Christian, she broke the generational cycle of idol worship—which was why the idols that were familiar to her growing up were completely unfamiliar to me.

From the time my mother came to faith in the Lord Jesus in the 1970s, she prayed for her parents’ salvation. She and her siblings, who also were believers, witnessed to their parents and grandparents. My mom is a gentle woman, far from defiant, but when my grandmother tried to make her drink ashes and liquid that had been burned to idols, my mother refused. As she continued going to church, my grandfather made threats that he never acted on. When I asked her how she persevered despite



Celebrating Christmas



A sign in grandmother's home—from trusting idols to trusting God

these challenges, my mother stated that she “just had a desire to go to church” and that nothing could stop her. Since childhood, my mother has told me these stories of how she persevered in her faith despite her parents’ objections. They remain a source of inspiration for my life and ministry even today.

As the years went on, my mother continued attending church. Eventually, she met a mature, godly boy in her youth group who would become her future husband and my father. Even without Christian parents, my mother’s faith continued to deepen. When she wanted to get baptized, my grandparents told her she was not allowed to get baptized until she was 21. According to my father, this was her parents telling her it was okay to go to church, but they did not want her to get “too deep” into the Christian faith. When my mother turned 21, she told her parents that she was going to get baptized—and

while they did not stop her, they did not attend the baptism themselves.

During the time my parents were dating, my father was preparing for pastoral ministry. Initially, my grandparents expressed concerns about the relationship, fearing that if Mother married a minister, she would have to provide for the family, because they would be poor. This was likely the result of others speaking ill of the pastoral profession. However, by the time my father proposed, they did not object and were even friendly toward him. On multiple occasions, my father shared the gospel with his future in-laws, but my grandfather “refused to listen.” Although my grandmother listened to the gospel and said, “the gospel is good,” she did not feel the time was right to accept the gospel and made excuses for why it was not the right time to come to Christ. It is possible that my grandparents felt it would upset their parents because

becoming a Christian would mean no longer participating in ancestor worship.

During Mom’s high school years, she began giving piano lessons to students. It made an extremely profitable living for her. She even bought her own car, a bright orange vehicle that I’ve only ever seen in pictures. However, she gave up her lucrative career for my dad. In 1986, my parents married and answered God’s call to move to the United States so that my father could pursue further theological education and serve as a pastor. While my father served as a pastor, my mother served in various capacities in music ministry. In the 1990s, they had me, then my two brothers. When possible, we would visit our family members in Malaysia. Mom reminded me often that her parents were not believers and that we needed to pray for them. I’ve always been a realistic and pragmatic person, and I saw plainly how the odds were stacked against my grandparents ever becoming Christians. And my great-grandparents were idol worshipers, old, and probably set in their ways. I did not pray with nearly the same measure of faith my mother did. But her prayers were not wasted and were answered in God’s perfect timing.

The first breakthrough in my grandparents’ salvation journey did not come until February 2013, when I was already in college. My mother and her five siblings gathered in Malaysia for a Chinese New Year celebration. One sister suggested family worship, which was unprecedented. During the second family worship of that trip, my grandfather was interested and sat in the room observing, while my grandmother refused to join. My mother and her siblings used this as an opportunity to tell my grandfather that they believed in Jesus, which meant they were going to Heaven, and they asked him if he would like to go there with them. After decades of his children’s witness and testimonies, my grandfather was actually soft-hearted at this time but also afraid of what my grandmother would think. However, 10 months later, four of my mother’s siblings held another family worship, and this time, when asked whether he wanted to believe, my grandfather said he believed, even though my grandmother did not. Then in February 2014, my grandmother had

Prayer	Date	Date answered
外公 and 外婆 to believe in Jesus	3/29/05	2/1/14
Get a piano	3/29/05	6/1/05

Childhood prayer journal



Grandfather's grave, with Scripture

the family's Buddhist idols removed from their house, which was her way of expressing that she wanted to become a Christian. After 40 years of prayer, the miraculous had happened! Two idol worshipers who were completely against Christianity had placed their trust in Christ for their salvation. I could hardly believe it when my mother told me that my grandparents were going to be baptized!

At this point, I had not returned to Malaysia for more than 10 years. However, since I had just graduated from college, my mother asked if I wanted to go with her to witness my grandparents' baptism. Eager and excited to see the fruit of her praying for four decades, we went on our international mother-daughter trip. Although there were many memorable moments from that trip, the one that touched my heart and has grown my faith the most was witnessing my grandparents' baptism on December 6, 2015. My grandparents' choice to get baptized truly was a miracle, considering they did not attend my mother's baptism decades prior and were resistant to the gospel for most of their lives. In the very church where my parents met and my mother was baptized, my grandparents publicly declared their faith in Christ.

My grandfather passed into Glory on January 12, 2025, less than a year after he

became a great-grandfather to my daughter. He had been ill for a while, and my mother was able to say her final goodbyes to him shortly before he passed away. My parents attended his funeral, and in a true display of his faith, his funeral was a Christian one. His tombstone is marked with two Scriptures, Psalm 23:6 and John 3:16.

In August 2025, my entire family went to Malaysia. This time, when I went to my grandmother's home, the idols were not there. Instead, when I went to the kitchen, I found a simple sign that said, "God bless our home." That Sunday, I revisited the church where I had witnessed my grandparents' baptism with my family. After the service, even though I was not with my parents because I had been in the children's room with my daughter, someone immediately recognized me as Pastor and Mrs. Lim's daughter because of my resemblance to my mother. Teenage me might have been embarrassed to be called out like that, but instead, I was pleased that this person could see the image of my mother, a godly and prayerful woman, in me. After that, when we ate snacks with the other church members, I saw my grandmother sitting at a table, happily conversing with them. That simple scene flooded my heart with gratitude and amazement that after all those years of my mom praying and me praying alongside her, albeit less faithfully and fervently than her,





The church where Samantha's parents met (and grandparents were baptized)



Witnessing grandparents' baptism

our prayers had been answered in the best way imaginable. And when I visited my grandfather's grave and saw his resting place for myself, my gratitude for God's answered prayer was renewed.

My mother continues to be a godly example of what it means to pray without ceasing. She is soft-spoken and never wants to talk into a microphone. Even at my wedding, when the microphone was offered to her during the parents' sharing portion of the program, she waved it away. But the way her faith speaks transcends words. Her godly, faithful example continues to be a blessing in my life. My prayer is that her story would inspire us all to pray without ceasing, especially for those we love who still do not believe in Jesus. It may take a few days, a few years, maybe even 40. But God hears our prayers, and my grandparents' story and my mother's faith are a reminder that He can do the impossible.

When I think about this testimony story, I am reminded of the words of one of my favorite hymns, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus":

*What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!*

*Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer! ■*



Samantha Chao is the worship and praise minister at Hosanna Presbyterian Church in Carrollton, Texas, and an adjunct

dissertation reader for California Baptist University. The details of this article came from interviews she conducted with her parents in 2022 for a class project.



A Light in the Forest

by Kavala Gangadhar



*A special love feast was arranged
for the faithful after the prayer
meeting*

In 1985, my mother and father started God's ministry in the remote and hilly tribal areas of South India, where the people depend on the forests for their living. At that time, God's ministry had not yet begun anywhere in these regions because the people there had very cruel natures, worshipped pagan gods, practiced idol worship, animal sacrifice, child marriages, and were addicted to homemade liquor. Both men and women were dying prematurely due to excessive alcohol consumption. Many women were widowed at a young age because their husbands died from alcohol abuse.

My father was from a pagan family in the tribal area, and my mother also belonged to a pagan family and lived in extreme poverty. After my parents got married, they both worshiped idols with my father working to set up the sound systems for pagan celebrations in the tribal areas. Completely addicted to alcohol, and a businessman who sold alcoholic beverages to others, my father did not take proper care of my mother.

After 25 years of marriage, they did not have any children. They used the medicines given by the traditional healers in the tribal area and also went to many hospitals, seeking help to have children. But no matter what



Organizing street prayers at night in a tribal village and sharing the gospel

they did, they were not able to have a child. Then a miracle happened! A pastor came to our home and met my mother. He told her about the Lord Jesus Christ who died to forgive her sins and who would give her eternal life. After many visits by the pastor, my mother believed in Christ and stopped worshipping idols. She started praying to God. In the same year that she believed in God, God opened my mother's womb and gave me as a gift to my parents. But my father did not stop worshipping idols.

However, soon after I was born, I fell seriously ill, and the local traditional healers and doctors in the nearby town declared that my survival was



*Pastor Kavala
Gangadhar with his
wife Alivelu, their
younger son Sushanth,
and older son Paul*



*Pastor Kavala praying
for those who have
recently accepted the
Lord Jesus Christ as
their personal Savior
in a tribal village*



Praying with orphans

unlikely. At that time, a man of God from the town visited the hospital and prayed for me, asking my mother to pray to God with faith for my healing. Through God's powerful intervention, I recovered completely and returned home safely. My mother recognized this as a healing granted by God solely through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Through my mother's prayers and seeing God heal me from a terrible disease at a young age, my father later experienced a complete conversion and salvation. He was transformed. He repented, gave up alcohol, sold his sound system, and spent the money on the gospel of God to do the work of God. In the very places where my father had previously

indulged in drinking and behaving disgracefully in front of many, he now carried God's gospel, moving forward to share the truth. However, he faced opposition everywhere he went because no one in these tribal areas was willing to accept God's gospel. While some did believe, others mocked and hurt him with sarcastic and humiliating words, saying, "This is the same man who drank with us until recently, the same man who sold alcohol until recently, and now he's preaching the Word of God, thumping the Bible!" But because of the faith my mother and father had in God, the vision they had received, and the way God spoke to them, they endured all the insults and continued in God's ministry. They established a small church in



a tribal area and began sharing the gospel. God used them powerfully, and in the following years, a small group of people began gathering in that church to worship God. Five years later, as per the call of God, my father was ordained as an evangelist and a dedicated servant who worked for the salvation of souls in this tribal area and continued the ministry of God until he breathed his last breath.

In August 2016, my father received God's call and went to be with the Lord. As his son, I greatly rejoice to share that he fought the good fight for God and His work. The ministry started by my father has led to the transformation of many individuals in leading many lost souls towards God. That same gospel continues to be spread in our time as well. As a family dedicated to God, my mother, my wife, and I are continuing in God's ministry. We are reaching out to some orphaned children and young widows in this tribal area, caring for their well-being, meeting their needs, and involving them in God's ministry.



There are still many families in these tribal areas that need to be transformed. Those who are against Christ are committing acts of violence against Christians in these areas. Because of our faith in God,

He is enabling us to continue in His ministry without weakening or being put to shame. There is great need for food and education of the tribal children, training for widows in handicraft skills, the purchase of Bibles for new tribal converts, and the provision of drinking water and toilets. Also, young people from our village must travel to the nearby town to attend college. The daily trips by private transport are very expensive for them, so we hope to purchase bicycles so they can go to college safely in the morning and return home in the evening.



My wife and I are convinced that worldly jobs are not for us but that God has appointed our family for His work and has kept me alive for this very purpose. We visit many tribal areas every day, offer special prayers for those who need prayer, organize prayer meetings at night to share God's gospel, and preach the gospel to those who have not yet repented, leading them to salvation. All the people in this tribal area belong to the lower middle class and a large majority are from the poor class. There is a custom of performing child marriages for many young children. However, we visit many villages and families, explaining to them the obstacles and dangers that will arise in future generations due to child

marriages, and we share the gospel of Christ, thus bringing about change in them.

From the beginning of this ministry until now, God has never forsaken us but has guided us according to His grace and love, using us for the salvation of perishing souls. We desire to undertake new works for God and to be greatly blessed and prosper in His work. I am the gift given to my parents after many years of marriage, their only child, with no children before or after me. However, after my marriage, God has blessed me and my wife with two sons. At present, our family consists of me, my wife, my mother, and our two children. We are all dedicated to the ministry of God, continuing to do the work of God. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. ■



*Pastor Kavala
Gangadhar and his
family live in Pydipaka
Village in South India.*



In a tribal village, a young man who was an alcoholic and idolater would not let his wife go to church and made trouble for her. However, when his son was diagnosed with a terminal illness, God through prayers saved the son from death. After the healing, the young man gave up his habits, accepted God, and was baptized. The pastor and fellow believers are praying for this young man.



Orphan boys and girls recruited from tribal areas. Their parents died young due to addiction to homemade alcohol, and family members did not care for the children. Those who are chosen, according to God's will, are God's servants and evangelists in future generations.

The Joyful Christian Life

—Thoughts from a Blind Man for Those of Us Who See

by Stewart Arthur



Stewart and his wife Jodi

Editor's note—Stewart Arthur lost his sight when he was a very young child. From the same accident which caused his blindness, he also suffered facial disfigurement. Soon afterwards, his parents divorced, and he was separated from his mother and sisters. He was subsequently raised by his paternal grandparents and residential State schools for the blind. While plastic surgeries restored Stewart's facial features, he remains totally blind. Yet he says he has never been bitter about his blindness: "Long before I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, I looked upon my blindness as God's will for my life. Just as He knew I would surrender my life to Him, His hand of protection and provision have always been upon me." Later, when Stewart was struggling with being a compassionate

and loving caregiver for his terminally ill father, he surrendered to God's sovereign will for his life. Called by the love of God and His Savior Jesus Christ, Stewart currently serves God along with his wife Jodi as online missionaries.

The Joyful Christian Life

Along with our Christ-given commission to spread the good news of Jesus Christ, Christians have a calling to live in such a manner that our lives draw non-believers to Christ. Our lives should be living testimonies to the goodness of God and the hope of Jesus Christ.

But in a world of sin, sorrow, sadness and tribulation, how is this even possible? How do we portray the



hope-filled Christian life to others when we experience the same hardships as the rest of mankind? We endure loss of loved ones, illness and disease, handicaps, physical and emotional pain, mental turmoil and anguish, offenses against us, etc. Additionally, as believers, we struggle against sinful fleshly desires, Satan's attacks, and sorrow over the evils and corruption of the lost world. Amid this, are Christians just weary, persecuted travelers, trudging through life, trying to get Home? No! Our lives can be filled with love, courage, peace, hope, and joy.

What is the Source of the Christian's never-ending fountain of love, courage, peace, hope, and joy? How do we drink from this restorative bottomless well of gladness and joy? The answer is always the same—our Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Consider God the Father

God's love for us is a constant cause for joy. His grace and lovingkindness renew every day for those who love Him. We are sons and daughters of our Father God in Heaven. What joy there is in the knowledge that our Father in Heaven is most powerful, most gracious, most merciful, most generous, and in total control. He works all things together for the good of His children and for His

glory. All good things come from Him. We are awed and find joy in our Father God's creative power and the universe He designed. The rising and setting of the sun is reason enough for daily joy. In addition to the beauty of both occurrences, they signal God's faithfulness to His Word and to us, His children. Malachi 1:11 (NKJV) declares: *"For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering: For my name shall be great among the nations," Says the LORD of hosts."*

How about the joy of seeing God's glory on display in the night skies? Psalm 19:1–2 (NLT) reminds us: *"The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known."*

Is there not joy in meditating upon God's peace? We have peace from Him, and we are at peace with Him. There is no animosity towards us or impending condemnation. The judgment to come is for those who reject Him and rebel against Him.

Consider the Joy of God's Fellowship

King David describes the joy of being in God's presence, *"You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand*

are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11, NKJV).

We achieve this spiritual fellowship with God through worship, prayer, devotions, and through His Word, the Bible. In Psalm 19:7–8 (NLT), God states through King David: *"The instructions of the LORD are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The commandments of the LORD are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are clear, giving insight for living."*

Consider Jesus Christ

The embodiment of our Triune God is Jesus Christ. It is what He has done, is doing, and will do for us, in us, and through us, that provides us countless opportunities for joy. The more we grow in our knowledge of Him through the study of Scripture and the more we see His promises fulfilled in our lives, the more our love for Him will grow. We will realize the abundant life He promises. It is a joyful moment when we learn new and wonderful truths about our Lord and Savior.

The work of Jesus Christ on the cross presents countless and continual occasions for thanksgiving, praise, and joy. His death served as atonement for our sins, allowing for our forgiveness. His death and burial allowed for the death of our old life and sin nature. His resurrection

allowed for our rebirth to a new and eternal life, free of the guilt and shame of our former life.

Jesus is not only a cause for our joy, but He also modeled joy in the face of sorrow, sadness, betrayal, and false accusations while enduring the most excruciating, painful death. Hebrews 12:2 (NKJV) says: *"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

Christ was called "a man of sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3, NLT), yet He endured the cross with joy. His joy was for those who would receive the free gift of salvation—for you and for me. We are His joy and He is ours.

Consider the Holy Spirit

The question remains: How can we possibly rejoice during deep periods of suffering, dark nights of the soul, and painful experiences? The answer is: in our own strength, we cannot. But we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13)! God would not command without providing the way. That is where the third person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit, helps us. Upon our spiritual baptism, the person of the Holy Spirit came to

indwell us. He serves many purposes, and one of them is planting various seeds of spiritual fruit. One such fruit of the Spirit is joy. Galatians 5:22–23 (NLT) lists these spiritual fruits: *“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!”* Verse 25 goes on to encourage us to express through our lives all of these fruits of the Spirit. Fruit gives evidence that we are saved and sealed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13, NKJV).

In summary, there is much sorrow and suffering throughout our walk of faith. We are, however, called to live joyful lives despite our trials and tribulations. Our Father God in Heaven, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit give us ample reasons for joy, and the supernatural ability to access and express a life of joy. Let us present a joyful demeanor to a lost world, attracting them to the light of Christ.

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4, NKJV).

“Rejoice always” (1 Thessalonians 5:16).

“Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!” (Habakkuk 3:17–18, NLT). ■



The We 3 Trio: Stewart Arthur, his wife Jodi, and pianist Dominic Bush

Stewart Arthur and Jodi are currently members of McDowell Baptist Church in St. Augustine, Florida. They are excited about a new calling as leaders in a small church in a different part of the country. Stewart will be preaching, leading Bible study, and counseling. Jodi will serve by his side and help in ladies' ministries.

back into the waiting room. Carefully trying to block out the faces and situations of others around me, I couldn't help but notice a woman sitting on the floor in tears, crying out, wrestling feverishly with anger over the trauma of a loved one. Minutes later, a woman and her teenaged son struggled as she attempted to get him into the room and sit down. She begged him to stay inside and await treatment but was met with equal fortitude and resolve. "Charlie" implored for a priest—not a doctor. The mother assured Charlie that he was in a place where he could get help, and that he should calm down and think positive thoughts. Nothing registered with Charlie. I declined to look in their direction, let alone make eye contact with either of them. I felt palpably ashamed that I was drawn into their world as a total stranger while facing my own family's ER trauma.

The ER intake nurse tried a few questions, and the mother explained that yesterday evening her son was out with friends and had some drinks and some hash (drugs). Charlie meanwhile refused to sit down and leaned hard toward the glass door vestibule entrance ready to walk out for good. His mother and the nurse restrained him while he continued to plead for her to find a priest; she promised that there would be a priest and that help was on the way. Then two summoned cops nonchalantly stepped in. After chatting quietly with the mother, one said, "Ma'am, we can't help you."

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By this time, I was looking into the faces, the gestures, and the angst inside the words. Surely it was impolite to eavesdrop and try to sort out what was unfolding. Every family has dark secrets, and this one happened to be playing out in front of all. Who can cast any stones? In my spirit, I understood that this moment was not relational, psychological, or clinical. It was spiritual. I stared out the window, and thought very hard—am I a priest, a minister, a caretaker, counselor, or clinician? I feared if I reached out and prayed with this mother and especially her son, how would they react? Am I a Christian, really? My mind rushed through what Christ did, what He taught, how He had intervened so many times in my own life and in my circle of friends.

I stepped forward. “Let’s go outside and pray together.” Making eye contact with me, Charlie quickly agreed. Once in the vestibule, he announced, “Let’s get out of there.” But this could not happen. I assured him that once we prayed to God for His help, we would find help right there. I placed my left arm on his shoulder and immediately sensed all the tension seething out of him. “Charlie, we’re going to pray to God right now. Repeat this prayer,” and he agreed. “Dear God, you know what is going on with me—You are right here now, and I don’t have to be afraid—Help me get healed—Whatever was in the past is over, and you can help me—You have the power to do this—God, thank you for all this.—In Jesus’ name, Amen.”



Somehow, Charlie's face was flushed with relief. He then relented and stepped back into the waiting room. His thanks were effusive. I captured the look on his mother's face and knew once again that this whole world cannot go against a mother's love. Back in the ER triage area, she thanked me. Charlie had calmed down and was getting his weight taken. I gave her a short tract and highlighted a prayer that he could pray. (And I prayed that she would pray it too.) Later, I noticed that she was calmly reading the tract with her son.

It is not hard to connect the dots, if we let Him do so: A crazy fall of my mother-in-law (thankfully the CT was negative), driving to a far-away ER, encountering at that time an unwelcomed battle between mother and son, yet finding a way to share the love of God. I am not a cog in a wheel; I am not a result of faceless forces beyond my control. I am commissioned. I cannot elevate myself or another. For my sake, this week I was reminded that while He was rich, He became poor for me. Now I am rich, not so much to be generous with things, but generous with Truth, spoken in love.

God's power, when mixed with love, can be made manifest at any time. ■



Gregory Yu lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. He has been a Christ-follower since college. He is a counselor, mentor, writer, and evangelist.

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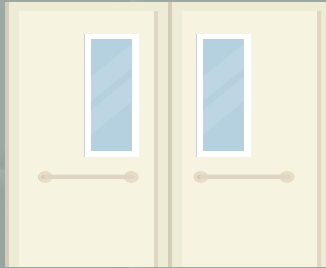
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INTERVENTION OF PRAYER IN THE



by Gregory Yu

One holiday weekend while sitting in a group Bible study, I was startled by a call from my wife. My mother-in-law had fallen on her head and was in the ER. Leaving immediately, I sped down the highway, a one-hour drive to the hospital, thinking the worst: brain injury, coma, paralysis, speech aphasia, wheelchair, 24-7 care, perhaps a premature death. I was beside myself, remembering my own father's fall on his head. Time both raced and stopped.

When I walked into the waiting room of the small community hospital, I hastened to learn how they would handle a brain bleed and trauma to the head. I knew hours were critical, and my neuroradiologist son would be there to help. Inside the assigned room, my wife sat next to my mother-in-law who was conscious and chatting. She seemed alert and responsive as we waited for the results of the CAT scan. I knew, even then, we would have no assurance of safety, as the worst can happen after just a day or two. I thought of a gentleman I met years back. Fresh into retirement, he lost his balance, hit his head on the ground on the tennis court, and days later he was gone.

Not wanting to add congestion to my mother-in-law's room with staff going in and out, I dropped



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