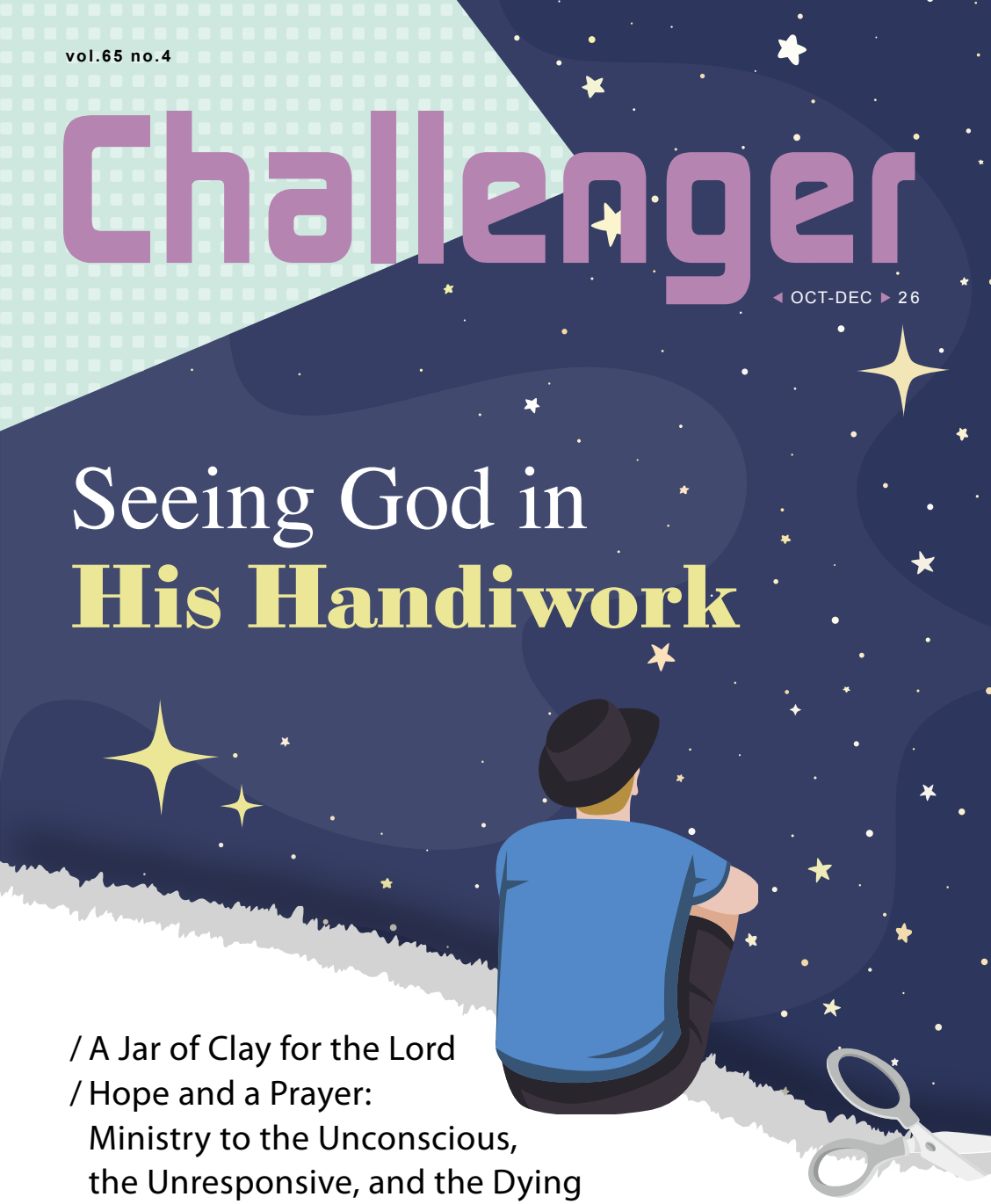
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# Challenger

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# Seeing God in His Handiwork



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# Seeing God in His Handiwork

by Paul Ernst



**Picture the Psalmist looking up at the night sky and composing *"The heavens declare the glory of God"* (Psalm 19:1). To whom—in our scientific age—do the heavens declare the glory of God? What would it take today for mankind to see in the heavens the same thing the Psalmist saw? The heavens declare that God is, that He is glorious, and that the starry skies are His handiwork.**

## The Fine-tuning Problem: Creation

Until the 20th century, the belief that God created the universe could be dismissed as a holdover from a time of ignorance or, at best, the conclusions of medieval philosophy. But now the verdict is in. The whole setup for the universe (and for the observer) to exist requires contrivance at every level. As the British atheist astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle put it (after looking at the precise way the nucleus of a carbon atom had to vibrate to make the rest of the elements that make up our universe): "A superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature."

Since then, we can fill in more details, all of which point to a designed universe. This is known as the fine-tuning problem.

So how do we advance the argument from "Gee, that seems amazing" to



a more structured argument that can stand up to scrutiny? Enter the Intelligent Design movement (ca. 1991). The basic claim is that some things in nature are best explained by the actions of an intelligent agent. Stated as a deductive argument: The fine-tuning of the universe is due to one of three things: 1) chance; 2) some physical necessity that had to be there; or 3) design. The possibility that all forces of nature and initial conditions of the universe are so unlikely that it is hard to find any scientist who believes that we are just this lucky. Despite secularism's preferences and methods, a design agent seems a much more likely explanation for what we now see, given the complexity and precision it takes to put together a universe, that from its inception must have—and did have—the capacity to put together something as fine-tuned as we see. So, of the three possibilities, only "design" is left standing. As one atheist put it, "This is the one argument for God that keeps me up at night."

## Origin of Life

Next, regarding the origin of life, Darwin supposed it came about in "some warm little pond," but he lacked the tools to show how. By the mid-1950s, we had some ideas about the chemical composition of the early Earth. We also know now that some meteorites contain the building blocks of life, such as amino acids that form proteins and sugars that form

the backbone of DNA. This inspired the famous Miller-Urey experiment that most basic biology textbooks proudly display as the answer to the origin of life. The team cooked up the basic ingredients: ammonia, carbon dioxide, and water—and, voila! They got a mixture of amino acids that might form chains, i.e., peptides and proteins. It was assumed that the rest of the stairway from chemistry to biology would be forthcoming.

Fast forward to today, and despite an explosion in the details, the problem has just gotten harder. Twelve distinct problems must be solved in order. Starting at the bottom, the formation and concentration of the building blocks. Unlike the Miller experiment, which produced some of the required building blocks but also many contaminants (road tar), the products must be pure before they can be used in the next step. The nature of chemical reactions is that, as you form the necessary building blocks, you get cross-reactions that produce lots of unnecessary ones that gum up the works. Skilled chemists can make the separations, but nature can't. A common mistake among science popularizers is that given enough time, some useful building blocks link up to make something useful for life. But at temperatures relevant to living systems, these reactions reach an equilibrium; i.e., the desired products break down into the starting materials. This means that **time is not your friend**.

Another problem is that the reactions that link the amino acid building blocks require the removal of a water molecule for each addition. If the water is not removed, the reaction will stop. The irony is that while water is necessary for life, it must also be removed. This is an example of the many chicken-and-egg problems that must be solved. Another is a source of energy, such as heat or electricity, to kick-start the reaction—yet the same energy breaks down the desired product. So much for the excitement when a planet is proposed as a candidate for life because it might have surface water!

Yet another problem is called homochirality, which is just a word for handedness—like right-hand and left-hand gloves. Only one "hand" type is compatible with life, yet chemistry produces right- and left-handed molecules in equal numbers.



Even skilled chemists can't make the separations without using the very molecules derived from life.

Moving further up the staircase from chemistry to biology, we encounter the sequence problem. Assuming you have all 22 amino acids in pure form with all the right "hands," they must be linked in the right order to have biological function. It has been experimentally determined that, for a modest-sized protein, the ratio of working to non-working protein chains is 1 part in 10 to the 77th power. It's like picking out one atom in the entire galaxy! Time and chance are not an explanation. Sir Francis Crick of DNA fame called this the sequence problem and said, "It's like a miracle, but of course those don't happen." He is an example of how someone's prior philosophical and religious commitments can prevent them from viewing science objectively.

We have now shown that a working, life-permitting universe must be fine-tuned, and the origin of life would require a multi-step lab with skilled chemists at each of the twelve steps, and even then, there are problems we can't solve—like knowing which sequences yield functional proteins without running the experiments an astronomical number of times. (But who knows, perhaps AI can help. This should hint at Fred Hoyle's "superintellect.")

## Evolution

But what about the evolution of life? Didn't Darwin show that once you did get to the first "simple" life with all its variations, nature would select for reproductive fitness in each environment? His famous "Tree of Life" would branch out until a sentient being would come about and "discover" evolution. This would proceed with small steps, gradually building until a new species comes about. He said if the small variations weren't there, his theory would "absolutely fall apart." Creationists have been criticized for using the analogy of a tornado in a junkyard producing a 747, as if the whole process occurred at once, ignoring Darwinian gradualism. "New Atheist" Richard Dawkins wrote a book on this called *Climbing Mount Improbable*. He said the creationists were climbing the sheer face while evolutionists went around the sloping backside and took the stairs. So, let's

take a look at the staircase and ask how big the steps are. It turns out they are pretty big! Using the old rule of thumb that one gene is needed for each protein (not really true anymore, but still a useful illustration), and let's call a gene a thousand letters using the four-letter DNA alphabet. That's a big sequence problem. Applying this to a well-known icon of Intelligent Design theory, the bacterial flagellum (which is literally an electric outboard motor made up of 40 proteins), you would need to solve the thousand-letter sequence problem 40 times! I will spare you the math. The steps are huge and beyond the reach of chance. Another bottleneck to evolution is gene regulatory networks. To change the body plan of an organism, you have to act early—when the sperm meets the egg—or in the first few cell divisions before the cells start to differentiate into tissue types because DNA has to be the same in each cell.

A basic problem for new body plans is gene regulatory networks. They are represented by diagrams resembling circuit boards. Try making a random change in a real circuit board and see what happens. It's been tried, and in every case, you crash the organism.

These are two evolution killers at the most basic level. But don't we see evolution happening right now? Sort of. But what you are seeing is adaptation after the body plan has been established. For example, some fish lose their eyesight in dark caves. Why spend effort supporting eyes you don't need? They grow back in the light. The environment is signaling whether genes that already exist should be expressed or repressed. Nothing new is being made. This is an adaptation. It's designed into the system as a type of self-engineering and should not be mistaken for producing novelty.

Intelligent Design (ID) has been effective in its critique of materialistic explanations for the apparent design in nature, but does it really point to God? ID proponents claim that their theory is scientific and not religious. Despite this, ID is accused of religious motivation, but this cuts both ways. Most evolutionary biologists are atheists or agnostics, so should we dismiss their arguments? No! Both sides need to be looked at on their merits.

Another objection is the so-called "God of the gaps"—that just because science doesn't have a materialist explanation today, believers in scientific progress say we must wait.

But all the progress since the Miller experiment has gone in the direction of design. ID is not just a negative argument against materialism but follows the scientific principle of uniformitarianism, an appeal to causes now known to be in operation. When we see messages in code that convey information and perform a function, our uniform experience is that they are the product of a mind. Francis Crick recognized this with his sequence problem and proposed that aliens designed it. But this raises the question of who made the aliens? Perhaps some godlike spirit inside the universe, or perhaps the universe itself, did the designing. This fits with the New Age and some Eastern religions. But this would not be God in the ultimate sense.

Furthermore, the life-permitting design of the universe requires a personal transcendent Being outside the universe. Why should the impersonal universe want to have purpose? Sadly, some of the biggest opponents of ID are in the Christian community! This sometimes comes under the heading of "theistic evolution." That sounds good and creates the image of God guiding the process. On the surface, there is no theological objection, but if you ask them to unpack what they mean, most will tell you that God used the Darwinian mechanism or one of its later iterations, so you are really back to a purposeless process. Or, to put it another way, not even an all-powerful God can use a purposeless process for a purpose. Some don't like the idea of an interventionist God who has to "tinker" with His creation when a more elegant solution is a God who wound up the universe and let it run on its own. But this is more like Enlightenment deism rather than the active God of the Bible. **A better understanding of evolution would be helpful in evangelizing. I don't think this is needed in every case, but studies have shown that evolution is a barrier to many and a cause for deconstruction of faith among the young.**

## Conclusion

So, we have three lines of evidence that all point to the same thing. In the case of the universe, we have the idea of a control room with all the dials set to the exact specification for a life-permitting universe. In the origin of life, we can picture a vast laboratory with pure ingredients delivered at each step, and while each process may be natural, the whole setup must be specified. The third leg of this argument, the

evolution of life, must be specified at the molecular level to produce a functional whole, as anything non-functional tends to be lost or selected against. When three separate lines of evidence all point to the same thing, you have a strong case—"two or three witnesses." More lines of evidence could be developed, like the uniqueness of our sun and solar system. More engineering analogies are being developed in areas such as hierarchical systems with feedback loops, which engineers readily recognize as the work of an agent.

But can we name the agent? I came to faith in Christ by looking at the prophecies about the Messiah in the Old Testament. Starting with the "seed of woman" in Genesis 3:15, down through the genealogies, the identity of the Messiah is being narrowed down, including the location of birth (Micah 5:2), the time of his arrival (Daniel 9:24), the manner and purpose of His death (Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53), His resurrection body (Psalm16:10), and many others.

The prophets who wrote these under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit did not understand what all the pieces meant. *"They wondered what the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about"* (1 Peter 10:12, TLB). Putting it in design terms, they had the specification (the Old Testament prophecies), but they had not recognized the pattern until all the pieces were in place (the New Testament fulfillment). The Bible has the same specification and fulfillments found in nature—not surprising, as both are a product of the same Mind!

So, yes, we can name the designer, and His name is Jesus. All things were made in Him, through Him, from Him, for Him, and by Him (John 1:3, Romans 11:36, and Colossians 1:16).

The Psalmist wasn't wrong after all!



*Paul Ernst taught high school chemistry and physics in the 1970s. He was an atheist at the time. After coming to faith in 2001, based on the historical case for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, he decided to use his background to help secular people overcome objections, especially from science. Paul has authored a Christian apologetics book entitled* You Bet Your Life: A Toolbox for Making Life's Ultimate Decision. *He follows the Discovery Institute's work to keep up with the latest developments in Intelligent Design.*



# A Jar of Clay for the Lord

by Hon-Kwong Chung



*Hon-Kwong Chung*

Looking back on my life, I am deeply moved by how God's hand has guided me, shaping me into a vessel for His use. From my roots in Malaysia to my life in the United States, and finally to answering the call to serve at Chinese Christian Mission (CCM) in Petaluma, California, my journey has taught me one enduring truth: God's arrangements far surpass human plans. He has refined my faith through trials and allowed His grace to shine through my weaknesses.

## A Providential Turn of Events

I was born and raised in Malaysia at a time when the country had only one university. Admittance was strictly limited, and quotas for Chinese students were incredibly slim. Most graduates who had the means chose to go abroad, some to the UK or Commonwealth nations, others to Taiwan. After high school, I was accepted into the electrical engineering department at National Taiwan University. However, a teacher encouraged me to take a leap of faith and try for the United States, even helping me with the applications.

For a long time, there was only silence from the U.S. schools. I proceeded with my medical exams and preparations for Taiwan, fully expecting that to be my path. Unexpectedly, an acceptance letter from an American university arrived via sea mail—it had been traveling for months. To finalize my visa, I had to fly to the U.S. Consulate in Kuala Lumpur twice. Even though I was on the verge of leaving for Taiwan, a sudden, inexplicable urge led me to choose the distant, unfamiliar shores of America. I burned my bridges and committed to the U.S. visa process, which went much smoother than I

ever imagined. At the time, I didn't realize that this was no accident; it was God paving the way, opening a different door at the very last moment.

Early life in America was a struggle of culture shock and language barriers. Yet, the change in environment afforded me more time and space to think freely. I met several classmates from Hong Kong, one of whom was a Christian. Through him, I was exposed to the gospel for the first time, beginning to seriously contemplate faith and the meaning of life.

Later, three close friends and I transferred to the University of Texas. There, I met more Christian peers and joined a campus Bible study. The turning point came during a winter conference in my junior year. For the first time, the gospel became clear: I recognized my own brokenness and my need for a Savior. That night, I prayed sincerely and accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Lord.



Reflecting on those years, I see that if God hadn't miraculously brought me to America, I might have spent my entire life missing the gospel, wandering further down a path toward destruction. As Isaiah 55:8 says, *"'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord."* I have lived this truth; His ways truly are higher than mine.

## Answering the Call to CCM

After coming to faith, I began serving in Bible studies and the local church, pondering my future direction. During a student winter conference, I heard speakers from CCM—including Rev. Wally Yew—share their calling. Rev. Yew spoke of setting aside worldly ambitions to focus solely on the Lord, living a simple life filled with profound joy. His testimony stirred something deep within me. He became the primary influence leading me toward CCM.

For a period, my heart could not find rest. A single question echoed in my mind: "Are you willing to be used by God?" I wondered if God was calling me. For months, I prayed through this persistent internal conviction.

The struggle was real. I wondered, "What use does God have for



*Picture with the CCM family*

an engineer?" I worried about my parents. They had sent me to America for a "bright future," and it was only natural for them to hope for my professional success. I even worried about the practicalities: if I were to start a family, could I survive on the notoriously low income of a ministry worker? These fears made me hesitate.

Yet, God did not let me go. During a time of devotion, I read 2 Corinthians 12:9: *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* It felt as if those words were written specifically for me. I realized God wasn't asking for my ability; He was asking for my obedience. Since He called me, He would be the one responsible for me.

I shared this with my pastor and spiritual mentors, who prayed with me and confirmed the calling. Finally, I laid down my burdens and committed to the path of full-time ministry. Joining CCM was a rigorous process—I had to write a detailed testimony of my salvation and calling, provide pastoral recommendations, and undergo a three-month trial period. It was a daunting challenge for a young man just starting out, but it taught me to lean entirely on God.

## Humble Obedience and Abundant Grace

In the 1970s, CCM was a small operation with few staff and modest equipment, yet its ministry was diverse. Because of the labor shortage, I was immediately assigned to the audiocassette ministry. We had no professional studio or equipment; I had to learn everything from scratch. I knew nothing about recording, editing, or post-production, but God grew my skills step by step. Eventually, I became responsible for slide shows, videography, editing, translation, and even the development of computer systems and IT platforms. My engineering background proved to be a blessing, making it easier to adapt to these emerging technologies.

Financially, life at CCM was a lesson in faith. Salaries were modest and not always on time—a condition we were informed of before joining. We lived by faith, bringing our needs to God in prayer. But beyond our personal needs, the entirety of CCM's ministry relied on God's provision. His grace was always sufficient; we never lacked the essentials. I experienced the reality of Deuteronomy 29:5: *"During the forty years that I led you through the wilderness, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet."*

Most importantly, service taught me humility. CCM is not a church, but it functions like a spiritual family. Senior coworkers often reminded us: do not form cliques, do not chase vanity, and respect one another. Philippians 2:3 became a guiding light: *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves."* I learned that ministry is not about seeking fame, but about faithfully completing the work God entrusts to us.

Decades have passed. I have seen CCM's work expand from cassette tapes to multimedia, and from print publications to global digital platforms. I have seen seekers find the Lord and believers find encouragement. Every small task is a channel for God's blessing. Whether I am tuning audio in a studio, writing a manuscript, or developing a webpage, it is all service rendered to Him. Colossians 3:23–24 says, *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters....It is the Lord Christ you are serving."* This has been the anthem of my life.

## Conclusion

From Malaysia to America, from my first prayer to decades of service at CCM, my life is a witness to one thing: God's hand was guiding me long before I knew Him. His plans always exceed our own. Though I am but a fragile clay jar, weak and limited, in His hands I can be used to carry His grace and blessings.

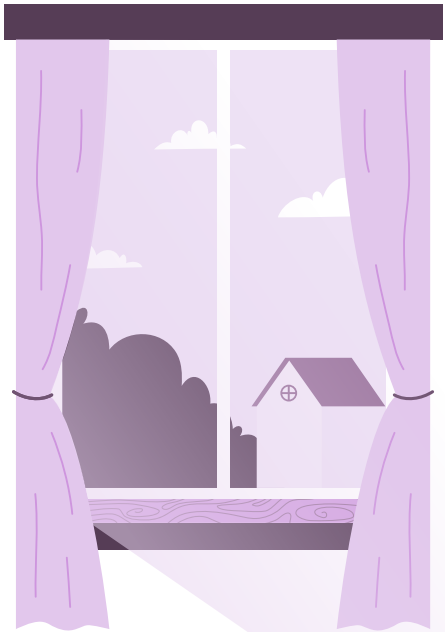
May my testimony encourage you: do not look down on yourself, and do not fear the future. If you are willing to obey and entrust yourself to the Lord, He will use you to achieve things beyond your imagination. We are but jars of clay, but we hold a treasure within *"to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us"* (2 Corinthians 4:7). ■



*Brother Hon-Kwong Chung faithfully served at Chinese Christian Mission for decades and has recently gone to be with the Lord.*

# Hope and a Prayer:

# MINISTRY TO THE UNCONSCIOUS, THE UNRESPONSIVE, AND THE DYING



by Tom Drenoske

*I've seen enough conversions at death's door to convince me that God gives many people another opportunity to get right with Him before the door closes forever.*

There was a time when I felt very uneasy visiting someone who was unconscious, unresponsive, in a coma, or at the point of death. What should I say in such a situation? What should I do? Would it be better if I said nothing? Would my presence be enough?

My attitude began to change when I was training to be a hospital chaplain. I was given instructions about what to do when visiting a patient who was in a coma or unconscious. I also had the opportunity to observe experienced chaplains when they encountered those kinds of patients during their rounds in the hospital. I was told that the last two senses to leave someone who is in an unconscious state are the sense of hearing and the sense of touch. Therefore, I should talk to the person as if they could hear me, and I should put my hand on their shoulder, or take the person's hand, so they might sense my presence and my concern.

One day I entered the room of a woman who was in a coma and had been in that coma for several days. I told her who I was, expressed my concern for her, and quoted a couple of scripture verses. Then I put her hand in mine and prayed for her out loud, using her name in my prayer. As

I prayed, I could sense that she was squeezing my hand. When I opened my eyes, she was looking at me and smiling. I pressed the call button, and the medical staff came in to evaluate her. This "eye-opening" experience reinforced the instructions I had been given by the teaching chaplains.

Once when working as a hospice chaplain, I was given the name and address of a hospice patient in a long-term care facility. Her daughter happened to be visiting her when I arrived. The patient was unresponsive. Her head was jerking from side-to-side, her eyes open and darting back and forth, but she was unable to see. A look of fear and panic was on her face. I introduced myself to the daughter and then introduced myself to the patient and asked if I could pray for her. She didn't respond. So, I put her hand in my hand and prayed for her by name. As I was praying, I felt her hand grip my hand tightly. Then, hearing the daughter crying, I quickly finished my prayer and opened my eyes. The patient's head was no longer jerking, and her eyes no longer darting back and forth. She was looking straight into my eyes and smiling, still holding tightly to my hand as if not wanting to let go!

As the daughter pried her mother's hand from my hand and put it into hers, she thanked me for my visit and for the amazing response of her mother. She said it was the first time her mother had responded in over a week. God had performed what seemed to her a miracle in her mother's life right before her eyes, and He used me in the process. What a privilege!

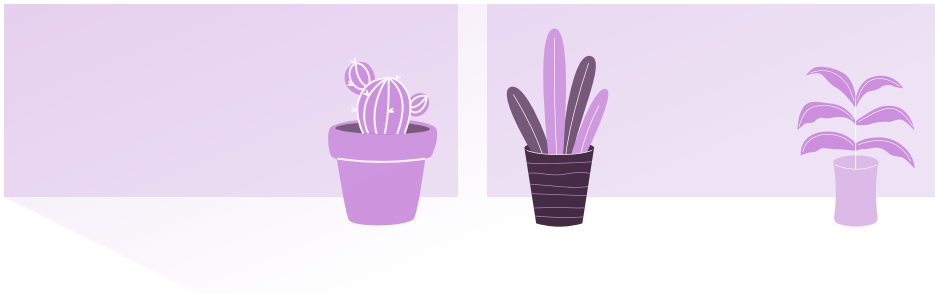
On another occasion, I had the opportunity to observe this phenomenon with a patient who was near death. As a hospital chaplain, I received a call from one of the nurses telling me that a patient was dying and close to death. Her family had been contacted, and they were on their way to the hospital. When a dying person is close to the time of death, some senses may cease functioning or function in a minimal capacity. I observed when I entered the room that the patient was very weak. She couldn't talk or open her eyes and could barely move. Sitting in a chair close to her so that she might be able to hear me, I introduced myself to



her. Not knowing whether she was a believer or not, I asked if I could share with her about Heaven and eternal life. She nodded her head slightly. I shared the gospel with her and asked if she wanted Jesus Christ to come into her life as her Lord and Savior. She nodded slowly. I told her I would say a prayer and asked her to agree and make it her own prayer. Then I quoted scripture to assure her that whoever has Christ has eternal life. When her family arrived, I greeted them and left, so they could spend time alone with her.

The next day I received a phone call from the woman's son. He told me that, after I left, his mother opened her eyes, sat up in bed, and started telling them what I had shared with her. She was very happy and excited. Then, she hugged each of her family members, lay back down in the bed, fell asleep, and died peacefully a short time later. The son asked if I would be willing to officiate at the memorial service for his mother, and "Would you share with all of us what you shared with her?" I gladly agreed to do so!

Then there came a day when I found out firsthand what it is like to be unconscious. On October 28, 2011, I was driving home from a shopping trip with my youngest daughter, and we were in the midst of a conversation. The next thing I remember—as if dreaming—was lying down and feeling wet. I could hear the muffled sound of voices but couldn't understand what was being said, nor could I see anything. It was completely black, and it felt like someone was pulling on my body. The last thing I heard before becoming unconscious was a woman's voice saying, "Is he going to die?" The next thing I was aware of was experiencing a sense of brightness. I opened my eyes—in a hospital bed in the intensive care unit of a hospital! My family was there, standing around my bed, holding my hand, calling my name, and praying. There was a large tube going into my chest. I was told that I had been in an automobile accident, and the body scan showed that I had nine rib fractures, two pelvic fractures, a collapsed lung, and some damage to my right knee. My daughter entered the intensive care unit on crutches and told me what had happened. She said that while I was driving, I



stopped talking to her. She waved her hand in front of my face, but I didn't blink or respond. Then my body became rigid and my foot pressed hard on the gas pedal. I was having a grand mal seizure. Trying to kick my foot off the gas pedal but unable to do so, she reached over and grabbed the steering wheel. At the end of the street, the car hit a large boulder and flipped over on its side. A couple of bystanders pulled the two of us out of the car. I lay on the ground in the rain until the ambulance came. My daughter who had suffered three pelvic fractures because of the accident told me that she was the one who asked the paramedics, "Is he going to die?" This personal experience made me more confident in ministering to an unconscious person with speech and human touch.

When we minister to people in this fashion, we are following Jesus' example. He ministered to those who were helpless—physically, emotionally, and spiritually, even those possessed by Satan. A helpless person is not hopeless. As long as a person is alive, there is hope. My experiences demonstrate that God sometimes gives helpless people moments when they can hear, feel, and even see and react. Let's remember the goodness and mercy of God and assume that God wants to use us in the lives of "unconscious" people even though we may not see any results from our efforts in this life. There may be a lot more people in Heaven than we expect!

If you were unconscious, and God opened your ears and restored your sense of touch for a period of time, wouldn't you want to feel the weight and warmth of someone's hand and the caring voice of someone talking to you by name? Of course you would! So, let's be the hands and voice of God to those who are helpless and need it the most. ■



*Thomas Peter Drenoske holds degrees in business, social sciences, and biblical literature, and has served for over 37 years in ministry as a pastor, chaplain, writer, and seminar speaker.*



# True Love
## is Worth the Wait



by Wenwen Zhang

*I treasure the days when God was guiding me, preparing a good life for me, changing me into a happy princess of our Heavenly Father.*

Before I got married, I had received a basic education in my country and made an average wage working for the post office. I didn't have high intelligence, and beauty was a million miles away from me. The only requirement I had for a husband was that he must be a "real Christian." At the time, people didn't understand me, since in China, from the 1990s, most members of society looked down on people who believed in Jesus. Their view was that Christianity was for old and sick people. I was far from that, and so were many of my believing friends who went to church in my small city.

### From Fear to Prayer

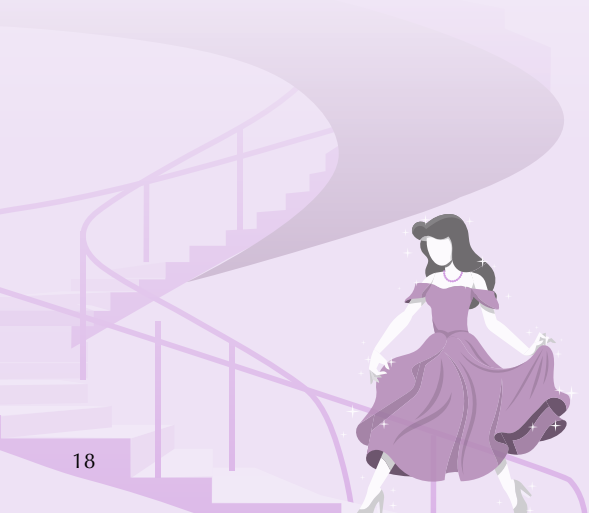
When I was a child, I often didn't want to live because my parents quarreled and fought every day. I didn't like my family, and it seemed that being married meant unhappiness, and I didn't want that for my life. But after listening to a Christian radio program from Hong Kong and becoming a Christian, I realized I had never prayed about marriage, even though I frequently thought about it. Then, when I was 29 years old, while absorbed in prayer, I heard a strong voice in my heart saying: "Marriage was created by God; you should trust Him. It is Satan who has distorted the relationship between husband and wife." It was then that I realized that the living and true God knew everything about me, even the secret dislike I had toward marriage. In that moment, I knew God cared for me and had spoken to me.

### My Faith Looks to God

At that time, I started praying for myself, even though I was afraid God might want me to marry a poor guy, or that I would have to go to some terrible rural area in China. I didn't expect to marry a millionaire, but maybe a middle-class man? The problem was that there was no Christian brother around my age in

my home church or even in my small city of around one million. My age kept creeping up—30, 31, 32, 33—and I had no idea where the right man was. In China, a woman who is not married before she is 30 years old was thought strange in people's eyes. My pastor and coworkers worried about me. They tried to persuade me to soften my ideas for a husband and that I shouldn't be so stubborn.

Because I had a good job, they suggested that I might marry a person who wasn't a Christian and help him to become a Christian. I rejected their idea decidedly. Every time, when society, or even church friends and family showered me with what I considered bad advice, I would slip away to a quiet place and pray. There was much pressure, sadness, doubt, hesitation, and despair. Many times, I would retreat to my bedroom and cry until midnight. But I knew God had said, "*Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers*," and I pledged that I would never act against those words.



So, through prayer, my faith got stronger, and I knew that one day I would marry a Christian man. I asked God why it was so hard to marry a Christian. His answer came clearly: "You are waiting for Me. I am waiting for you as well. You pray for a happy marriage, but you hate marriage in your heart. Even if I give you a husband, will you treasure him? Prepare yourself to be a good wife first—before you get married."

I prayed, "Lord, heal me by Your hand and love. Remove my fears. You created marriage for our good, and I know, with Your blessing, my husband and I would be very happy."

## The Promise of God

Day after day, year after year, I waited. I bought an apartment which had two bedrooms and one living room and thought to myself: "Now that I have my own space, I could marry a pastor." I realized that since pastors in China are poor, they don't have enough income to offer a bride a new house. But I knew that I could support my family's needs. I could marry a pastor, use the house, and we could both serve God with all our heart. What a wonderful dream! I was surprised by my 180-degree change. I had been afraid that God wanted me to marry a poor guy. Now, I felt that I would like to marry a full-time pastor!

By this time, I had been praying for marriage for four years, and God had

guided me, corrected me, and built me up by His hands. Also, He had given me His promise. It sounded just like God's promise to Abraham, that he would have a son. Even though everything looked impossible, God's words, I knew, were always true. One day I prayed: "Dear Heavenly Father, I don't have many requirements, but please prepare a man for me who loves You more than he loves me, and would You please show me which man is the one you have appointed for me." After praying, I felt the Holy Spirit saying, "Your marriage will be an honorable testimony. If you believe, you will see the glory of God."

## Fulfillment of a Dream

In 1996, a magazine called *Youth Times* published news that young Americans wanted to make pen pal friendships with Chinese young people. Since I had mastered Chinese and had studied English when I was a student, I thought having a pen pal friend might be a good way to improve my English. So, I wrote a letter to *Youth Times*, stating that I was eager for them to help me find a pen pal. After several months, I got three or four letters from men saying they wanted to date me. My purpose was to study English, not date. As time went by, I totally forgot about the offer to make a pen pal friend.

Then four years later, totally out of the blue, I got another letter from America. I was surprised since I didn't know anyone who lived there. The person who wrote to me is now my husband, Ken. In his letter, Ken told me of his faith and about the work that he did. He said, "I am looking for someone who loves Jesus Christ, with whom I could become good friends and look toward marriage. I want a wife with whom I can pray and serve God together."

It was unbelievable! I could not stop my tears. Ken had no idea how long I had been waiting for this moment. I knew this was the man I would marry. After a long prayer, I decided to reply to his letter. A sister in church helped translate my letter into good English. I told Ken about my experience of faith and my dream to marry a pastor and to attend Bible seminary. I quoted Psalm 37:3–6. *"Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun."*

As the letters began to flow, I discovered that Ken was quite different than I had expected. He told me that he had gone to church since he was small and that he was "reborn" when he was teenager. He said that he had a calling from God and wanted to tell God's good news to the Chinese people. Years earlier, he had been a missionary in Central America. He said that the Psalms 37

verses I had quoted were the key verses that had drawn him to personal trust in Christ years before. Now, reading these same verses from a Christian Chinese girl, he prayed, "God, fulfill my destiny, if this is Your will."

Once in a letter, Ken encouraged me with the verse from Romans 5:5 (BSB): *"Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."* That night, I opened my Bible to Romans chapter five and read to verse five. It was amazing that Ken and I were two people with different backgrounds, cultures, and lifestyles, but we had the same values and marriage views. It was the witness of God's power and love! *"All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth to those who keep his covenant and His testimonies"* (Psalm 25:10, NASB1995).

Before Chinese New Year, in January 1999, an American group called Global Education Foundation Association invited Ken to consult on an activity which had a medical exchange with Wuhan City in China. On that project, Ken was able to make a side trip to my home. We fell in love at first sight. It seemed like we had always known each other. Both of us had been longing for each other for many years and had finally come face to face. Our hearts were filled with happiness and joy.

Three days later, we went to Wuhan City together with the Global Education group as this would be a good opportunity to get to know each other better. Ken loves Chinese people and had been to China four times since China's reform and open door to the world. He had imported medical equipment for use in poor areas of China and had served the Chinese church. So, he was a pastor! God is faithful, always.

When we came back from Wuhan City, it was Chinese New Year's Eve. We had a great time celebrating the traditional Chinese festival together. Ken was very kind and humble, especially later, when he saw my father lying in bed with a serious disease. Ken knelt and prayed for him and accompanied me to serve my father in the hospital. Ken's love and behavior won my mother's and brother's hearts.

In May of the spring of 2000, the sun was shining brightly as the Lord led Ken and me down the red carpet at our wedding in China, to become husband and wife. Many people heard the story of our love and came from afar. Even ASSIST founder, Dan Wooding, and his lovely wife, Norma, traveled from America to witness our wedding. Inquisitive people filled the whole church. During the celebration of marriage, while wearing my wedding dress, I shared my testimony. After I finished, my mother stood up, came forward, and publicly accepted Jesus as her Savior. Ken guided her in the sinner's prayer and confession of faith. God's

name got great glory that day, and all the brothers and sisters in the church were comforted and encouraged. We sang loudly "Sing Halleluiah, Praise the Lord!"

Today, Ken and I have been married for more than 25 years, and we have a happy marriage. God made our dreams come true. The happiness of marriage is not dependent on time but on the noble purpose that God ordained for marriage.

True love deserves waiting for. God's Word promises that *"None who wait for You will be put to shame"* (Psalm 25:3, BSB). *"Blessed is the man who fears the Lord"* (Psalm 112:1, BSB). ■



*Wenwen Zhang is a Chinese American author, pastor, and curriculum designer. She married an American missionary in 2001 and is actively involved in writing ministry and global missions. She is currently pioneering and shepherding a house church among Americans in Florida.*



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## Response & Prayer Request (10-12/26)

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(Continued from back cover)

We battle for glory in endless chase, then weep for our lost conscience and grace.

At this moment, His sorrow is clear, why He deeply grieved for making us here.

The human heart, deeper than all it appears,

Can build countless wonders, yet know life less than an ant, through the years.

Then how shall we find what we seek?

The wisdom is shown by the lowly and meek:

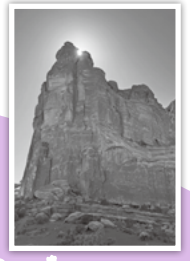
Flowers bloom silent, beauty they speak;

Dogs give their presence, week after week.

They ask for little, but their devotion is deep.



*Cindy Yang*









Yet mankind is tethered to greed, for love, bread, and carriage, we greedily plead.

If only like them, from these burdens were freed, life could be light and graceful indeed.

Our countless pursuits are all vain.

Why not yield all our burdens and strain?

Trust that all things work in their due chain,

For everything holds His meaning and gain. ■



*Cindy is a passionate preschool teacher and a bilingual writer. She also serves as a news broadcaster at Bread of Life Christian church in Seattle.*



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# Aligning with the Lowly

by Cindy Xiaoman Yang

Before Mother Nature, voices sound hollow, shadows redundant.

I slow my pace, lest I disturb her quiet, peaceful abundance.

I muse on Eden, where all was meant to exist in harmony.

Each after its kind—grass sprouting, birds chanting, trees blooming naturally.

It seems if this picture held no mankind, it would not feel desolate or left behind.

I ask myself then: What were the expectations of God when creating man?

Were we to be humble, like dust and light,

Or rule as "crown," bound to conquer and fight?

Consider the deeds of our race, our credit and blame face to face:

We can send our kin to outer space, yet through war, destroy our own home base.

(Continued on page 22)

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