

My Testimony Judy Ho

Conversion

Though my mother was married to a non-believer, seed of gospel implanted by missionary workers during her youth made her believe that the best way to bring up her four children was to let them grow up in church. Therefore, from my kindergarten years, I started to go to church; first to the church of one of my maternal aunts and later, to my mother church led by a primary school teacher. From primary 2 onwards, I attended church regularly – first Sunday school, followed by youth fellowship, Sunday service and then prayer meeting. Church life formed an inseparable part of my upbringing. During my early secondary school years, I accepted Jesus as my personal Savior in one of the gospel meetings organized by my mother church. After my conversion, my Sunday school teachers had tried their best to strengthen my faith and help me grow up in Christ.

Calling from God

In the middle of one night in my late secondary school years, I became wide awake. I clearly saw a vision of God as a mass of bright light and I heard God asked me, “Are you willing to serve Me?” Without hesitation, I sincerely answered, “Lord, I am willing to serve you.” Since then, I know that I have promised God to serve him. I haven’t mentioned this encounter with God to anyone. Yet, in my mind, I have been certain that I would have to serve the Lord my God one day.

Career choice

Since a primary school student, I have been a keen reader. One of my favorite types of books at that time was biographies. My hero at that time was Florence Nightingale who gave all her life to look after the sick. Due to her influence, I became interested in medical work. Instead of nursing the sick, I thought that I would be more interested in becoming a doctor treating the sick. Therefore, since primary school, I decided to become a medical doctor. My wish came true when I was finally admitted into the medical school at the University of Hong Kong in 1979. Since then, I was convinced that, one day, I would use my medical profession as a platform to serve God and I would have to prepare myself accordingly.

Betrayal: prodigal son left home

As a young doctor in training with a very demanding work schedule of long working hours, frequent on-call duties and preparation for specialty qualifying examinations, I struggled to keep up with my church life. My first error at the time was to focus on human failures instead of on the almighty and unfailing God. Though not directly involved, I became aware of power-struggle and interpersonal conflicts in my church that culminated into dismissal of the pastor. I was confused and disappointed at what happened and decided to stop going to my mother church. For months, I drifted from one church to another but none was like home. To make

matters worse, my relationship problems made me feel betrayed by God's children. I began to look for non-Christian ways to solve my interpersonal problems.

My second error was my reluctance to let God to be the master of my life. In certain aspects of my life, I preferred to have my own way instead of God's. Knowing what I did was against God's teaching, I faced a lot of internal conflicts so much so that, one day, I decided to put my religion on hold so that I could pursue various goals of my life on my own, including my career ambition and interpersonal relationship. Over the years, I have been inadvertently involved in incessant power struggle in my professional life. On many occasions, I have witnessed the ugliness of human nature due to greed and hunger for power and control. I experienced even more disillusion when faced with greater betrayal by non-believers!!

Spiritual awakening

Over the years, even though I put my relationship with God on hold, I knew full well in my heart that Yahweh is the only true God. However, I was unwilling to let Him to be the sole guidance of my life. I only prayed for His help when I was at my wits end; but afterwards, I ignored Him again. On several occasions, I asked myself whether I would be ready to let God to be in-charge of my life again. I asked myself whether I would like to be barely saved but face God with an empty hand on Judgement Day.

By the mercy of God, towards the end of 2010, I was aware that I had wandered from home long enough. As a prodigal son, I knew what I got away from home was far worse than what it was worth the effort and the cost. I was then willing to resume my relationship with God but I did not know how. I thought that my faith was a personal matter and I was not willing to ask for help from fellow believers. I was not even aware that I could pray for God's guidance. No active action was being taken for about six months.

But God has been faithful, He intervened even when I did not ask for His help. In April/May 2011, I attended a reunion dinner with my medical school classmates (brothers in Christ) who went to Singapore with me as elective students in our final year. During that function, I met up with Dennis and Pollyanna Tsang, the couple who looked after us during our Singaporean days. To me, they have always been totally trustworthy and caring. During that evening, I was able to have a long chat with Dennis. When asked by Dennis about my faith, I was not afraid to spill my problems and told him that I had not attended church for many years but was ready to try resuming my church life again. Dennis invited me to attend his church – Oiktos Church at Wanchai. I agreed to give it a try without much expectation.

Without me even trying, God has prepared the most suitable church for me. Oiktos Church has less than 30 members. Unlike my mother church, I felt welcomed without undue pressure to engage in church life or its activities immediately. Again, unlike my mother church, Oiktos Church is not business- or activity- orientated. Instead, it is a vibrant church with strong emphasis on bible study and missionary work. Oiktos has used the Bible (God's words) to change me gradually.

Slowly, my attitude towards my relationship with God changed. In the beginning, I attended Sunday service, read the bible and prayed only when it was convenient and suited my schedule. Gradually, I long to attend church service and even reschedule my work (i.e. doing my ward rounds very early on Sundays) so that I can attend church service on time. Oiktos Church makes me feel like home. Initially, I read the Bible with much difficulty in understanding. But I forced myself to read the Bible regularly. The Holy Spirit gradually opens my heart to understand God's words more and more. As suggested by Elizabeth Ip (my dear sister at Oiktos), I started using the Life Application Study Bible for my daily devotion, which proved to be a gem that let me understand God's words better and know how to apply Its teaching in my daily life. At first, I prayed erratically. But my church started a project (thanks to Jenny Kho) asking members to pray for each other every day. This project of praying for others has rekindled my prayer life – I have more things to talk to my God instead of concentrating on my own needs. When I experience how God answers my prayer for my brothers and sisters in Christ, I become very excited and am encouraged to pray more earnestly. Through prayer, I feel much closer to my Creator.

God also gives me a healthy appetite to understand Him and His work on this world better. Over the months since my revival, I had read several very useful books. From Philip Yancy's "What's so amazing about God", I learn that God is actively involved in daily happenings in the world; due to our sins, human beings suffer a lot of tragedies. Yet, through these tragic events, God intervenes and gives tremendous comfort to many. From Philip Yancy's "What so amazing about Grace" I revisit God's undying love and grace for mankind. From Lee Strobel's "the case of Christ" I relearn the unshakable facts that Jesus became a perfect man and willingly died for our sins. I become more aware of the extent of Jesus' sufferings on the cross and the true meanings of His salvation. From Lee Strobel's "the case of the Creator" I re-examine various scientific evidence confirming that this world is created by God; and scientific advancement only makes this fact clearer.

Over time, my relationship with God grew stronger. I have experienced tremendous peace – a feeling that has escaped me for a long time. I have also experienced joy – joy of becoming God's beloved daughter again. My willingness to let go and allow God to be the sole guidance of my life has led to an abundant life. I have experienced His blessings and have become more intimate with Him.

Renewal of His calling

While I become closer to Him, the Lord has reminded me of my commitment of serving Him. With time, my desire to fulfill this promise has grown stronger. At the same time, God has been opening up chances for me. In August 2012, I visited the orphanage for handicapped children established by International China Concern at Changsha, Mainland China. At that visit, I was able to chat with several volunteers who gave up one to two years of their life (after their retirement for some) to serve God in a foreign country. I was determined then that I would follow their example in serving God after retirement. Through V-care's eye care service to

volunteers on Logos Hope (the gospel ship), the beautiful and admirable lives of those young volunteers inspired me and challenged me that I should give my best for Christ.

How about Africa? It has been God who takes the initiative! In early 2012, Pastor Stephen Chan came to Oiktos Church to deliver a sermon and shared with us the work of SIM in the post-service sharing session. During his sharing, I asked a number of questions relating to the possibility of medical service through SIM without a strong desire or awareness that this could be a real possibility for me. Several months later, when Stephen came to our church again for sermon, he asked me directly whether I would be interested to go to Africa to take a look at the medical service of SIM there. Without much thinking, I replied that I was open to consider this possibility. Through Stephen, I subsequently sent over my C.V. to SIM for consideration of matching to one of its medical facilities in Africa for short term attachment of about two weeks (the maximal duration that I could be away from my clinical work at that time). I then know that I would go to some place in Africa for two weeks' medical service some time in 2013.

While waiting for SIM's response, God gradually let His plan become clearer to me over a few months. Through Oiktos Church, I had been attending a bible study group on the Torah since September 2012. From this group, I have gained deeper understanding of our beloved Father so much so that my goal and daily prayer has been to walk daily with God, following the example of Noah.

Following Elizabeth's example of transferring her church membership, God convinced me over several months that this was what I should do as well. Therefore, I went through the process of transferring my church membership and was accepted as a formal member of Oiktos Church at Christmas 2012. A few days later, when I received the formal application form for short term associate from SIM, I was amazed to find that going to Africa was not my own personal decision, I had to be sent by my church. I would require my Church's recommendation before my application would be considered. Well, God's timing is just right!

Just before Christmas 2012, Dennis lent me a book written by Marianne Hui titled "How I fell in love with Africa" which I read during the Christmas holiday. I was deeply moved by Marianne's dedication and her eagerness to follow God's will. Her description of her year in Africa gave me more realistic idea about ministry in Africa. God also challenged my initial plan of serving Him upon retirement. He asked me whether I would forgo my long set retirement plan of working till 60 years old so that I could have enough savings for a comfortable retirement. He asked me whether I would follow His plan instead of mine; and whether I should limit the execution of His plan by my own selfish desire. Finally, I have been able to tell God that I am willing to be sent by Him whenever and wherever He considers appropriate.

Immediately after the Christmas holiday, I received Stephen's e-mail informing me that SIM was open to let me visit E Hospital at J City, N country for two weeks some time in 2013. I finally was able to start the formal application process to be SIM's short term associate. I experienced enormous peace when I received Stephen's message. In January 2013, I attended an interview with Dr. Stanley Ling, Regional Director of SIM East Asia, who discussed with me my short- and

long- term plan of missionary service. He also gave me valuable advice regarding my spiritual preparation.

Over a few months, God had been working on me and changing my perspective regarding serving Him at His chosen time. He let me understand that my duty is to prepare myself accordingly and to maintain a love relationship with Him so that I can follow His plan as He reveals it to me one step at a time.

God has let me understand the seven realities of experiencing Him as detailed by Henry Blackaby in his book entitled “Experiencing God”. They are:

1. God is always at work around you;
2. God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal;
3. God invites you to become involved with Him in His work;
4. God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes and His ways;
5. God’s invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action;
6. You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing;
7. You come to know God by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you.

Short term missionary trips

Since becoming a short term associate with SIM in 2013, I have gone to three short-term missionary trips at J city of N country. In August 2013, I worked two weeks at E hospital participating in clinical care of patients, teaching of medical students as well as trainee doctors and spiritual care of patients. I interacted with the local hospital staff and learnt from the experience of overseas missionary doctors stationed at the hospital. My activity then was confined to the hospital due to security concern around Eid (holiday marking the end of Ramadan).

In October 2015, I spent three weeks in a PACE (Prayer and Cultural Experience) team at J city with Dennis and Pollyanna Tsang. During the first week, we had orientation on the various issues/challenges relating to missionary service in N country. We visited a number of non-medical missionary services of SIM at J city. Through these visits, I acquainted with various SIM missionary workers and have broadened my understanding of God’s Kingdom work in that part of the world. During the second and third weeks, I conducted an endoscopic workshop at E hospital training doctors and nurses to perform endoscopy on the digestive system. I was also invited to lecture students in a local seminary.

In March this year, I revisited J city with Dennis and Pollyanna to attend the opening ceremony of a community school founded by Sung and JO Lee (a Korean missionary couple who have served in J city for nearly 30 years) and sponsored by Oiktos Church. We stayed in the

retreat center established by the Lees whose admiring lives in serving the Lord amazed us. Their wholehearted dedication to the Lord and their love for the local people (especially Muslims) have set a high standard for me to emulate. Interaction with the Lees have also provided me with insights into the opportunities and challenges of ministering in N country. During our stay, we were involved in the monthly training of local missionary families conducted by the Lees at the retreat center. I learnt to provide basic and practical healthcare and hygiene knowledge for these families who serve in remote villages without healthcare facilities. The Lord has opened my eyes to ministering opportunities outside the hospital setting. During our stay, I was also able to discuss with the Personnel Manager of SIM N office regarding my intended long-term service.

Time for long term service

My initial plan was to leave my job after the second short-term trip in preparation for long-term service. However, as the Bible says, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD’ (Isaiah 55:8), God teaches me to wait on Him and let Him to be the leader. I was inadvertently involved with an issue at work that mandated me staying on in the job for the time. For 12 months, I had prayed for God’s resolution of the issue to be His sign that the waiting would be over.

In October 2016, my prayer was answered and the issue was adequately resolved in the way that I prayed for. Therefore, I have started the process of winding up my hospital practice of over 30 years. I have also started the application process of becoming a long-term associate of SIM. The application process has been a thorough one which, at times, has been daunting and, yet, rewarding in providing me with greater insight into my faith and its application in my future missionary service.

The application process has been progressing well. A second interview with Dr. Ling in May has largely cleared up the path ahead. I would attend an orientation by SIM in its East Asia office at Singapore in September. During the orientation, discussion on church partnership, financial planning and field placement would be held so that I can understand and start the various practical preparations for the long-term service.

God willing, I look forward to handing in my retirement/resignation notice by the end of December this year so that I can leave my job at the end of June 2018. I would then spend the next six months on full-time spiritual preparation before going to the field in early 2019. Meanwhile, arrangement is being made for the six-month spiritual preparation which may include attending a residential preparatory course in the UK for would-be cross-cultural missionary workers and a short-stay for voluntary service in Israel.

Spiritual maturation

In the past few years, God has been actively nurturing me to be a more mature disciple of Jesus and to be a more suitable maid for His Kingdom work. I have the opportunity of

deepening my understanding of His words through reading a wide variety of spiritual books and attending various short-term bible courses conducted online, by correspondence or in groups. Field trips to Israel and Turkey have given me three dimensional understanding of the Bible as I relate the Scriptures with the land, culture and the history of Israel.

I am honored to be given the valuable opportunities of serving the Lord in my church and two bible study ministries. I treasure spiritual support, encouragement and fellowship from fellow brothers and sisters inside and outside my church. With their support, I strive to maintain an intimate relationship with my God and to walk out His teachings in my life as best as I can.

Life over the past few years has not always been plain-sailing. There have been challenges and temptations. I have witnessed failures and conflicts within the faith communities. Yet, our Father has reminded me that I should focus my gaze on Him alone instead of being discouraged by human weaknesses (including mine). Our tendency to sin (miss the mark) makes me realize that I should be humble and should cling to God every day of my life. I should also be merciful to the weaknesses of fellow Christians because our God is merciful. He keeps on loving His children even though we keep on failing and shaming His name.

A few bible verses are particularly precious to me. They serve as constant reminders in my daily life. They are:

Deuteronomy 6:5 – You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Proverbs 1:7a – The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.

Proverbs 31:30 – Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.

John 15: 2&5 – Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Concluding remarks

God is truly amazing and wonderful; my spiritual journey is a good example of His awesomeness. May all glory and praise be to the LORD our Father forever and ever, Amen!

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